

22. Eternal Truths

The Veda is the Mother of all the Sastras. The Veda emanated from God Himself as inhalation and exhalation. The great sages, who were the embodiment of the treasure gained by long ascetic practices, received Veda as a series of sounds and spread it over the world by word of mouth from preceptor to pupil. Since it was “heard” and preserved by generations, the Veda is known as Sruthi, “that which was heard or listened to.” The Veda is endless. Who composed the Vedas? Until today, it has not been possible to unveil their names. Those who recited it had perhaps no desire to earn renown, for the names are nowhere seen mentioned in the Vedas. Maybe they had attached no importance to their names, or clans or sects, or it is likely they had no kith or kin or clan. Whoever he or they may be, the sages were sure they were masters of all knowledge, for the sense of equality and equanimity found in the Veda is the innate quality of only such wise persons.

So it is very appropriate to infer that the Veda was given to the world only by persons endowed with all powers.

The word “Veda” originated from the root “*Vid*,” meaning “to know,” “*Vidam thu anena ithi Vedah.*” “That which reveals and makes clear all knowledge is Veda.” The Veda can be mastered neither by limited intellect nor by limited experience. The sacred Veda instructs all that one requires for his spiritual advancement. It instructs one in the means and methods to overcome all sorrows and grief. It instructs one in all the spiritual disciplines which can give unshaken peace. No one has understood correctly the beginning of the Veda or its end. So, it is hailed as *Anaadi* (Beginningless) and *Sanathana* (Eternal). Since the first and the last of the Veda are not known, it is *Nitya*, Everlasting. The intelligence of humans is tainted but since the Veda has no trace of taint, it is concluded that it cannot be a human product. So the Veda is also characterised as *Apourusheya* (Non-personal).

The Veda is its own authority. Each Vedic sound is sacred because it is part of the Veda. Those who have faith in the Veda and its authority can personally experience this. The great sages were enriched by such experiences and they have extolled it as the source of wisdom. These experiences are not bound by time or space. Their validity and value can be recognised not only in India but by people of all lands. They lay down basic truths, it can be asserted.

The Vedic religion originated, we do not know when; others came later. This is the difference. So, if the Absolute has to be known, it is not possible to succeed with the help of the skill and strength that man has. Human intelligence can operate only within certain limits. *Buddhigrahyam atheendriyam* (The intellect transcends the senses). But the Veda is beyond the reach of intelligence. Intelligence is restricted. It can deal only with facts discoverable by the senses and experiences related to these. It can act only in the area of the visible, the viable.

Mother Veda has been kind to her children—the human race. To sanctify its cravings and to uplift the race, she has posited the concept of Time—and its components, the years, months, days, hours, minutes and seconds. Even gods were declared to be bound by Time. The individual or Jiva is caught in the wheel of Time and Space and rotates with it, unaware of any means of escape. But really he is beyond the reach of Time and Space. The Veda is bent upon the task of making him know this Truth, and liberating him from this narrowness. Mother Veda is compassionate. She longs to liberate her children from doubt and discontent. She has no desire to inflame or confuse. Wise men know this well.

Gravitation has existed on earth since we do not know when. It had its origin along with the Creation of the Earth. The Earth and the Force of Gravitation are both inseparable, indistinguishable. Just because it is not recognised by a few or because it is not visible as such, it will be foolish to deny

its existence in the earth. But the fact is, no one knew the existence of this universal force, though it was there along with the Earth! The force was operating even when man was unaware of it. At last, after analysing various principles and observing various experiments, the Western physicist, Newton, announced that the Earth had the force of gravitation. The world accepted his statement and placed faith in its truth. But the force was operating all the time, even before the announcement by Newton. It did not start operating all of a sudden, when the experiments demonstrated it.

The Vedas are Eternal Truths. They existed even before the people of this land discovered, practised and experienced them. Just as Western physicists announced the existence of gravitation after their experiments, the ancients of this land demonstrated the innate authenticity of the Vedas through their own experience. Here too, the Veda existed long before it was discovered and put into practice. Newton's Laws of Gravitation benefited the whole world. They express universal truths applicable to all places and times. They are not confined to Western countries only. So too, the Veda is Truth, not merely for Bharath but for all people on earth.

