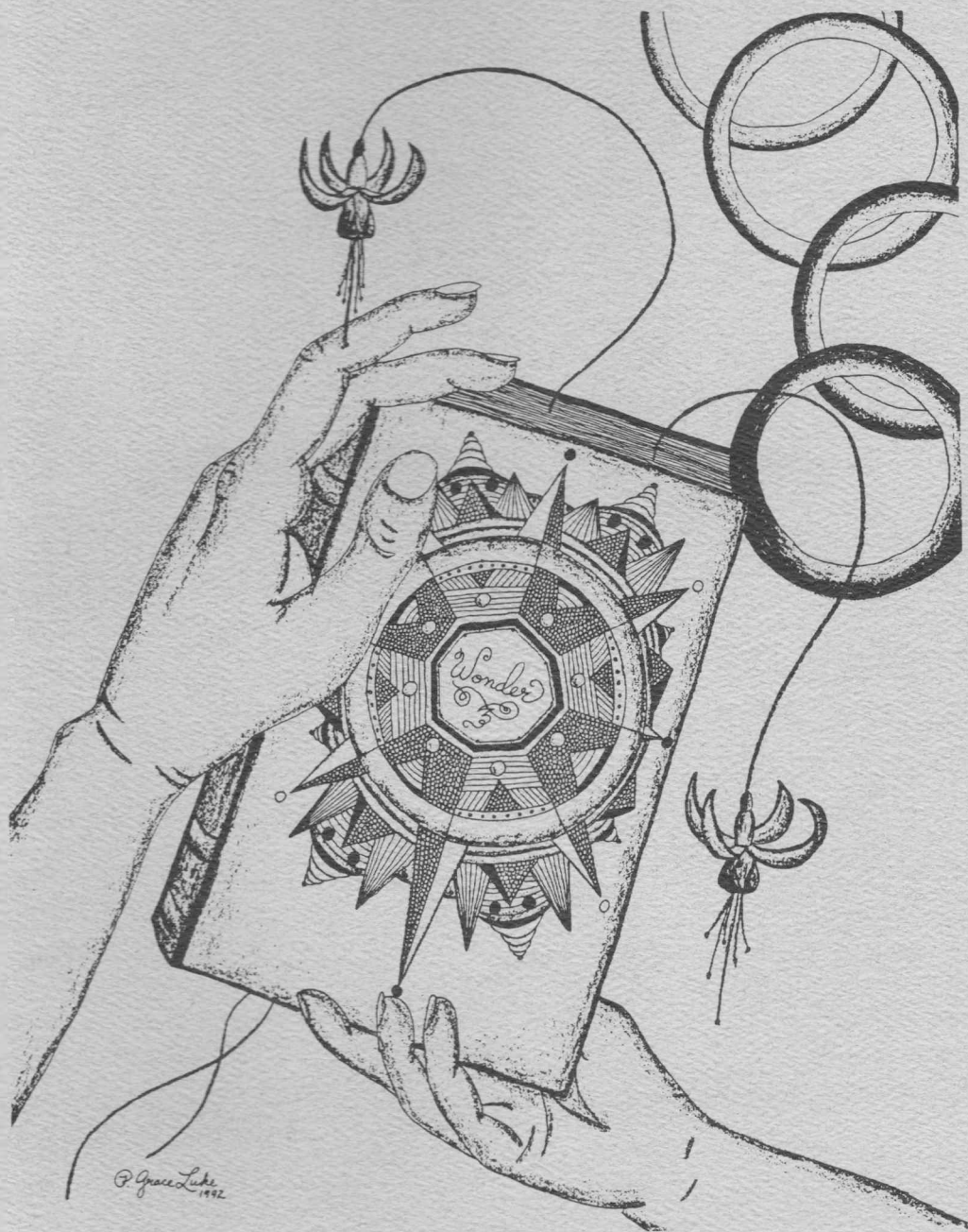
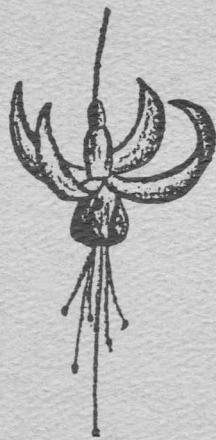


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Experiencing
the
Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad

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East-West University of Unitive Sciences
Fernhill (India) Bainbridge Island (U.S.A.)

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Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad

- 1 This is.
This envelops All.
Apart from this not even an iota
is left in the whole.
It was a mistake to objectivise.
Everything is back to its own, to *Īśvara*.
Knowing "That Thou Art," enjoy;
do not grab.
Whose can be the desired anyway?
- 2 Performing your apportioned duties,
claiming no agency of action,
desire to live a hundred years of blessedness.
Nothing else is expected of you.
Be assured, no stain of action
will cling to the person in you.
- 3 There is a demonic world
enveloped by darkness, confused.
The marauders of the Self
go into it, dead in Spirit.
- 4 Established forever,
although faster than the mind,
the One moves not.
The senses do not find this,
which has gone beyond.
Remaining steadfast, it transcends all.
In that, the energizing nourisher (*mātarīśvā*)
apportions each one's appropriate function.
- 5 That does move,
that does not move.
That is very far,
that is very close.
That is inside of everything,
that is outside of everything (also).

- 6 The one who continually sees
all beings in the *ātman* (Self) alone,
like that, in all manifested factors the Self also,
that person, because of such a vision,
never becomes repulsed.
- 7 In whom all beings
are known as the Self alone,
what delusion is there
or what sorrow
to one who beholds this unity?
- 8 That environs,
pure and transparent,
bodiless, flawless,
devoid of anatomical system,
sinless, poetic wisdom permeating,
self-born, empirically valid, eternal,
functionally distributed evenly
- 9 Into blinding darkness
enter those who worship ignorance.
And into still greater darkness as it were
enter those who delight in knowledge itself.
- 10 Other is the use of knowledge, they say,
the use of ignorance is another.
Thus we have heard from the wise
who have explained that to us.
- 11 One who knows both of these together,
knowledge and ignorance,
having overcome death with ignorance,
enjoys immortality with knowledge.
- 12 Into blinding darkness
enter they who worship non-becoming
Into darkness greater than that, as it were,
enter they who delight in becoming.

13 Other is that which pertains to becoming, they say,
that which pertains to non-becoming is another.
Thus we have heard it from the wise
who have explained that to us.

14 One who knows both of these together,
becoming and destruction,
having overcome death with destruction,
enjoys immortality with becoming.

15 The face of truth is covered
with a golden disk.
That, O Nourisher (Sun),
may you remove so that I see
the truthful performance of duties.

16 O Nourisher of this world,
lone wanderer,
who gives a meaningful pause between events,
the supreme magnetic center of the heavens,
born of the primal father of all beings,
restrain thy beams.
Gather this brilliant effulgence.
Let me see that, your most auspicious form.
That Person (*puruṣa*),
who shines in the sun,
let me assure myself that I am that.

17 Breath enters into the atmospheric wind.
This body will end in ashes.
AUM, remember the purpose
of my doing actions,
remember what I have done.

18 O fire, by a bright path
lead us to prosperity,
shining one who knowest all the ways.
Keep far from us
the sin that accrues as action.
Most ample expression of adoration
to you we render.

AUM, peace, peace, peace.

Guide to Sanskrit Pronunciation

The sounds indicated in the examples are approximations of the original Sanskrit sounds. Only the consonants which are significantly different from English pronunciation have been included.

Vowels

a	like the u in "but"
ā	like the a in "far"
i	like the e in "me"
ī	like the ee in "beet"
u	like the o in "to"
ū	like the oo in "pool"
ṛ	like th ri in "rig"
e	like the a in "gate"
ai	like the i in "high"
o	like the o in "note"
au	like the ou in "loud"

Consonants

ṅ	like the ng in "sing"
ñ	like the n in Spanish "Señor"
c	like ch in "eschew"
ch	like ch in "much"
gh	like gh in "loghouse"
jh	like geh in "hedgehog"
th	like th in "Othello"
dh	like dh in "adhere"
ph	like ph in "haphazard"
bh	like bh in "abhor"
ś	like the sh in "shove"
ṣ	like the sh in "fish"
ḥ	echos the vowel which immediately precedes it

FOREWORD

"The meaning of life is this: that it has no meaning to say that life has no meaning." This remark is from Niels Bohr, who won the Nobel Laurels for Science in 1947. When he accepted the motto "Contraria sunt Complementa" (contradicting realities are in essence complementary), he was completing one full oscillation of the pendulum of Western Philosophy. Material reality was revealed before the seeing eye of the scientist as a system of complexities too subtle for human intelligence to sort out. Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle touched on metaphysical reality as the basis of physical reality. A sub-atomic particle could, as it were, hide its velocity while revealing its position to the measuring apparatus, or hide its position while indicating its velocity. Is it after all a spark of the mind-stuff that we recognise as a particle of the atom? The "fundamental symmetry" acting as the basic cause is clearly no material thing, but an idea. In Paris, in 1982, Alain Aspect experimentally proved that two photons could exchange messages by signaling each other, thus undermining not only Einsteinian relativity, but even the very structure of the material world.

In the language of the *ṛsis*, duality is the word for such a pass as the present one. Intellect can never solve the riddle because what we call intellect is but a product of the dual processes. So we have to try other means to get beyond duality which masks the ultimate truth. Emotion, imagination, insight... can be tried one by one but they by themselves are not any more reliable than intellect. But where we can't break through or cross a barrier we can attempt to transcend it. There is no other way. *Na anyah panthā vidyate ayanāya*. To transcend it we have to press into service all those inner faculties at the disposal of our human personality, because we are born to be ever on the move (*caraiveti*) and because on the move we do not know how to waver and step back.

The theme of Indian Philosophy has always been the ways and means for transcending the phenomenal world of mind and matter, of joy and sorrow, of ignorance and knowledge. There is many a system evolved by many a sage. And each system is complete in itself. But the function of each system is just to project the individual on to the great path of realisation, the *āyana*, the Tao. Thereafter the pilgrim of the spirit has to discover the truth by himself, has to identify and inseparably unite with it in ultimate bliss. There is no carriage available; nor is the road very clear. *Na tatra rathā na rathyogā na panthānaḥ śanthe*.

We require a *guru*, a firm hand that can pick us up and initiate us into the process of self-discovery. Perhaps no system will be of great help to the seeker in the ultimate phase. A master mind who thinks in a clear way and guides his fellow seekers has been the long-cherished golden dream of every age in the cultural history of India. We have the promise, too, of his arrival from time to time - *sambhavāmi yuge yuge* - with different names, of course: Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Śankara, Ramakrishna, Aurobindo, Śree Nārāyaṇa

A salient feature of these masters is their disarming simplicity with

radiant profundity. They never want to mystify things, adding fog of thought to the already existing fog of life! To them, truth contains ample mystery in itself. When all is known, perhaps one feels that there is very little to be known, in fact! To experience what lies deep in our knowledge is the crux of our inquiry; what Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati calls "imperial empathy" is the one thing needful.

At the Narayana Gurukula in Fernhill last year some of the bold minds of our generation sat together for days and delved deep into the meaning of *Īśāvāsya* in the right Upanisadic manner. They are sharing with us the fruits of their search and discovery in the following pages, presenting them in the inimitable style of Guru Nitya. Evidently this book is not intended to argue out a new point by way of a commentary. Truth is as old as the Himalayas; but every travel there unfolds new vistas of beauty and wonder. Guru Nitya symbolizes the harmony of poetry and science in the sanctum of philosophy. His language has the precision of mathematics and the suggestivity of modern art. In the noisy world of today, it is an edifying experience to sit at his feet and listen to his soft, well-chosen words. He teaches that the operations at work within oneself as well as in the galactic spheres can be orchestrated. He shows how the self is holding us back from real enjoyment by walling off the world of bliss around us. He is asking us to read in the verse book of the universe with sufficient poetic sensibility which alone brings the cure for the ills of action and inaction.

Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad forms the last part of the *Śukla Yajur Veda* compiled by Vajasaneya who is also known as Yajñavalkya. This sage appears more than once in Vedic literature, especially in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*. Guru Nitya therefore takes illustrations from both the *Upaniṣads* to clarify his ideas. Sitting with him in the cool shade of Fernhill, we see the god (*īśa*) at the theological level, the sun (*sūrya*) at the cosmological level, and the self (*ātma*) at the psychological level. Then he tells us how those three present themselves to experience though in the usual run they are not fully accessible to experience. Gradually he guides us to the use of the eighteen mantras of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* as a means to meditate and gain that difficult access.

Vishnu Narayanan Namboodiri

Thiruvananthapuram

PREFACE

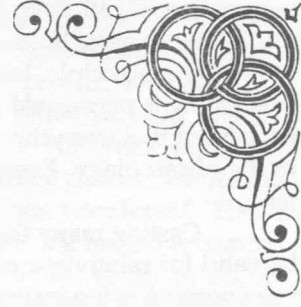
The *Upaniṣad* is meant to be a context, a context to imbibe the hidden truth of the all-permeating God, or *īśa*, by sitting close to the spirit. Yājñavalkya, presented in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* as a teacher par excellence both of King Janaka and Maitreyi, a woman with a great love for wisdom, gives his instruction in a single plain sentence, "Listen, ponder intensely, and live what you realize."

