

PSYCHODYNAMICS OF PRANAVA

Preliminaries

All schools of thought, whether philosophy, science or religion, are based on the binary function of two opposites. When two opposites are bracketed together to account for the Primeval or the Ultimate, many permutations and combinations are possible between them, which account for the limitless, specific formations or manifestations with which the phenomenal world abounds. Unitarians, dualists, and pluralists look for a common system into which they can neatly arrange and classify the plurality of things without admitting that they are monists. Yet the fact remains that a monistic pattern of centralizing everything into a single reality is at the back of everyone's mind.

All seem to declare that they are in search of truth. Yet when the word "truth" that people use is closely examined, it implies a reality which is to be differentiated from ultimate truth. Indians have devised two special terms in Sanskrit: *paramartha*, to account for eternal truth, and *yathartha*, for factual truth that is empirically presented. *Yathartha* is the truth that is discerned with the testimony of immediate perception in the here and now world where subject-object duality is persistent. *Paramartha* or eternal truth is a contemplative conviction based on facts, thought, and convictions which arise from a subjective appreciation of the unchanging. Because of its quality of consistency which transcends time, space and clime, it is given the status of the Ultimate.

The natural incentive to seek truth is to vouchsafe one's happiness. The search for truth in India is said to have an historical growth from three wisdom sources (*prasthanatreya*): the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavad Gita. Although we see a relentless war going on in India between protagonists of different systems, there is no dispute that truth can be obscured by untruth and that the judgment of even the greatest teacher of any time can sometimes be erroneous.

According to Shankara, the foremost among Indian philosophers, the search for error is as important as the search for valid judgment. It is reasonably presumed that all painful situations in life, either of physical diseases, social calamities, or psychological, moral, and spiritual failures, arise from wrong judgments in a person's conscious life or from an overall state of nescience or ignorance. All of us are to some extent oblivious of the many causal factors which can combine in themselves to make the present unwieldy or disastrous. Man is instinctively afraid of some error that he and society are likely to stumble on. Both science and religion are on the lookout for hidden possibilities that waylay us and bring a variety of tragedies ranging from simple accidents to unavoidable crises. Shankara chose to pitch the camp of his search in the safe quarters of the Upanishadic rishis. He set as a model of search the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the most voluminous contemplative text ever written.

We find a period of poetic imagination in India when Vedic literature flourished. The conception of mythological figures of psychic significance appears in the Vedas. Afterwards, as a sequel to Vedic poetry, a sort of surrealistic imagination was employed by Upanishadic rishis to account for the phenomenal world as well as the incomprehensible, so to say, the noumenon. The main device employed in these wisdom texts is word dynamics which predominantly suggest opposite tendencies.

Brahman, the Sanskrit equivalent of the Absolute, is concealed in the prefix *brihadaranyaka* as the root *brih*, meaning "the ever-increasing". Ultimate truth has to include within it everything known and unknown. As we progress in our discovery of the fringes of the unknown, or its depth or sublimity, our findings are naturally included as annexed truth. Consequently truth is ever increasing. It is with this meaning that the Ultimate is called Brahman. Although it is meant to include beginningless and endless time and the entirety of spatial extension, its unitiveness is considered to be without parts, and therefore it is said to be one without a second, incomparable, without attributes, and changeless.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad commences with the model of a Vedic ritual, which is to be treated as obsolete as we pass from the ritualistic beginnings of Veda to its contemplative conclusion. In old world literature, especially the Yajur Veda, a horse sacrifice or *Asvamedha* literally meant tying a horse to a post, ritualistically severing off its head and cutting out its tongue, heart and other parts. There is no need to say how cruel, unclean and barbarous such an act is. The allegorical references in the opening chapter, the *madhu khanda* or honey section of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, are to the horse that is sacrificed. But in contrast to the ritualism of early Vedic literature, the Upanishad refers to a horse whose head is the dawn. Its eye is the sun, its vital force the air, its open mouth the fire called *vaisvanara*, and the body of the sacrificial horse is time measured in years and eons. Its belly is the sky, its hooves the earth, its sides the four quarters of space, its ribs the immediate quarters of earth, its joints the months, weeks and days, its feet the days and nights, its bones are the stars and its flesh the clouds. Its half-digested food is sand, its blood vessels are rivers, its liver and spleen are mountains, its hair is herbs and trees. Its forepart is the ascending sun, its shaking of its body is thunder, its making water is rain and its neighing is voice. No one can conceive of tying such a horse to a post and cutting off its head.

In the horse ritual, a golden vessel called *mahiman* is placed in front of the horse and a similar silver vessel, also called *mahiman*, is placed behind the horse. *Mahiman* means glory. The glory of this horse comes from the eastern sea, which represents the infinitude of primeval manifestation. The glory of the silver vessel is the western sea, which suggest final reemergence.

Just as Brahman is explained as “ever increasing truth,” the horse is an allegorical expression for the expansion of phenomenality. *Brih*, the root of Brahman, means “expansion.” Similarly the word *asva* means “ever swelling.” The sperm that enters a mother’s womb starts swelling after its union with the egg. Where does this swelling end? It swells into an embryo. The embryo becomes a fetus with many features. The fetus grows into a child. The child comes out of the mother’s womb fully equipped with organs of perception and action and with the potential to act and react. It can reproduce another being of the same kind, which will be followed by a trail of similar beings capable of changing and

transforming the very ground on which they are bred. Thus the swelling suggested by the word *asva* accounts for the multitudinous quality of the world of creation.

Although for religious reasons a Creator is permitted, or admitted, Indian schools of thought give no actual credence to such a Creator. Self-born suggestiveness swells on all sides with fresh and new suggestions. Every formation of growth of the embryo takes place between the presentative materials arising from the past and the futuristic design of possibilities, which are continuously carving and licking into shape new limbs for fresh operations. Thus the past, the present, and the future are to be taken as a single function where what is predominant is not the objectivity of the body that arises, but the continuous function which is proliferating with new modes of action. Shankara traces the possibility of all errors that can lead us to almost irreversible false notions which breed pain, to this proliferation. Therefore the *asva* that is to be sacrificed is none other than the ever-increasing suggestibility that arises from the seedbed of an urge which has within it the dual principles of hunger and the call for its appeasement.

Here the very symbol of the horse suggests life coming into being. For this reason the head of the horse is called dawn, symbolizing the dawn of life. The horse is presented with an open mouth from which emerge flames of fire. Fire is symbolic of wanting to consume and it is experienced as hunger. If hunger is not immediately appeased, death follows as a consequence; hence the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad identifies hunger with death. In modern economic terms, what is suggested here is demand. The primary demand of a living organism is for food. Food for digestion in the belly is not the only demand. There is also the demand for vital energy or *prana*, the demand for objects to be seen, the demand for sounds to be heard, the demand for other beings to be loved, and the demand for a situation where one can reproduce oneself. Several thousands of years after the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad was written, Karl Marx wrote *Das Kapital*. Both books begin with hunger as the primary need of living beings, hunger of the body and hunger of the mind. It is the timeless call of Nature to meet the challenge of hunger.

The all-consuming fire of hunger is cosmologically pictured in the Upanishads as *vaisvanara*, the fire of the Cosmic Person's hunger. There is a compulsion in demands, which has a categorical nature. A demand is to be met with supply. Before one finds the supply to meet the demand, a state of mind has to emerge which understands the situation and can conceive a means to fulfill the end. Hence the Upanishad says: with the appearance of death on the scene, the being became conscious with a mind. Mind is said to be a natural product of emergence. On acquiring mind, one dreams of possibilities. Before one drinks water to quench one's thirst, the idea of drinking and the idea of tasting are there. Before one eats, one has the idea of food as a means to satisfy hunger. Before food is put into the mouth, relish of food comes to the mouth. It is the relish that acts as an impetus to find the substance in which the possibility of satisfying the relish resides. Relish is *rasa* in Sanskrit. Concretization of *rasa* is seen in the water of life. On partaking the first food, the breast milk of the mother, the watery substance that brings relish becomes a fuel to the hungry digestive system. Hence the water of life is related to the flames of enjoyment.

Metaphorically it is said that fire ensues from water. Water of life is called *amrita* and the fire that comes from it is called *arka*. *Amrita* and *arka* are considered inseparables, with *amrita* being immortality and *arka* meaning light. The sun is looked upon as *arka* and the rain that falls from the sky is *amrita*. Thus phenomenality as described in the Upanishads has aspects which are inseparable from the actualities of life.

When man is fascinated by the pursuit of further possibilities he becomes deeply entrenched in his preoccupation with the physical world of phenomenality. Until and unless his fascination for the phenomenal world ceases, he can never be introduced to the eternal truth of which the phenomenal is only a shadowy image. We see this presented in *The Republic* of Plato as the analogy of the cave dwellers. Plato designates truth and falsehood as the world of the intelligibles and the world of the visibles. The world of the visibles is a shadow, an image cast by the light of eternal truth. Shankara too, using a different approach, engages in the hard task of dislodging from consciousness the suggested world and its many alluring fascinations. Thus begins the theme of Indian philosophy based on the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

When we read the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad along with the Chandogya Upanishad, we cannot miss the striking similarity between these two major Upanishads. If the stress in the Chandogya is on *tat tvam asi* (That thou art) the stress in the Brihadaranyaka is on *aham brama asmi* (I am the Absolute). While the Chandogya is never tired of saying “this, this, and this also,” the Brihadaranyaka employs the negative way of “not this, not this, not this also.” The structural secret of all major Upanishads is identified with the secret and symbolic language of *pranava*. The scheme employed in both the Chandogya and the Brihadaranyaka is epitomized in the Mandukya Upanishad, which is nothing but the elaboration of *pranava* or *Aum*. We will focus our attention on the secret syllable *Aum* as elaborated in the Upanishads and in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

Narayana Guru and Pranava

After giving the general principles of the Self in his *One Hundred Verses of Self Instruction (Atmopadesa Satakam)*, Narayana Guru says, “Do not wake any more and without sleeping remain as pure knowledge; if this is not possible establish your bipolarity with a contemplative (*muni*) who has understood the secret of *pranava, Aum*.” In all disciplines there are prerequisites. They can be of a positive or negative kind. To be instructed by a master the aspirant should have the need for instruction. This is a negative prerequisite. A positive prerequisite is that the aspirant is very eager to be benefitted by the wisdom of a master. There is no need to presume that everyone is eager to know the higher secrets of life. Those who already know have no need for further instruction. Those who don’t care to know don’t have to bother. Only the uninstructed person who is eager to know is here considered competent to seek in the wisdom context.

In a previous verse of the *Atmopadesa Satakam* the Guru indicates that the nature of the Self is pure knowledge which does not triplicate into the knower, the known and the act of knowing: “Knowledge, the act of knowing and the knower are nothing other than a primordial knowledge; merging into that infinite supreme knowledge, remain always as that.” In continuation of this he says, “If you cannot remain as

pure knowledge, then you need to seek a direct relationship with a contemplative who knows the secret of *Aum*.”

This introduces us to a discipline in which the uninitiated self is giving itself to be raised by a superior Self. In the Bhagavad Gita we read, “Raise yourself with your Self; you should never degrade yourself.” There the self that tends to become degraded and the Self that raises the self are seen in the same person. But in Narayana Guru’s verse, the Self that can raise the self is a contemplative who knows the secret of *pranava*. The self which needs to be raised is a person who cannot escape the limits of duality or the alternating functions of a corporeal body which is regulated by external events like day and night.

Whether we take the case of a superior Self and an inferior self or an enlightened person and an aspiring person, one thing is recommended by both the Gita and *Atmopadesa Satakam*: a bipolarity should be established between the enlightened mind and the mind that is afflicted by darkness. Narayana Guru doesn’t explicitly say that a person should be taught or instructed. What he says is the seeker’s physical self should be engaged in doing service to a contemplative. There is a traditional way of a disciple attending on a guru in the Indian context. Only those familiar with that can get a full picture of the kind of intimacy suggested by this verse.

The guru does not ask for service, because he lives in a state which transcends all needs. But the disciple attends to the guru like a mother attending to her child, performing one act after another, according to her understanding of the child’s needs. Even the most illiterate, uncultured mother instinctively keeps vigil on her child in this way. She may have many other defects but she is perfect as a mother. The mother is not prompted by fear nor is she a slave. She is overwhelmed by love. She sees the most precious essence of her being in the child, and through the development of her child she will have her highest fulfillment. Similarly, the disciple attends to all the physical needs of the guru not as a slave but out of intense love. The disciple knows that the guru is the light of their soul and wants to keep that light burning. The osmosis that takes place in the relationship between the enlightened guru and the light-seeking disciple is here given as the simplest way of becoming enlightened on the secret of *pranava*.

When the Self was first introduced in the *Atmopadesa Satakam*, it was described as *karu*, the Self which prompts a person to act. The Brahma Sutras of Vedanta are also called the Saririka Sutras, sutras that concern the owner of a body. Here *seva* is an act performed with understanding, an action prompted by pure knowledge. Action performed by a physical body can be binding, but in this case the outward action is only an expression of a soulful enlightenment, so it loses the negativity of actions prompted by the urges of incipient memories. Any person who wants to relate the lower self to the higher Self has to derive their promptings from understanding rather than from urges that come from prior conditioning.

The key to this liberating relationship is described here as “those who have transcended the cyclic birth and death by knowing the secret of *pranava*.” Thus it is also made clear that *pranava* is a secret language. When written it is only a formal symbol, *Aum*. When it is spoken it is only a nominal symbol. But within the symbol a great world of epistemological import is lying hidden. What is obvious is phenomenal; what is hidden is noumenal. Making a breakthrough from the phenomenal to the noumenal is what is indicated here as the secret of *pranava*.

In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, it is said that one attains the state of final absorption in the changeless state of the noumenon by contemplating on the true nature of *pranava*. It is paradoxical that the veil that is to be removed is the veil that comes from empirical knowledge and immediate perception, which brings such a conviction that we are certain of what we are experiencing. This certitude is the toughest obstacle in knowing the real, the noumenon.

In addition to empirical knowledge, the Yoga Sutras identify four other kinds of mental modifications which veil the noumenon and which are to be restrained: illusory knowledge, fancy, lassitude and memory. Narayana Guru didn't explicitly say one should not have lassitude or not be inertial and gross, but said simply that one should give one's service to a guru, and that implies the cultivation of a vigilance prompted by deep love. Just like the mother keeping watch over her child, the disciple sits sleepless to guard the sleep of the guru from being disturbed.

Although we may think it is painful to go without sleep, when we see how a mother, even when seemingly asleep, is roused to action by the slightest movement of her child, we see what is expected of a disciple who is keeping in the service of a contemplative. This is how we start understanding the secret of *pranava*.

The non-dualistic totality is called *advaita* or “not-two.” However, the reference to two is imperative. Explicitly there are two aspects and implicitly the two are counterparts of a single reality. Between the counterparts there should be an essential bipolarity which unifies the two into one. Such is the scheme of the Absolute. When the counterparts are established in absolute bipolarity, the union will leave no separation between the two and will be free of any duality. The process of bipolarity indicates an enjoyable attitude. When there is nothing but the highest value of joy remaining, the union is complete. Then there is nothing to be accomplished and no agency for accomplishing anything.

