

ईशावास्योपनिषत्

# ISHAVASYA UPANISHAD

*The All-Pervading  
Reality*

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***"THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE"***

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TEXT

19

Reflections by  
**SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA**



## ***Sandeepany's Vedanta Course***

***List of All the Course Texts in Chronological Sequence:***

<b>Text No.</b>	<b>TITLE OF TEXT</b>	<b>Text No.</b>	<b>TITLE OF TEXT</b>
1	<i>Sadhana Panchakam</i>	24	<i>Hanuman Chalisa</i>
2	<i>Tattwa Bodha</i>	25	<i>Vakya Vritti</i>
3	<i>Atma Bodha</i>	26	<i>Advaita Makaranda</i>
4	<i>Bhaja Govindam</i>	27	<i>Kaivalya Upanishad</i>
5	<i>Manisha Panchakam</i>	28	<i>Bhagavad Geeta (Discourse -- )</i>
6	<i>Forgive Me</i>	29	<i>Mundaka Upanishad</i>
7	<i>Upadesha Sara</i>	30	<i>Amritabindu Upanishad</i>
8	<i>Prashna Upanishad</i>	31	<i>Mukunda Mala (Bhakti Text)</i>
9	<i>Dhanyashtakam</i>	32	<i>Tapovan Shatkam</i>
10	<i>Bodha Sara</i>	33	<i>The Mahavakyas, Panchadasi 5</i>
11	<i>Viveka Choodamani</i>	34	<i>Aitareya Upanishad</i>
12	<i>Jnana Sara</i>	35	<i>Narada Bhakti Sutras</i>
13	<i>Drig-Drishya Viveka</i>	36	<i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i>
14	<i>"Tat Twam Asi" – Chand Up 6</i>	37	<i>Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living)</i>
15	<i>Dhyana Swaroopam</i>	38	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
16	<i>"Bhoomaiva Sukham" Chand Up 7</i>	39	<i>Aparoksha Anubhuti (Meditation)</i>
17	<i>Manah Shodhanam</i>	40	<i>108 Names of Pujya Gurudev</i>
18	<i>"Nataka Deepa" – Panchadasi 10</i>	41	<i>Mandukya Upanishad</i>
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20	<i>Katha Upanishad</i>	43	<i>Shad Darshanaah</i>
21	<i>"Sara Sangrah" – Yoga Vasishtha</i>	44	<i>Brahma Sootras</i>
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### **A NOTE ABOUT SANDEEPANY**

***Sandeepany Sadhanalaya*** is an institution run by the Chinmaya Mission in Powai, Mumbai, teaching a 2-year Vedanta Course. It has a very balanced daily programme of basic Samskrit, Vedic chanting, Vedanta study, Bhagavatam, Ramacharitmanas, Bhajans, meditation, sports and fitness exercises, team-building outings, games and drama, celebration of all Hindu festivals, weekly Gayatri Havan and Guru Paduka Pooja, and Karma Yoga activities.

This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

***– The Author, 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018, Sri Krishna Jayanti Day***

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text  
**19**



ईशावास्योपनिषत्

# ISHAVASYA UPANISHAD

*"The All-Pervading Reality"*

## Reflections

**by Swami Gurubhaktananda**

on the 12 Lectures delivered by Guruji, **Swami Tejomayanandaji**

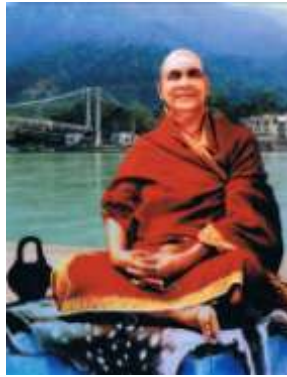
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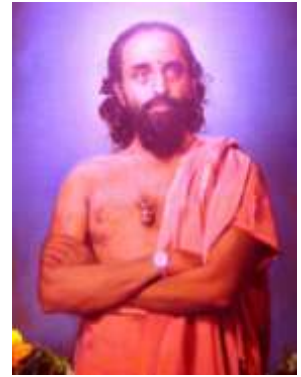
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## **Personal Dedication**

### **1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan**

*who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;*

### **2. To Puja Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj**

*the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;*

### **3. To Puja Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)**

*for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;*

### **4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji**

*my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.*

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ईशावास्योपनिषत्

**ISHAVASYA  
UPANISHAD**

*“The All-Pervading Reality”*

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**ISHAVASYA UPANISHAD**  
“The All-Pervading Reality”

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# ईशावास्योपनिषद्

## ISHAVASYA UPANISHAD

18 Verses on

*"The All-Pervading Reality"*

## INTRODUCTION TO THE UPANISHAD

THIS UPANISHAD IS IN the Shukla Yajur Veda. It is part of the Samhitas. It takes its name from the first word of the first Mantra which means "the dwelling or clothing of the Lord". There are only 18 Mantras in this text, but it has attracted the most number of commentaries, which suggests the importance of this Upanishad.