We spent three weeks in the Gurukula intimately following the instructions of Yājñavalkya. With the grace of God, the teacher and the taught listened to the words of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* and deeply pondered over the meaning of each mantra and the inspiration of every word we heard. At that time our intention was not to put together what we heard and said into a book, but only to experience the *Upaniṣad*. The actual exhortation which Yājñavalkya gave was to go deep into what we heard. The term for this is *manana*. *Manana* is not going out of oneself, but going deep into the core of one's Self. The English word 'experience' is inadequate and inappropriate for bringing out the true meaning of *manana*. 'Ex' means outside, while Yājñavalkya's instruction is to gather together into one's center. So we translate *manana* as imperiential empathy. That was what we were cultivating for three weeks.

We all changed considerably during this three week study. We were moving triangularly from God to the world and from the world to our inner self. Each time we completed a triangular apperception of the Upaniṣadic teaching our world of understanding ascended vertically and spread horizontally. This *Upaniṣad* has a structural symmetry. It takes us from beyond our birth far beyond our death. In between, we imperientially entered into the unspeakable realms of transcendence, became comfortably identified with the immanence of God's loving care and became aware of the snares in the periphery which are to be recognized both with effort and care.

What is presented in this record of our imperiential beatitude and experiential sense of reverence and gratitude is not the speculation of one man's mind. It is a collective presentation of the one spirit and mind that we shared in this rare adventure of the spirit.

This book is not to be read as we usually read books. Live with each mantra one whole day. Then record your own spontaneous reactions. That will help you to get into the spirit of the *Upaniṣad*.



Mantra One

*īśāvāsyam idam sarvaṃ
yatkiñca jagatyām jagat
tena tyaktena bhūñjīthā
ma gṛdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam*

This is.
This envelops All.
Apart from this not even an iota
is left in the whole.
It was a mistake to objectivise.
Everything is back to its own, to *Īśvara*.
Knowing "That Thou Art," enjoy;
do not grab.
Whose can be the desired anyway?

THIS IS. This is the real *upanīṣad*. *Upanīṣad* means that which keeps you close to a revealer of truth and shows you the intimate secrets of truth. The opening word "this" has reference to the manifested world of our experience. This world reveals itself. Even so, everything in this world, however big or small, also reveals itself both generally and specifically. As we go closer to each detail we are taken into confidence as though by a loving teacher. We are shown the general scheme of things, the over-all order of the world, the structure of each unit, the interrelation of all the constituent elements and the functional ability of both specific functions and the complementarity of all units which together constitute a system. The knowledge of "this" convinces us that this is real. Even a grain of sand becomes real when we know it. This is the first certitude we get in life.

Truth means a universally established reality. What establishes the reality of a thing is a sound knowledge of the feasibility of a system which reveals a coordinated structure which reasonably explains its function. Reality has an innate integrity. It is not a man-made rule or code we speak of. It can be seen in the inherence of an operational force with which a minute particle preserves its nature and identity. The intrinsic identity of a thing's uniqueness is its *dharma*. This law of *dharma* or uniqueness holds good for everything in this world, because the innate principle of manifestation has in it a homogeneity. This homogeneous operational principle which governs everything is *īśa*, the Upanīṣadic concept of God with which this scripture begins. It is with such a postulation that the Sage asserts that *īśa* envelops all. *Īśa* or *Īśvara* is conceived both as an immanent principle as well as the principle of supreme transcendence.

The Upanīṣadic statement in the original Sanskrit is *īśa āvāsyam idam sarvaṃ* - which literally means "*īśvara* envelops All This." Although it is a

convention to call *īśvara* God, we need not give an anthropomorphic God as our reference here. *Īśa* means that which oversees, governs and controls from within as a principle, law or intrinsic nature. When the *Upaniṣad* says that everything is permeated with *īśvara* it is only a parallel of the physical scientist saying that everything is a manifestation of matter. The difference is only in the phraseology. Everything attributed to God is also attributable to matter.

Casting many things aside from our minds as of no consequence may be valid for relativistic expediency. However, in the absolutist vision of the Sage nothing is too insignificant. Nothing is to be rejected. Even a single particle of dust has its due place in the scheme of things. Everything is to be held in reverence. Then alone can we experience the holistic presence of the all governing Reality. This is the first stepping stone in the path of Realization. The Sage calls our attention to the divinity of each speck, *yat kiñca jagatyām jagat*.

Jagat is the changing world. In our world there is nothing which can be counted as stable. The universe itself has in it several galaxies with their own systems of movements. The sun is only one star among millions. Around the sun the planets are rotating. Our earth is revolving on its axis and rotating around the sun. Our biosphere is always in commotion with its changing winds, cycles of seasons, and oceanic changes. A seemingly stable rock also has within it many shifting molecules. In the molecules there are fast moving atoms and in each atom there are dancing subatomic particles. The only changeless factor in the universe is the eternal law of change.

Considering the time span of the universe humans are insignificant beings. Even trees are blessed with the longevity of several thousands of years. Consider our plight. Our first twenty five years are only a preparatory period. Degeneration, senility and decomposition set in by the time the human organism is 70 or 80 years old. So where is the time for us to examine everything carefully? We are in a state of terrible haste, so we look for short-cuts, package deals, and the cataloguing of things. It seems we are restless visitors to this world who live in excitement and confusion for a short while and hurriedly leave this universe before we become familiar with anything worth knowing.

We are sort of insane workaholics. Between our waking hour and our submission to heavy sleep we have a tight schedule. We have to take our ablutions, pray, or hurriedly eat breakfast. We have to go to school, to church, or shopping. To correct the injustices of life we have to rush to the court and see the attorney. The farm is to be prepared, crops are to be harvested. These are the transactions which relate us to our immediate neighbours as well as the far-off. So we have no time to go close to this world even to admire a flower or appreciate the sweet melody of a singing bird. We need a garbage bin bigger than the ocean to discard into it large areas of this universe in which we are not interested.

Mind you, the greatest of the great and the biggest of the big are compositions of the smallest of the small, the finest of the finite. If you do not know the small, you will not know the big also.

Īśvara or God is the dynamic process of creation. Sitting in a grain of pollen dust, *īśvara* is smaller than the pollen. It is the same *īśvara* whom we meet as one of immeasurable dimensions in the processing of the galactical extravagance. Thus we should have a pulsating interest which can centralize itself in the subtlest nucleus of the tiniest in the finite and has an expanding

girth that can include the universes, known and unknown. As the interior structure of the inconceivable supreme and our consciousness with all its ability to cognize and judge, God reverberates between the core and the periphery of cosmic pulsation. *Īśvara* is both the substance and its mass. To pulsate in unison with the cosmic throb is your commitment when you opt for God realization. It is simple if you do not have a meddling ego, and it is complicated if you want to have separate frames of reference for every notion that you forge in your individuated mind.

The *ṛṣi* asks you to ponder over the imponderable principle on which the ponderable is established. The smallest we had been conceiving of until recently was the atom. Then we found that the atom itself is a colony of particles, each one with a separate schedule of movement. These particles are ever engaged in a collective dance within the atom. The atom is running faster than Achilles. Its span of movement is limited to the dimension of a molecule. Within each molecule there is a troop of dancers choreographed with such precision that they will not run out of the molecule. Neither are the molecules stable. Thus we have movements within movements ranging from the inner restlessness of an atom to the perfectly programmed planetary movements around the sun. It is to that reality the *ṛṣi* points and says, *ja-gatyām jagat*, the moving factors within the grand scheme of the universal movement.

Why did the *ṛṣi* begin with the pinpointing of *idam*, this? People speak of going somewhere to study: "going abroad for foreign studies." But the *ṛṣi* wants to assure us that there is nothing foreign to us; everything is here. Our studies are to be confined in the here and now. "That" is very far; only "this" is close to you. So take advantage of "this." All your immediate knowledge comes right where you are by seeing, by touching, by smelling, by tasting, by hearing and by experiencing. When you know "this," the knowledge of "this" will initiate your interest in what is adjacent to "this." "This" is related to many other "this's" or "these." Look how merciful are our masters! They bring the school to us right where we sit to meditate. How meticulously they point out what you should see, what you should hear and what you should ponder over! How cleverly they describe, how distinctly they define!

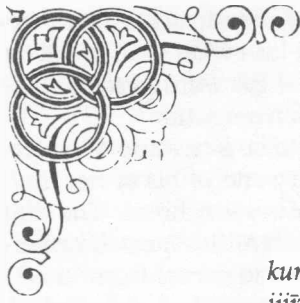
We came to know "this" by seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling and knowing with our mind. Then what did we do? We did the most foolish thing - we divided our knowledge into many fragments and labelled everything. Take for example what we saw with our eyes. First we recognized forms. Then we made distinctive forms: the point, the line, the triangle, the square, and the circle. Thus we transformed the entire world into patterns of geometry. Then we attempted compositions of forms to distinguish the root of a tree from its trunk, the trunk from its branches, branches from twigs, twigs from leaves, leaves from flowers, flowers from fruits and even the tap root from subsidiary roots with capillaries. This fragmentation has been going on in each area of the operation of our faculties of cognition. We list things which even the world's biggest encyclopedia cannot list. In our obsession with the infinitude of multiplication we lost sight of our unity, the unity of this universe. We made universities to indulge in multiverses. To that we added our egoistic thrust - our claim to know, to do and to experience. Thus we make one and the same person the knower, the doer, and the enjoyer, the good and the evil, the wise and the ignorant. So we are lost. We have become pieces. At one moment we identify ourselves with one piece and in the next with another. Thus we have become victims of identity crisis.

Now out of the wilderness of confused vision we have to reclaim the one consciousness which we have broken into bits and put into many circumstantial consequences. Mad people only become schizophrenic, but we have become polyphrenic.

We made artificial maps of this universe. Then we drew arbitrary lines on the map and made political divisions with nationalistic identities and ambitions. The border lines became firespitting trenches where military guards are standing in vigil with machine guns and intercontinental ballistic missiles. We make separate homes with strong doors secured with padlocks. With that our own brothers have become strangers, aliens, burglars, and thieves to be taken care of. When we projected our sense of wealth in gold and silver we felt helpless that we had no adequate lockers to keep our gold in storage. So we decided to make ourselves idiots by believing that scraps of paper can be considered equivalent to gold or silver. Oh friends! Aspirants of realization! Wait a minute. We are asked to renounce our claims of agency as the knowers of the world, doers of the world, and admirers of the world. If you lose that identity will the world disappear from you?

This is a beautiful world. When you admire the rising sun or moon, should you say, "This is my sun, or my moon?" Even without that bogus identity the sun shines in perfect beauty, the sheen of the moon is poetic and admirable. Even without establishing your personal ownership of a cup of coffee or tea, its aroma can be pleasant and even without claiming it to be yours, the sugar in it will continue to be sweet.

All the *ṛṣi* says is to forgo your ego. Give up your false claims of identification. Even then the world will continue as it is with all its richness and all its agreement to be *īśvara*. So the *ṛṣi* says, *tena tyaktena*, forgo your ego, *bhujñīthā*, enjoy this world. With this realization the strange becomes familiar, the alien becomes one's own. There is no longer any reason to grab. So the *ṛṣi* says, *mā grdhah*, do not grab. *Kasya sviddhanam*, whose is this wealth? Whose else can it be but yours? Such is the beautiful invitation to the path of realization given in the very first *mantra* of *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad*. So be happy forever and in every way. Such is our blessedness.



Mantra Two

*kurvanneveha karmāṇi
jijīviṣecchatam samāh
evam tvayi nānyatheto'sti
na karma lipyate nare*

Performing your apportioned duties,
claiming no agency of action,
desire to live a hundred years of blessedness.
Nothing else is expected of you.
Be assured, no stain of action
will cling to the person in you.

"This" was here from all eternity. "This" implies countless millions of items which can all be referred to "this." It is from "this" each one of us has emerged. Therefore "this" is like our mother, our origin, the womb from which we have emerged. "This" suggests an inside factor and an outside factor. "This" becomes outside when one assumes an identification as an animated corporeal being. Then a dichotomy comes between "I" and "this." That dichotomy is not just a solitary event. It initiates us into a long process of encounter with "this." The most pronounced encounters come from our interaction in the context in which "I am" is the subject and "this" is the object. When I hear a sound, word or noise, that becomes an object of my hearing. Whatever touches me becomes an object of my touch. Similarly there are objects of seeing, tasting and smelling. In the world of objects there are a plethora of classes. Each class is further divided into umpteen categories. Each category is given an identification mark. Thus I enter into a dialectical situation of the one and the many. The many are presented to me as individuals, groups, or the collective whole to which I belong.