It is not correct to claim that Bharath, or India, is the birthplace of the Vedas. The utmost that can be said is that they were discovered by the people of Bharath. To ask why a happening in one place did not take place in another place

also is the sign of a confused mind. The Divine Author decides what should happen when and where. As He decides, so it takes place. The atmosphere in India was congenial for the revelation and the growth of the Vedas. The Vedas were drawn towards the hearts of the sages of this land, this *Karma bhoomi* (earth), this *Yoga bhoomi* (land of Yoga) and this *Tyaga bhoomi*. Other lands pursued *Bhoga* (luxury) and so their atmosphere was overcharged with worldly aspirations and achievements. The Vedic message could not therefore be easily understood there. Since in India, the spiritual quest was sincerely pursued, along with material objectives, people here had the good fortune of the *Veda Matha*, Mother Veda, incarnating.

Of course, this does not mean that the Veda Matha has not blessed other lands or is absent therein. It is like the force of gravitation, present everywhere. The Veda is omnipresent. The heroic sages of Bharath were able to receive the Vedic Message as a result of their sadhana of denial and detachment as well as their capacity to concentrate and to experience the bliss resulting from practising it. They were so selfless and full of compassion and love that they shared with those who approached them what they had heard and enjoyed. They are therefore called “*Manthra Drishta*.” Through the long line of their disciples, the message has come down the ages and spread all over the land. Like a continuing flood, the mysterious Veda was “visualised” by the Sages as *Drishtas*. The Bharathiyas, people of this country, are well aware of this debt.

The scriptural texts of India—the Vedas, Vedangas, Upanishads, Smrithis, Puranas and Ithihasas—are repositories of profound wisdom. Each of them is an ocean of sweet sustaining milk. Each is sacred and sanctifying. The waters of the Ocean can never be diminished in volume however many pumps you ply to drain them. Enormous quantities of water are turned into steam by the hot rays of the sun, bundled into clouds, and returned to the earth as rain. This helps the harvesting of grain and renders the land green with vegetation. The wonder is that in spite of this tremendous uptake and downpour, the level of the ocean does not go down even by an inch. Furthermore, even though thousands of live rivers pour their waters into the seas, the level is not seen to increase. Similarly, the persons who have supplemented their knowledge of the scriptural texts with the awareness of their validity acquired by practising the lessons contained in them, are not affected by praise or blame, whatever the source and quantity. Their hearts will stay pure, unaffected and calm. The holy scriptures of India are strongholds of such sustaining lessons.

However, one can imbibe those lessons only to the extent of one’s patience and intelligent skill. After mastering the texts and gaining experience in putting the lessons into actual practice, one can share the light and the joy with others. The texts of India insist on the value of actual practice and the need to confirm the truths by experiencing their impact.

If a person desires to understand clearly the sacred books and scriptural texts of India, to imbibe their message,

he must learn the Sanskrit language. He cannot avoid that responsibility and that duty. The very mention of Sanskrit immediately arouses in many among us a prejudicial attitude. "It is the dead language of a dying culture. It is boosted by the fanatic attachment of antiquated conservatives," contemporary moderns declaim. They condemn the language as surviving only in meaningless formulae, in fast-vanishing rituals and ceremonies, in wedding rites and other futile exercises. It is a very difficult language to learn, it is said. Such beliefs have dug themselves deep into the minds of moderns. These banal opinions and false attitudes have to be exorcised from the minds of men.

Sanskrit is an immortal language. Its voice is eternal. Its call is through the centuries. It has imbedded in it the basic sustenance from all the languages of the world. Revere Sanskrit as the Mother of languages. Do not ignore its greatness or talk disparagingly about it. When you yearn to slake the thirst for nectar offered by the Vedas, you have to learn Sanskrit. In order to interpret the Vedas and elaborate their inner meanings and mysteries, the sages have left behind text books of complementary sciences like grammar, poetics, philosophy and astrology. Their researches and books range over several fields of knowledge like astronomy, geography, jurisprudence, ethics, epistemology, music, psychology and rhetoric. Western scientists are struck with admiration at the wonder of astronomy they have unveiled and the truths they have unravelled in other sciences. They have benefited by the clues provided by these sages, and they are engaged in

further research encouraged by the discoveries of these ancient seers. They have acknowledged that these Rishis had advanced far more than the Greeks in their astronomical knowledge. In the Vedas and the supplementary literature they produced, we can find already revealed many secrets of nature, hailed as revolutionary discoveries by modern science, like the existence and explosive possibilities of the atom. Many sections of the *Atharvana Veda* are found to be mines of such important information when examined by westerners. The Germans established special institutes and universities in order to conduct research on the contents of the tons of palmleaf manuscripts of the Naadi texts and horoscopes, and on astronomy, medicine, chemistry, toxicology, mathematics, etc. They are learning Sanskrit so that this work may proceed successfully. In America, Russia and even in Afghanistan, the Universities are not only themselves eager to introduce Sanskrit as a subject of study but they are being pressed by scholars to do so! Foreigners are revering these texts from India as gems of lucky discovery.