The endeavor to unite and the consequential attainment of union are peculiar to a number of situations of counterparts coming together, such as the union of couples, the context in which teacher and taught are in a state of instructing and learning, when questions are cleared by answers, and when words explode into meanings. For this reason, two special terms are given in spiritual discipline—worshipful adoration (*upasana*) and final absorption in a state of contemplation (*dhyana*). Although worshipful adoration is given to the *pranava Aum* in various Upanishads, both major and minor, and the Mandukya Upanishad is devoted entirely to the explanation of *pranava*, the best introductory exposition comes in the opening chapter of the Chandogya Upanishad.

The Chandogya Upanishad

In the first *khandā* of the first *prapathaka*, the first mantra is:

Aum! One should reverence the *udgitha* (loud chant) as this syllable, for one sings the loud chant (beginning) with *Aum*.

Aum is constituted of three syllables—A, U and M—which are followed by a silence which is also to be treated as a meter. These are to be symbolically taken to represent the triple aspects of becoming (creation,

sustenance and dissolution) and the unitary ground of being. The state of being is the transcendental. Adoration (*upasana*) given to the *pranava Aum*, is for the explicit purpose of bringing one's bipolarity into indistinguishable union. Implicitly, it is for becoming initiated into the fourfold secrets of the expressive syllables of A-U-M and the impressive, non-syllabic silence. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna Paramatma eulogizes *Aum* as identical with the Absolute. Hence, it is here described as *parardhya*, fit for the highest meaning or position. Krishna is described in the Gita as *caturbhuj*a or the four-armed, and the Absolute is also traditionally understood as *catuspada*, having four limbs. The first three limbs constitute the world of becoming. The fourth is not to be taken as a part but as the whole in which the three parts are implied. In the Gita we hear Krishna describing the entire world of becoming as being elaborated from a minute fragment of his being, whereas the indivisible whole remains inestimable as the eternally unknown.

In the context of the Gita, Arjuna is the seeker who places himself at the feet of Lord Krishna in complete dedication and with an absolute willingness to serve him. Arjuna is the worshipper, *upasaka*, and Krishna is the worshipped, *upasana murti*. In this mantra of the Chandogya Upanishad as well, *Aum* is that which is to be worshipped and the priest at the sacrificial altar who is loudly chanting *Aum* is the worshipper. He is in service. It is this context that was enunciated in Narayana Guru's verse given above, in which the aspirant is asked to be in the service of the wisdom teacher, the *muni* who knows the secret of *Aum*.

In this mantra the mode of worshipping *Aum* is given as reverence to the imperishable foundation of everything that is seen here. The psychophysical carrier of life is like a burning candle. When a candle burns, it gives a release of energy and a light that illuminates everything around. Even so is the burnt sacrifice, which we experience as life. The triumphant life that glorifies its own basic truth is said to be articulating *Aum* loudly just like the chanting priest of the Sama Veda giving his loud utterance of *Aum*.

Even when the body and mind burn away, the essence continues as imperishable. Hence in the second mantra of the Chandogya's first *khanda* we read:

The essence of things here is the earth.
The essence of the earth is water.
The essence of the water is plants.
The essence of plants is a person (*purusha*).
The essence of a person is speech.
The essence of speech is the Rig ('hymn').
The essence of the Rig is the Saman ('chant').
The essence of the Saman is the Udgitha ('loud singing').

Rasa or essence is not merely the essence of a thing. It is that essence of perennial value which is, as Keats wrote, "a joy forever." Hence the Sanskrit definition *rasa-asvadane*, translated as "*rasa* is the enjoyable." The term *bhuta*, meaning the world or things here, indicates the principle of becoming. Although the flux of becoming is apparently transient, the essence of the transient world is *prithivi*, the earth. *Prithivi* is that which is spacious enough to accommodate various forms of life. Even though the ever rotating and revolving earth can very well be taken as the changeful, it has been consistently holding within its grasp the seven seas and the great mountains of the world. Its substantiality is even figuratively called terra firma.

If extension is the essence of the world of becoming, water is seen here as the pervasiveness of the world of extension. The extensiveness of the earth can be seen in the nature of water, which is percolating into everything and flowing in all directions. When earth and water come together they have the magical power of producing organic matter, from which evolves the greening of the world, its vegetative life. Hence, *oshadhi* or plants, are described here as the enjoyable essence of water.

The life that presents itself first in the vegetative world does not stop there. The will to live, the delight to enjoy, spearheads and culminates in the species of *Homo sapiens*. This superior aspect of life is called *purusha*, which literally means, "that which walks ahead."

Man delights in his words. The expression of his self comes when he transacts and makes another person know how he feels, what he thinks, what he wants and what he wishes to do. *Vakya* or the articulated word is the organization of the names of things and the verbs of activity. The

word or sentence a person speaks is indicative of his cogitation and also of the judgment he makes about it. Therefore the spoken word or sentence is said to be the essence of *purusha*.

Of all the words that man speaks, what delights him most is giving his spontaneous reverence to the Divine. In the exaltation of his soul he sings hymns and praises, *rk*. The word is said to be made of music, and when the highest truth is envisioned man's tendency is to sing. At least two of the great scriptures of the world, the Gita and the Quran, are sung as praise in the form of a song. The Vedic mantras of *rk* are rendered into song in the Sama Veda. Therefore it is said that the *sama* is the essence of *rk*. A song becomes most delightful when it is sung in an ascending scale. The ascending scale of *Aum* is *udgitha*. Hence it is said that the essence of the *sama* is the *udgitha*, loud chanting. Of all delights, the delight given by the chanting out loud of *pranava* is the most supreme. Hence in the third mantra it is said:

This is the quintessence of the essence, the highest,
the supreme, the eighth, namely the *udgitha*.

In the *Sangita Kalpa Druma*, the verbal part of music is called *matu* and its melody is *dhatu*, which correspond to *rk* and *sama*. Fifteen specific qualities are spoken of as the kind of musical sounds in which compositions can be sung. Good music should have these desirable qualities, and *pranava* is the essential spirit of all music. *Pranava* is what makes these characteristics come true. They are:

mrista.....pleasing to hear
madhura.....sweet to hear
cehala.....easily resonating
tristanaka....enjoyable when recited in low, middle or high tone
sukhavaha....that which brings a sense of leisure to the mind
prasura.....capable of being expanded
komala.....flat
gadha.....impressive
sravaka.....that which can be heard from a distance
karuna.....that which generates compassion
ghana.....that which can be given in sharp notes
snigdha.....mellifluous

slaksana.....unbroken like a streak of oil
raktiman.....that which produces love for union
chaviman.....that which elevates the mind

In the fourth mantra of the Chandogya Upanishad the question is raised, “What is *rk*? What is *sama*?” In the fifth mantra the answer is given, “Speech (*vakya*) alone is *rk*; breath (*prana*) is *sama*. The syllable *Aum* is *udgitha*. Speech and breath, taken together, form a couple, as do *rk* and *sama*.” Union is effected when the counterparts resonate in absolute harmony. When spouses embrace in their love union, they forget all duality and attain unity. Similarly, when a word is to be articulated, *prana* becomes its dynamic energy carrier. With the phonetics it effects, meaning evolves. The meaning is *rk*. The intonation of the word can be such that it attains musical quality, *sama*. Here the praise is not spoken but sung in a delightful manner. The delightful body of the word is generated by *prana*. Like a woman nurturing the fetus in her womb to bring forth a delightful child, *prana* receives the word content and transforms it into a melodious musical expression. Here not only the word and its musical expression are united, but the listener is also transported to a state of ecstasy just as spouses delight each other.

The fourfold actualization of a purposive life is said to be the envisioning of one’s intrinsic nature (*dharma*), meaningfully giving expression to that nature (*artha*), desiring to actualize the unfoldment of one’s truest form (*kama*), and ultimately transcending all relativistic modes of achievement (*moksha*). The *pranava* is such that it covers all four aspects. Thus it is at once the macrocosm that encompasses the universe and the microcosm that is being epitomized in the syllable *Aum* which a person can meditate on.

The sixth and seventh mantras of the first *khanda* of the Chandogya Upanishad are as follows:

This pair is joined together in this syllable *Aum*.
Verily when a pair come together, verily, the
two procure each the other’s desire.
A procurer of desires, verily indeed, becomes he
who, knowing this thus, reverences the Udgitha
as this syllable.

We cannot move even the smallest part of our body without releasing the energy of *prana* into it. The air we breathe in and out is only the gross aspect of *prana*. *Prana* is also the experience of our sensory and motor functions. It is also our mind and the fourfold functions of the inner organism. For the motor functions, the commands are to be given in words. Therefore, the consent for all actions in us has to come from *Aum*, which is composed of both *prana* and *vak* (word). Therefore, *Aum* is also called the word of consent. In mantra eight we read:

Verily, this syllable is assent; for whenever one assents to anything, he says simply *Aum*. This indeed is fulfillment, that is, assent is. A fulfiller of desires, verily indeed, becomes he who, knowing this thus, reverences the Udgitha as this syllable.

Aum is the plenum. It is the unexpended. By taking away the plenum from the plenum it never becomes less. By the sun evaporating the water of the oceans into clouds the oceans do not dry up. With the showering of rain from one cloud the sky doesn't become exhausted of clouds. Similarly, *Aum* continues to give without being expended. So it can give consent to all and for everything. A truly rich person is one who never feels any loss because something has been given away to someone. One who meditates on *Aum* also becomes generous and never a loser of anything. In Christian and Islamic prayers, consent is given by saying "Amen" or "Amin," which are not different from *Aum*. *Aum* as the word of consent is again praised in mantra nine:

This threefold knowledge proceeds with it: saying *Aum* one calls forth; saying *Aum* one recites, saying *Aum* one sings aloud, to the honor of that syllable, with its greatness, with its essence.

Contemplation of *Aum* in the Mandukya Upanishad

In the Chandogya Upanishad we have seen how the *pranava* is to be worshipped. The entire text of the Mandukya Upanishad deals with the contemplative depth of *Aum*. Every pulsation of consciousness has a central locus from where the ripple of consciousness expands. If nothing

stops the expansion, it can culminate in infinitude. The central locus is marked in the mind as a non-specific indication. It becomes specific only when it is circumscribed due to identification with conditional consciousness, *sopadhika-jnana*. In verse twenty-seven of the *Atmopadesa Satakam*, Narayana Guru says the following:

Sitting in the dark, that which knows is the Self;
what is known then assumes name and form,
with the psychic dynamism, senses,
agency of action and also action;
see how it all comes as *mahendra* magic!

When unconditioned knowledge presents itself, it has no qualifying adjunct. What could be referred to as “this” becomes identical with “all”. There is no better description of the Absolute than referring to it as all, *sarvam*. When we say, “this all,” the specificity of “this” is cancelled out by the generality of “all”. It is with such a paradox that the Mandukya Upanishad commences the descriptive study of *pranava, Aum*:

That (eternal) syllable, *Aum*, is all this;
its further elaboration, past, present, and future,
all is this *Aum* indeed;
even what is beyond, transcending the three times,
that too is *Aum*.

Aum is first placed as an indicative by calling attention to it with the article “this”. “This” is a specific mark. So if you ask, “What is this?” the answer is “all this”. It’s a paradox to relate the specific “this” to the universal “all”. When such opposites are brought together in the mind, the paradox becomes inconceivable. Only when specific conditional cogitation is allowed does conceptualization occur. The inconceivable rids the mind of modifications. To stress the transcendence of spatial and temporal specificities, after enumerating time as the past, the present and the future, this relativistic notion of time is paired with pure duration. Those who have had the experience of reading Henri Bergson’s *Duration and Simultaneity* will understand how relativistic time can be cancelled out by the notion of pure duration. Thus the opening mantra of the Mandukya Upanishad not only presents the epistemological theme of *Aum* but also gives an initiation into the

mystical discipline of cancelling out opposites whereby one can come to the neutral zero, which is the same as the spontaneous manifestation of *dhyana*.

There are several mystical disciplines in the world. In India the Saivite, Vaishnavite, Brahmanic, Yogic, Tantric, Buddhist and Jain schools of mysticism are in vogue. The Chinese have developed Taoist discipline. The Buddhism that entered Japan from India through China developed into Zen mysticism. The devotional aspect of Vedanta, combined with Islam, gave rise to Sufi mysticism. Christian mysticism has its roots in the mysticism of the Kabbala. It was also influenced by Egyptian schools. What is common in all mysticism is a paradoxical loop where the obvious disappears in the oblivious and the oblivious reveals itself mostly in an indecipherable language of the heart rather than in the ratiocination that happens in the head. The mystical purport of *Aum*, if developed into a science, will become the most exciting and absorbing science of mysticism.

Jesus said, "I am the goal, the path and the light." The goal he marks is the Kingdom of God. Ultimately, the Kingdom of God is discovered in the seeker's heart. Thus the ultimate is in the primeval. When a person sits to contemplate on *Aum* they are surrounded by silence. The silence that is felt in the heart can be seen spread out in all directions without any frontier. In that silence there is an unfathomable depth, as well as a sublime height that can never fully be reached. It is with the awe-inspiring wonder of that silence that one slowly opens the mouth to articulate. With the syllable A, the sound becomes full-throated and the mouth is open to its widest possibility. Then, like the tapering of a funnel, the syllable A transforms into the syllable U until the lips come together in M. The tapering articulation vanishes into an ultimate silence, which coincides with the primeval silence with which the contemplation of *Aum* was begun. What was and what is, is only an infinite range of silence. The articulated sound is like the rise and fall of a sound wave, an inundation with a peak and a valley. The silence continues in the heart of the intonated sound where that unbroken ground of all is suggestive of the imperishable.

In our school days, we are taught how to make linear marks to be pronounced as sounds. Consonants are divined and conjoined with

vowels, and all the alphabet characters together are called *aksaras*. There is really only one *aksara*, one imperishable. Unfortunately the identification of *aksara* with a written or spoken letter of the alphabet makes most Indians confuse the imperishable *Aum* with a stylized scribbling of the Sanskrit or Tamil language, and the profound is changed into the profane. The imperishable *Aum* spoken of here is not what is written or drawn with a few sinuous curves. Yet the idolatrous mind of man has made the spoken *Aum* a cliché and the written *Aum* an idol. First of all, one has to break away from such puerile forms of giving veneration to *Aum*. For this reason we see mystics everywhere swearing against idolatry. Where there is science or mysticism, one has to clear one's ground before settling down to the serious business of penetrating to the depth of the real that is shrouded in the enchanting veil of the phenomenal. In the Mandukya Upanishad such a course is systematically given, which takes us not only to the variegated periphery but also to the depth and height of the mystical richness of *Aum*.

The Gospel According to St. John begins with a pointed reference to the Word. He says, "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God." If we take the Word spoken of by St. John literally, that can lead us to confusion. In St. John's original text his reference was to the Greek word *logos*, meaning the causal and primordial intelligence which is existentially continuing in and through creation as an eternal creative and dissolving force. St. John borrowed the term *logos* from his personal instructor, Philo Judea (Philo the Jew) who was an enthusiast of Plato's philosophy. Plato himself adopted the word *logos* as the ascending fire of creation and the descending fire of dissolution. In the light of such a study, the Word equated with God's creation and with God himself cannot be a three-lettered or four-lettered word spoken or written by someone somewhere. Only by comprehending the imperishable existence of everything that is evolving and dissolving in the flux of becoming and also which transcends time can one grasp the connotation of *Aum* implied in this mantra, which can be equated with *logos* or the Word.