Each relationship is experienced as a challenge. Every challenge has in it an implied compulsion to fight or to flee. Here our sense of discrimination, one of the inner faculties called the faculty of judgement, comes to our aid and whispers to our mind that wills. We hear instructions such as, "Pay heed to this because this is imperative." Or we may hear, "Forgo this. Do not give any attention to it for it is irrelevant." When I become convinced of the relevancy of an encounter, I accept the challenge as a command to react. The action that I have to perform in that context is my apportioned duty. It is imperative and it cannot be discarded. If I act upon it, it is an action (*karma*). If I improperly act, it becomes an evil action (*duṣkarma*). If I do not act, it is an act of omission which can be called inaction (*akarma*). If my action becomes perverted, that becomes *vikarma*. In any case it will be followed by its result (*karma phala*). Now a question arises, "How many times will a person be exposed to such dire situations of challenge?" If a person has his/her physical

consciousness of sense perception, reflex actions, and urge to act or react, action situations will recur from the day of birth until his or her vital breath is silenced with death. Hence in the second mantra of the *Īśāvāsyaopaniṣad* we are told that for a sentient person there is no vacation from action.

Does this mean that every living person has to be a creature of suffering exposed to inevitable action situations to the very end of his or her life? Only the action is inevitable; to suffer or not to suffer is your choice. The fruit of action is binding on the actor only if that person identifies himself or herself as the one who wills the act. Actually the command comes from "this" - the world at large. You are only lending the instrumentality of body, mind, energy, and know-how to carry out the command as one who is given a role to play in the sportive arena of nature.

When the sun showers its hot rays on the surface of oceans, lakes, and rivers, the water on the surface has no other option but to become water vapor. The atmospheric pressure is such that the vapor cannot float on the surface of the sea or lake. It rises into the sky as a cloud. When the wind blows, the cloud has no other option than to be carried to the mountain ranges. When the mountains offer a barrier to the winds the cloud begins to cool. Now the clouds are ready to shower rain. Wherever a chance wind takes the cloud it rains. Water which falls on the ground is controlled by gravitation. It streams from the mountain top to the valley and becomes a river. The river takes the water back to a pool, lake or the sea.

Everything is like a sport. Indians call it *Ma*. A real sportsman is delighted to give himself to the situation of a game. A football player may joyously participate in a thousand tournaments. He is not suffering from his active participation in the sport. He is enjoying it. Every apportioned duty can be made into a joyous recreation. To cook in the kitchen to feed hungry stomachs is not without its joy. The aroma of dishes, the delicate touch that you can give to them and the aesthetic imagination that you can present are all full of challenges, joyous challenges. So the *ṛṣi* says, "Program your life to expose yourself to all the wondrous challenges of this world for a hundred years." What else is to be done here? *Kurvanneveha karmāni jītvīṣecchatam samāḥ*: you have opted to live in the world of "This" framed in time and space which has several millions of units like you, each equipped with faculties of various sorts. This is life, accept it. Do not think you can run away from it. *Nānyatheto'sti*: when the game is over, sportsmen come off the court and embrace their counterparts. A good rival is the best friend who has bit every nerve in you. You admire your enemy. When you go back home you do not carry a grievance. The action has not left its bitterness in your mouth: *na karmalipyate nare*.

You are free to change your mind and opt for *īśvara*. It takes only a moment for "this" with all its variegation to disappear. Such instant freedom is called *saddyo mukti*. If you choose the sportive way of a slow climber you can also free your self. It is called *krama mukti*. In either case ultimately you will come to the end of the game. Between the freedom of God and the necessity of the world our life is graced to have its fulfilment.



Mantra Three

*asuryā nāma te lokā
andhena tamasāvṛtaḥ
tāmste pretyābhigacchanti
ye ke cātmahano janāḥ*

There is a demonic world
enveloped by darkness, confused.
The marauders of the Self
go into it, dead in Spirit.

The sun is a generic name for the source of light. There is a beautiful dialogue in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.6) between king Janaka and Yājñavalkya on how a person sees things.

The king speaking first asked him, "Yājñavalkya, what light does a person here have?"

"He has the light of the sun, O king," he said, "for with the sun, indeed, as his light, one sits, moves around, does his work, and returns."

"Quite so Yājñavalkya, but when the sun has set what light does a person here have?"

"The moon indeed is his light."

"But when the sun has set and the moon has set what light does a person here have?"

"Fire indeed is his light."

"But when the sun has set, the moon has set and the fire has gone out, what light does a person here have?"

"Speech, indeed, is his light," said he, "for with speech indeed as his light one sits, moves around, does his work, and returns. Therefore verily, O king, where one does not even discern his own hands, when a voice is raised, then one goes straight towards it."

"Quite so Yājñavalkya, but when the sun has set, the moon has set, and the fire has gone out, and speech is hushed, what light does a person here have?"

"The Self, *ātman*, indeed, is his light," said he, "for with the soul indeed as his light one sits, moves around, does his work, and returns."

There is no possibility of there being no Self. So the Self is to be taken as even superior to the sun that illuminates everything. The Self, *ātman*, and *brahman* are the same. Everything in this world is basically illuminated by

dharma which is the law of *īśvara's* light. There is perfect unity in the Self. It cannot be divided into the seer and the seen. Consequently, individuated persons do not see their Self even though every experience of individual sight originates from the Self. A few blessed ones after coming to this world have retraced their steps and returned to the Self and found their absolute unity with *isvara*. They have resolved their problems forever. Knowledge comes like a flash of lightning and thereafter one becomes a knower. When you are taught that $2 + 2$ is equal to 4, this knowledge does not come step by step: 2, $2\frac{1}{2}$, 3, $3\frac{1}{2}$ and finally 4. Either you know it or you do not know it. Similarly if you come to realize that your Self is none other than the Absolute, you cease to be a seeker from that moment because you are forever transformed into a seer in whom the seen and the seer are not separate. If that is what you have gained with your wisdom, you have already attained instantaneous freedom. This is what seers call *saddyo mukti*.

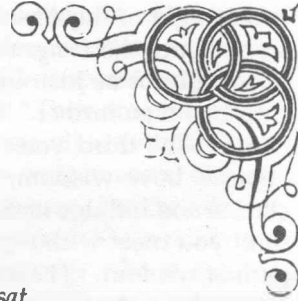
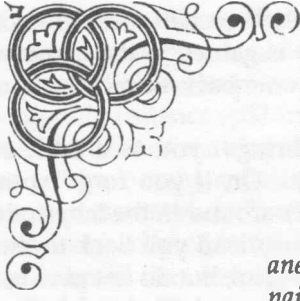
Except for these rare fortunate seers, others have to teach, train and discipline themselves. Ultimately, after a few births, or many births, they may be freed. This is *krama mukti*. Fortunately our corporeal being is adequately equipped to discern between right and wrong, true and false wisdom and folly. Some are quick, many are of mediocre merit, and some are unfortunately slow. The intrinsic nature of the individuated organism which gives one one's level of existence in this world is one's personal *dharma*. If an individual's *dharma* is of a brute, he is not fit to specialize in the Theory of Relativity. He has to wait until his system is further processed to gain its subtle nuances of intelligence. Another may already be a front runner, and others are catching up. If you are fortunate you will have sensible parents, wise and sympathetic mentors, encouraging peers, and a helpful environment. The set-up in which you have these facilities which are excellent, mediocre or poor is none other than the world in which you live.

You are trained in the world through a series of opportunities given to you to exercise your questioning faculty, your attention and recall faculty, your faculty of discernment and judgement and ultimately your faculty to react with pleasurable acceptance or painful avoidance. In this God is absolutely impartial. Equal opportunity is given to everyone. It is as if the world has a fool-proof arrangement to line up all sentient creatures in an ever-progressing queue with several trials and errors.

The device called *jagat* has meticulous classifications and categorizations which have between them something so very efficient like the blood/brain barrier. Everyone and everything gets his or her or its due. Success or failure depends on your proximity to your inner brightness or your unfortunate alienation from it. When you walk away from the central core of the light of the world, you stumble in darkness. Various kinds of dangers are there waiting for you with their tragic mouths open. Mistakes never come alone. A small mistake leads you to a grave mistake, and a grave mistake to a still more serious mistake until you find that you are in a blind alley from which a reverse is not possible. The *Īśāvāsyaopaniṣad* calls it the path of the demonic. If you are not clever enough to steer past it, you will be so alienated from Self-knowledge that you will become verily a suicide (*ātmahanta*). Not to know even the shimmering of your Self is as bad as murdering your Self. One becomes lost when one goes into the deep dungeon of death without having a single positive wish in ones mind. There are many who do not feel satisfied with what they have attained in this life. However, several of them are optimistic that they can improve their performance to come closer to the

bright light of the Absolute in their next life. Surely they will, they are not lost. Hence the *Bhagavad Gīta* says, "A *dharma* that is gained in the here and now will not be lost with your death. You will come back to pick up the thread and go further." Finally you will succeed.

The third verse of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* brings you to a table of choice: Love wisdom; you will gain it some day. Or, if you forgo your chance and indulge in darkness, you have to wander around in the labyrinth until you meet with a gentle and kind soul who may lead you back to the path of wisdom. The lesson given in this mantra is grim, but do not give up hope. From the next mantra you are going to be instructed what the Self is, how you can recognize it, and how to get back on the right track. It is with such an optimistic note that we enter into the fourth mantra.



Mantra Four

*anejadekam manaso javīyo
nainad devā āpnuvan pūrvamarṣat
taddhāvato 'anyānatyeti tiṣṭhat
tasminnapo mātariśvā dadhāti*

Established forever,
although faster than the mind,
the One moves not.
The senses do not find this,
which has gone beyond.
Remaining steadfast, it transcends all.
In that, the energizing nourisher (*mātariśvā*)
apportions each one's appropriate function.

In Robert Frost's book of verse, *North of Boston*, one poem called *Mending Wall* will certainly catch the reader's attention. Frost writes,

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

When the wall crumbled, the poet and his neighbor set out to mend the wall.

I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.

Frost had an apple orchard while his neighbor had only pine trees. When he saw the enthusiasm of his neighbor, a thought came to his mind.

There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbors."

When the neighbor defended his enthusiasm by saying, "Good fences make good neighbors," Frost puts a last question.

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out.

The disease of modern man diagnosed by Frost in this famous poem is the problem of walling in and walling out. In either case the wall is a menace and the ideal is to have no wall at all. This is a perennial problem facing mankind. Most people are afraid of their own freedom and the freedom of others. There are a few who think of freedom as the only worthwhile goal to attain. When you go into the open you see the boundless sky above your head. The sun blazes in the sky with all its glory. The wind blows across and we do not know from where it comes and where it goes. Under our feet is the humble green grass which fearlessly spreads itself in all directions. If it is allowed to have its way it will envelop the entire globe with an emerald attire. However, man loves to make a strong citadel for himself. He feels secure only when he walls himself in and walls others out. The person who loves absolute freedom is in love with truth that unifies everything. The insecure person on the other hand is afraid of public exposure and the gathering of crowds around him. He chooses to hide under the shroud of darkness.

Robert Frost once said, "You have to believe me because I am a bard."

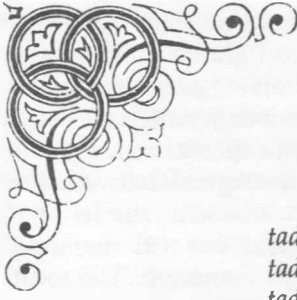
The most precious words have always come from the lips of poets. God is conceived as that which cannot be walled in or walled out. Yet we see all over the world different kinds of prison houses made to wall God in and wall people out. In contrast to this, the Upaniṣadic bard presents the Self which is One and cannot be enclosed because it is everywhere. It does not move yet it is present everywhere without moving. It is this paradox which we have to resolve first.

Mind is supposed to be the fastest moving phenomenon which we know. What characterises the mind is the doubt it formulates, the question it frames, and its curiosity to go into even the most remote corners to discover the hidden truth. The counterpart of doubt is certitude, of a question is its answer, of curiosity is the exposition of truth, of search is the declaration of what is sought. These constitute what we call knowledge. What is characteristic of the Self is the knowledge of truth that resolves all doubts and answers all questions. Hence we are told that the one Self whose presence is everywhere is already waiting in patience to bless the seeker with the wisdom he or she seeks. This is the most beautiful way in which we are introduced to the Self by the sage.

The One that is conceived by the sage has no rigidity. It does not have to be static to maintain its identity. The mark of its reality is not glued to the cliché of the scientist's call for objectivity. Transformation does not change the integrity of the inner principle out of which the variegated forms are fashioned. Water can be the boundless blue ocean, the floating cloud, the river that runs through the entire length of a country, or what is held in a container or reservoir. Even before it is assigned its special status in the world of relativity it carries its basic nature with it, H₂O. The Self has the freedom to be rushing or standing still. It assumes ever so many structures and each structure promises a different function. In spite of multitudinous functions, all the assignments have come from one source which is none other than the one energy which is both in the mind of the structural engineer who designs a dam, a bridge, a road, a tunnel, a cottage or a city, as well as in all the materials that go into the construction to fulfil the dream of the engineer.