The science of Yoga was assigned great prominence in the past by Indians. Even now, in many countries of the world this science is being studied and practised. Institutions where *yogasanas* are taught exist in great numbers throughout America and Russia. In India, however, when the practice of Yoga or Meditation is mentioned, people respond with the feeling that it is a spiritual path related to the Vedantic school of thought. As soon as Yoga is referred

to, many who hear the word get pictures before their minds of lone hermits in the depths of thick forests, wearing the ochre robe of monks and living on fruits, tubers and roots. Their opinion is that Yoga-sadhana is the ancient discipline practised by such homeless ascetics. This is an ignorant guess. It is not true at all. The Yoga science is today being probed by physicists and others in Western countries.

In this era of technology, it is becoming increasingly difficult to lead peaceful lives. Men are becoming the targets of various types of mental ailments. In countries on the front line of civilisation like America and England, people have lost the delight of natural sleep at night. They experience only artificial sleep induced by the tablets they swallow. As a consequence of these and many other drugs taken to ward off other ills, they suffer more and more from diseases of the heart and blood pressure. In the end, they render themselves unhealthy wrecks. Such lives are highly artificial. People are sunk in fear and anxiety; mentally on one side and physically on the other. They have no rest. Drugs, tablets, capsules and pills are produced in millions but the general health has not improved. Besides, new varieties of illness have emerged and are developing fast. A few intelligent westerners have realised that their only refuge is Yoga. They have confirmed their conclusion by means of experiments. They have taken to Yoga with increasing faith.

The Vedas are the oldest literary creations of man. Now the word “literature” is used to connote writings scribbled

while eager to find something to spend the time hanging on hand. They have no inner worth or significance. They destroy the traits of good character in the reader and implant bad attitudes and habits. They do not adhere to the path of Truth. But literature is a term that cannot be applied to writings or poems that reel off tales that are false. It should not emerge from the egotistic fancies of the individual.

The Vedas are the soul that sustains the spiritual life of Bharath. They are the breath that keeps the people alive. They possess a divine power, amazing in its effects. They are charged with the vibrations of mantras, which can be experienced by those who go through the process scientifically. They can impart also the strength derivable through symbols and formulae of Tantric nature. “Tantra” means the means and methods of utilising the mantras for one’s own good. Man has physical and material power only. His Karma becomes holy and sacred when the mechanics (*yantra*) of life are ruled by Manthra and Tantra. The technique of this sadhana is in the Karma Kanda of the Vedas. The ancient sages became aware of this and have preserved it for mankind in the Four Vedas.

Unable to grasp these truths, those who pride themselves as “moderns” proclaim that the Vedas contain only verses and mantras which are learnt by rote and repeated by aged cronies. Not only “moderns” but even those who earned distinction as “the foremost Pundits,” those who expound to the people, gathering fame, use the

Vedas for promoting their material well-being and not for helping them on the spiritual path. They are unable to discover the sacred task for which the Vedas exist. Whenever the chance arises, they benefit by the scholarship, but they are not eager or able to use the Vedas to purify their daily lives.

As a result, “moderns” find it impossible to develop faith in the Vedas. When the Pundits do not seek to Practise the Vedas they have learned and parade their lack of faith by not instructing their own children on the glory of the Vedas, they naturally cause lack of faith in the entire society.

Many others, in spite of their ignorance of the meaning of the Vedic hymns, walk through busy places reciting the sacred texts in mechanical orthodoxy. Foreigners—especially German scholars—though they have not learnt the Vedas by rote, have realised that the mantras possess and transmit profound power. They have during the centuries carried to their own country, portions of the Vedas and conducted patient and painstaking research on them. Consequently, they have unravelled strange mysteries. They found that the Vedas contain the secrets of all the arts which confer progress on man.