To make the meaning explicit, the three aspects of time—the past, present and future—are especially underlined here for reflection. Only by experiencing a thing do we become impressed by the truth of its

existence. As we move in time, our appreciations of existence are sequentially piled one over the other, and everything of the past is held close within the ambit of the present in the form of memory, which comes as conceptual configurations to complement percepts. It is by the relevance of that memory that we give our present its vast magnitude, both in space and time. There is no past sitting anywhere apart from the immediate awareness of the present. Similarly, there is no future kept in storage somewhere except in the anticipation and imagination of an individuated mind.

Existence cannot support itself, at least for the recognition and appreciation of it, unless every form of existence is cogitated by our comprehending minds. This shows the methodological excellence of the Indian rishi, who places *cit* (consciousness) immediately after *sat* (existence). These two aspects of truth are inseparable. That is why Nataraja Guru defines science as a discipline which transforms the visible into the calculable. It is not necessary to get into all the jargon of philosophy to admit and appreciate the perennial persistence of fundamental values. That is why even a sentimental poet can readily see the truth of a perennial joy dwelling in the heart of beauty. Here we see the relevance of *ananda* (value) coming as the culminating mark of our search.

Bishop Berkeley insisted that the validity of the world resides in its perception, *esse est percipi*. When he was asked what would happen to the world if there were no one there to perceive it, he said, "In such a contingency, God will be perceiving it." We quote Berkeley here to show the limitation of human consciousness. Granted that something exists outside the scope of time, the rishi wants us to know that even that is to be included in the imperishable *Aum*. The first mantra of the Mandukya Upanishad should be read along with the great dictum of the Chandogya Upanishad, *tat tvam asi*, That Thou Art. The second mantra of the Mandukya Upanishad also gives one of the four great dictums of the Upanishadic literature, *ayam atma brahma*, This Self is the Absolute. The whole mantra is as follows:

All here is the Absolute indeed:
This Self is the Absolute,
This same Self is four-limbed.

In the first mantra, the epistemological subject for discussion is presented. It is customary in traditional books of Indian wisdom for the subject matter to be presented in the opening mantra or verse. In the Mandukya Upanishad, *pranava* is presented in the opening mantra. In the second mantra, the methodology to probe into the depth of the subject is given with a two-fold suggestion. The opening sentence is presented as a judgment: "All this is the Absolute indeed." "All" refers to the plurality of the perceptions with which we are confronted from moment to moment. Western philosophers like the existentialists also first bracket all items for discussion into a subject of common epistemological import, in spite of the differences between the very many items that are brought into the *epoche*. "All this is" is also methodologically significant. It suggests to the inquirer to pinpoint a common factor, which is present in every item of perception and, for that matter, in the pluralities of conception as well as value factors. It is in the homogeneity of a single principle that all variegations are to be reduced to a subjective consciousness which is identical with the Self as the most acceptable reality of everything.

After establishing the homogeneity of all individual factors that are bracketed with the term "all", the method of reduction is very beautifully presented in the epitomization of "all" as the Self. The indicative term "this" is difficult to explain without qualifying what "this" is. The qualification is given with a categorical statement: *ayam atma brahma*, This Self is the Absolute.

The third line of the mantra is a descriptive statement directing the student to make a positive methodological analysis in which its ultimate or conclusive position will imply an integrated philosophy wherein all steps of analysis are employed only to arrive at a final synthesis. This is to help the seeker to not get lost in the chasm that exists between the empirical here and now and the transcendental eternal. The great dictum referred to above is also described as the instruction to direct the seeker's contemplative discipline. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad Yajnavalkya instructs his wife-disciple Maitreyi to listen, ponder over, and identify with the revelation that comes from one's deep contemplative reflection.

In fact, this is the most difficult exercise in Vedanta. Correlating the ever-pulsating center of one's being to the never-changing reality of the Absolute is to be achieved first by evolving a *schema moteur* in which the cyclically moving wakeful and dream and deep sleep states are all brought to a topological measuring system by which the transcendent can be made as transparent as possible in the mirage-like phenomenality of the arrangement, in which the causal becomes ideational and idea impels the concretizing of the individual. The Upanishad takes the trouble of analyzing the threefold states—the wakeful, the dream and the unconscious or deep sleep—and geometrically providing them with an eternal base which allows participation through immanence and yet holds back unaffected as the transcendent. This we shall see in the next mantra.

In the imperiential envisioning of the mutual participation of the immanent and the transcendent there resides a mystical experience common to all schools of mysticism, which is alluded to as love for the Absolute, mystical frenzy, devotion, piety, divine Eros, as well as others. In Indian mystical literature this is described as *bhakti*. Both Shankara and Narayana Guru hold the same view of *bhakti* as the continuous contemplative injection into one's own being, by which time transforms into pure duration and space abolishes itself into *sunyata*, the transcendental void. In the Bhakti Darsana chapter of his book *Darsana Mala*, Narayana Guru writes:

Meditation on the Self is bhakti.
That by which the Self is blissful, with that,
the knower of the Self always meditates
upon the Self by the Self.
Brahma is meditated upon
because Brahma is blissful.
Constant meditation on Brahma
thus is known as bhakti.

In verse thirty-two of *Vivekacudamani*, Shankara also writes:

Among the set of means to bring about *moksha*, *bhakti* is the greatest. Continuous contemplation of one's essential nature,

svarupa, is said to be *bhakti*. Others say that continuous contemplation of the truth of one's self is *bhakti*.

The first limb of the fourfold aspects of *pranava* is given in the third mantra of the Mandukya Upanishad:

In the waking state, (he is) overtly conscious,
having seven parts and nineteen faces,
nourishing himself on the concrete,
the Universal Man, the first limb.

However enormous the external world is, man, who is a finite being with an assigned placement in the world, is privileged to act in unison with it and be its interpreter and commentator. In that assignment he shares his responsibility with every one of his kind, not only of the present but through all millennia. What we do in the present will be continued by posterity. It is as if there is an eternal person transcending time and space who has been living in everyone who has come to this world in the garb of a human body and will continue to do so ever after. The program of this cosmic person is to enjoy. The cosmic person's head is far above the clouds where he can share the dreams of the luminaries. His feet are planted firmly on earth. He is like a vertical parameter touching the earth and the heavens. Between the earthly alpha and the heavenly omega, he has many worlds to enjoy.

The mystical language of the Aitareya Upanishad presents a creation myth which is worthy of being contemplated upon with veneration. When the two slits beneath the eyebrows of the newly born baby open, the sun is generated in the cosmic sky and light enters the child's visual system. They are initiated into the wonder of seeing all illuminated objects. Similarly the soul of the baby frees itself to go in all directions through the crevices of the ears. It is filled with the choir of the spheres that is sung to greet the music-loving soul, which becomes so infused with the symphony of the universe that the child becomes an equipoised being dancing to the rhythm of the mysterious waltz that it hears from within. All beings are singing to the child in continuous orchestration. It is as if the physical world has been in eternal prayer for its lover to sprout as a connoisseur of all the beauty it can present.

Between the ancient winds of stormy seas that blow onto the land and the fragrant breezes of flower-laden mountains that greet the oceanic gales, there arises the invisible *prana*, the life-giving energy. The *prana* installed in a living organism is like a little mobilizing engine that sets into motion a million movements. By breathing in and breathing out, man receives into every cell of his being the cosmic *prana* of life. The cosmic *prana* is called *matarisvan*, the grand assigner of duties as well as the one enjoyer enshrined in the pleasure palace of every living person. She is also the great taskmaster. Even in the hearing of a single sound, one is confronted with a wide range of harmonics. For conscious enjoyment, the senses are to be disciplined in recognizing the mode of orchestration, and the person listening is to be attuned to every shade and nuance of the musical melody. Thus the connoisseur can become a perfect aesthete.

The world is said to have originated from the self-sacrificing fire of the primeval person's urge to transmute and transform itself into a more organized, perfected being. The individual who keeps the mystical fire of creative transfiguration maintains it in the hearth of his genitals to create several replicas of himself. Nothing delights him more than offering the sacred libation of his genitals in the sacrificial fire of a woman's yearning motherhood. From the moment the father's sperm enters into the mother's ovum, the alchemic flames of creation begin. It is like a structural engineer designing and building a perfect body for the soul to live in, with seven major chambers and nineteen entrances. The fire of origin, the Word or logos, is held intact as the centerpiece of the altar of the human heart. Smoldering and fuming, the fire in the newborn sparks off and leaps into verbal expression that fills the hearer's ears with conceptual meanings out of which gestalt after gestalt appears.

In the gross world of impenetrable matter, each body has a natural claim to occupy its own required space—a space to be, a space to spin, and an ever-widening space to fly around in. In that variegated world of multitudinous bodies, each one has its own stamp of uniqueness. Even a microbe has its place in the infinite scheme of things and a definitive role to justify its existence.

Life breeds only where there is moisture, as water is the carrier of life. It fills and empties the cup of life. It enters the body as nourishment. When the day's bread has been enjoyed and digested, the same water flushes out filth and purifies the organism without anyone even noticing. What is easily passed off as a creature is not anything other than the grand program of creation, of which the seemingly individuated person is only a still portrait of a fact that is seen for a split second. The Ganges, the Nile, the Volga and the Mississippi are looked upon as grand rivers, but not a single drop of them has ever held itself in the same place for even a moment. Similarly, whatever we see in the first phase of *Aum* is existentially real and in the time-space continuum only a phenomenal semblance.

However lavish is the world in its changing colors, varying symphonies and tactile stimulations, all these would have been meaningless without the consciousness of man presiding over the grand drama of cosmic creation. For this reason, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad describes the world as honey to man and man in return becoming honey to the world with his five vital energies, five senses of perception, five organs of action and the fourfold functioning of his inner organ—questioning, remembering, deciding and becoming affected. Man is privileged to enjoy to the maximum. Why call this world one of thorns and thistles, pestilence and fury? For the discerning person it is a world of figs and grapes, a carnival of colors and music, a world to love and be loved by. This is the picture we get of the conscious experience of the psychophysical enjoyment assembled in the first leg of *pranava* symbolized by the vowel A. The rishi calls this magnificent arrangement the first quarter of the cosmic person, with seven parts and nineteen faces to enjoy.

The second quarter of *pranava* is the most intriguing, and at the same time the most absorbingly interesting section of the mysterious *Aum*. It does not yield its structural secrets when it is approached from the side of perceptual knowledge and the logistics of perception. If comparison is possible and scientifically admissible, the closest example to U, which represents the dream, is the highly secretive mechanism of genetics and its potentials which are presented to our cognitive minds as partly decipherable and partly indecipherable signs and symbols. The mantra is as follows:

In the dream state, the inwardly conscious,
with seven parts and nineteen faces,
nourishing itself on the well-selected,
is the luminous one (*taijasa*), the second limb.

It is strange that man makes so much of the transactions of wakeful life and gives almost no attention to the subjective phenomena described here as *svapna* or dreaming. Only the psychoanalysts give some credence to the symbolic language of dream. All major scientific inventions were initially presented to the minds of individual scientists as functional hypotheses. Poets, artists, playwrights and mystics were first cradled in the magical envisioning of dreams. Now we should ask who the programmer is of this wonderland of creation. In the opening verse of the Apavada Darsana of Narayana Guru's work *Darsana Mala*, we read:

It was in the beginning as if non-existence—
this world, like a dream; thereafter,
everything was projected
by the will alone of the Supreme Lord.

Of course, the substance out of which everything is created is the self-luminous light, which presents itself as dream, called *taijasa* by Vedantins. If the causal consciousness is taken to be almost equivalent to nucleic DNA, the manifestation of messenger and transfer RNA can be seen in the unfoldment of consciousness into the elaboration of a dream, which has within it the entire scheme of actualization that is yet to happen in wakeful consciousness. Dream is the most crucial function in a person's life in which the pragmatics of actualization are hidden behind the masks of indecipherable symbols. In the Western study of dreams, first Freud stumbled on the significance of symbols. Taking a hint from Freud, Jung developed an elaborate theory of the archetypes that pull strings from the depths of the collective unconscious. For Jung this was only a hypotheses borrowed from Upanishadic and Buddhist lore, particularly the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, and also *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and *The Book of the Great Liberation*.

The triple tiers of consciousness which Freud postulated (the unconscious, preconscious and conscious) stand in comparison with the Indian concepts of causal consciousness, dream or subjective consciousness, and wakeful or transactional consciousness. The causal consciousness, derived from incipient memories, both physically and genetically, can be roughly related to the unconscious spoken of by both Freud and Jung. The unfoldment of causal consciousness into a dream matrix is comparable to the preconscious spoken of by Freud and the concept of the subconscious in Jungian literature. It is after a seepage of the dreams through the pragmatic validity of a memory with social acceptance that actualization is promoted with a subject-object elaboration that allows a part of the dream to manifest in the world of physical actuality.

From the hidden pragmatics which are pressured by genetic individuation, through countless lives, or by a perfection that is aspired to through successive psychic repetitions, a person arrives at a recountable dream. As every dream has in it a potential for actualization, there has to be a one-to-one correspondence between the area of stimulation and the motor system of its responsive reaction. The principle of conditioning and the principle of projection are interlaced in this process so that the circular movement of dream energy, which physiologically should happen only through actual physical stimulation and response, leaves a subjective reverberation that can go on endlessly, which psychologists only recognize as the retention and recall of memory. Where we experience a presentative conditioning, which afterwards can be seen only as a representative impression, is the area where we should look to see how the inwardly conscious, which is said to have seven parts and nineteen faces, is nourished by the *taijasa*.

If the first *pada* can be spoken of as a finished product, the dream behind it is a sequential weaving of innumerable ideations to arrive at the final product. Without understanding the significance of dream, the great artist Pablo Picasso commented on the finished product of an artwork as only a leftover impression of the artist. Actually, a real work of art is to be seen as beginning with the flash of an idea and continuing through the very many elaborations it undergoes when the artist is trying to transfer his ideational or imperiential encounter with an inner dream to its ultimate manifestation. Bergson speaks of going around

and thing and knowing it in bits and fragments, a process which gives only information of external impressions. He also speaks of absolute knowledge of the whole through an act of identification from within. Only those who are initiated into the secret of an imperiential identification come anywhere close to the realization of the secret of the dream, which is the unveiling of the self-luminous creative source of U, the second limb of *pranava*.

In spite of the universality of all human beings belonging to the species of *Homo sapiens*, each person shows a uniqueness in a number of physiological peculiarities and personality traits. So it is only natural that we seek an explanation for this. There are two parallel theories to account for individual differences. One is the modern biological theory of genetics. The other is the Indian theory of reincarnation and the transmigration of souls. Both theories endorse the belief that there is a carrier of the essence of a previous embodied life into the present one, which has the special features of a seed in which the previous life form is embedded. Modern biologists not only trace the history of genetic continuity in the hereditary transference of parental qualities through a few successive generations, they also treat that genetic inheritance as a legend which locates the origin of the biologic history of the genes in the evolutionary history which began millions of years ago. The seed and its constituents are said to have no mind of their own, nor any awareness of all their potentials. The genetic elaboration of the genes into a fetus and the embryonic development of the fetus into a fully formed child which continues to show change and growth through its whole lifetime, and the person's final culmination in disorganized deterioration and death, are all said to be programmed genetically, although countless intricate programs are implied. The geneticists and evolutionists do not think it is necessary to have a programmer for genetic activities nor to postulate an intelligent being as a creator and maintainer of life. They try to explain why one person behaves differently from another with the functional properties of certain biochemical substances and electrical actions.