What the sage attempts is a unique way of presenting the one Self which is at once *īśā* as well as *ātman*. It is this totality of truth to which we, our mind, senses, breath, thoughts and dreams belong, and to which the manifold changes we give to the world also belong. Thus we have in the

Upaniṣadic sage both a poet and a meticulous scientist. He is also a good mathematician who learned his calculating ability from the already prevailing rhythm in the particles that dance and the choir of the heavens which sets the archetypal model of true music. The more we ponder over this Upaniṣadic mantra the more an astounding certitude of truth will emerge from it. Before such a certitude we are sure to stand dazed and thrilled. The cosmic apprehension of the mysterium tremendum can be seen in an icicle as well as as in the flake-like appearance of the Milky Way.



Mantra Five

*tadejati tannaijati
taddūre tadvantike
tadantarasya sarvasya
tadu sarvasyāsya bāhyataḥ*

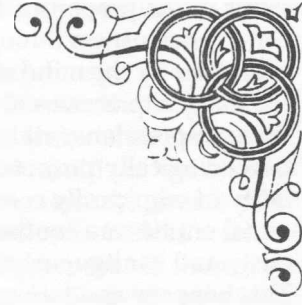
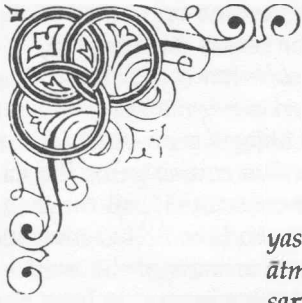
That does move,
that does not move.
That is very far,
that is very close.
That is inside of everything,
that is outside of everything (also).

In psychology the term "this" is very important. "This" is the stimulus and it is followed by many possible responses which are all indicated by the word "what?" The question "what?" can be substituted by "which?" "when?" "where?" "how?" "who?" "why?" etc. Each item of presentation to the senses can initiate a whole series of questions. Each question is put from a fresh angle of vision and each finding is a new point of view. Thus differentiation comes because of the very many possible points of view. It is as if "this" is changed each time to occupy a new locus of interest.

The word "that" is all-important in metaphysics. A philosopher goes beyond the perceived object to seek the conceptual unity which can remain unaltered while accommodating in it all the varieties that may come within the class of a perceived object. The concept is the most general idea that can append itself with a characteristic which is common to all the concomitant species within a genus. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* the sage Uddālaka relies on the concept of "that" to teach his son and disciple Svetaketu that all existential factors ensue from the changeless truth of "That." The dialectical counterparts with which the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* begins are established as a bipolarity between the philosophical conceptualization and the psychological perspective of the world of variation. Two opposite attributes are given to *tad* or "that" which is also the repository of "this." Hence in this mantra we read, "That moves and that does not move." There is no epistemological violation or contradiction when the sage says "that moves and that does not move," because the instruction goes to a contemplative who knows how to accommodate the conceptual "that" of philosophy and the perceptual "this" of descriptive psychology.

Thereafter the sage gives two contradictory statements in relationship to space. Motion is the normative measuring principle of space. Movement is from one point in space to another point in space. Thus it is quite relevant to speak of "far and near" after presenting the dialectical polarity of movement and non-movement. In the present statement also the polemics of the opposition of the far and the near become dialectically schematized as a bipo-

larity in the contemplative context. If you think of a spot close to where you sit and remember a star you have seen which is two light years away, the two are not far apart because both are experiences within the consciousness of a single individual. The far and the near are only conventionally valid and are not psychological realities. Finally the sage comes to another aspect of the same dialectical situation where it is not possible to distinguish between the internal factor and the external factor. You see a whole world with its phenomenal details existing through millions of years spread out with manifold dimensions. An idea presents itself simultaneously in the mind. The focal center of consciousness is not outside. It is where you are in the here and now, and so you have to admit that everything is experienced at a given moment in the focal field of that given moment. So we may say that everything is inside. At the same time, if you want to lift a cup of tea and bring it to your lips you can stretch your hand into the external space and physically locate the cup outside and bring it to your lips to quench your thirst. Considering this empirical and pragmatic orientation to which we belong, everything is outside. The *ṛṣi*, by taking three classical contradictions gives us one of the finest dialectical lessons of contemplation which has immediate and practical benefit for us.



Mantra Six

*yastu sarvāṇi bhūtāny-
ātmanyevānupaśyati
sarvabhūteṣu cātmānam
tato na vijugupsate*

The one who continually sees
all beings in the *ātman* (Self) alone,
like that, in all manifested factors the Self also,
that person, because of such a vision,
never becomes repulsed.

Mantra Seven

*yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāny-
ātmaivābhūd vijānataḥ
tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka
ekatvam anupaśyataḥ*

In whom all beings
are known as the Self alone,
what delusion is there
or what sorrow
to one who beholds this unity?

Before we are born as individuals, indwelling in this body, the world with all its details was already here. There are several other individuals like us who have come before us and who share this world with us. We come to this world as one more percipient, seer, or experiencer. We add one number to the several others who are enjoying this world and become another enjoyer. We become one among the many.

As soon as we are born our senses of perception are opened outward and we start perceiving the world. The world outside does not immediately become meaningful to us although our awareness focuses itself into the core of our consciousness to which the senses bring an impression of what is perceived by a new born. Our core consciousness then starts its first exercise of interpreting the perceived world. From then on a continuous dialogue goes on between the outer world and the perceiving consciousness of the individual. From the very beginning a person becomes aware of himself or herself in

terms of the properties of the outside world which become registered in the core consciousness through the instrumentality of the senses meaningfully coordinated by the mind. As a complementary process, what is experienced as the inner impressions of the new-born along with an extrapolated version of these impressions, are automatically projected as objects seen outside in a psychologically projected time and space which in due course gains the validity of empirically consistent experience. Even unconsciously, all these external entities are continuously perceived in the Self, and the Self is continuously and contiguously spread out as the external awareness of the world. This happens as a two-way flow of consciousness both converging from the world to the central focus of one's personal consciousness and diverging from the core to all directions. The living organism is thus amazingly invested with a device by which it can have a total participation with the world into which the individual manifests as a speck of awareness.

Wakeful awareness of sensory experiences and mental impressions are immediately interfered with by the pragmatic needs of the individual. The mind is given a special order to select a point of consciousness around which an immediate ensemble can be assembled or picturesquely composed so that the rest of the individual's consciousness can be slighted and more or less ignored as an irrelevant part of the chosen gestalt. Almost immediately after the post-natal experiencing of awareness the new-born individual is pushed into a corner to have only a partial knowledge of the world to which it has come. It further loses the continuity of its world vision by creating an organic insomnia or dullness in the psychophysical and psychochemical basis of the organism's consciousness which is none other than the individual's central nervous system, especially certain areas of the brain. Thus the physicality of the new-born and its biological inadequacy makes the baby a partial being, having only a smattering of consciousness which is allowed to shimmer occasionally as its surface consciousness. The rest is protectively huddled into a deeper strata to function as the growing baby's unconscious. As the child grows into maturity biologic and psychologic interference are further elaborated, hardened, and even distorted with the cyclic changeover of consciousness from the wakeful state to the dream state, from the dream state to the deep sleep state, and from the deep sleep state back again into the wakeful state. The individual being is allowed to have a recurring consistency in perception with a certain regularity of comprehension only in its waking experience. It reckons with the factors that confront it again and again in its wakeful hours and those entities are given a priority over the rest of its experience, especially of the dream and of the deep sleep state.

Through the repeatedly chosen physical and psychophysical entities with which the individual consciousness reacts intelligently and compulsively because of genetic commands, instinctive channels of energies, and conditioned reflexes, the child becomes very much a creature of its environment. It develops indelible images of attraction and repulsion, love and hatred, fear and hope, and a sense of the beautiful and the ugly. By the time one becomes an adolescent, nature has already prepared one to become a God or a devil, and one achieves a grade which can be anywhere between a Lucifer and a Jesus, a *Māra* and a Buddha, or *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*. Because of this natural evolution through which we pass, we develop strong convictions, incurable suspicions, and symptoms of diseases both mental and physical. That is why the *Upaniṣads* make the Self-realized person such a rare entity. Only one out of several millions of people in ten thousand years gets over all the distortions

that come to his or her personalized self to recognize and reestablish his or her kinship with all.

The alchemy that produces the most wonderful magic of transforming the repulsive into the beautiful is love. We get an anecdotal explanation of this in the life of great spiritual luminaries. Out of them let us select one. Francis of Assisi was born in an environment which could darken his soul and corrupt him to the core. By the grace of God, unforeseen events came one after another and in his delirium of high fever the make-believe world of empirical pragmatism started withering away from his psyche. In those days the Christian community of Europe believed in a harsh God who punished certain sinners with the scourge of leprosy. So pious Christians took every leper for an enemy of God, or at least one who despised God. No "true Christian" dared to show sympathy to a leper. The lepers had to go around begging, ringing a bell of caution so that the pious could keep away from them. When Francis heard the bells of the lepers walking in the streets he became afraid and shrieked in his delirium. When he regained his health, the first visitor to his normalizing mind was a pretty girl who was like an incarnation of innocence and a veritable lover of deep sympathy. She became devoted in rendering physical service and giving nourishment to the lepers. Francis was charmed by this beautiful messenger of kindness. He loved her very deeply without his erotics being ignited by her femininity. When Francis received the call of the Divine to restore the true faith in Jesus, his new friend Clara dedicated herself to Francis as a willing servant of God. Her love erased from the mind of Francis his natural aversion to lepers and in its place came his absolute love and total recognition of the beauty of soul even in the ugly man or woman almost eaten away by leprosy. Till the very last he lived in their service. Thus the unity in Self presented Francis with a mind overflowing with love.

Nobody ever laughed at the folly of human superstition more than Francis, and nobody saw more beauty in its extravagance in everything which he had close by to embrace and hold in reverence with a fraternity which was universal. To live is to know and to know is to love.

THE SUBLIMATION OF THE GROSS

We live in a world of two complementary infinitudes. One is the spiritual infinitude of homogeneity. Its counterpart is an infinitude of the heterogeneous. Between these two extremes the individuated human oscillates. When one is stuck in the physical, the individual consciousness is dissolved in the indiscernible depth of the unconscious. Then it is as if the Self does not exist. Like a mammoth tree that sleeps unconsciously in a tiny seed of futuristic possibility, the Self remains dormant in the womb of time. When the spirit favours it, life awakens with its vital energy shooting into all directions and the seed changes into a fully grown tree or a fully developed human being with all faculties coming to their full function. To emerge from a state of non-being to the blessed state of one's being we read the Upaniṣadic prayer, "from nonexistence may we come to existence," *asato mā sat gamaya*.

In the seeded state or state of dormancy, there is no distinction between the sky and the earth, or the body and the soul. There is only pitch darkness prevailing everywhere. It is as if life is blinded and it lies imprisoned in the core of an uncompromising darkness. From there comes the first

throb. Śri Aurobindo describes this event in a poignant manner in *Savitri*.

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' marge.
Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
The abysm of the unbodied Infinite;
A fathomless zero occupied the world.
A power of fallen boundless self awake
Between the first and the last Nothingness,
Recalling the tenebrous womb from which it came,
Turned from the insoluble mystery of birth
And the tardy process of mortality
And longed to reach its end in vacant Nought.
As in a dark beginning of all things,
A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown
Repeating for ever the unconscious act,
Prolonging forever the unseeing will,
Cradled the cosmic drowsé of ignorant Force
Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns
And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl.

To emerge from this initial darkness to the beginning of the beginning the soul prays, "lead us from darkness to light," *tamaso mā jyotṛ gamaya*.

In the world of heterogeneous multitudes each unit is measured out in time and space. A restricted area of space decides the dimension into which a body can grow and expand. It also has a time span marked out in secret. The beginning is birth and the end is death. No finite being is allowed to free itself from the period of time granted it to be on earth. Individual souls lament this mishap and hence the prayer, "lead us from death to immortality," *mṛtyor mā amṛtam gamaya*.

These two halves of the whole are presented in the *Bhagavad Gīta* as the Yoga of *kṣetrajñā* and *kṣetra*. *Kṣetrajñā* is the spirit, the knower. *Kṣetra* is the material counterpart, the known. These two halves bound together keep us in bondage through several lives. At the same time, the bondage is like a program of evolution which can transform a wingless crawling larva into a flying butterfly of colorful wings. This is the magnificent theme of the *Upaniṣads* - transformation of matter into spirit and the captivation of spirit in matter.

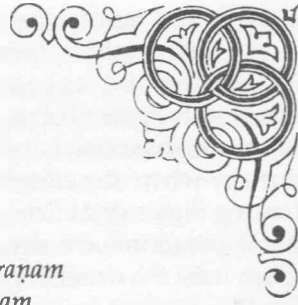
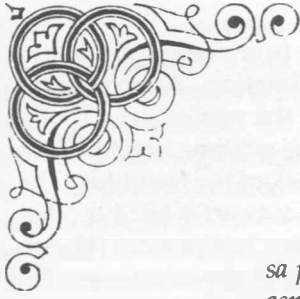
We are already captives. Three heavy loads are sitting on us. The first load is a prejudicial rigidity that makes the true nature of our reality impenetrable and imponderable. It constantly afflicts our minds and makes us hateful persons. The second load is not as clumsy as our prejudicial irrationality. It is like a compulsive magnet which holds on to its counterparts with a blind, mortifying bondage. It sits in our hearts making life a difficult game to play with many obligations and a bleeding heart which always pines for the imaginary beloved and laments over the recurring losses of life. The third load is like a heavy mass of black lead which keeps us anchored in the underworld of sorrow and confusion. This can be veritably called our immovable

anchor in the sea of *samsāra*.