As adjuncts to the Vedas, many scriptural texts emerged. The Veda (knowledge) of Archery, and Veda of Ayu or Maintenance, Prolongation and Preservation of Life (medicine), the Veda of Planets and Stars (Jyotir Veda)—many such texts were composed and promulgated.

Sage Viswamitra discovered the manthra named Gayatri, which is addressed to the energy of the Sun, Surya. This manthra has infinite potentiality. It is a vibrant formula. It has immense powers, powers that are truly amazing. For, the Sun is its presiding deity.. The Gayatri enabled Viswamitra to use rare weapons which bowed to his will when the manthra was repeated with faith. Through the powers he attained in this way, Viswamitra was able to become a great scientist and create a counterpart of this cosmos. A person who is able to increase the capabilities of his hands and his senses is now considered a “scientist.” But the term (*Vijnani*) was correctly applied in the past only to those who developed spiritual power and discovered the formulae for delving into the Divine within, those imbued with faith and devotion who could spontaneously demonstrate that power in actual day to day living. On the other hand, the “scientists” of today know only a bit here and a bit there. They exaggerate and boast of what they have managed to learn. They are fond of pomp and proud display. They rise sky-high on the fumes of praise. Such absurdities are quite contrary to the true behaviour of a scientist. For he is humble and meek. He is aware that, however much he knows, there is a far vaster field which he has yet to know. He is conscious that Divine Grace is responsible for what little he knows.

Viswamitra was a scientist who had recognised this truth. So, there is no scientist yet greater than he was. But though a sage of such immense eminence and with so expansive a heart lived in India, he is not remembered by

the people of this land. They honour the foreigners who have glimpsed his greatness. They have placed their faith in those researchers who have elicited valuable lessons from the Vedas. The Veda is the Mother of Bharath. But the children do not revere the mother any more. They revere the stepmother and believe in her! This is the result of the anglicised educational system.

Probing further and further into the scientific attainments of the sages of ancient India, the construction of *Vimanas*, vehicles capable of flying in space, is described by Sage Bharadwaja. Mental Science had advanced so much that they could reproduce what had happened or predict what would happen. The Science of Medicine was highly developed in India. It was Sage Bharadwaja who taught this science for the benefit of mankind. Sage Atreya took up the task of propagating this science and technique of healing. Saint Charaka compiled all the discoveries into a *Samhitha* or “Collection,” named after him. It deals elaborately with the diagnosis of diseases, methods of healing and cure, foetal development and other essential but not easily discoverable facts of medical science. The doctors proficient in that science could, in those ancient years, surgically remove or correct various diseased parts of the body when the illness could not be cured by drugs. Saint Susruta has written in his compendium on many surgical processes. This text has been discovered and is available for study. Dhanvanthari, Nagarjuna and other sages have brought to light many other medical discoveries of Ancient India, made by adherents of

the Vedic tradition of scientific research. There are also many valuable texts on ethics, jurisprudence and other social sciences which are invaluable treasures for all time, like the Dharma Sastra of Manu and the Nyaya Sastra of Gautama.

Vedantha is the legitimate property of every section, every caste, every community, and every race, of the followers of any faith and persons of both sexes. Vedantha means Wisdom or Jnana. “Wisdom” relating to which field of knowledge? It is wisdom on the knowledge of the Atma. This wisdom is the supreme gain that can be earned in life. What greater gain can there be for man than becoming aware of his Self, himself knowing himself. Faith in the possibility of knowing oneself is necessary for every student of Sruthi (the Vedas) and Smrithi (the Moral Codes).

The object seen is clearly separate from the subject who sees. This is a universally accepted Truth. Who is this I that sees? All things that have Form are recognised and seen by the sense organ, the eye. The eye sees the physical body, other individuals, even insects, worms and things. It sees everything that is within its range. The body too is a *thing* that the eye sees, along with the rest. So, how can we conclude that the body *is* the I?

Then, who really is this I? Fire burns and also brightens. It burns things by heat and brightens them by the light it sheds. Fire is different from the things it acts upon. Now, who is it that knows this truth—the truth that “fire” and the “things that it burns” are different? It is the Atma. When a

log burns, the fire is present and active in *all* of it. Similarly, the Atma pervades the entire body, and enables it to perform deeds and to move itself and its limbs.