In the reincarnation theory of the Hindus and the transmigration theory of the Buddhists, two different postulates are employed to trace the trajectory of an individuating personality passing through several embodied beings with a history of what is popularly known as karma. In

the Hindu theory, karma is a conscious deliberation which an individual performs with a motivation that mostly manifests because of the person's defective value visualization. In the case of the Buddhists, all functional details belong to karma whether they are accompanied by conscious effort or are unconscious reflexes or even mechanical actions caused by the inorganic constituents of the life-situation of the individual.

In spite of the marked differences between the genetic hereditary theory of the biologists, the Hindu theory of the psychic stream of recurring personality occurrence, and the Buddhist theory of the combined rational and irrational aggregate of reactive forms held together by ideational impressions, one thing is relevant: all agree that there is a cause for individuation and it is lying dormant in a substance that exists prior to the manifestation of a person who is recognized in the present life with a certain name and form. This aspect is mooted for discussion in the third limb of *pranava*, which is marked symbolically with the half-syllable M, which is neither a full consonant nor a full vowel. The mantra relating to this is given in the Mandukya Upanishad as follows:

That (state) wherein one desires nothing whatsoever,
and sees no dream whatsoever, is deep sleep.
In the deep sleep state, having become unified,
just a mass of consciousness made up of bliss, enjoying bliss,
having a sentient mouth is the Conscious, the third limb.

From the moment of the fertilization of an ovum to the hour of the birth of the child, the fetus is in deep sleep. In that state it has no desires and it does not see any dream. This long period of the unconscious state of the growing fetus can be called *sushupti*. In spite of having no conscious desire or semi-conscious dream, the growing fetus is active. This is one of the greatest miracles of this world. A thick and slimy drop of vital fluid that was transferred from the male generative organ to the female womb joins with an ovum and then duplicates and replicates in a strange manner. Without the conscious deliberation of anyone it becomes fully formed into a small person with perfect hands and legs and the senses to perceive. It is paradoxical that the child is growing in

the womb of the mother without being attended to by either of its parents. Narayana Guru remembers this prenatal state with gratitude:

Within the womb, O Lord of good,
Was that lump in hand—this humble self.
With what exceeding love,
Who but Thou, kind One, nurtured it into life!
Ordered by Thee, all comes about.
Thus knowing, this Thy servant
To Thee now surrenders all.

Of earth, water, fire, air and ether too,
From each gathered and firmly shaping in the palm
Who confines me within a cell with blazing fire—alight
Even from the oppression great of such a feminine divinity,
Protect and nourish me in Thy nectarine immortality.

For months full four and five,
Growing, becoming by slow degrees,
Even Thou it was who eyes formed one after one,
Ever warding off Death's hand.
All that is now past,
But to my recollective weeping of that prime fetal time,
Listen, O Lord of good.
Yea, semen it was that mixed with blood,
And thus, by sound matured and taking form,
I lay mediate.
Then for me there was no mother or father;
So by Thee alone raised, sole parent mind,
All that I am is here today.

Prenatal Gratitude, translated by Nataraja Guru, (verses 1, 2, 5, 6)

Perhaps this is the only period when man is not tormented by the problems of this world. So it is only natural that man seeks the security and warmth of the womb of the unconscious night after night and feels comforted and rejuvenated when he is blessed with deep sleep. In the Bhagavad Gita it is said that what is night to the worldly man is the time to keep awake and alert for the yogi. This is also true of the unconscious,

which is busy when the conscious mind is inoperative. Even the vegetative world reveals this secret. Flower buds which look unimpressive in the evening change overnight into fully bloomed flowers. This is a silent zone. The unconscious does not speak.

From the beginning of the birth of consciousness in man, he has been curious to find out how everything comes into being without the hustle and bustle of planning commissions and construction engineers. Those who are poetically inclined listen to the whisperings of the muses and become fully informed of a God who created everything; they believe that God is never tired of continuing the creation in secret. Some conceited earthlings who are proud of their power to coin equations claim that it all happened with a big bang, of what they do not know. What being, laboring and fashioning the world, was doing it in silence and loneliness? If we go with the scientist and believe that there were only whirling clouds of nebulae for millions of years, the clouds were whirling without deciding how many stars they should split into to make neat and well-formed galaxies. Sri Aurobindo, in his legend of *Savitri*, refers to this in his inimitable style:

It was the hour before the Gods awake,
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence's marge.
Almost, one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
In the somber symbol of her eyeless muse
The abyssm of the unbodied Infinite;
A fathomless zero occupied the world....
As in a dark beginning of all things,
A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown
Repeating forever the unconscious act,
Prolonging forever the unseeing will,
Cradled the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force
Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns
And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl.

Such was the prenatal sleep of the cosmos through which the galaxies, stellar systems, planetary systems, and life on earth emerged. The

human prenatal unconscious is only a feeble echo of the cosmic formation in silence. What a grand theme is this unconscious, this *sushupti*, of which the Mandukya Upanishad speaks as the third quarter, from which alone emerges the dream of the second quarter and the transaction of the first quarter! This well-correlated and well-coordinated scheme of the rishi helps us to make a breakthrough into the dark abyss where our fateful lives are pre-discussed, pre-designed and pre-determined by the gods of destiny, who alone are present for the selection and coordination of the chromosomes whenever innocent parents, drunk with orgasmic wine, copulate in madness.

Even the pious fakir Jalalu'ddin Rumi thinks, "First you were mineral, then vegetable, then man. You will be an angel and you will pass beyond that too." As though he has made a great discovery, he further adds, "The worker is hidden in the workshop."

The ancient savants and modern men of science vaguely realize that there is a supercosmic intelligence hiding its plan from everyone while keeping itself busy creating everything from a subatomic particle to a supernova. When we chant the mantra *Aum*, this sonic vehicle transports us to the last terminus of the journey of rational intelligence and brings us to the very home from where the song of creation has emerged. The master magician who lives there is described as *prajnanaghana*, consciousness through and through. No hungry mind lusting after desires enters this world. And no fool is allowed to play any mind games. Dreams are barred. Hence this region is christened as the domain of *ananda* pure and simple. The god who dwells in *sushupti* is eternally nourished with self-generated bliss, and so is called *anandabhuk*.

On a ship the captain's room is out of bounds for passengers, but whenever he pleases, through his chosen channels, the captain can reach all passengers, individually and collectively. The same is the privilege of the god of the unconscious. He can let loose his Ariels and Pucks to entertain individual minds with dreams. He also knows how to keep animated beings on the leash of rationality so that they may behave according to the norms and conventions of a universally concrete world, which are repeatedly revealed at regular intervals. Take any branch of science and walk through the corridors of its research

laboratories; sooner or later you will come to the house of ignorance, beyond which the physicist, the chemist and the biologist cannot move another step. This is the *mysterium tremendum* in which everything is fused into one, which the rishi describes as *ekibhutam*.

The most amazing wonder that we can think of is the implied intelligence that is operating in the least of all things, such as an atom or microbe. Between the power that moves and changes and the designing intelligence that is directing all such motions we have the entire theme of creation. These two are taken together in the sixth mantra of the Mandukya Upanishad:

This is the Lord of all, the all-knower;
this is the inner negation factor;
this is the source of everything,
and the beginning and end of beings.

This beautiful idea expressed by the rishi is also seen by others who have watchful eyes. Guy Murchi, in *The Seven Mysteries of Life*, puts it lyrically, also describing the wonder of wonders as omnipresent, or *sarvajna* in Sanskrit:

Omnipresence

Where did life begin?
In the festering ooze of a primeval swamp?
In a submicroscopic virus?
In a stone? A star?
Strictly speaking, in none of these.
For, truthfully, the question is wrong.
Life did not literally begin. Life is.
Life is every where everywhen,
At least in essence,
And of course
It depends on your definition.

Did you ever meet a living stone,
A stone that stirs, that travels,

That eats, grows, heals its wounds,
A stone that breeds its kind?
Yes. All stones are alive
Essentially, potentially;
At least they move around
When weather and circumstances permit,
Going mostly downhill,
Sometimes waiting centuries
In a deep pool in some stream
For a torrent wild enough to drive them on.
And stones are crystals,
Rock crystals that grow, molecule by molecule,
Filling their own cracks or wounds,
Reproducing themselves slowly
But perfectly.

One kind is even magnetic and attracts iron.
The ancient Chinese called it
“The stone that loves.”

Larger mineral-like organisms also live
In their patient, plodding way:
Dunes drift and glaciers creep.
As do mountains, islands, volcanoes and rivers—
That are born in the clouds and die in the sea—
And lakes and storms,
All moving as is their wont,
Even fires on Earth
And whirling spots on the sun.
In fact there is compelling evidence
That the earth lives as a superorganism,
Along with moons, planets, comets, stars, galaxies
And other celestial bodies,
And that, most of all,
The Universe itself
Is a growing, metabolizing supersuperBeing,
In very truth alive.

Of course, nothing is so evident in the obscure world of causality. But we have our power to abstract. And through abstraction we can get to this great wonder, which the philosopher-scientist sees in an egg or in a wave. Again Murchie sings about the *avyakrita*, the unmanifested Substance, of which the rishi of the Mandukya speaks:

Abstraction

What's in an egg?

A song is there, in chemical notation,
Invisibly packed into the genes;
Also detailed instructions for nest building,
A menu or two, and a map of stars—
All in the one cell that multiplies into many,
All put at the disposal
Of the little feathered passenger
So, once hatched and fledged,
He will have more than a wishbone
To launch his life.

What's an ocean wave made of?

At first glance nothing but saltwater;
But keep your eyes on it ten seconds...twenty seconds...
You'll notice the water is roused
Only momentarily by the wave
Which passes it by,
That the wave leaves the molecules and bubbles behind,
That the wave in essence is a kind of ghost
Freed from materiality by the dimension of time.
Made not of substance
But energy.

And likewise with living bodies
And rocks, and all metabolizing matter
From atoms to stars,
Which all flow through space-time
Uttering the abstract nature
Of the Universe.

The rishi does not forget to relate the abstraction of the causal world to the omniscience of the cosmic programmer. Murchie puts it this way:

Interrelation

What relation is a white man
To a black man?
A yellow man to a red or brown?
Closer maybe than you'd think,
For all family trees meet and merge
Within fifty generations, more or less—
In round numbers a thousand years—
Which makes all men cousins,
Brothers in spirit, if you will
Or, to be genetically precise,
Within the range of fiftieth cousin.

But relations don't stop here:
Man also has ancestors in common
With the chimpanzee and other apes,
Back twenty million years or so,
Plus all the mammals further back—
His ten millionth cousins
If you'll abide my candor.
Still farther, the billionth cousin span
Takes in the whole animal kingdom,
And many vegetables, and trees;
The trillionth must include rocks and worlds.
There is no line, you see, between these cousin kingdoms,
No real boundary between you and the universe
For all things are related,
Through identical elements in world and world,
Even out to the farthest reaches
Of space.

Guy Murchie speaks here of the fiftieth cousin and the ten millionth cousin and the trillionth cousin. A similar idea is hiding in the very name of the Mandukya Upanishad, as *manduka* means frog and *mandukya*

means pertaining to a frog. When a frog first appears on the surface of the water like a shining dewdrop, it has no head or tail. It is just spherical and translucent like a pearl. In a few days it develops a head and a tail. Then above the tail, two legs appear. When it has only a tail and two legs, it is called a tadpole. Then parallel to the legs two arms appear. In the course of time, the tail disappears. Then the frog lives in the water holding its nose above the water level. When it pleases, it jumps out of water onto dry land. Then it is no longer swimming as a fish but walking or rather hopping as a little animal. Both cosmic evolution and the evolution of an individual are allegorically implied in the changes a frog undergoes, changes which ultimately free it from the stagnant pool of *samsara*.

The distinction between a mature *manduka* and a baby *manduka* is the tail that is prominent in the tadpole. In the mature *manduka* the tail is prominent by its absence. In cosmic evolution, each nebula comes like a spiral tail unfurling its coils. When it becomes finalized as a brilliant star in the firmament, the first coils of the nebula are not to be seen at all. When a pearl-like frog egg begins its growth, it produces a long tail, and all the urges of the tadpole are maneuvered by its propelling tail. When it matures into an adult frog, it no longer has a tail. That is the resemblance between the nebula and the tadpole, the mature star and the frog.

Similarly, when a man first manifests in the womb of his mother, he is like a head with a long tail. He comes out of the stagnant pool of his amnion sac, the membrane around the fetus, when his tail is completely absorbed. According to Indian source books, the tail is the storage of all his urges. It remains in the adult as the *kundalini*, which is said to be like a snake with three and a half coils, which is also suggestive of *Aum*, the *pranava*. In man's babyhood, adolescence and youthful days, from his unconscious tail end, a number of desires and irrational urges surge up. When he becomes mature in his wisdom, it is as if instead of the tail stimulating him, the ambrosial flow from the thousand-petalled lotus (*sahasrara*) in the crown of the head continuously keeps him in the serene silence of self-knowledge. In that state he is also like a *manduka* with no tail.

On certain mornings when you go for a walk, you may see along the footpath a large amount of white froth with innumerable bubbles all shining in the sun with a pearly luster. Where does this froth come from? Certainly not from the grass. If you have the inquisitiveness of a child, you may sit and touch the froth, to look for its source. You will need a lot of patience. If you seek relentlessly, you will ultimately come to a small bug no bigger than a head louse. This amazing creature is called the spit bug, and its enormous quantity of froth comes from this smallest of all creatures. There is another spit bug even smaller than this. Compared to the spit bug this other being is infinitesimally smaller, because it is not even visible with the most powerful microscope. Indians call it *srista*, the projector of the universe. In a clumsier manner, Westerners call it "the Creator." Functionally, the *srista* is a super, super spit bug who is spitting out nebula after nebula and from which the galactic systems are continually emerging. When we look at the quantity of froth, we are baffled by the incomprehensible power of the spit bug. The quantity of liquid emerging from it cannot be adequately accounted for when we consider the source. The spitting out, the propagation and the creation of the world, also offer a similar paradox. What is its material cause? Is it the Substance out of which the universe evolves or is it the word with which God creates?

The Indian God did not create with the word. He only dreams. It is not that the dream is there because it is dreamt, but the dreamer derives his status from the dream that is dreamt. This strange methodology is topsy-turvy, because God, who should have been the efficient cause, becomes the material cause, although there is nothing material about him, and his intention becomes both the efficient and final cause. With a view to putting some order into this otherwise incomprehensible story of creation, Narayana Guru wrote:

Are you not creation, the Creator too,
As also the magical variety of created things?
Is it not you again, Oh God, who is the very stuff
Of which all creation is made?

Here we get the first and final cause and all the intermediate causes implied in creation, all in one package deal. Pointing to the same, the seer of the Mandukya Upanishad says, "*eva sarvesvara.*" Why

sarvesvara? Because he is the unmoved mover. Sitting where he is he goes everywhere and without moving he overtakes the fastest of all moving entities. Incidentally, Aristotle should be credited for defining God as the unmoved mover. It is probable that Aristotle got this idea from his juvenile experience of falling in love with some young Greek girl, who must have learned her cunning by combining the strategies of Artemis and Aphrodite. A lover has only one dream: to make his depressive-looking beloved bloom into a smile, however transient that smile is. There is a Hercules in every lover who is willing to do any amount of labor to please the beloved. God is the most impossible of all beloveds. He is not sitting there as one person. He can be experienced only as the spasmodic convulsion of urges and appetites which are the first cause of all movements. Love does not work alone. Love is born with a twin sister, Hate. Between them is played the ping-pong tournament of life.