The *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* is trying to release us from these three heavy loads by teaching us both the art and science of sublimation. An icon of the Śiva worshippers gives a symbolic representation of the vertical polarity between the insane dynamics of gross passion and the sublime height of the blue sky where the crescent moon shines as a faint mark of the beautiful. The dancing Śiva stands firmly with one foot planted on a dwarf while his other foot is raised into the sky. This symbolically represents how we can lift ourselves from the dross of gross necessity to the freedom of transcendence. The dwarf in the Śiva icon is placed at the alpha point of the vertical parameter of sublimation while the crescent moon which marks the yogi's final attainment at the omega is shown as a gentle light shining in the firmament. The secret of sublimation is a gradual rising through a series of disciplines in which your acceptance of tension is followed by a release. You suffer an irritation to restructure yourself to be more and more sympathetic until you come to the climax of compassion. Thus at the gross end is aversion and at the sublime height is compassion.

A truly rich person is one who has overcome all needs. One becomes free of need only after attaining the perfection of the plenum. All prayers, supplications and petitions come from a hungry mind, a thirsty mouth and a soul plagued by a sense of want. This mainly happens because of an illusory visualization of the images of values existing outside one's being. A person fancies that another person is beautiful and is to be possessed. It is not always physical beauty that infatuates. The infatuation of another can be somebody wielding power. So one denounces oneself as a powerless person and craves power or the powerful person. Others crave ownership of the riches of the world. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, the propitiation of *praṇava*, *aumkāra* is prescribed as a remedial measure to overcome the unquenchable thirst for possession. If one can release oneself from the disease of craving and reach the other end of the scale, one becomes a person overwhelmed with the grace that fills the soul. In such a state one has perfect agreement with everyone and without any hitch in one's mind, can pass on all one's possessions to others by simply giving consent, *AUM*. Therefore *praṇava* is described in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* as a word of consent (*anujñā vākya*).

The last and final phase of sublimation is to come out of the icy cold ocean of tears in which unimaginative wretches drown themselves. They are veritable *śudras* because they always melt in sorrow. The word *śudra* is derived from the word *śoka* or sorrow. One who melts in sorrow is called a *śudra*. This is not a social status given to someone by a third party. It is by one's own option that one becomes a sorrowful person. In Western psychiatry people who are inflicting sorrowful states upon themselves are called masochists. Like being addicted to an opiate, such a person loves to deny everything bright and beautiful and voluntarily resigns himself or herself to the depth of depression. Like an octopus which makes its own environment murky, these unfortunate people make themselves spiritually blind. If you just know that you are the blissful spirit which is seen in pure existence, in the certitude of knowledge, and in the summum bonum of values, the paralysis of the soul can be gotten rid of. These are the three-fold disciplines of sublimation given to us in verses six and seven.



Mantra Eight

*sa paryagācchukram akāyam avraṇam
asnāviraṃ śuddham apāpavidham
kavirmaniṣi paribhūḥ svayambhūr-
yāthātathyato 'rthān vyadadhāt
śāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ*

That environs,
pure and transparent,
bodiless, flawless,
devoid of anatomical system,
sinless, poetic wisdom permeating,
self-born, empirically valid, eternal,
functionally distributed evenly.

A mystery that has been gladdening the human mind from the dawn of our spiritual and aesthetic history is poetry. The mark of poetry is that it touches the innermost core of our sensibility and that it is readily recognized as a precious pearl of wisdom which transcends our ability to describe it in total significance. Pythagoras postulated that God created the world with mathematical harmony. The *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* goes even one step further and confirms that everything is contained in the truthful wisdom of poetry. Referring to the pure essence of poetics the ṛṣi says, "That environs everything."

A person may write or articulate a poem in a language familiar to him or her, but the true poem is not the words that are heard. It is a mysterious presence that cannot be fully clothed with words. Or we may say that a true poem is a self-effulgent truth which is many times more impressive than the expression of the poet. The poet may not succeed in finding all the appropriate words that can impart the essence and wonder of the truth that has chosen him or her to be an instrument of poetic expression. But the indwelling spirit of poetry is so rich and vital that it can penetrate through the clumsiness of the poet's linguistic devices and directly reach the soul of the listener or reader. Wisdom presents itself with a 'bang', using the word only as a vehicle or carrier and the poet becomes like a glorified farmer whose spoken or written word immediately finds the fertile field of the worthy listener's mind. A single word that transpires between poet and critic or admirer multiplies into a million sproutings. In one sense we can say, "In the beginning was poetry, the Word was with poetry, and poetry is the world of words."

A megaton bomb with atomic capability can perhaps demolish an entire city with millions of people in the flash of a second. Poetry, on the other hand, can reach the heart of the world's population through millennia and create a world of beauty, truth, justice and compassion. It can give mankind an ever-transforming direction of mobility through ages.

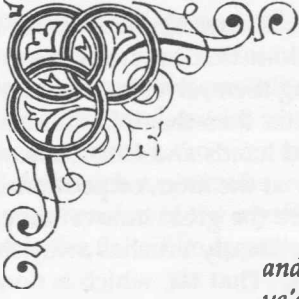
What was presented in the first verse of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* as *īśā* is presented in the eighth verse as "the poetic wisdom that environs everything." People all over the world have been making themselves sort of playful children by creating gods which are now no better than the dolls children play with which have painted staring eyes and rigid hands and feet. Such an anthropomorphic image of God, worshipped daily at the altar, or petitioned to with lamentful supplications, is considered to be the great innovation or contribution of religions. The *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* ruthlessly brushes away the notion of a caricatured God and categorically says, "That *īśā*, which is none other than the spirit of poetry, has no body, *akāyam*." As it does not belong even to the language with which it is shrouded, the syntactical or metrical errors of the poet cannot touch the essence of the poetry with the blemishes of his creation. The *ṛṣi* describes it as *avranam*, not ulcerating.

Poetry does not come as an addendum to the poet's sensory stimulation. What makes poetry valid is its universal sensitivity and not its sensory conceivability. When true poetry flashes like lightning from the soul of a poet, the bliss with which it reverberates in the sky of poetry will make similar reverberations in the minds of the connoisseurs of poetry. The profundity of its secret suggestion can be even a million-fold stronger than that experienced by the primeval poet himself. This aspect of poetry is called *dhvani*. One of India's greatest critics of poetics, *Ānandavardhana*, wrote a monumental book called *Dhvanyāloka*. It was commented on by *Abhinavagupta* in his *Locana*.

Only eternal truth which appeals to all of humanity can be truly called poetry and therefore no poetry can be sinful. Sin is the product of a narrow vision. Poetry is always generous and large hearted. God is without name, but the source of poetry is to be named. The most appropriate name is *kavi*. *Kavi* is a synonym for *ṛṣi*, the seer, one who is endowed with insight and one who has a mind to contemplate or ponder over truth. Hence a poet is also called a *manīṣī*. Seeing truth, symbolizing truth into an image, and then making that image a vehicle of understanding for all of humanity for all time to come is the craft of the poet. It is with that craft that a conceivable world is formally sculpted into ideas and presented to every mind. Thus what is infused into the human mind as knowledge infuses our subjectivity with poetry. This is a spontaneous manifestation not willed, fashioned, or privately generated by any agent. Hence the *ṛṣi* says *paribhūḥ syambhūḥ*: functionally distributed evenly.

In spite of its universality, subjectivity and spirit-like essence, poetry has an empirical relevance in every living context. It is not the heritage or patrimony of the elite, or those of noble birth, or of socially ornate people who hold titles of eminence. Poems come with spontaneity as much in a child's mind as in the intuition of an erudite mature person. Poetry can come in the lisping of a baby, or in the floundering of an insane fool. It belongs to all. Poetry comes as an assignment to raise the nobility of any person's conscience at least for a split second, and its cumulative effect is the enhancing of the worthwhileness of humanity's essential poetic mind.

Only very rarely in a book of the religious masses do we come across such an astounding presentation of the Supreme in such a matchless expression of a certitude that can be both sung and lived.



Mantra Nine

*andham tamaḥ praviśanti
ye'avidyām upāsate
tato bhūya iva te tamo
ya u vidyāyām ratāḥ*

Into blinding darkness
enter those who worship ignorance.
And into still greater darkness as it were
enter those who delight in knowledge itself.

Mantra Ten

*anyadevāhur vidyayā
anyadāhur avidyayā
iti śuśrūma dhīrāṇām
ye nas tad vicacakṣire*

Other is the use of knowledge, they say,
the use of ignorance is another.
Thus we have heard from the wise
who have explained that to us.

Mantra Eleven

*vidyām cāvidyām ca
yas tad vedobhayam saha
avidyayā mṛtyum tīrtvā
vidyayā'mṛtam aśnute*

One who knows both of these together,
knowledge and ignorance,
having overcome death with ignorance,
enjoys immortality with knowledge.

In this study one of the major paradoxes in life is closely scrutinized and a sound perspective is given to us to resolve the anomalies of our lives. Most people are like blindfolded horses. They have a set track on which they pursue day to day life. They are governed by unexamined conventions and clannish or tribalistic fetishes. The one person they see somewhat distinctly is their personal self. Around that self they see their family members huddled together. They feel bound to their families with obligations. For such people blood is thicker than anything else. Very few of them can look beyond to the common plight of other people who are outside the circle of their family or clan. They do not like any change in their lives. Their today is like their yesterday, and they want their tomorrow to be strictly like today. Just as they cannot see anyone other than their kinsmen as loveable or adorable, they are also deaf to anything which is spoken outside their closed circle. In spite of the multitudes living around them proclaiming their faiths, reciting their prayers, or exemplifying their philosophies, these conservative people understand only the language of their few favorites.

In India there are millions of people who think that they will be polluted if someone outside their class touches them. Even the best among them will not dare to eat in another house, let alone marry a woman who belongs to another class, tribe or caste. Thus in a country of vast magnitude like India we can find people living in air-tight compartments of tradition. They have a number of loyalties - loyalties to the prejudices of their community, loyalty to their cherished superstitions, loyalty to a small geographical area to which they belong, loyalty to their mother tongue which is usually a dialect. There has never been an occasion for them to examine the goals, values and validity of their lives. They are ritualistic in their ablutions, ritualistic in their eating and drinking, ritualistic in receiving a guest and even ritualistic in abusing and fighting. It is as if they are in a state of blind worship. They have set preferences of certain forms which alone are beautiful to them. Only a few familiar intonations of sounds are music to their ears. Other people's music is always noise and they cannot tolerate it. They are very choosy about what they will eat. Their consideration is not hygiene, but conformity to tradition.

They make neat compartmentalizations of ideals. They have no strength or courage to live their ideals but they will flout them. They are like imbeciles when it comes to the compulsive urge of sex. They have two kinds of ethics about sex - a total ban on sex in the daytime and in the public, and the indulgence of a brute in their private lives. They make their gods also in their own image. They are willing to make any bloody sacrifice if they see in it a superstitious promise of a future gain. In spite of all the progress man has made through ages, a good majority of the human species cannot claim any superiority to the carnivorous animals of the forest. The *ṛṣi* pities the mechanical and compulsive life of such brute-like people. He classifies them as the worshippers of nescience. They are slaves to their wants. Hunger and sex play the most vital role in deciding their short-term and long-term planning. In spite of all the examples set by the saviours and teachers of the world, these masses still live in the darkest dungeons of ignoble strife.

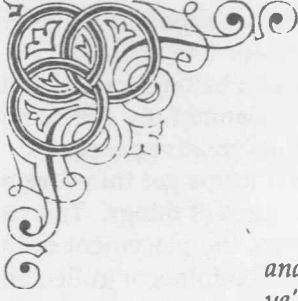
We have another group of people among us. They are intelligent and erudite. They can speak on the origin of the world; they are familiar with the most subtle speculations in religion and science. They think of themselves as the luminaries of the world. They look down upon others as if uneducated people are a pack of worthless barbarians. They sit in their ivory towers. They are so very clean that they cannot afford to go near the dwelling place

of an ordinary man. Their words are so precious that they do not want to waste them on people of little intelligence. Their pearls of wisdom are not to be placed before the pigs and dogs among humans. They spend long hours in dignified silence splitting hairs of logic or grammar. They are perfectionists. For fear of making mistakes they will refrain from all activities. They can tell how many subatomic particles there are in an oxygen atom, or how many stars are two to five hundred light years away from us. But they do not know who is living in the flat next to theirs. Some of them even do not know the name of the chef who cooks for them, or the chauffeur who is driving them around. They have no time to think of petty things. They are busy with matters of great consequence.