The light shed by the lamp is the instrument that informs us at night: “This is the cup.” “This is the plate.” The eye is a similar instrument which informs us “This is a house,” “This is a thorn,” “This is a stone.” The eye is not the Atma. In the absence of the lamp, the eye, or in the absence of the eye, the lamp cannot cognise the house, the thorn, the stone, the cup or the plate. Both the lamp and the eye are media or instruments of “illumination.”

The instrument, eye, sees the body, where it is situated. The body that is *seen* cannot therefore be other than a similar instrument. The senses are the experiencers of hearing, tasting, seeing, touching and smelling. When the eye is known as an instrument, the other four senses too have to be recognised as tools. All these senses are under the control of the mind which is their master. Even this mind is being controlled and conditioned by some other master. The mind cannot be the core of man.

The intellect or buddhi examines the information materials offered by the mind. It is the instrument that judges and decides. For example, imagine a sharp knife. However sharp, it cannot cut a fruit on its own initiative. Nor can it cut the thinnest thread by itself. It can do so only when it is held by the hand of someone. The intellect is similar to the

knife. It is helpless without the “I,” the Atma, which has to wield it.

Then, we have to consider another equipment of man—the Prana or the vital air. Let us consider whether we can nominate it as the “I”? During deep sleep, man is not conscious that he is breathing and that the “vital airs” are alert! Of the three states—the waking (*Jagrat*), the dreaming (*Swapna*) and the sleeping (*Sushupti*), though the prana is existent in all, the man is not aware of the experiences of the waking state while dreaming, nor of the experiences of the dreaming state while in the wakeful state. During sleep, the pranas do not activate the intellect or the memory. They appear to be quiescent. When the boss is active, the dependants cannot keep quiet. Since they are not uniformly active always, pranas or the Prana principle cannot be considered as the “I” or Atma.

Now about the Ego. There are two fields in which it operates and so, it has two meanings: (1) Self love, *Ahamkara*, the “*Dehatma*,” Body-consciousness, the Exterior “I” and (2) the Inner “I,” the *Pratyag-Atma*. Persons who do not know this distinction confuse themselves and assert that “I” is applicable to the *Dehatma*. But this is wrong. The body as we have seen is a tool, it is an object. It is the seen and not the seer. How can the ego, identified with it, be the Atma? This ego also is of the “seen” category. It is absent in sleep and plays false in dreams. Truth has to persist unaffected, in the past, present and future. That which is absent in two states, how can it be true?

As a result of this inquiry, it has become plain that the senses, the mind, the intellect, the vital airs—not one of these can be accepted as Atma and accorded that validity. Therefore, the question arises: what else, who else, is Atma?

It has no entry or exit, no hands and feet, no organs and limbs, no blot or blemish. It is the minutest among the minute, the hugest among the huge. Like space, it is everywhere. It *is* all and so it is free from “I” and “mine.” It is consciousness, as fire is heat, and the sun is light—it has no affinity with distress or delusion. It is supreme everlasting ecstasy, *Paramananda*. It is the core, the heart of all beings. It is the awareness in all. It is the seer of everything “seen,” it sees all objects seen. Everyone, whatever his nature or stature, who declares, after being served by the senses, “I see,” “I hear,” “I taste,” etc., is really only talking of lamps, of tools and not of the Atma. The Atma is not a part-seer, a series-seer, a non-seer or a pseudo-seer.

The Buddhi, like the moon, has no light in itself. Like the moon it reflects light from another source adjacent to it, namely the Atma. Buddhi can operate only by reflecting the Cosmic intelligence, represented by the Atma.

The Sun is designated the Cosmic Eye, Jagat Chakshu, a name based on the Sun’s involvement with the proximity to other objects. The Sun has no ego-sense or a sense of possession and property, and no will or want or wish. By His very presence darkness disappears and light envelopes

the world. So, He is called the Enlightener. But He is not consciously doing so, as if in duty bound. The Atma too has neither obligation nor application. If asked how the Atma becomes a “doer,” the reply is—is the magnet a “doer,” simply because the needle which is in its neighbourhood moves?

The basic question may now be raised. Does the Atma exist? If it does, how and with what proof can it be established? There is no need to prove that the Atma exists, for, if the Atma is capable of being proved by certain arguments and lines of reasoning, the existence of a person, who uses those arguments and follows those lines of reasoning has to be posited. That person will again be the Atma!