In planning this intricate game, God has transformed himself into a genius of mathematics, of whom Pythagoras knew more than Aristotle. Even when creation was in its cradle, God was careful in structuring the atomic models of basic elements. He never made a mistake in matching the number of protons with the number of electrons; consequently his atoms never crossfire. Only God knows how many eons passed when he was all alone to appreciate the efficient harmony with which his creation was progressing, until he got aides like Galileo, who gave a third eye to modern scientists to look at the marvel of God's creation. Then came an even more valiant person, Sir Isaac Newton, who became lyrical in his appreciation of God's precision techniques. He admitted without reservation that God knows. The seer of the Upanishad knew it long before, so he said *esa sarvajna*, he is the all-knower.

In the opening mantra of the Isavasya Upanishad, an intriguing appellation is given to God: *avasya*. Indian's monist philosopher Shankara interprets this word as "being enveloped or covered." This meaning is challenged by the qualified monists and the dualists, who interpret it as "the indwelling." They are both right and wrong. Or, more generously, we can say they are both right and not wrong in the least. It is the weaver's intention to make a cloth, so he threads the warp around the woof. Both the warp and the woof are yarn. The monist sees only the primary oneness of the first cause. He thinks the cloth conceals the

reality of the thread by presenting the homogenous look of the final product. So he is right in saying that the reality is hidden behind the superimposed idea of the cloth. In commenting on the Isavasya Upanishad, Shankara's ingenious way is to apply a converse understanding of the theory of superimposition. Those who see the world do not see its hidden cause, God, because the reality of God is covered by the appearance of the world, so he expects the wise man to see the reality as much on the surface as it is beneath and reverse the order of superimposition so that God, instead of being hidden, can be seen as the all-pervading principle.

The qualified monists and dualists, who were pragmatic in their philosophical pursuit and realistic in their empirical approach, took into account the intention of the creator, whether a potter, a weaver or God, and put emphasis on the finality of things as the concretization of the intention of the creator. The pot not only appears to be a pot, but it is the potter's idea of the pot that is holding every particle in its place to give the inner cohesion of the finished pot. Similarly, it is the idea of the cloth that prompts the weaver to ply his thread in a certain way so that the final product can express in every bit of it the actualization of his intention. On a much larger scale, this is also true of God the Creator. Thus, God as Idea is the indwelling reality of this universe which issues out of him. Hence it is said, "He is the indweller, he is the womb where the world is secretly nurtured." In the Gita, Krishna goes one step further and describes himself as the father who has invested the sperm of every being into the respective wombs from which they are born. Thus it is said that Krishna is "the source (womb) of everything." In this third quarter, the circle comes to a full round. Birth and dissolution are only two faces of the same reality. So it is described as "both the beginning and end of all beings."

The ground from where one starts is the alpha. If you draw a vertical parameter, cutting through the point of alpha, its two poles can be referred to as two omegas, the denominator omega and the numerator omega. In Indian mysticism the denominator omega is *nirvikalpam* and the numerator omega is *savikalpam*. The absorption that one gets in the sublime height, whether of identification with objects (*savitarka*), identification with thoughts (*savicara*), identification with bliss (*sananda*), or identification with the self (*sasmita*), is said to be *sabija*,

still retaining the seed to manifest and proliferate. On the other hand, in the denominator omega, *nirvikalpa*, all *rasas* or moods are shorn of their *gunas*, nature modalities, so they become totally merged in the changeless. There they assume the status of *santam*, *sivam* and *advaitam*: peace, freedom and nonduality.

Between the numerator omega and the denominator omega, the alpha gains a new status: it becomes centralized instead of being the subterranean ground of all. This is clearly exposed in the seventh mantra:

As not inwardly conscious, not outwardly conscious,
as not filled with a knowing content, not conscious,
not unconscious, unseen, non-predicable, ungraspable,
bereft of quality, unthinkable, indeterminate,
as the substance of the certitude of a unitive Self
as the calmer of the unmanifested,
tranquil, numinous, non-dual, is the fourth limb
considered to be. It is the Self. That is to be recognized.

In the Bible we read, “Dust thou art and to dust thou returneth.” The same Bible also holds the view that the spark of life in man comes from God and ultimately will be called back to God. This may sound like a contradiction. However, all religions subscribe to such a paradoxical view. In the Chandogya Upanishad (6.2.1) we read, *sadeva somya idamagra asit*—“Existence alone, oh gentle one, was in the beginning.” Its contradiction comes in the Taittiriya Upanishad (2.7) which says, *asadeva idamagra asit tato vai sadajayata*—“In the beginning verily, this (world) was non-existent. Therefrom, verily, Being (*sat*) was produced.” The same contradiction also occurs within the Chandogya itself (3.19.1): *asadeva idamagra asit tat sadasit*—“In the beginning this world was merely non-being. It was existent.” Narayana Guru, in his *Darsana Mala* puts it as *asidagre’sadevedam bhuvanam svapnavat punah*, where the word after *asidagre* (in the beginning) can be taken as either *sadeva* (existent) or *asadeva* (non-existent).

The crux of the whole study is how to relate the chromatic aspect of *Aum* with the colorless silence that follows. This difficult task of relating

the immanent with the transcendent is very beautifully presented by Shankara in his *Daksina Murti Stotram*:

He who, like a juggler or a great yogi, spreads out this universe but does it out of His own will, the universe which exists indeterminate like the germ of a seed, and is later on diversified by the difference arising from the notion of space and time created by *maya*, to Him, incarnate as the blessed teacher, to Sri Dakshinamurti, is this salutation.

The fact of life has its relevancy only within the world of time and space, where a continuous program of transformation is always going on. The simplest example is our own life on earth. All physically sound people go into deep sleep and, after lying there for a while, absolutely unconscious, wake up and go from one program to another. Again in the night they are knocked out and go into the same unconscious sleep. This is very similar to coming out of the dust with an individual personality and again going back into the ignoble state of the dust. This is a repetitive process. Life becomes far more intriguing and worthwhile when the essence of it is related to the universal witness of the opening and closing of cosmic cycles. Here we make a departure from the intricate machinery of nature and go into the simplest of all realities, which is described only with a non-functional function, "is" (*sat*), or slightly more elaborately, "*Aum* which alone is" (*Aum tad eva sat*).

Is it consciousness which is throbbing within? The rishi says no. Is it an elaboration of consciousness which is seen as all this? Again the answer is no. Now putting this all together we naturally have to dismiss everything that is thought, felt and experienced within, and all that is registered by the senses and mind as existing outside. One may suspect that the reality under discussion could be a subtle condensation of possibilities that can some day elaborate itself into time and space with variegated forms and names. That way it could be a potential consciousness through and through. But we have a conditioned mind. Whenever we hear terms like "knowing," "becoming aware of," or "conscious of," we create a playground and put on one side of the field a mysterious entity experiencing a state of awareness and on the other

side the drama that is unfolded to it. Such kinds of conditional states have no relevancy here.

As we do not know any alternative other than inertial matter, which is not having any sensation or awareness, we may come to the conclusion that it is incapable of knowing. That surmise is dismissed. It is a matter of deconditioning and unlearning whatever one has gained in this manifested world, such as seeing, transacting, grasping, taking note of hallmarks, anticipating, and so on. What is referred to is not any of this. Rather one gets to it by transcending all this. By going beyond sound, touch, form, taste and smell, one comes to a peace with which one was never acquainted before. It is the numinous toward which everything moves. It is other than the wakeful, the dream, and the deep sleep. What is it? Well, it is the fourth. Call it *atma*, if you may. This is to be known. This impossible position comes in the Isavasya Upanishad, mantras four and five:

That does not move—the One swifter than the mind.
This is never attained by the senses.
It has gone before already.
That remains still while running past others.
In that, the vital breath assigns functions.
That moves; That does not move.
That is far; That is near.
That is inside of all these. That is outside of all these.

In *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra compares this to Robert Oppenheimer's description of the position of an electron: "If we ask, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say no; if we ask whether the electron's position changes with time, we must say no; if we ask whether the electron is at rest we must say no; if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say no."

The fourfold aspects of *pranava* provide us with a key to understand everything. After covertly presenting the methodology of the Mandukya Upanishad in the first seven mantras, the rishi gives its methodological scheme of correlation an overt expression in mantra eight:

This same Self treated as the word is *Aum*;

treated as *matra* (substance), the three limbs are *matras*, the letter A, the letter U, and the letter M; thus the meters are the limbs too.

Swami Prajnanananda, in his illustrious book *A Historical Study of Indian Music* (Anandadhara Prakashan, 1965, p. 396-400) gives a beautiful account of *pranava* in the context of music. Before that, he presents the word that blasts as *sphota*. The science of *sphota* is one of the earliest sciences of semantics developed in India. We give here a gist of what the Swami says. He says that the word emanated from the eternal sound, *sabda* or *sphota*. The causal sound of *sphota* has two aspects, *dhvani* (sound) and *varnam* (alphabet character). When sounds are pure and simple and do not convey any definite meaning, they are known as *dhvanyatmaka sabda*. When they are intelligible and capable of being expressed by letters, they are known as *varnatmaka sabda*. According to Upavarsa, *varna* alone is expressive of *sabda*. This view is endorsed by Shankara and Sabara Swamin. Patanjali also accepts this view in his *Mahabhasya*, that sounds are articulate (*vyaktavak*) when they are turned into letters. The audible or articulated sound is popularly known as *vaikhari*. The meaning of a word conveyed by *vaikhari* is ultimately expressed by *sphota* and not by sounds of momentary existence. The derivation of *sphota* is *sphutatrartho'smaditi sphotah*. When a word or sentence is conceived as an indivisible unit, that is called *sphota*. *Sphota* is both the vibrating sound or *dhvani* and the gestalt it presents, *bhavartha rupa*.

According to grammarians, *sphota* is the word essence, *brahman*. Nagesa, in his *Laghumanjusa*, insists that all words come from the cosmic sound *sabda brahman*. Swami Prajnanananda is of the view that *sphota* can be compared with the divine mystic word *Aum* or *pranava*, from which all forms of speech (*vak*) are supposed to emanate. Patanjali also identifies *sabdatattva* with *brahmatattva*. In the *Laghumanjusa*, Nagesa identifies *sphota* with *pranava*. According to Nagesa, the nucleus of *sphota* is *bindu*, which is composed of three subtle qualities. The *bindu* is an inexhaustible source of energy, *saktitattva*. The unconscious part of this energy is known as *bija*, while the combination of the conscious (*cit*) and unconscious (*acit*) parts is called *nada*. *Bindu* is both the nucleic and intelligent aspect of *sphota* and as such is said to be the

ultimate source of all forms of speech (*vak*). The last and fourth form of speech is spoken by men through the vocal organ.

Patanjali speaks of the four padas: noun, verb, preposition and particle. Bhartrihari, Nagesa, Gaudapada and Sayana have also divided speech into four parts: *para*, *pasyanti*, *madhyama* and *vaikhari*. These four kinds of speech correspond to four different stages through which nada passes till it becomes perfectly audible. Thus we may start with *bindu* or the final point as the nucleic germ or sound and proceed from the *muladhara* to the *visuddhi* in order to see how *sabdabrahman* or *paravak* transforms itself into popular speech. From *bindu*, it is said, arises *nada*, which is called *sabdabrahman*. It is featureless, intelligent in essence, and possesses the characteristics which are favorable to cosmic creation.

The entire space in which the cosmic bodies are generated and held can be looked upon as a cosmic electromagnetic field. The same principle can be seen applied in the structural morphology and cytology of individual living bodies. The cosmic electromagnetic field is said to be controlled by *tripura sundari*, whereas the interior electromagnetic field of the body-mind-spirit is said to be controlled by the *kundalini*, which resides in the *muladhara cakra*. According to the Tantric school, when *nada* or *paravak* is stirred in the *muladhara* by *kundalini*, there is a spouting of energy which goes to the *svadhisthana* and becomes *pasyanti*, a kind of natural *samadhi*. Just as the growth of the fetus or infant baby is held away from public gaze and is not disturbed by any sensation, the word forms in the heart *cakra* (*anahata*) where it is in the state of *madhyama*. These three aspects are the most subtle, the more subtle, and the less subtle aspects of *pranava*. From the subtle, the articulated word emerges in a gross form in the *visuddhi cakra* or throat plexus. Then alone it is *vaikhari*.

In the eighth mantra of the Mandukya Upanishad the methodology implied in the *pranava* is explicitly stated with the denotation that A, U, and M stand respectively for the perceptual, the conceptual, and the latent. Narayana Guru uses the same scheme to define the perceptual world of experience in the opening verse of his *Advaita Dipika*:

One thousand names, one thousand forms,

With whom, abiding therein,
There are one thousand interests.
Such is this world, uncritically viewed;
It is real only until the dream is past;
On waking, the awakened One is all that remains.

The scheme of the Mandukya Upanishad vaguely corresponds to the Cartesian coordinates of the X-axis intersecting the Y-axis. Of course, the suggestions in mantras eight and nine are far richer in methodological elaboration.

All wakeful experiences are presented to the senses as a form that is identified with an appropriate name. Although the name is an abstract symbol, as in algebra, geometric form becomes meaningful and consequently a concept is found in the mind, which has a one-to-one correspondence with the object in focus, particularly the interest it evokes. That is why Bergson held the view that physics and metaphysics belong together in one and the same discipline, where observation, logic and intuitive reasoning interpenetrate. Nataraja Guru compares it to a game of cricket in which the bowling and batting teams occupy opposite sides of the pitch or field and alternately move from one side to the other. The full implications, whether of Cartesian coordinates or the schematizations of Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant, are examined in Nataraja Guru's *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*. Summarizing the studies made by these philosophers, Nataraja Guru writes the following.

Cartesian structuralism and the newly discovered principles underlying the differential, integral and infinitesimal calculuses were all brought to bear on his [Leibniz'] monadological picture of the universe. Finally Kant gave this mathematical and picturesque tendency a correct epistemological status at the core of reality. In his notion of the *schematismos*, Kant was careful to point out the categories of abstract thought as they combined themselves with visible aspects of a representation of reality and formed together the double-sided schematismos, which he was able to elaborate in his writings only to a limited extent, as we can see from the following from Kant:

Schematism is an intermediary function between sensibility and understanding, which on the one side unifies the sensible in order to make it understandable through concepts, and on the other gives to the concept a sensible figuration (for example the scheme of causality is succession). The schema is thus homogeneous on the one side to the concept, and on the other to the sensible; it makes possible the inclusive assumption of the sensible under concepts. (Vol. I, 59-60)

The world of perception not only registers impressions in our memories but also evokes a deep aesthetic and intuitive creative interest in us. By so doing it alters the very dynamics of our creative self by opening in it various avenues of interest which can cause varying spectrums of moods, called *rasas*. As our sense organs and the inner organs called *antahkarana* both belong to our physical self, the nature modalities (*sattva, rajas, tamas*) can also invest it with the ongoing value visions of our empirical and subliminal life. Several clear concepts are sculpted in the memory fold through the power of *sattva*. Instead of remaining in a static assemblage, *rajas* causes them to continuously interact with each other, such as in the modulation of dreams or in the grand arenas of artistic creation and scientific invention. The stratifying, cementing and crystallizing power of *tamas* is also engaged with infinite profit so that the personality of the recipient of sensory perception can grow into an aesthete who is a grand connoisseur of perennial values.