If the compulsive brute is pestered with obsessions, these highly perfected types have developed pathologic inhibitions in relating themselves with their fellow humans. The *r̥ṣi* calls them the "worshippers of science." The sage thinks of the unfortunate victims of biological, psychological, sociological, and communal compulsions as blind people living in darkness. He thinks of the perfectionists who strain away every bacteria and virus from the air they breathe as blinded in a darkness eternally doomed. Such is the sorrowful figure we get of this world when we look for a normal person who can discriminate between the necessary and the contingent, and between the essential and the superficial.

After clearly describing the characteristics of the two main groups of people who are so sadly afflicted with the loss of their value vision, the *r̥ṣi* speaks of a common sense approach to life. There is a certain merit in carrying out the apportioned duties assigned to one with loyalty and dignity which brings natural results to one who engages in his or her activities. One can own and also share these benefits with others. There is also great merit in the dedicated engagement of people who are always interested in the furtherance of insight into the structural and functional aspects of life at all levels and in all fields. The discoveries and innovations of spiritual scientists like the gurus and masters and physical scientists who are tirelessly working in their fact-finding pursuits which have rid the world of various kinds of slavery and many killer diseases. Thus the pursuit of the worker and the pursuit of the thinker bring beneficial results even though the benefits are characteristically different.

After making the distinction described above, the *r̥ṣi* glorifies the achievements of both paths. The path of *karma* or action gives a person a chance to be instrumental in bringing welfare to the world at large. One's action need not necessarily be confined to one's personal interest, or to the specific time to which one belongs. It can be a contribution into the work bank where cumulative results can benefit not only all of humanity but also the entire ecosystem of which a working person is an integral part. By carefully seeing the relation between cause and effect we can improve our programs of action every day so that the world can become more and more rid of its evil practices. Even in mundane things such as keeping a farm, the worker can develop a system of ecology by which the earth, water and air can all be kept as pure as possible and the use of thermal energy can be revised so that the balance of entropy is not tilted. The sage puts it in a metaphorical way and says that the person engaged in unitive action can transcend death. By death he means dislocation in the continuity of a culture. He admires the insight of the wise and he is hopeful that ultimately we can live a life which will enhance human dignity and immortalize the cherished values of humanity.



Mantra Twelve

*andham tamaḥ praviśanti
ye'asambhūtim upāsate
tato bhūya iva te tamo
ya u sambhūtyāṁ ratāḥ*

Into blinding darkness
enter they who worship non-becoming .
Into darkness greater than that, as it were,
enter they who delight in becoming.

Mantra Thirteen

*anyad evāhuḥ sambhavād
anyadāhur asambhavāt
iti śuśrūma dhīrānām
ye nas tad vicacakṣire*

Other is that which pertains to becoming, they say ,
that which pertains to non-becoming is another.
Thus we have heard it from the wise
who have explained that to us.

Mantra Fourteen

*sambhūtim ca vināśam ca
yas tad vedo 'bhayaṁ saha
vināśena mṛtyum tīrto
sambhūtyā' amṛtam aśnute*

One who knows both of these together,
becoming and destruction,
having overcome death with destruction,
enjoys immortality with becoming.

We live in a world which presents endless variations in the forms and shapes of things. In Sanskrit form is called *rūpam* and shape is called *ākṛti*. Form is the boundary of any body that exists and belongs primarily to our visible perception. Shape on the other hand is meaningfully devised either by nature or God or by the technological insight of creative people.

Evolution is a process by which meaningful forms get transformed into useful shapes. Useful shapes occur in the structures of things. This can be easily seen from the shape of our hands and legs, the placement of the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, and within the mouth the foodpipe, or gullet, and the wind pipe which lead to the stomach and the lungs respectively. Even if we look at one of our arms we are sure to be impressed by the shape of the shoulder blade, the socket and ball arrangement of the upper limb fitted into the trunk, the shape of the elbow, the flexibility of the wrist, and the triple division in the forefingers and the two joints of the thumb. The shape of all these parts gives extreme efficiency to the arm and hand to do manifold activities. These natural shapes of human limbs are all *ākṛtis*.

Before the world came into being, there were no shapes and hence ancient scriptures speak of the shapeless amorphous being which was prior to the evolution of the world. It is called the *avyākṛtam*, the nonformative period of manifestation of the world. The state of *avyākṛtam* is also called *asambhūti*. Before the child becomes exposed to the activities of the persons and things around it, very little coordination is effected in the central nervous system of the child and its various glands. Consequently the child also has within it a state of *asambhūti* or *avyākṛtam*. Parents, teachers, neighbors and such elders occupy themselves with the responsibility of bringing coordination in the child's faculties so that it will begin to see what relevant functions are "out there" in the world to fit into its daily programs. Where there is no coordination or knowledge of the appropriateness of shapes and consequential relationship of one shape with another, the child is disposed to a state of inaction such as we see in an imbecile or an idiot. Certainly it is to be lamented when a child is lost in this sad way. In the present mantra such a state of *asambhūti* is considered to be one of despair. It is like a blind person to whom no aid is given to establish an orientation in the world. Less and less knowledge means less and less coordination. The idea of purposiveness and one's commitment to it comes only when a person can appreciate how efficiently one can use one's many faculties to implement a number of useful activities.

A normal human being does not get enough opportunity to discover even 20 % of his or her innate potentials and possibilities for achieving technical skills. Here technical skill is a blanket phrase which covers all other skills - moral, aesthetic, intellectual, spiritual and organizational. The world is like a super machine of cosmic dimension. Every person in the world is so placed that he or she has to play a vital role in maintaining the world in its maximum harmony. If a person is not conversant with his or her assignment in this world, it is like becoming insensitive and thus a dysfunctional part of the world. One becomes acutely benumbed with one's *asambhūti*. Even in disastrous situations of dire consequences the insensitive person does not see oncoming danger and succumbs to it. So it is only appropriate to say that a person lost in *asambhūti* or inability to program is in a perpetual position of losing opportunities and even life. In the previous pairing of nescience and science we saw the compulsion which comes to a person because of ignorance. In that case one is obsessed with biologic urges, psychologic compulsions, social pressures, political discriminations and so on and so forth. The

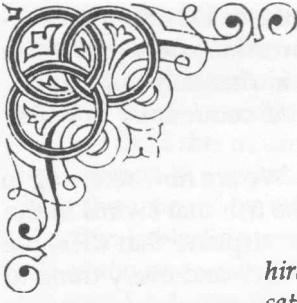
other side of the same ignorance is presented here as the world of negative inhibitions. A strong sense of fear, wretchedness, or worthlessness prevents a person from carrying out his or her duties which are intrinsically imperative. Thus the person concerned becomes out of place in the community to which he or she belongs.

Now let us see the counterpart of *asambhūti*. We are now referring to the world of shapes. The bird that flies in the air, the fish that swims in the water, the canoe or boat that plies in the river, the airplane that flies, the spaceship that goes to other planets - what enables each and every thing to function is the shape which is either given to it or acquired through evolution. Our fingers are so formed, our wrists made flexible and our eyes placed at such an angle that we can supervise any function that is coming from the tips of our fingers. From childhood we learn how to hold a pencil or pen and make shapes or figures or letters on a slate or paper. From there on, that skill develops and we learn how to express our ideas by putting them into words which can be scribbled on a paper. That process goes on elaborating until one becomes a great poet, philosopher or scientist. This enables a person even to change the world by putting ideas in the minds of people such as Equality, Fraternity, and Liberty. A single person can move millions and bring a revolution which can impact generations through millennia.

Those who blindly pursue the negative possibilities of *sambhūti* precipitate wars, weapons and destructive devices of science. They can interfere with anything, even the genes of the vegetative or animal world and destructure what the world has taken millions of years to achieve and stabilize. The dangers of *sambhūti* are enormous and diabolic.

We have both in us. We have unformulated psychic energies which limit our personalities to at being half or three-fourths formed. Many of our gifts are lying buried in the unformulated person in us. Many of our demonic atrocities come from the tragically evolved and dangerously shaped bends of our minds. The *rsi* has seen all this. He cautions us and urges us to take remedial measures. But he also shows the merits of both. A man who has never tasted alcoholic spirits has no idea of the delights of an alcoholic. That alienation from alcohol is not to be despaired. He does not lose anything by that. If the inefficiency of a Third World country means it does not aspire to create atomic weapons, the world is only benefitted. This *asambhūti* is meritorious. The *sambhūti* by which farmers of knowledge who have effected and succeeded in a Green Revolution is a great blessing to this world. These are the meritorious aspects of *sambhūti* and *asambhūti*.

We can take full advantage of our non-pursuit and pursuit only if we know how to pair these opposites in a reciprocal manner. Such is the wisdom of *asambhūti* and *sambhūti* that is taught by the wise sages of the *Upaniṣads*.



Mantra Fifteen

*hiraṇmayena pātrena
satyasyāpihitam mukham
tattvaṁ pūṣannapāvṛṇu
satyadharmāya dr̥ṣṭaye*

The face of truth is covered
with a golden disk.
That, O Nourisher (Sun),
may you remove
so that I see
the truthful performance of duties.

In the *Bhagavad Gīta* heaven is contrasted with hell. Heaven is described as that which is extensive. It belongs to the range of infinitude. The opposite of the wide and the infinite is the narrow and the finite. The most specific and finite point of consciousness that throbs in a human being is one's ego consciousness. One recognizes one's ego as "I" or "I am." In the possessive case it is "mine." Thus hell is postulated to be the most concentrated pain one gets at the core of one's egoistic consciousness. Heaven is supposed to be the range of a wide consciousness where the individual and his or her ego are considered irrelevant. The glory of heaven is its all-filling divine presence. So naturally hell is considered to be a dark dungeon where not even a semblance of grace is experienced.

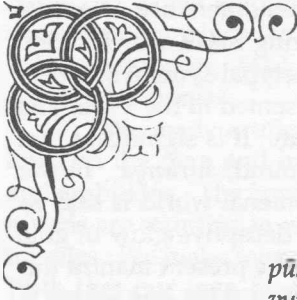
In the *Bhagavad Gīta* three gates to hell are mentioned. They are the lust for sexual indulgence (*kāmā*), the greed for gold, (*lobha*), and hatred with burning anger, (*krodha*). Erotic infatuation is a subjective vice, whereas the greed for gold or riches is an objective vice. Love for the yellow metal makes one down to earth. The great virtue of gold is its heaviness and the brilliant glitter it makes. The granite stones with which you can build a house or a bridge are practically of greater use value than gold. Compared to gold, iron is considered to be a base metal. However, it is the most useful metal used in all countries for rails and various components of buildings and bridges. But greed falls for the glow of gold. Gold is not edible. It is also not available in sufficient quantity for major metal work. Its use value is meager yet it acquired the exchange value on which commercialism and merchantilism are all well established. Gold symbolizes money and it has become the international guarantee for the use of various symbolic tokens of exchange value.

For several years reserve banks had to store several solid pieces of gold to establish clients and other nations' faith in the printed money. The gold standard is a facade in the world of transactions. In the days of the *Upaniṣads* there were no gold coins or banking systems. But even then the *ṛṣi*

could see how people can be deceived with the phenomenality of gold's shimmer. He presents the glow of gold as a deceiving mask which hides truth. In the Sanskrit language *hiraṇ*, gold, is an archetypal symbol of a perverted vision of value. Two mythological figures presented in the *Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavatā Purāṇa* are Hiraṇyakṣa and Hiraṇyakaṣipuḥ. It is significant that the names of these demons commence with the sound, *hiraṇya*. In the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* also, the origin of the phenomenal world is said to have occurred from a golden egg, *hiraṇyagarbha*. The deceptive glow of gold has an archetypal significance in the Indian mind. In the present mantra the hidden truth of the Absolute is said to be veiled by the golden hue which is another way of describing formal temptation.

In the pursuit of science, whether in the East or in the West, the seeker postulates a primary suspicion about the truthful validity of what appears before one's eyes. There is also the famous proverb, "All that glitters is not gold." It is universally accepted that the glitter of gold can hide truth from us. Even then, the wise men of the past broke through appearance to come to more substantial truth such as of the atom. In India the credit goes to Kanada, propounder of the *Vaiśeṣika Darśana*, who decided that behind the solidarity of objective matter what truly exists is the invisible atom. The atomists of Greece, Leucippus (5th Century BC) and his disciple Democritus, also came to the same conclusion.

In the present mantra the seeker of truth makes an appeal to the principle of creation to remove the deceiving veil which is like the golden disk that we see every morning which hides the true form of the sun. As we are more substantially benefitted by the solar energy than its fascinating colours in the morning or evening, the *ṛṣi* makes a direct appeal to the sun, addressing him as nourisher (*pūṣan*), and asks the sun to show us its indulgence of mercy to withhold the blinding light of its radiation so that we may see it in its truest nature. However mighty the sun is, both in magnitude and cosmic importance, the sun gets true recognition only if there is a seer on the earth who can see the light and admire the world illuminated by the sun. If the sun is the eye of the world, the eye is the sun of our souls. The importance comes not from the quantitative magnitude of the sun, but the qualitative bipolarity of the illuminating sun and the seeing eye which are interlinked for the creation of the visible world. The aspirant who qualifies himself or herself as a truthful performer of one's intrinsic duties (*satyadharman*), has a right to be admitted into the scheme of the world order. The person who sees is as much serving the purpose of God as the sun that shines from the firmament and keeps the world going through its alternation of day and night in rest and work. Here we see how the psychological factor of the ego is intrinsically connected with the cosmological function of the sun which presides over the solar system. Just as the sun is leading all the planets in their respective orbits, the eye is leading human beings as the pointer of their paths.