Of course, some men may reply that the Vedas are the authority for the existence of the Atma and that the Atma can be experienced and validated through the Vedas. The Vedas do prohibit certain activities as Unatmic or opposed to the norms expected from a believer in the Atma. They do recommend certain other activities like charity, moral behaviour, as Atmic. But the Atma is its own proof, its own witness. Its existence cannot be established by other facts, or things.

The Sastras, which are texts supplementary to the Vedas, declare that God resides wherever six excellences are evident: Enthusiasm (*utsaha*) determination (*sahasam*) courage (*dhairya*) good sense (*sadbuddhi*) strength (*sakti*)

and adventure (*parakrama*). The inaugural prayer of man has to be directed to God (Ganapathi) to gain these six gifts which can purify consciousness and reveal the Atma. One has to undertake the discovery of one's Atmic core, with bravery in the heart. This is no exercise for cowards. Wicked persons, waverers in faith, doubting hearts, woeful countenances, are destined to go through life as *rogis* (sick persons) and not *yogis* (dwellers in Atma).

This is the distinguishing mark that separates the wise (*jnani*) from the unwise (*ajnani*). Krishna spoke, laughing with an outburst of joy. Arjuna listened while overpowered by sorrow. The *jnani* is always full of joy, he laughs. The *ajnani* is afflicted with sorrow, he weeps.

In order to achieve victory while inquiring into the nature of the Atma, one has to pass through the *Asramas*—the four stages of life recognised and recommended by the scriptural texts of Sanathana Dharma. Each one while passing through each stage, aware of the duties and responsibilities prescribed in the texts, learns for himself a quantum of the knowledge that leads to Atmic awareness.

It is only after the childhood years that the *Asram* routine will have an impact on man. Until then, he cannot gather any special knowledge about his duties and responsibilities. Man has boyhood, adolescence, youth, middle age and senescence, as stages of growth. There are also corresponding stages in the growth of wisdom in him.

In the first stage of boyhood, he is led from ignorance and “innocence” into the world of knowledge, when he is accepted as a pupil by a Guru (Preceptor). After that, he has to serve the Guru and obey him, without feeling burdened and bound. In the second stage of youth, he has to share with society the means and measures for its progress and security. He has to start earning for his livelihood and spending his income with intelligent care. He has also the duty of providing examples to those younger than himself and guide them into socially useful paths. At the same time, he must follow the footsteps of elders and learn from them lessons for his own advancement.

In the third stage of adulthood, intelligent attention has to be paid not only to one's own advancement and the advancement of the family and society but also to the advancement of the people generally. That too is the responsibility of the grownups and they must acquire the skills necessary. They must have wider visions of the peace and prosperity of all mankind, and try to contribute to both, within the limits of their capacity and resources.

Old age is the fourth stage. By the time one reaches this stage of his journey, he must have discovered that the joys available in this world are trivial and fleeting. He must be equipped with the higher knowledge of spiritual joy, available through delving into the inner spring of bliss. Through his experiences, his heart must have softened and be filled with compassion. He has to be engrossed in

promoting the progress of all beings without distinction. And he must be eager to share with others the knowledge he has accumulated and the benefit of his experiences.

Thus, occupations and resultant attitudes have been assigned to the various stages of human life. Practice is as important for confirming one in wisdom as reading is important for confirming one in knowledge. Alongside of knowledge, youth has to cultivate the good qualities of humility, reverence, devotion to God and steadfast faith. He has to engage himself in good works and enjoy them for the sheer elation they confer. During adulthood, along with the earning of wealth and involvement in the improvement of society, attention must be paid to the promotion and preservation of virtues and to the observance of moral codes. Steps should be taken for improving one's righteous behaviour and spiritual sadhana. All levels of consciousness have to be purified and then directed to holy tasks.

During middle age, besides fostering the family and society, man has to live an exemplary life to inspire his children and hold forth, before society, elevating ideals worth practising. No attempt should be made to belittle society and benefit only the family, for, it is bound to fail. The Brahman principle can be realised only by purifying one's activity and utilising that activity to serve oneself in all. It can never be realised so long as one relies on the caste into which he is born, or the intellectual equipment he has added unto himself or the mastery of the Vedas.