As the *pranava* is described in the Chandogya Upanishad as the superlative aspect of *rasa*, we should make ourselves familiar with the science of enjoyment elucidated in the *rasa vicara* (contemplation on the essence of life) of various creative mystics, who have evolved outstanding theories in Indian aesthetics of different fields such as drama, dance, music, poetics and contemplative mysticism. One who is a connoisseur of high sensibility is called a *rasika*. *Rasa* or enjoyment enthralls the heart. Hence one who knows how to enjoy everything, from the simple pulsation of their heart to the elaboration of beauty, as an expression of their own soul, and can present it in all its embellishments, is both a creative genius and an aesthete. The triple tiers of creation are said to be: pulsation (*spandam*), its elaboration into the enjoyable counterpart of the self (*bhogyaikarasam*), and the very many items which can be representative of the summum bonum, like

the one sun shining with its innumerable gradients, like the spectrum of colors seen through a prism or in a rainbow (*camatkara*).

In this study, the *A-kara* and the *U-kara* are to be taken together. Hence we shall bracket mantras nine and ten of the Mandukya Upanishad before making a final discussion of *rasa*:

The A stands for the waking state
where the Universal Man is the first substance
because of obtaining or being the first.
He obtains all he wants and becomes first too,
who understands thus.

The U stands for the dreaming state,
which is the luminous one, the second substance,
because of superiority or from being intermediate.
He leads wisdom generations and becomes one of sameness too.
None ignorant of the Absolute could be born
in the family of him who understands this.

Rasa, The Soul of Enjoyment

When *rk* and *sama* become word and breath joined in the chanting of *Aum* out loud, *pranava* is said to become *rasatmam*, the most exhilarating joy of the chanter. According to Abhinava Gupta, *rasa* has an outer limb and an inner limb. For example, in the enjoyable sight of a panorama, or a properly displayed drama, or a musical concert, *rasa* resides in the external object that pleases one as well as in the corresponding inner cognizance of beauty. The affectivity of *rasa* is like a circulatory function which combines the external and internal. This bracketing of objective and subjective can be seen in the context of a mantra being chanted, the enjoyment of poetics, music and dramatics, and in both the creation and enjoyment of all visual arts, including sculpting and painting. In all these, *rasa* does not reside just in our minds or in the object. It is like an all-pervading presence of the highest form of beauty. In music it manifests as *nadabrahma* and in poetics as *rasabrahma*. In all enjoyments *rasa* is the soul of enjoyment.

From ancient days *rasa* was presented by Indian authors, including the rishis, and can be seen in the great epics of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. However, special reference is to be made to authors like Dandin (600-680 CE), Bramaha (680-725 CE), Vamana (circa 800 CE), Ananda Vardhana (850-890 CE), Abhinava Gupta (950-1020 CE), Lollabhatta (9th century), Sri Sankuka (end of 9th century), Bhatta Nauaka (10th century) and Jagannatha Pandita (circa 1700 CE). All of them are held in great esteem for their contributions to Sanskrit poetics, and all have given theories of *rasa*, sometimes elaborating what their predecessors said and sometimes correcting whatever flaw they found in the theorization of the great authors of antiquity.

The *rasa* theory came into vogue for discussion from the time of Bharata (variously dated from the 2nd century BCE to the 2nd century CE). His Natya Sastra is even today a basic text for Indian classical dance, *bharata natyam*. According to him, poetry (*kavya*) and drama (*rupaka*) are two forms of evoking the same affective feeling of beauty. In poetry the attendant emotional circumstances are roused by poetic imagination, and in drama they are represented in the actor who is presenting a theme convincingly. Bharata derives four secondary *rasas* from four primary moods. This formula was not accepted by later critics. Bhoja rejected Bharata's theory of eight *rasas* and substituted his own theory of forty-nine. In spite of the criticisms leveled against Bharata's theory, it has been thoroughly applied to poetics, and several writers were holding on to Bharata as the most authoritative expounder of *rasa*.

Dramatists, poets and critics have shown favor to one or the other of the emotive affectivities of aesthetics called *rasa*. However, their preferences should not make us feel that one *rasa* has superiority over another. For example Abhinava Gupta looks upon aesthetic experience at the transcendental level, whereas Bhoja in his *Sringara Prakasa* looks upon *rasa* as the dynamics of the entire personality. Bhoja picks ten *rasas* out of his forty-nine as important, which he describes in *Saraswati Kanthabharana*. To Abhinava Gupta, *rasas* are of a cathartic as well as an emotive character. Lollabhatta holds the view that there are innumerable types of *rasas*. However, we may make a passing reference to the *rasas* studied by Bhavabhuti, Bhanudatta, Bhoja, and Abhinava Gupta. In Bhavabhuti's *Uttara Ramacarita* this verse occurs: "There is

only one *rasa*. That is *karuna* (compassion) which because of the relation with different causes and situations appears in different forms (such as those of *sringara*, etc.) just as water appears as a whirlpool or bubble or wave, though all that is nothing but water." This verse has misled many people to think that compassion is the only *rasa* that Bhavabhuti recognizes. But in his work *Malatimadhava*, erotics (*sringara*) is predominant. In his *Mahaviracaritha* the main *rasa* is valor (*vira*).

Bhanudatta, in his *Rasa Tarangini* maintains the number of *rasas* to be nine. However, he is of the view that total detachment (*nirveda*), as in *samadhi*, being the predominant mood of peacefulness (*santa*), has a place only in poetics and not in dramatics. He also holds that there can be accompanying moods which can possess a person's state of mind consistently for a long time, such as tenderness (*aardrata*), yearning (*abhilasa*), faith (*sraddha*) or desire to acquire (*spritha*). One of the main contributions of Bhanudatta is the transformation of moods. For instance, a libidinal urge (*rati*) born of erotics (*sringara*) can produce an attitude of endearment (*vatsalya*). Similarly faith (*sraddha*), when it becomes dispassion, passes through an attitude of devotion (*bhakti*). Even when sarcasm is produced in a person because of the neglect shown by the beloved, there can be an undercurrent of tenderness, spoken of as *laulya*. There can also be an opposite kind of transformation. For example, sarcasm developed toward a lost love can assume an aggressiveness to possess at any cost, called *karapanya*.

In spite of Bhoja's advocacy for a number of *rasas*, he thinks of *sringara* as the only *rasa* that counts. In the *Saraswati Kanthabharana*, he recognizes a sense of wellbeing (*sreyas*), peaceful disposition (*santa*), sublimity (*udatta*) and egotism (*uddhata*). He adds these on to the eight *rasas* of Bharata. According to him *sringara* (loving attraction) becomes the most dynamic affectation of a person to make him adhere to the path of perfection. He even thinks of *ahamkara* as a stimulant that can release vital energies, just as the intellect is rousing the whole personality.

Among the earlier aestheticians, the most brilliant exposition of *rasa* was given by Abhinava Gupta. In the later critics, Jagannatha Pandita left no other serious opponent after him. We shall take a cursory glance at

Abhinava Gupta's approach to the problem of the types of *rasas*. He asserts that there are no more than nine *rasas*, out of which *santa* is said to have no permanent disposition (*sthayibhava*). He draws a clear distinction between love (*sneha*) and libidinal urge (*rati*) In *rati* he cites three features: 1) It is between two persons of opposite sex, each being the object of desire and so of enjoyment to the other; 2) The judgment of the onlooker about the couple is "she is his wife," and as a resultant feeling the spectator also yearns for similar enjoyment; and 3) It does not persist. It lasts only as long as the state of infatuation remains. This is only when love is staged in a drama. In poetry *rati* can be a permanent feature.

The derivation of *sringara* is as follows. It is derived from the root *sri*, to kill (*srihimsayam*). According to the Unadi Sutra, *sringara* is so-called because it kills, it eliminates the personality of one who has its experience. In that, *sringara* serves the same purpose as the *pranava*. When love is raised to the highest form of devotion and the *udgitha* is given as *sama* in praise of the Absolute, it kills the *vasanas* which remain buried in the causal consciousness, symbolized as M, and thus the personal identifications of the individuated person (*jiva*), along with all outward longings, are naturally killed. Nescience (*avidya*) is dispelled and all that is left is the indescribable, which is only called the fourth (*turiya*).

Abhinava Gupta's theories on poetics are based on the Pratyabhijna philosophy. In the *Pratyabhijna Darsana* the twenty-five categories of Samkhya, plus *maya* from Vedanta, are further elaborated with the following: *siva tattva*, *sakti tattva*, *sadasiva tattva*, *isvara tattva*, *avidya tattva*, *kala tattva*, *vidya tattva*, *raga tattva*, *akala tattva*, *niyati tattva*. So altogether there are thirty-six categories. These thirty-six principles cover the different aspects of *pranava*. In the *Pratyabhijna Darsana* the primeval and ultimate principle is Siva, who is identical with truth (*satyam*), peace (*sivam*), and beauty (*sundaram*).

When a great king is admired for his several qualities, he may have to look into a mirror to see what he is admired for. Another analogy is given by Narayana Guru in his *Atmopadesa Satakam*, verse 33:

Knowledge, to know its own nature here,

has become earth and the other elements;
spiraling up, back and turning round,
like a glowing twig it is ever turning.

Similarly Siva, to know his own boundless qualities, has Sakti as a mirror. At the time *Sadasiva* or the eternal Siva is about to create the universe, he sees in the Divine Mother the form of the universe, *Visvakara*. When he is maintaining the status of the created universe, he sees in her *Sakti svarupa*, the protective power which shines forth as all the constituent parts of the universe. Even at the time of the dissolution of the universe, he sees in the Mother the transient aspects of beauty which resolve in the formless and nameless. In verse 52 of *Atmopadesa Satakam*, Narayana Guru epitomizes these triple aspects, holding in his mind the nature of *pranava*, both as *dhvani* (sound) and *mauna* (silence):

The sky will glow as radiant sound—
On that day all visible configurations
will become extinct in that;
thereafter, the sound that completes
the three-petaled awareness
becomes silent and self-luminous.

Just as *A-kara*, *U-kara* and *M-kara* remain indistinct in *Aum*, *sadasiva tattva*, *isvara tattva* and *sudhavidya tattva* remain indistinct in *vidya tattva*. In *sivasakti tattva* we have the rousing power which surges upward (*unmisa sakti*) and the dissolving submergence (*nimisa sakti*). From this indistinct aspect, which is none other than *maya*, a polarization comes of “this” and “I”. “I” (*aham*) is radiant and “this” (*idam*) is inertial. Narayana Guru writes of this in verse 51 of *Atmopadesa Satakam*:

Having existed in knowledge, an I-ness,
in the beginning emerges;
coming as a counterpart to this is a this-ness;
like two vines spread over the tree of *maya*,
completely concealing it.

As in *Pancadasi* of Vedanta there is *pancakosaviveka* (discrimination of five sheaths), in *Pratyabhijna* there are five *pancakancukas*:

Kalaa: the omnipotence of Siva is veiled by *kalaa*, and thus he becomes of little power. In his place there comes *jiva* or *purusha*, the individuated person.

Vidya: the omniscience of Siva is veiled by *vidya*, and in his place there comes the individual of little knowledge.

Raga: Siva the eternally satisfied is veiled, and in his place comes the living person who is hankering after pleasures.

Kaala: Siva, who is transcendent of both time and space, becomes veiled and in his place comes a mortal person who goes through successive births and deaths.

Niyati: Siva the ever-free is veiled, and in his place comes the individuated person who is bound.

The subject for emotive appreciation is first presented subliminally in the *muladhara* chakra as a simple pulsation, which brings the vague notion of an object being presented to the subject, indicated by "this". That becomes transformed into an object of interest, and affectivity is felt in the heart (*anahata*). Then it transforms into an elaborated vision of admirable qualities or an orchestrated melody with many elaborations and embellishments (*camatkara*). This happens in the consciousness that is both felt and maneuvered in the *ajna* chakra, the center between the brows. When it first presents itself it is called *bodhatmakatva*. Then it becomes the transformation into a gestalt, *bbhavarupatmakatva*. It is like the self-luminous light of the inner organ (*buddhi*) stimulating the creative mind, by which one goes into imagination (*bhavana*) and comes to enjoyment (*bhogam*). These are also respectively called *abhidha*, *bhavakatva* and *bhojakatva*. In poetics they are known as the substance of consciousness (*arthabodha*), creative imagination (*kavyavastu*), and identification with the essence of poetic aesthetics (*kavya anubhuti*).

Patanjali and Pranava

Like the *Pratyabhijna Darsana*, there are many disciplines in India which can all be fitted into the scheme of *pranava*, *Aum*. We will close this paper with a look at how the psychodynamics of *Aum* can give a

person the mystical experience of *samadhi*, which is described in sutras twenty-one through thirty-three of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. The following sutras illustrate that:

21) *Samadhi* is proximate for those whose consciousness of supremacy is keen.

22) Also, a further differentiation is made of mild, middling and intense (faith).

What is important in this context is to have as clear an idea as possible of the psychobiological nature of desire. In the West, the innate concepts of drive, propensity, emotion and desire are explained in terms of the will to live and the *élan vital*. In the Indian context the operation of a desire is considered to have two opposing monitoring forces. One comes from *prakriti*, the nature modalities in which *rajas* is considered a volatile force that can either lend its support to *sattva* or dominate as a passionate goal-oriented energy expenditure. All the major instincts of a biologic organism, such as a need for nourishment, propagation of the species, and self-preservation, are taken care of by the nature-oriented propensity, *prakriti virya*. The other basis of desire is to reassume the pure state of the Self or *purusha*, which is opposed to the demands made by nature's longings. In most people these opposing energy channelings cancel each other out and very little energy is left to conduct the daily chores of life.

Three major driving forces that can easily be exaggerated into pathological energy expenditures are the erotic passion to possess and dominate one's love object, the insatiable greed to possess the means to dominate others, and the hankering goaded by anxiety regarding one's future security paired with the hoarding of exchange value tokens such as money. To transcend the physically impressive needs of the body and mind, one should have a clear envisioning of the spiritual worthwhileness of seeking union with the Absolute and of realizing the supreme nature of one's Self. If the first type of demand is like driving down a hill, the second type—one's spiritual pursuit—is of an ascending order. A lot of stamina has to be put into the disciplining of one's body and mind even to bring it to a stabilized position from which to commence one's ultimate search.

In warming oneself to the task, Vyasa thinks that there are nine kinds of gradation involved in evoking energy from its hidden sources and spending it ingeniously for the actualization of the highest values one conceives of. The first division Vyasa makes is of those with mild energy, medium energy and intense energy. The second series relates to the orientation which each group has in terms of persisting consciousness or spiritual awareness. Some have only a faint idea of their spiritual awareness and some have a middling sense of the call of the spirit. There are others who are supremely conscious of the spiritual foundation on which phenomenality rests. Then there are those who are capable of drawing energy to support spiritual consciousness. In that also, variations can come according to one's ability to tap the dormant energies which can be experienced physically, mentally and psychically.

Love and hatred are catalysts which evoke the flow of energy. Hatred can cause a sudden surge of energy which adversely affects the entire physical system of a person. This is short lived, like the bursting flames of ignited gasoline. Love, on the other hand, is a steady flow, which produces more and more energy in the long run. The purer the love, the greater is the chance of furthering the continuous flow of energy. Hatred has within it an intermittent operation of ambivalence in which obsession and inhibition soon wear out and both receiving and giving become obsessive. In a spiritual pursuit the idea is to give up totally, and the receiving acts like a fountain where what is given in the form of love is received back in the form of grace.

