



CHAPTER - I

That which has no origin knows no beginning. It was before everything or anything was. There was nothing prior to It. For that very reason, It has no end. It expands as far as It wills, progresses as diverse as It feels, and through Its Fullness, It fills the Universe, too. Knowledge of this supreme Principle is known as *Vidya*, Knowledge, Wisdom, Awareness.

Many seers with manifold experience of this unique Awareness have visualised in their illumined hearts the sovereign secret underlying the captivating Beauty of the Cosmos. Compassion towards humanity has prompted them to communicate the vision through human language to arouse the innate thirst in the soul for immersion in that Bliss. *Vidya* causes this urge in the hearts of the seers.

Sound is the very core of the Veda. Sound is associated with harmony and melody and hence the Veda

has to be heard and ecstasy derived therefrom. It is not to be analysed, commented upon and judged. This is the reason why the Veda is called *Sruthi* (That which is heard). Through listening alone to its recital, the awareness of the *Atma* and of the Bliss it confers can be earned. The Bliss thus acquired manifests in words and deeds that confer bliss on all around.

The term *Vedantha* is generally used by many to indicate a school of philosophical thought. But *Vedantha* is only a special section of Vedic literature. All the Upanishadic texts form part of *Vedantha*. *Vedantha* is the consummation of Vedic thought. The Vedas themselves are invaluable guides towards the Highest. The *rk*s or hymns of *Rig Veda* are ecstatic effusions from the spirit of man extolling the delight derived while contemplating the orderliness and beauty of Nature outside them. The *Sama Veda* is the precious verbal treasure which enables man to praise in song the Creator and His Creation. The mystery of this world and of the worlds beyond is elaborated in the texts which are comprehensively called *Atharvana Veda*. The formulae for rites and ceremonials either beneficial or merit-yielding or sacrificial, have been collated as the *Yajur Veda*.

The Vedic literature grouped into these four collections—each under a different name—has four more branches—the *Manthras*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*. The *Manthra* texts are also called *Samhithas* (Collections); all sacred formulae are therein grouped together. The texts which describe the means and methods

of utilising them and benefiting by their proper recital are known as Brahmanas. The word Brahma has many meanings. In the expression, Brahmanas, it means Manthra. The Brahmanas deal mostly with ceremonials and kindred external activities. The Aranyakas, however, deal with the inner significances and internal disciplines like withdrawal of senses and elimination of attachments. The Upanishads attempt, by philosophical analysis, to harmonise the two paths. They form the final phase of Vedic studies, and are called Vedantha. They can be considered as even the essence of Vedic teachings. They are the cream of the entire Vedic scriptures. When the Vedas are assimilated by scholarship, these emerge as butter does when milk is churned.

All forms of Vedic literature mentioned thus far form the most ancient body of knowledge, Vidya “Upa-nishad”—the word is formed by the root ‘Sad’ getting two syllables ‘Upa’ and ‘Ni’ as prefixes. ‘Sad’ means ‘sitting.’ It has also another meaning ‘destroying.’ ‘Ni’ means ‘steady,’ ‘disciplined.’ ‘Upa’ means ‘near.’ The pupil has to sit near the Guru (*Acharya*) or Preceptor, paying steady attention to what is being communicated to him. Then only can he learn the fund of knowledge and the skill of discrimination.

The Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita—these are the basic roots of Indian philosophical thought. They are together known as Prastana Thraya, the Authentic Triad.

This material objective world is what becomes visible to our eyes, what pleases our senses, what fascinates our minds and what informs our brain. But in and through this very world, there is one reachable non-material subjective world. When that is known, both worlds reveal themselves as partial expressions of the same indivisible Consciousness (*Chaitanya*). The two supplement each other into the One Fullness, (*Poornam*). From the *Parabrahma*, (the Full) the *Jiva* (the Individual, that is the Complement) arises. When the Jiva sheds the material corpus in which it is encased, the eternal Universal Consciousness is again the One Fullness, the Parabrahma Principle. *Poornam Adam* (That is Full); *Poornam Idam* (This is Full); *Poornaath Poornam Udachyathe* (From the Full arose the Full); *Poornasya* (From the Full) *Poornam Aadaaya* (when the Full is taken) *Poornam Eva* (the Full only) *Avasishyathe* (remains).

Vidya or the Education Process teaches one that the Cosmos is a manifestation of the Lord’s sport and nothing else. The Upanishads declare this Truth thus: *Isaavaasyam Idam Jagath*. This world is the residence of the Lord. Therefore, no one can entertain a sense of personal possession or even a trace of egoism. Renounce the feeling of attachment; feel the Presence of the Lord everywhere. Welcome the *Ananda* (Bliss) that the Lord, as the Embodiment of Ananda, confers on you and experience it with thankfulness and without being bound by desire. This is the message of the Rishis, the sages and seers.

Give up the feelings “I” and “You”; then alone can you understand the glory of that which is neither “I” nor “Mine.” This does not involve your renouncing everything. The Real Teaching (Vidya) directs that the world be dealt with, as duty demands, in a spirit of detachment, avoiding entanglement. The acid test by which an activity can be confirmed as holy or sacred is to examine whether it promotes attachment or avoids bondage. The acid test to decide whether an activity is unholy or sinful is to examine whether it arises from or promotes greed. This is the teaching, the lesson from Vidya. Intent on fulfilling your legitimate duties, you can pray to God to keep you alive for a hundred years. You will not incur blame. So, Vidya advises you to engage in activities with full understanding of their nature and consequence.

Beasts kill only other beasts. But the blind man who has not acquired the Vision of the Atma that he is, kills himself. And Vidya warns that he who commits this crime goes into fearful realms sunk in thickest night. Vidya, the Supreme Wisdom, attempts to describe for man the “characteristics” of Atma. Atma has no movement but It is present everywhere. Even the gods cannot keep pace with it, however quick they are. It reveals Its Presence long before we anticipate Its Presence. The Atma is immutable and omnipresent. Vidya announces that it is an impossible task to determine It.

When one attains the Supreme Wisdom or the highest level of Vidya, the distinction between the “opposites”—

Atma and *Anatma*, Vidya and *Avidya*, *Vikasa* and *Vinasa* (Growth and Decay) fade away. Mystics and sages have attained that state of Higher Unity and the history of their struggles and successes is enshrined, through the prompting of Vidya, in literature. For such sages, from that level, knowledge is as dangerous as non-knowledge. They are aware of the mysterious origins and consequences of both. They are capable of overcoming death through non-knowledge and achieving immortality through knowledge.