Mantra Sixteen

*pūṣānekarṣe yama sūrya prajāpatya
vyūha raśmīn samūha tejaḥ
yat te rūpam kalyāṇa tamam tatte paśyāmi
yo'sāvasau puruṣaḥ so'hamasmi*

O Nourisher of this world,
lone wanderer,
who gives a meaningful pause between events,
the supreme magnetic center of the heavens,
born of the primal father of all beings,
restrain thy beams.
Gather this brilliant effulgence.
Let me see that, your most auspicious form.
That Person (*puruṣa*) who shines in the sun,
let me assure myself that I am that.

The sun is there even before it appears to the world at dawn. Actually the sun neither rises nor sets. When we come to know the sun, it is already the all-enveloping light. In that respect the sun is like *īśā*. *īśā* is the all-illuminating knowledge with which the entire world is revealed to us. At the time of the inception of a new unit of life in the mother's womb, nobody is aware that a person is in the process of manifestation. Just as the sun's light envelops and illuminates everything in the visible world, when the child occurs to the phenomenal world, the awareness of the child reaches out to the details of the phenomenal world through the senses and the mind comprehends the objective world. Then it is as if the light of the Self is enveloping all objects of vision. We see three parallel sources of existential reality, substantial knowledge, and the commencement of transformations. There is *īśvara* at the theological level, sun at the cosmological level, and the Self at the psychological level. All three have the characteristics of being presented to experience and being inaccessible to experience. The seekers of God pine for God-realization and wait for that occasion to happen. Those who sit in the night and wait for light impatiently look to the east to see the dawn blushing the eastern sky. Those who are imprisoned in the physical mesh of this body do many disciplines to experience the Self as the irrefutable truth of their life. The *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* often compares the awareness of the Self, its self-founded knowledge, to the metaphoric emanation of light which is the nature of the sun. Thus science and nescience are compared to light and darkness.

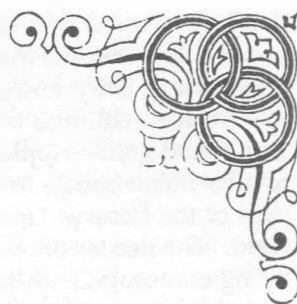
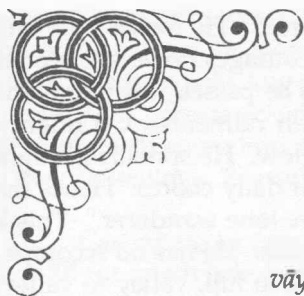
For us living in the world, the sun is our rouser. He comes punctually to our own doorstep, irrespective of whether we live in a shack, a neat house, or a palace with golden turrets. He has a million beams which are like his hands. With them he gently touches every being in his path and rouses

the dew covered tiny grasses and the mammoth trees. He fondles the bug and the bear and the man and the monkey. He encourages flowers to bloom and birds to chirp and sing. The world rejoices as he passes. He paints the sky in deep colours, adorns all forms with golden raiments. On mighty waves and gentle ripples he leaves a mark of his glow. He spreads his light to all sentient beings to get up and start doing their daily chores. Hence the sage of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* calls him *ekaṛṣi* "O ye lone wanderer." This is right. The master of our day goes alone in his rounds. He has no accompanying entourage with him. The sun goes from hill to hill, valley to valley, and shore to shore, with the benevolent intention of nourishing all forms of life. Hence the sage calls him *pūṣan*, the Nourisher. He combines in him both the father and the mother. He is the bringer of energy like the breadwinning father. Like the mother he cooks the food for living organisms in every green leaf that turns to him. He has helpmates like the wind (*mārut*) and the moisture bringing rain (*varūṇa*). The green we see in the leaf is the solar bank in which the nourishment for living beings is stored. So it is appropriate to call the sun *pūṣan*.

The sun is a great moderator. He keeps a time clock for the world. When the time ticks there is a pause between two seconds. That is reflected in the winking of an eye, the beating of a heart, the pulsation in an artery, the alternation of day and night, the pause between two microtones. It comes between a death and a subsequent birth. He is the pause which we mark with a comma. He is not rushing on or whirling with the mad frenzy of a flywheel. Action and pause, tension and release, wakeful activity and restful sleep - all these are attributed to the mysterious commandment of the sun.

Hence the sun is called *yama*. Both birth and death come from him as his two benevolent gifts to the world. He fixes everything through his power of attraction. He is the central magnet of the solar system. All planets are held at a safe distance from each other to move at different speeds around his august presence with rhythmic movements. Hence he is called *sūrya*.

He is commissioned by the Lord of Life who presides over all of us, hence he is called *prajāpatya*. He is both the original life and its echoing reflection. This can be the review of a person in old age who had a daily encounter with the sun, greeting him every day and missing him every night. He is the witness of all actions (*karma sāksi*). A person who desired to live a hundred years doing his or her duties has now come to the fag end of the performance. He or she is lovingly laid to rest with legs stretched, hands at rest, and eyelids heavy with the call of time to retire. The old man or woman slowly opens his or her imploring eyes to have a last look at the most trusted friend and caretaker of a whole life-time and makes the following supplication: "O venerable protector, my eyes are too weak to look at your dazzling beams. Please restrain them for a moment. Your form is auspicious to see. Let me have your caressing look and consoling glance for the last time in my life. I want to get from you one last assurance. That is why I want to look full into your eyes. All through my life, in the morning when I offered my oblations to you, I addressed you as *sūrya nārāyaṇa* because the ever-present illumination in you comes from the Absolute on whom you and I depend as *nārāyaṇa*. And every time I saw you, I gratefully paid my homage to that One which lends its light to me, addressing it as *akṣi nārāyaṇāya*. You are a cosmic reality; my status is of the psychologic microcosm. In fact you and I and the Supreme are one and the same, *so 'ham*."



Mantra Seventeen

*vāyur anilam amṛtam athedaṁ
bhasmāntaṁ sārīram
aum krato smara kṛtam smara
krato smara kṛtam smara*

Breath enters into the atmospheric wind.
This body will end in ashes.
AUM, remember the purpose of my doing actions,
remember what I have done.

A person's life on earth closes with the release of the vital breath that had been like a bolt holding all the limbs of the living organism together. The *Upaniṣad* refers again and again to the parallel principles of the macrocosm and the microcosm. Mantra Four describes the insertion of the cosmic vital principle (*mātariśvān*) into the psychosomatic organisms of individuated beings. In this verse that cosmic wind of the world (*anila*) is called back to receive the vital breath of the person (*vāyu*). The animation of the *ātman* in the corporeal body is deducted, leaving only the elemental remainder which was once the form and shape of a person. Then all that is left is to give back to each element what had been taken from it. The solid body is transformed into dust which merges with the dust of the earth from which the body was fashioned. The moisture of the body returns to the element water. The combustible part burns for a little while with a crackling flame, going back into universal fire. Of the five *prāṇās* which were maintaining the body, a residue remains to carry out the final disintegration. Finally, that also escapes into the atmosphere. There is no longer any person to express desire. But individuation is still around as a quality of how the person lived. The gross body and the subtle body are gone. Ultimately there is the last mark that once a person lived here conceiving many thoughts, making many plans, achieving many goals, engaged in dreams while asleep and doing deeds in wakeful life.

The departing soul has none of the faculties of the individual. We are told that all of the impressions created by a person's deeds are nullified. But the essence of a person's intentions goes with them because death is only a pause. A door closes to this life and a door opens to the next life. The intentions become the causal consciousness which reenters a new body to continue the purposes which were being worked out by the person who was on earth. The last two lines of this mantra are attributed to the departing soul envisioned as lingering in the cremation ground to bid a final farewell to the world of memory. When a body dies, the ego dies and takes with it the mind and the power of judgement. But memory remains both in the soul of the dead person and in the world at large. Hence the repetition of the soul's last reminder, *krato smara, kṛtam smara, krato smara, kṛtam smara*.



Mantra Eighteen

*agne naya supathā rāye
asmān viśvāni deva vayunāni vidvān
yuyodhyasmad juhurāṇameno
bhūyiṣṭhām te nama uktim vidhema*

O fire, by a bright path lead us to prosperity,
shining one who knowest all the ways.
Keep far from us the sin that accrues as action.
Most ample expression of adoration
to you we render.

The last mantra of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* is a general prayer of all who have witnessed how their forerunners lived a full measure of life here and ultimately passed away. After the cremation of the dead person nothing of that person is left except the reminders of his or her deeds. Even when a person's deeds are not completely fulfilled, they are often remembered for the ideals they adopted to make their lives meaningful. Their words and deeds are an inspiration to other human beings to make the world better tomorrow. The one who has been in continuous contact and encounter with all living beings who have lived and gone and those who are still living here is the universal fire. The fire is seen in all its glory as light and heat in the sun. It is also in the innumerable shining bodies of the heavens. We human beings have been and are in closer touch with fire in the form of the light that brightens our homes. We use it every day to cook our food. Fire is there wherever natural combustion takes place. It is even in water because water is composed of hydrogen that burns and oxygen that is a catalyst for fire. It is seen in the acids and the alkalis. Fire is in the word which shines forth as meaning. It rouses our energy and inspires us to become active. Fire is in the sea and in the mountains, particularly in the volcanoes.

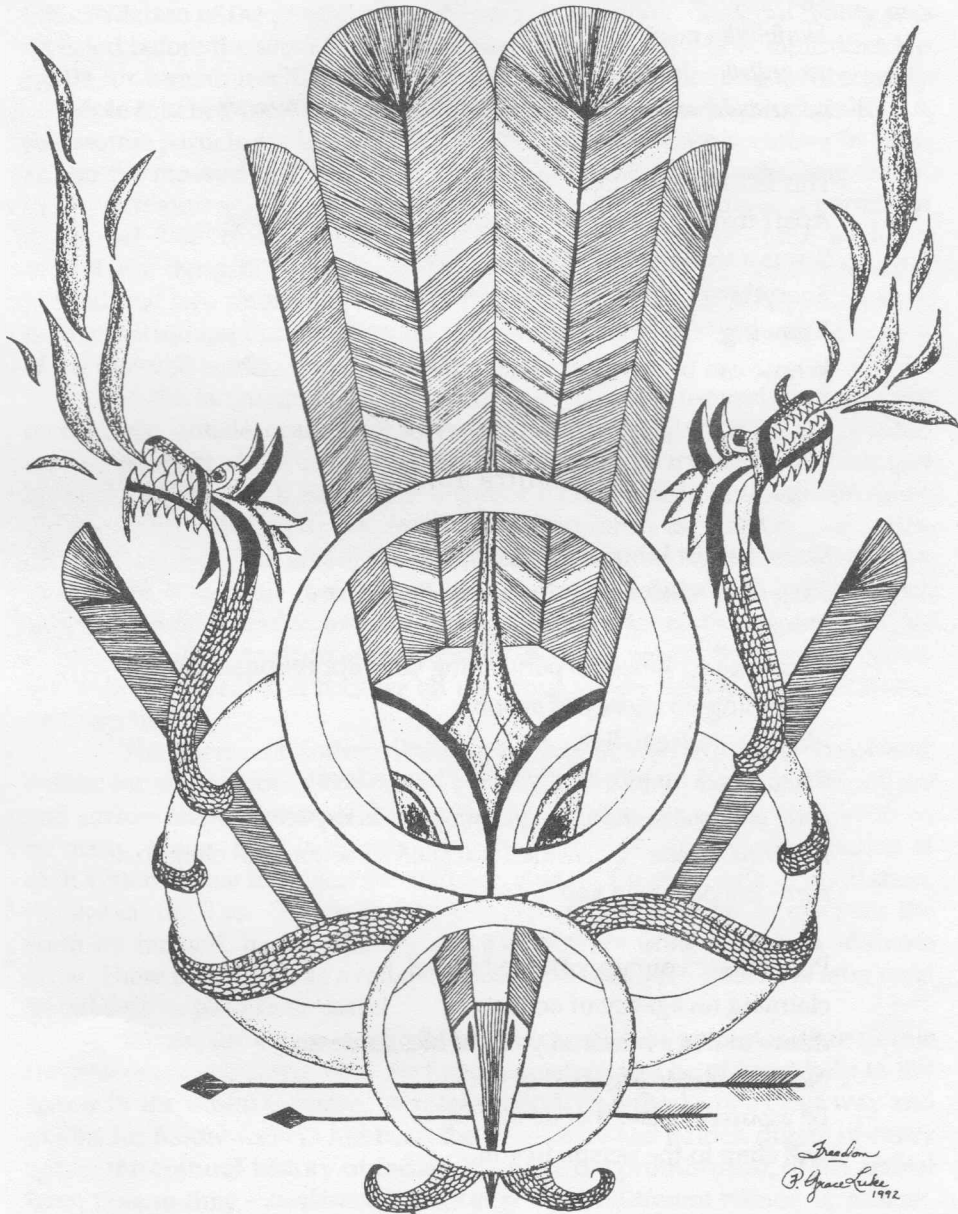
Nothing is closer to us than the fire which gives us light and warmth. Hence this universal prayer is addressed to God or the Self identified with fire. Supplication is made to the fire to lead us. Everywhere people pray to fire to lead them. There is the famous quote, "Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom; Lead thou me on . . . I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me." In the *Upaniṣads* also we read, "Lead us from darkness to light." In this prayer the light is related with the path. Jesus said, "I am your light and your path."