Even when a person is physically weak and confronted by adverse situations, the love to give increases. This is evident in the case of Indian saints like Tukaram and Mirabai, and in Christian mystics like St. John of the Cross. Their physical debilities hardly stopped them from channelizing large founts of energy to accomplish their spiritual goals. The only energizing force that is now known to modern physiology is the release of certain chemical substances such as adrenalin. But how exactly it becomes an energizing force with corollaries of glycogen and others has not been fully investigated.

Patanjali immediately suggests a technique that is also a realization:

23) Or by experiencing the omnipresence of *Isvara*.

Innumerable are the people who are seriously pondering over the meaning and significance of this world in which they find themselves. For each of them, innumerable are the objects to be discerned. Thus there is a plurality on the subjective side and a plurality on the objective side. However, at the time of observation, study, evaluation and judgment, one thinks only of one's inner light. Several questions can be put, but all questions are reduced to the singular faculty of interrogation. Several judgments may be made, but all judgments are given the status of verified truth by the certitude of the Self. There is no end to the items of memory that are recalled, but they are all looked upon as relevant recall. Whatever the meaning of an experience, it is basically affective, and affection is the feeling-content of the experience in terms of pain or pleasure. Thus, on the subjective side, systematic reduction is made in all contexts to unify all plurality in the imperiential state of a unitive knower.

A corresponding methodology of reduction is accepted on the objective side. All experiences can be considered as items of a gross world of transactional verity, a subjective world of conceptual composition, and the residual existence of a consciousness that turns in upon itself. Finally, all these are accepted as the phenomenal variegations arising out of the immanence of a transcendent Supreme Being. The methodology of reduction is a universally accepted formula for the systematization of philosophy.

Samkhya is basically dual in its epistemology. It accepts a plurality of souls (*purushas*) and a homogenous principle of nature as their counterpart. Thus there already exists a neatly worked out reduction on the side of *prakriti*. There is not anything unbecoming in attempting a similar unification of *purushas* by marking out one *purusha* which is distinct from all individual souls and yet has a place in the animating principle of all individuated beings. The *sadhana* concerning *prakriti* is that of handling the operations of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* with discernment. This can be well balanced with advantage by holding *Isvara*, or the Spirit par excellence, as a model for directing the subjective consciousness to relate in an appropriate manner with the

changing experiences that alternate between the wakeful, the dream and deep sleep.

The ingenious device of bringing in *Isvara* as the twenty-fifth category in Yoga epistemology marks its distinction from the Samkhyan epistemology, which has only twenty-four categories. The twenty-fifth category given here, instead of diversifying the epistemological cohesion of the system, unifies it in a remarkable manner. Although *Isvara* is often glibly translated into English as God, it is not God, at least not in the Islamic or Christian sense of that term. In the following aphorism we get a clear definition of *Isvara*:

24) *Isvara* is a distinct *purusha* untouched by the vehicles of affliction, action and fruition.

The dual factors into which the reality of this world is divided are the procreative energy, called *prakriti*, and the monitoring consciousness that is involved in the transformation of that energy, such as in the projection, existence and dissolution of each individual person. In that process, three factors are involved. First is the vehicle of affliction. The world that is manifesting in and around us is always in a state of flux. Change is a categorical imperative for a being to come into existence and work out its course. When one billiard ball hits another, both the balls deflect and move in accordance with the momentum that is created with the randomness of the hit. The direction a ball is about to move in is unknown to the balls, and the player about to move is also unknown to the balls. The player has in mind the approximation of a guess, which is the main factor in the continuous maneuvering of the game. Similarly, there is an overall uncertainty presiding in the moment-to-moment envisioning of the life process in an individual who comes into existence. This irremediable ignorance with which a person commences their life course is the affliction that is spoken of here.

Avidya or ignorance is the main characteristic of affliction. A randomness that assumes a course of purposiveness and a purposeful maneuvering that is mounted on a horse of uncertainty work hand in hand. With innumerable such occurrences all around, the course of action is determined within the field of uncertainty. That is called *karma*. Karma begins, as it were, as a nameless drive. Then, through the

sequences of the channeling of energy in the relations that are established and in the values that are reckoned, karma can ultimately be seen as moving from an incentive to act to a goal that is actualized. This process is called the fruitioning of action (*karma vipaka*).

Such is the routine course of every individuated person or consciousness that presides in a unit of procreative energy functioning as a living being. The binary principles of procreative energy and presiding consciousness (*prakriti* and *purusha*) are both transcended by a third factor named in the previous aphorism as *Ishvara*. *Ishvara* is free of affliction, karma, and *karma vipaka*. Here, from the pluralistic concept of several *purushas* subjected to the affliction of ignorance and engaging in multifarious activities, we come to a noumenon which is not affected by any phenomenon. According to Patanjali:

25) In *Ishvara* the seed of the omniscient is not exceeded.

The *Ishvara* of the Yoga system is identified with *pranava*. To understand the marks of that identification, one should know the structural relationship of the fourfold aspects of *pranava*: the wakeful, dream, deep sleep, and the fourth. These can also be respectively termed as responsive, imaginative, latent, and dissolving or absorbing.

The responsive, designated by the A in *Aum*, is limited to the sphere of the perceptual. In the world of interactions between individuals, and between individuals and things, the most important aspect is the relation between seemingly independent factors. In the gross world, everything has its own special mark of identification and there are common characteristics by which individual factors can be classified. The knowledge of the laws that regulate the harmonious coexistence of things, both in their static state and dynamic interaction, is determined to be unvarying. That is why humanity has succeeded in evolving sciences relating to different fields, such as chemistry, botany, biology, psychology and sociology.

Both the laws and the knowledge of the laws have frontiers beyond which they cannot be pushed. At best, every item of knowledge concerning relative factors will necessarily be relativistic as well. In plane geometry the sum of the three angles of any triangle will be one

hundred and eighty degrees. Similarly, in simple arithmetic two and two will always add up to four. Even if wisdom becomes crystal clear, the knowledge of the relativistic sphere, that is, of wakeful consciousness, will always conform to certain norms that can never be improved upon. This limitation is referred to here with the word *niratisaya* (is not exceeded). An ordinary person may have only a limited notion in this field. So, naturally, effort can be made to expand that knowledge until it reaches the natural frontier of relativistic comprehension. When the final limit is touched, it is described as omniscience so far as the transactional field is concerned.

As we move on to the world of projective imagination, limitation does not arise out of the qualities of one object confronting the qualities of another. Rather, it depends on the creative energy of structuring conceptual elements of gestaltation, so that even when one goes into extreme elaboration, the structural interrelationship between ideas is not violated logically, aesthetically or ethically. In this particular function of consciousness there is also a natural limitation beyond which imagination cannot go. Nobody can imagine that the shortest distance between two points on a plane could be a curved line. The mind refuses to accept that possibility. Likewise, one cannot conceive that A and not-A can exist at the same time, in the same place, in the same sense.

Within the field of imagination, which is technically called *svapna*, there is another kind of determining factor that is not limited to the physical requirements of the familiar world of gross objects. As in Picasso's creative art, there can be the transposition of parts. Still, that can be valid. Within the second field of *pranava*, indicated by the letter U in *Aum*, those who arrive at the frontiers of the world of imagination are recognized as master poets, master artists, master playwrights, and the like. In such cases, omniscience is marked by the unfolding of one's creative power so that it can reveal its ultimate potential.

The third aspect, *susupti*, symbolized by the M of *Aum*, is confined to the world of cause and effect. What is not potentially present in the cause cannot manifest in the effect. Conversely, anything manifested as an effect is indicative of a latent cause, a hidden seed. Here the limitation arises from a pulsation within manifestation, expanding from a cause to

an enlarged field of effect, and, in the same manner, centripetally turning inward to epitomize the entire effect into a causal factor. This process, which is going on interminably, is happening in the unknown and in the unconscious. Therefore the entire perspective of it is not available either to perceptual observation or to conceptual comprehension. Here also there is a limitation, which has for its frame of reference the time-space continuum and the intrinsic laws that govern the origin, expansion, reduction and dissolution of mass. Omniscience in this case is when the process in the unconscious has been maximally interpreted to the conscious mind. When one cannot go farther into the immensity of the unconscious, the omniscience of causal consciousness reaches its insurmountable frontier.

Ultimately, everything that has gone into the perceptual, conceptual and causal is to be seen as the horizontalizing phenomenality that is happening within a determined possibility within the noumenon. The omniscience in this respect becomes modified with the cancelling out of the knower and the known.

When *Aum* is looked upon as *Isvara* or the Supreme Teacher, the omniscience of that special person is to be understood in the sense in which we have understood knowledge finding its norm within the four limbs of *pranava*. This brings us to:

26) He is the teacher of the ancients, too, not being limited by time.

One of the most popular invocations of the guru principle with which most Indian people begin their study or work is the praise given to the guru as creator (Brahma) sustainer (Vishnu) and dissolver (Mahesvara), with a final assertion that the guru in reality is none other than the Absolute:

*Aum, gurur brahma, gurur vishnuh
gurudevo mahesvarah
gurur saksat param brahma
tasmai sri gurave namah
Aum santih santih santih*

The first three references—Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara—are indicative of the time segments of beginning, middle and end. These three are transcended by pure duration or absolute time, which is beginningless and endless. The phenomenality of creation is a cyclic process, very much like the spurting of water in a fountain, which remains visible in the process of rising and falling, and then becomes one with the water of the reservoir, only to be thrown up again in the next moment. Life on earth is also cyclic. The process of obtaining a body, the use of it for carrying out whatever action is appropriate, and finally disintegrating, to be transformed again into the instrument of another living being, is just like the water circulating through a fountain or a smith casting the same metal again and again into new forms.

In such processes, the water or metal and so on are not enriched by the specific transformation they have undergone. But life is not like that. Each embodiment enriches it with the registry of various experiences. The cumulative effect of undergoing such experiences becomes embedded in the genetic stream, the selective mold through which evolution is sustaining the biologic principle of earth, which thus has in it a record of ceaseless learning. At each phase, wisdom is obtained from a teacher provided by the benevolence of time to make a crucial step. Such are the teachers whom we revere as Buddha or Jesus, Vasistha or Visvamitra, Shankara or Ramanuja.

Apart from such teachers, who appear at specific periods in the history of humanity, there also exists in and through all such teachers and our own personal understanding, the Eternal Teacher who has been guiding the destiny of all through the millennia of the evolution of life on earth. That Supreme Teacher is venerated here as the ever-burning light of wisdom which is enshrined in the heart of all.

27) The designator *Ishvara* is *pranava*.

A common mistake we make in the study of Yoga is that we bring in Vedantic concepts and interpose them into Yoga. In Vedanta there is only one *Ishvara*, which is the same as the universal Self. This is not the teaching of Yoga. In Yoga, *Ishvara* is also a *purusha*, but not the *Purusha*. The only difference is that the *purushas* in you and me are subject to the five *klesas*, to the impact of *karma*, and the maturation of the causal

potency of *karma* (*karma vipaka*). The five *klesas* are ignorance (*avidya*), attachment (*raga*), aversion (*dvesa*), egoism (*asmita*) and excessive love of life (*abhinivesa*). We humans are subjected to these, but *Isvara* as a *purusha* is not affected by them.

In order to fully grasp the idea, we have to think of a model *purusha*, such as the monad of monads of Leibniz. Leibniz speaks of the monad of an unpolished stone, the monad of a polished stone, the monad of a dewdrop, the monad of a child's mind, the monad of an adult's mind, the monad of an educated person's mind, and the monad of monads. All these monads are reflected in each other. Light reflects from each in varying degrees. There is less darkness in the polished stone than in the unpolished stone, in a dewdrop than a stone, and so on. The monad of monads reflects everything without darkness. Similarly, the *purusha* which is *Isvara* is not afflicted—it is perfect. Yoga suggests that we should make our minds conform to this *Isvara*. This is a philosophy not only of duality but of plurality. Empirical science can go with this very well because Yoga epistemology has been adopted from Samkhyan epistemology, which admits of a duality and a plurality at once. In the functional evolutionary outlook presented by Kapila, there is an interrelation which is holistic.

Patanjali describes *Isvara* as a teacher about whom it is said that from time immemorial he was the teacher of all—perfect, omniscient and the revealer of everything. How does *Isvara* teach? With sound. Suppose you hear the sound “flower”. You may remember how a particular kind of flower looks, then another and another. Many perceptual forms are elaborated in response to one conceptual sound. Thus, from the beginning of the world many possibilities arise by offering a name that stands for a whole group of things. *Flower* is only one name. The Oxford, Webster's, or Random House dictionaries have thousands of such names, and they represent only one language. There are dictionaries for French, German, Dutch, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, and the numerous languages of India and Africa. Think of this one teacher who has been giving all these class names, of which each stands for thousands of objects, different in shape, color and qualities. There are not only sounds of names, there are also sounds of verbs. You can say the train is running, the child is running, or time is running. A single concept can have very wide variations. It is with such elaboration given

to the revelation of sound that we should understand *Isvara* as the revealer of both the experiential and imperiential factors from which the perceiver and the perceived manifest.

If you take geometrical figures such as three points, they lend the possibility for lines. Lines make angles possible, angles make triangles possible, and triangles put together can become squares and parallelograms. In fact, the entire world is a geometrical elaboration. *Isvara* is omniscient in the sense that it is the enunciator of the laws of all geometrical figures. Even figures as variant as squares, circles and triangles can stem from the same law. The radii that go from the center of a circle can touch every point on the circumference. That is also one of the laws implied in the radiation of light and the propagation of sound. There is no end to the list of the omniscience of *Isvara*. Even when termites are making a nest, the law that decides how the termites should first build columns and then connect them in a certain way to make an arch is an archetype of architecture. *Isvara* is not only a revealer to humans: it is a revealer to termites as well. When a larva in water matures and comes to the surface and unfolds its wings, *Isvara* reveals to the larva that it can fly. In this way even a piecemeal meditation on the omniscience of *Isvara* can fill us with wonder. This concept of Yoga, which is added on to the Samkhyan epistemology as the twenty-fifth factor, when elaborated into the four modulations of sound in *Aum*, not only inspires our appreciation for the mysterious and inexhaustible attributes of *Isvara* but also initiates us into the yogic discipline of contemplation:

28) By its (*pranava's*) constant repetition
and dwelling upon its meaning in the mind.

The word *mantra* has two meanings. In scriptures like the Rk Veda, *mantra* means praise. A more technical meaning given in the Yoga Sutras is “that which saves a person by meditating on it.” Most people think a mantra is some sort of magic syllable, which can be taken from a book and repeatedly articulated. That is like learning to drive a car or play an instrument like the vina or swim in the ocean by reading instructions in a book. There has to be an experienced person giving their attention as an instructor to teach anything that is to be

accomplished with practice. In the case of instruction in *mantra yoga*, the teacher should be a fully experienced person, a *mantra drasta*.

Suppose somebody hears that by discovering *gavayam* in the forest, one can be benefited. A person who goes into the forest not knowing what a *gavayam* is will not know what to look for. Is *gavayam* a stone, a tree, an herb, an animal, a bird or an insect? If one goes without knowing how to identify what they are looking for, they will be at a loss. It is the same if one does *mantra japa* not knowing what to perform or what to expect. Only a person who has contemplated on a mantra and received the illumination of energy ensuing from it can be a *mantra drasta*.