He who is born cannot escape death, sometime, somewhere. Every moment, many are born and many die. But man has to discover how to "avoid" death. Now, the Atma which is the core of man, is not born. Since it does not take birth, it does not meet death. Death happens to the body with which it is associated, with which it mixes. The delusion that the body is the core, that the body is real, *that* verily is death. Affliction by that falsehood is the act of dying. To be free from that delusion is to attain Immortality. The body it is that disintegrates, not the Atma, the Soul, the Self. The body is undergoing change every moment and the final change is death, when the Self, changeless, remains. When one believes that the changing body is oneself and starts referring to it as "I," that "I" dies, but the real "I" is deathless.

As intense elevating activity and fearless inquiry into one's Truth are practised more and more, the consciousness that the "body is oneself" can be overcome and negated. Consider the fruit of the tamarind tree. When unripe, it is not easy to separate the rind, the pulp and the seed. So too, those who have stuck to sensual desires and to fondling and feeding the body, cannot earn the awareness of the Atma. When the tamarind fruit becomes ripe, the rind can be broken off, the pulp gets detached from the seed and the seed can be isolated without effort. Inquiry and unselfish activity ripen the consciousness and the Atma can be isolated from the body, clear and pure.

The body has five encasements which hide the Atma. These are grouped under three categories—the gross, the subtle and the causal. The physical case (flesh, blood, bone, etc.) and the vital case (breath) form the gross body. When these two sheaths, the *sthoola* body (the gross body), fall or disintegrate, the body too falls and cannot rise.

The word *sukshma* which is generally translated as “subtle” means in Sanskrit “small”; it has another meaning too, “that which expands.” Air expands more than water. Space is more expansive than air. Compared with the expanse of the liberated soul, even space has to be considered “gross”! Steam is more expansive (subtle) than water. Though a block of ice or a lump of camphor appear “gross,” they become subtle when heated or lit.

The rule of the world is that the seen causes the unseen, the manifested explains the unmanifested. But the rule in the realm of the Spirit is different. The latent Atma causes the patent world. Being is behind Becoming, and finally, Becoming merges in Being. The patent is absorbed into the latent. As milk from the cow, from the Supreme Person flows the Power of Maya or Relativity as the Five-element constituted Cosmos (Prakriti), the patent manifestation. The Cosmos is cognised as a composite, just as milk is a composite of cream, curd, and butter, which can be got out of it by the action of heat and cold, and the addition of sour drops, and the process of churning thereafter. The churning separates the butter from the milk. In the same manner, through cosmic processes and upheavals of heat and cold,

the Five Fundamental Elements, (earth, water, fire, air, and space) were separated and Earth, this Ball of Butter, emerged, as the product of the churning. If any person or thing has one of the three character traits (balanced, passionate, dull) predominant in the makeup, we denote him as having that trait. So also the Element, which is predominant in any created entity, gives its name to it. This is the reason why the world on which we live is called Bhoomi, the Earth. The realms in space where the element of water predominates are known as *Bhuvar Loka* (Subtle world) and *Swar Loka* (Causal world). The materials therein flow in currents and streams.

In short, what appears as the Five Element-constituted Cosmos is only the superimposition on God, of the non-real Individual Self and the Five Elements. God seen in and through the non-real appears as Nature. This is but a distorted picture of reality, this ever-changing multiplicity. The fault is in the mirror that reflects, the mind that perceives, the brain that infers. What the mirror presents as true has no authenticity. The mirror is coated with dust and its face is not plain at all. God has no maya. He has no intention or need to delude, nor does He will that it should happen. But man in his ignorance sees things which do not exist and believes that they do exist just as he sees them. This weakness of his is named *Adhyasa*.

When God is reflected as Nature, the reflection becomes Maya. As milk curdles into yoghurt, God becomes

Jagath or the World of incessant transformation, or Maya, or the Image of the Unchanging Divine. His Will causes this unreal multiplicity on the One that He is. He can by His will end it. He is the Master of Maya.

God is omnipresent, omnipotent. Of the three entities, the Overself, the Self and Nature, Nature has, as its purpose, the fulfilment of the wants of man. God has no wants or wishes. He is the fullest and highest Attainment. The Ananda of every Being and for every Being flows spontaneously from God. His words to Arjuna in the Gita are, "I have no duty to discharge, Oh Partha, in the three worlds." He has created duties only to foster the consciousness of all living beings. He has no activity and no obligation. He brings about the result for every activity. Without Him, no activity can yield result! He decides which result should accrue from which act.