When we pray we expect that there is a benevolence in the Absolute which will respond to our prayer. Hence it is added, "lead us into the right path which will be beneficial to us." The common belief in India is that there are two paths. One path leads into the southern way called the *pitriyāna*, or smoky path. It will bring us back once again to live in this world to correct

our mistakes and become noble and virtuous to enter into the path of no return. The path of no return is called the path of light, *devayāna*. When a departed soul enters into this northern path, *uttarayāna*, he goes to the solar region and from there into the brilliance of the Absolute. A departed person's soul has no ability to conduct itself into the path of no return. Only the eternal witness who has been seeing both the deeds and the intentions of a person can decide whether a departed soul is qualified to go into the path of no return. This supplication is to ask for whatever is granted by one's own merit. The Absolute is the plenum which is always perfect and needs nothing. Each one of us is a gift given unto ourself by the Absolute. So all that we are capable of is folding our hands in reverence and adoration and saying, "Obeisance to you Lord, Obeisance!"

APPENDIX

Mantras in Sanskrit Transliteration and English with Word Meanings



Mantra One

*īśāvāsyam idam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyām jagat
tena tyaktena bhujñīthā ma grāhaḥ kasya sviddhanam*

īśāvāsyam - this is
idam sarvaṃ - this envelops all
yatkiñca jagatyām jagat - apart from this not even an iota
is left in the whole (it was a mistake to objectivise;
everything is back to its own - to *īśvara*)
tena tyaktena - knowing "That Thou Art"
bhujñīthā - enjoy
ma grāhaḥ - do not grab
kasya sviddhanam - whose can be the desired anyway

This is. This envelops All.
Apart from this not even an iota is left in the whole.
It was a mistake to objectivise.
Everything is back to its own, to *īśvara*.
Knowing "That Thou Art," enjoy; do not grab.
Whose can be the desired anyway?

Mantra Two

*kurvanneveha karmāṇi jijīviṣecchatam samāḥ
evam tvayi nānyatheto 'sti na karma lipyate nare*

kurvanneveha karmāṇi - performing your apportioned duties,
claiming no agency of action
jijīviṣet - desire to live
śatam samāḥ - a hundred years of blessedness
evam tvayi nānyatheto 'sti - nothing else is expected of you
na karma lipyate - be assured, no stain of action will cling to
nare - the person in you

Performing your apportioned duties,
claiming no agency of action,
desire to live a hundred years of blessedness.
Nothing else is expected of you.
Be assured, no stain of action
will cling to the person in you.

Mantra Three

*asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasāvṛtaḥ
tāmste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ*

asuryā nāma te lokā - there is a demonic world
andhena tamasāvṛtaḥ - enveloped by darkness, confused
ye ke cātmahano janāḥ - the marauders of the Self
tāmste pretyābhigacchanti - go into it, dead in Spirit

There is a demonic world enveloped by darkness, confused.
The marauders of the Self go into it, dead in Spirit.

Mantra Four

*anejadekam manaso javīyo
nainad devā āpnuvan pūroamarsat
taddhāvato 'anyānatyeti tiṣṭhat
tasminnapo mātariśvā dadhāti*

anejadekam - established forever, the One moves not
manaso javīyo - although faster than the mind
nainad devā āpnuvan - the senses do not find this
pūroamarsat - which has gone beyond
taddhāvato 'anyānatyeti tiṣṭhat - remaining steadfast, it transcends all
tasminnapo dadhāti - apportions each one's appropriate function in that
mātariśvā - the energizing nourisher

Established forever,
although faster than the mind, the One moves not.
The senses do not find this, which has gone beyond.
Remaining steadfast, it transcends all.
In that, the energizing nourisher (*mātariśvā*)
apportions each one's appropriate function.

Mantra Five

*tadejati tannaijati taddūre tadvantike
tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāsya bāhyataḥ*

tadejati - that does move
tannaijati - that does not move
taddūre - that is very far
tadvantike - that is very close
tadantarasya - that is inside
sarvasya - everything
tad u - that is
sarvasyāsya - of everything
bāhyataḥ - outside (also)

That does move,
that does not move.
That is very far,
that is very close.
That is inside of everything,
that is outside of everything (also).

Mantra Six

*yastu sarvaṇi bhūtānyātmanyevānupaśyati
sarvabhūteṣu cātmānamtato na vijugupsate*

yastu - the one who
sarvaṇi - all
bhūtāni - beings
ātmani eva - in the *ātman* (Self) alone
anupaśyati - continually seeing
sarva bhūteṣu - like that in all manifested factors
tataḥ - that person (because of such a vision)
na - never
vijugupsate - becomes repulsed

The one who continually sees
all beings in the *ātman* (Self) alone,
like that, in all manifested factors the Self also,
that person, because of such a vision,
never becomes repulsed.

Mantra Seven

*yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtānyātmaivābhūd vijānataḥ
tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvam anupaśyataḥ*

yasmin - in whom
sarvāṇi bhūtani - all beings
ātma eva abhūt - as the Self alone
vijānataḥ - known
tatra - to one (who)
kaḥ mohaḥ - what delusion
kaḥ śokaḥ - what sorrow
ekatvam - unity
anupaśyataḥ - beholds

In whom all beings are known as the Self alone,
what delusion is there or what sorrow
to one who beholds this unity?

Mantra Eight

*sa paryagācchukram akāyam avraṇam asnāvīram śuddham apāpavidham
kavīrmanīṣī paribhūḥ svayambhūr yāthātathyato'rthān
vyadadhācchāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ*

saḥ paryagāt - that environs
śukram - transparent
akāyam - bodiless
avraṇam - flawless
asnāvīram - devoid of anatomical system
śuddham - pure
apāpavidham - sinless
kavīr - the essence of poetry
manīṣī paribhūḥ - all-permeating wisdom
svayambhū - Self-born
yāthātathyataḥ - empirically valid
arthān vyadadhāt samābhyaḥ - functionally distributed evenly
śāśvatībhyaḥ - of the eternal

That environs, pure and transparent,
bodiless, flawless, devoid of anatomical system,
sinless, poetic wisdom permeating,
self-born, empirically valid, eternal,
functionally distributed evenly.

Mantra Nine

*andham tamaḥ praviśanti ye'avidyām upāsate
tato bhūya iva te tamaḥ ya u vidyāyām ratāḥ*

andham - blinding
tamaḥ - darkness
praviśanti - enter into
ye - those who
avidyām - ignorance
upāsate - worship
tataḥ bhūyaḥ iva te tamaḥ - still greater darkness as it were
ya u - and those who
vidyāyām - in knowledge itself
ratāḥ - delight

Into blinding darkness
enter those who worship ignorance.
And into still greater darkness as it were
enter those who delight in knowledge itself.

Mantra Ten

*anyadevāhur vidyayā anyadāhur avidyayā
iti śuśrūma dhīrāṇām ye nas tad vicacakṣire*

anyadevāhur - other is they say
vidyā - the use of knowledge
anyadāhur avidyayā - the use of ignorance is another they say
iti śuśrūma - thus we hear
dhīrāṇām - from the wise
ye - who
vicacakṣire - have explained
tat - that
naḥ - to us

Other is the use of knowledge, they say,
the use of ignorance is another.
Thus we have heard from the wise
who have explained that to us.

Mantra Eleven

*vidyām cāvidyām ca
yas tad vedobhayam saha
avidyayā mṛtyum tīrtvā
vidyayā mṛtam aśnute*

vidyām ca avidyām ca - knowledge and ignorance
yaḥ - one who
veda - knows
tat ubhayam - these both
sah - together
avidyayā - with ignorance
mṛtyum - death
tīrtvā - having overcome
aśnute - enjoys
amṛtam - immortality
vidyayā - with knowledge

One who knows both of these together,
knowledge and ignorance,
having overcome death with ignorance,
enjoys immortality with knowledge.

Mantra Twelve

*andham tamaḥ praviśanti ye'asambhūtim upāsate
tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u sambhūtyām rataḥ*

andham - blinding
tamaḥ - darkness
praviśanti - enter into
ye - those who
asambhūtim - non-becoming
upāsate - worship
tataḥ bhūya iva te tamaḥ - greater darkness than that, as it were
ya u - and those who
sambhūtyā - becoming
rataḥ - delight in

Into blinding darkness
enter they who worship non-becoming .
Into darkness greater than that, as it were,
enter they who delight in becoming.

Mantra Thirteen

*anyad evāhuḥ sambhavoād anyadāhur asambhavoāt
iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nas tad vicacakṣire*

anyad āhuḥ - other is they say
sambhavoāt - what pertains to the world of becoming
anyad āhuḥ - other is they say
asambhavoāt - that which pertains to non-becoming
iti śuśruma - thus we have heard
dhīrāṇām - from the wise
ye - who
vicacakṣire - have explained
tat - that
naḥ - to us

Other is that which pertains to becoming, they say ,
that which pertains to non-becoming is another.
Thus we have heard it from the wise
who have explained that to us.

Mantra Fourteen

*sambhūtim ca vināśam ca yas tad vedo'bhayaṁ saha
vināśena mṛtyum tīrtvā sambhūtyā'amṛtam aśnute*

sambhūtim ca - becoming
vināśam ca - and destruction
yaḥ - one who
tat ubhayaṁ - these both
saha - together
veda - knows
vināśena - with destruction
mṛtyum - death
tīrtvā - passes over
sambhūtyā - with becoming
aśnute - enjoys
amṛtam - immortality

One who knows both of these together,
becoming and destruction,
having overcome death with destruction,
enjoys immortality with becoming.

Mantra Fifteen

*hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitam mukham
tattoam pūṣannapāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye*

hiraṇmayena - of golden hue
pātreṇa - disk
satyasyā - of truth
apihitam - covered
mukham - face
tat - that
toam - you
pūṣan - O Nourisher (Sun)
apāvṛṇu - may remove
satyadharmāya - the truthful performance of duties
dṛṣṭaye - so that I see

The face of truth is covered with a golden disk.
That, O Nourisher (Sun), may you remove
so that I see the truthful performance of duties.

Mantra Sixteen

*pūṣanekarṣe yama sūrya prajāpatya vyūha raśmīn samūha tejah
yat te rūpam kalyāṇa tamam tatte paśyāmi yo 'sāvasau puruṣaḥ so 'hamasmi*

pūṣan - O nourisher of this world
ekarṣe - lone wanderer
yama - who gives a meaningful pause between significant events
sūrya - the supreme magnetic centre of the heavens
prajāpatya - born of the primal father of all beings
vyūha raśmīn - restrain your beams
samūha tejah - gather this brilliant effulgence
yat te rūpam kalyāṇa tamam - this your most auspicious form
tatte paśyāmi - let me see that
asau puruṣa - that Person (*puruṣa*)
yah saḥ - who (shines) in (the sun)
asau aham asmi - let me assure myself that I am that

O Nourisher of this world, lone wanderer,
who gives a meaningful pause between events,
the supreme magnetic center of the heavens,
born of the primal father of all beings,
restrain thy beams. Gather this brilliant effulgence.
Let me see that, your most auspicious form.
That Person (*puruṣa*), who shines in the sun,
let me assure myself that I am that.

Mantra Seventeen

*vāyur anilam amṛtam athedam bhasmāntam sārīram
aum krato smara kṛtam smara krato smara kṛtam smara*

vāyuh - breath
anilam - enters into the atmospheric wind
amṛtam athedam sārīram - this body will end in
bhasmāntam - ashes
aum - AUM
krato - the purpose of my doing actions
smara - remember
kṛtam - what I have done
smara - remember

Breath enters into the atmospheric wind.
This body will end in ashes.
AUM, remember the purpose of my doing actions,
remember what I have done.

Mantra Eighteen

*agne naya supathā rāye
asmān viśvāni deva vayunāni vidvān
yuyodhyasmad juhurāṇameno
bhūyiṣṭhām te nama uktim vidhema*

agne - O fire
naya - lead
asmān - us
supathā rāye - by a bright path to prosperity
viśvāni - all our efforts that fruition
vayunāni - actions and knowledge thereof
deva - shining one
vidvān - the knower of everything
juhurāṇam - always deceiving
enaḥ - the sin that accrues as action
yuyodhi - keep far
asmad - from us
te - to you
bhūyiṣṭhām - most ample
namauktim - expression of adoration
vidhema - we render

O fire, by a bright path to prosperity lead us,
shining one who knowest all the ways.
Keep far from us the sin that accrues as action.
Most ample expression of adoration to you we render.

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