The mantra we articulate is *vaikhari*. If we take mantras like *Aum*, *Hrim*, *Srim*, we can see that they are structured with specific notes or sounds. Each mode of sound is a vibration. The vibration has a certain quality according to its amplitude, frequency and timbre. These are all measurable as aspects of physical vibration. A sound heard by the ear or articulated by the tongue, or a vague image seen by the eye, can burst into meaning in consciousness (*sphota*). When it bursts into meaning a mental picture is created. If a person sees a fruit tree such as a mango or apple tree on the wayside or in another's garden, the impression it causes in the mind is only of a tree. But when one has a tree in one's own garden which one has planted, tended, manured and watered, the future benefit of the tree is considered a significant factor. A person looks upon their own tree as a promise of the future and will be quite concerned about any harm that might befall it. In the same way, a mantra is planted one's mind by the guru or instructor. Like a gardener, the instructor is always watching how the energy of the mantra is released over time and how that energy is reciprocated by the aspirant.

A mantra is structured with letters, which in Sanskrit are called *akshara*, meaning imperishable. The person who articulates may perish but what is articulated remains as an imperishable word for all posterity. In the previous mantra we have seen that the *pranava*, *Aum*, is the designator of *Isvara*. When a rishi like Vyasa gives the mantra *Aum Krishnayanamah* to the world, he is looked upon as the *mantra drasta*, the expounder of that mantra. As the mantra is a designator of Krishna, Krishna should be treated as the deity or spiritual dynamics behind it. One gets a *bhavana* or deeper meaning of the mantra by relating oneself

to the *mantra drasta* and pursuing the significance of the mantra with the intention of gaining the insight of the rishi, who is filled with love and devotion to the deity Krishna.

In the same manner, when one meditates on *Aum* in the mantra given to us by Patanjali, he is the rishi or the *mantra drasta* and *Isvara* is the spiritual dynamics of the mantra. As we sit to repeat *Aum* in our minds, it is not to be done mechanically but by visualizing Patanjali as passing on to us his revelation. Planting a mantra in one's consciousness is like preparing the ground (*mula*) and sowing in it a seed (*bija*), which will sprout in the course of time (*kilaka*). Ultimately the seed flowers forth into the wisdom ensuing from the mantra, culminating in the utmost satisfaction which one seeks (*phala*).

The initiation into a mantra is given ritualistically. When a person plants a sapling they first build a fence around it so that a straying animal may not bite off its leaves or careless people may not tread on it. Similarly, a person who is entering into the discipline of *mantra japa* chooses a convenient place where they will not be distracted by others. When a tree has grown into its mature size, it does not need any fence. Similarly, when a person is established in the full significance of the mantra with which they are disciplined, all rituals drop away.

Japa is continuous repetition of the mantra, which in the present case is *Aum*. *Japa* is intended to include *tapas*, *svadhyaya*, *bhavana* and *abhyasa*. *Tapas* is the burning away of the dross of the mind. *Svadhyaya* is becoming intimate with the true nature of oneself. *Bhavana* is mentally suggesting the general direction in which the revelation of the Absolute can be expected. *Abhyasa* is establishing coordination between the conscious mind and the unconscious, from where an archetypal revelation is believed to be arising.

When one repeatedly says the same word, it may produce a feeling of monotony, which can induce a hypnotic slumber. When the mind turns into a tangent, if it is again and again brought back with deliberation to the attentiveness with which the *mantra japa* was started, this will help to dispel lethargy and inattentiveness. This is how the burning of the dross of the mind happens. The nature of the Self and the nature of the Absolute are not different. When one tries to get into intimate relation

with the nature of the Absolute, that automatically gives insight into one's own nature. Thus *svadhyaya* (self study) manifests.

Bhavana is taking aid from imagination. When the teacher reveals the nature of the Self, he is likely to use the dialectical approach of defining its characteristics from both a positive (*svarupalaksana*) and negative (*tatastalaksana*) angle. However, because of one's social and cultural exposure, there is always the danger of the mind being led astray to anthropomorphic versions of the Absolute. One may think of the Absolute as a blue-bodied person with curly hair decorated with a peacock feather or as the grotesque figure of a man hanging on a cross. This kind of imagination only brings distraction. Even so, there has to be some direction in the mind to symbolically suggest what one is looking for. Thus *bhavana* is both helpful and not helpful. Obsessive imagination can only bring a caricature-like notion of the Absolute to the mind. One's imagination needs to be supported by the substantiality of a perennial truth. Having the right *bhavana* or imagination is essential in the experiencing of *pranava*.

Repetition is recommended so that conceptual correction can be effected by going deeper and deeper into one's experiencing of truth. Establishing a coordination between the cogitating mind and the so-called mindless state of *samadhi* is to be achieved by repeating the experience. This leads to real progress:

29) From it (the repetition of the *pranava* mantra) the disappearance of obstacles and the turning inward of consciousness (happen).

Consciousness is like light that oscillates. The two-way movement of light can be described as centripetal convergence and centrifugal divergence. In ordinary people who are exposed to the fivefold stimuli coming from objects of interest of all five senses, two locations are again and again established: one in the object and a corresponding one in the subject. The external stimulus haunts the individuated consciousness, and sensory knowledge oscillates between the object of interest and the I-consciousness of the agent of perception. Even though the inward-moving consciousness (*pratyak cetana*) can ultimately reach the core of one's being and find its identity with the Self, this is thwarted by the

oscillating consciousness which, after establishing an inner picture which corresponds to what is experienced outside, returns to the external object to establish its relationship with the source of the new interest. The *paranga cetana*, which is luring consciousness to the object outside, is called *viksepa*. *Ksepanam* is depositing; *viksepa* is depositing the interest of the individual in an external object. But when *pranava* is meditated upon, the unity of the threefold consciousness becomes merged in the fourth and, as a result, *paranga cetana* is inhibited by the wholesomeness of unmodulating consciousness. Thus only *pratyak cetana* is allowed, which in its ultimate convergence goes to the very core (*pratyak*) of the Self. By repeatedly thwarting the outward-flowing consciousness, all hindrances to imperiential empathy with the core aspect of the Self become weaker. Because of the salutary effect of continuously repeating *pranava*, the outward-going tendency of consciousness is arrested. This enables the twofold benefit of dissipating all obstacles in the path of Yoga and making one spirit-oriented. Patanjali continues:

30) Physical pain or distress, mental depression, doubt, exaggeration, laziness, hankering after objects, insanity, having no firm ground for spiritual orientation, instability in faith—these cause the distraction of the mind and they are the obstacles.

Sutra 30 is a listing of nine causes of major disturbances which can be seen manifesting in most people. The first one is *vyadhi*. The word *vyadhi* comes from *vedha*, which means pain or distress. The psychosomatic system is structured so carefully that it functions harmoniously when all the interlaced parts are in good form and each is contributing its function correctly. A machine which functions twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, all year round, through all one's life, will necessarily have wear and tear. Even a single nut missing from a mammoth machine can cause a disaster in its whole functioning. The mind and body are like two bulls dragging a cart or the two wings with which a bird flies. The dysfunction of one makes the other also useless. Similarly, in the binary body-mind relationship, when the body fails it is called *vyadhi*, literally the distress-giving entity.

To arrive at a certain goal, even if you have the best mode of transportation, if you have no mind to get up and drive your vehicle, you

will be sitting lost in boredom. As years go by, we see more and more people who are exposed to mental depression. They know they have to get up and act, but they cannot even make up their minds to hold a pen. This is the dysfunction that comes from the mental side, called *styana*, mental depression.

The body and mind can both get in each other's way. The mind is willing to go but the body sits there like a heavy load, or the body is ready to move yet the mind is apprehensive about allowing the body to function. The result is like the driver of a car who puts his feet firmly on the accelerator and the brake at the same time—a lot of commotion goes on inside but nothing happens. Such a person is aware of the dreadful waste of his time, and that itself causes a drain of energy. Consequently, his energy cannot be channelized in any direction. One of the greatest tragedies in human life is that many hours are wasted each day because of this kind of inability to take a decision. This is called *samsaya*, doubt.

When a machine is operating only at a throbbing level and not put into gear, it becomes overheated. It is the same with our body-mind machine. Sitting in one room and endlessly ruminating causes grievous distress to one's nervous system, and this causes many people to exaggerate. They become nervous, irritable, and unable to cope with anyone or anything. Such a delirious state is named *pramada*, exaggeration.

An exaggerating mind spends too much energy in a short time and the body and mind feel exhausted. Nature's way to prevent further deterioration is to take away incentives to act, making the body and mind lazy. This is *alasya*.

The will to live is such that fresh quanta of energy are released which give incentives to the mind to look into new avenues of interest. Consequently, the previous decorum of life is given up and the person may function in a weird manner. Thus one may even become antisocial, a nuisance to himself and others. This is the state of *avirati*, the hankering after objects in excessive sensuality.

When the desire to enjoy becomes uncontrolled, one is only aware of the enjoyment of the desired object and unaware of the appropriateness

of the situation. Infatuated with desire, one tends to speak aggressive and disrespectful words and may even behave like a brute. Hysterical exultations and manic-depressive behavior may manifest in such a person. This is *bhranti*.

A person who is devoid of will power and concentration will always be searching for a new path, and fails to pursue any discipline to the extent of it yielding any result. Sri Ramakrishna compares such a person to one who digs a hole a couple of feet deep for a well and then abandons it because it has not yielded water, then digs another hole two feet deep and abandons it, and so on. Such a person is always at the beginning of a path and never accomplishes anything. He has no clear idea of what exactly he is looking for. The state of such a visionless person is called *darsana alabdha bhumikatva*.

Like the unimaginative person who cannot direct himself consistently to an achievable goal, there is the restless, unsteady person who is always full of plans but who does not know how to execute any of his programs. He is endlessly waiting, like an angler who is sitting on the bank of a river that has no fish in it, with neither a hook nor any bait at the end of his line. This is the state of *anavasthitatva*, instability.

Each of these nine obstacles causes a lack of clarity in a person's cogitating intelligence. One's memory, instead of being structured, is amorphous. This causes distraction of the mind and obstructs the path of Yoga:

31) Pain, despair, shakiness, and hard breathing are the companions of these distractions.

Kham is space. If we live in a space full of sunlight, flowers, and beautiful things which make us happy (*su*), then we say we are living in a good space (*sukham*). But if our living space is cluttered with darkness, obstruction, and misery (*duh*), then it is a negative space (*duhkham*). The experience of time comes from motion happening to our living space. Each motion-producing state is called *kaala*. In the living space of most people, the fluctuations of time bring happiness and unhappiness alternately. Only when these alternations cease can one say they have transcended time and space.

When *sukham* is not there and one's living space is darkened, the mind refuses to function and a state of depression comes (*daurmanasya*). The result is *angamejayatva*, which means you feel acute physical weakness such as shivering and unsteadiness. You no longer feel you can function efficiently. Your inner agitation and mental anxiety cause your breathing to become hard. When a person is afflicted with pain, all the symptoms enumerated here come together.

Patanjali is not cataloguing the eternal pains of life. He is calling our attention to a common occurrence in which a person is assailed with negative energy. When such negativity comes and torments the mind, reflected pain comes in the body as well and the body shows signs of malfunction. Such negativity needs immediate therapeutic correction.

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* is usually looked upon as an eightfold ascending path. The first of four complementary pairs of discipline is restraining oneself from negativity (*yama*) and carrying out positive programs of injunctions (*niyama*). When one's mind is properly restrained and kept on positive programs, it gains a firm ground wherein one can restfully establish oneself for the advancement of one's unitive vision. Remaining on such firm ground is called *asana*. When a steady state comes to mind, *prana* becomes regulated, the ascending and descending movement of the breath becomes harmonious, and energy becomes equally distributed. This is *pranayama*.

When there are no distractions, the mind can clearly see the beneficial norms of life. A normative notion comes in the form of a harmonized hierarchy of values. When all values of interest are structured around the peak or crowning value, life has a central principle to regulate thoughts, words and actions. This inner principle is *dharana*. *Dhar* means to support. When you have *dharana*, you are able to stand firmly rooted in your convictions in certain principles, and that provides a stable basis for your programs of life. *Dharana* is the supporting principle which keeps a person always clear-headed.

When the stream of consciousness flows evenly, as desired and channeled by the individual, that harmonious flow is *dhyana*. Just as all rivers flow to the ocean, when all thoughts and inner movements merge

in a state of absorption, *samadhi* comes. *Samadhi* means union. In other words, one gains a unitive vision of life in one's understanding, one's dedicated program of action, and in the progressive cultivation of one's happiness, which is identical with the happiness of the world. When these possibilities are thwarted by the interference of painful manifestations in one's living space, they are to be corrected immediately.

32) For removing these obstacles there should be repetitive practice of one truth (or principle).

The meaning is clear.

33) The mind is clarified by cultivating friendliness toward happiness, compassion toward misery, gladness toward virtue, and equanimity toward vice.

In the previous sutra we were told that by continuously practicing any one discipline we can get over the *klesas*, the obstacles in the path of Yoga. Here Patanjali is enumerating four situations of life. They are when you see that your environment is conducive to happiness, when there are painful occasions in your environment, when you are witnessing a virtuous action, and when you are exposed to vice.

As one's environment changes, it is better to resort to that particular discipline which is most appropriate for each situation. Let us take, for example, the state of happiness, which comes most naturally in an environment where one is not provoked by anyone or disturbed by anything. Even when one is fortunate to be placed in a situation where nobody is being offensive, one is often not induced to be friendly with that situation. Most people become lazy when there is no challenge in life, and start losing interest in everyone and everything around them. We are actually surrounded by fellow human beings, animals, birds, plants, and a changing panorama. When these are all obscured by our self-indulgence, human beings look like mere shadows to us. Even family members and co-workers are looked upon as people of no consequence. Thus our attitude becomes unfriendly, devoid of any enthusiasm in our caring and sharing. Most people miss a great opportunity to discover in the person sitting next to them or working

with them one of the finest friends they can make. It is to avoid such a tremendous loss that we are asked to cultivate positive friendship with whoever we are exposed to or are relating with.

The person who is bracketed with you in social life may seem uncouth or overbearing. If you cultivate your identity with them, then it becomes your duty to transform them into a very likeable person. You can accomplish this not by aggressively intruding into their life but by helping them understand themselves and making common programs with them, so that they need not feel alone in the world without a comrade to assist them.

Even if her child pulls away and becomes hysterical when she tries to give it a bath or some such care, a mother does not become hostile to the child. Her only concern is what is good for the child. When you adopt such an attitude of active interest in sharing all your good moments of friendliness with the other person, they gain a more sympathetic understanding. You are not only making a friend but helping them to be more adorable. In the practice of any discipline, consistency and continuity are absolutely necessary. So your friendship should not be a short-term experiment. It should be motivated by an ardent desire. Your sincerity has to prove itself by its continuous prevalence between you and the other person. When you share your happiness with another in the same situation and the same cause, your happiness is multiplied. No joy is a true joy unless you can share it with another.

Conclusion

As we have seen from the Chandogya Upanishad and the Mandukya Upanishad and from a cursory survey of Indian poetics, drama, and the mystical discipline of Yoga, *Aum* is a subject of infinite range, and volumes could be written on its dynamics. *Aum* is both a seed mantra as well the finale of Vedanta.

Aum