It is usually the first Upanishad taken up in a course of study of Vedanta. The text is split into five chapters, which we have called "Waves"; each one is a 'wave' of Truth.

The target reader for this Upanishad could be of two types. The first is the serious student who seeks to be freed from the bondage of this world and to whom renunciation is the most appropriate path to follow in order to pursue *Jnana Yoga*. The second is the person who cannot do such a renunciation, but who is very desirous of attaining some degree of closeness to God. He is offered the path of *Karma Yoga* to enable him not to create any more new Karmas and to reduce his Karmic load.

There are people other than these two types who do not attach much importance to spiritual or religious practices, and who are quite contented to enjoy sensual pleasures as much as possible. They have no interest in making any spiritual progress. Their fate, too, is included in this text, perhaps in the hope that they will review their attitude in life.

There are some utilitarian people who feel that everything we do should bring some material rewards. They would like to see the letters 'Dr' in front of people's names, but 'Br' (meaning Brahmachari) was frowned upon. Even the certificates given for Vedanta studies were of no value to them. Gurudev himself used to tell students when giving them these certificates, "This is not a certificate to say that you are now God-realised saints! No, it may not even get you a job. This is just to say that you attended this Course!"

During the Chinese invasion years (around 1962), some friends of Swami Tapovanji had kept him informed of what the Chinese intentions were. They would put everyone to work to produce something. That was their philosophy. Those who did not work were considered lazy. Tapovanji was indifferent to philosophy of this type.

Generally the Upanishads do not ask one to do anything. They convey knowledge of how one can conduct Self-enquiry. Hence, critics often regard them as useless when compared to the Karma Kanda portion which makes them do various rituals to gain some ends. Guruji asked, "How can they say something is useless just because it does not show tangible results? What foolishness is that! Knowledge makes a person realize that a thing is not a snake but only a rope. Is that not useful? They may call it useless, but it is because of Knowledge alone that they can do all their activities."



There will always be people who will strive for the Truth. They are not interested in worldly enjoyments. Perhaps they have seen the hollowness in them. The numerous commentaries are useful for all seekers of Truth. The greatness of the scriptures is seen in the type of person it produces, not how much money it enables one to earn.

A saint has said: “Even if all the Upanishads are destroyed, if just the first verse of Ishavasya Upanishad is saved, we can have the whole Vedas written again.”

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### Overall Theme of this Upanishad

*“To see the all-pervading Truth in and through the disturbing trellis of the phenomenal world, is to realize the Truth in the outer world of Plurality. How this is harmoniously done is the very theme of the entire Ishavasya Upanishad.” – Swami Chinmayanandaji.*

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### PEACE INVOCATION

#### **Shanti Mantra**

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

**Om Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaat Poornam-Udachyate;  
Poornasya Poorna-maadaaya Poorna-mevaa-vasishyate.  
Om Shaantih! Shaantih! Shaantih!!**

Meaning: “That is Whole, this is Whole; from the Whole, the Whole becomes manifest; from the Whole, when the Whole is negated, the Whole alone is what remains.”

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**Lord Shiva represents the Supreme All-pervading Reality**

# ISHAVASYA UPANISHAD

Wave 1: Verses 1-3 (3 No.)

## THE THREE PATHS

### 1.1 THE ULTIMATE PATH

#### Verse 1:      *The Path of Renunciation*

ॐ ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।  
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम्      ॥ १॥

1	<i>Om, eeshaa vaasyam-idam sarvam or eeshaa aavaasyam-idam sarvam</i>	<i>A dwelling of the Lord is all this, or A clothing (covering) of the Lord is all this,</i>
2	<i>yat kim cha jagatyaam jagat;</i>	<i>whatsoever that moves in this universe;</i>
3	<i>tena tyaktena bhunjeethaa</i>	<i>By renunciation, should it be enjoyed by him;</i>
4	<i>maa gridhah kasya svit dhanam.</i>	<i>Do not covet anybody's wealth.</i>

This is one of those famous verses of the entire Vedas, often quoted as representing the essence of Vedic spirituality. The *Ishavasya Upanishad* gets off to a flying start by presenting here the highest Goal of the Vedic philosophy.

Rank materialists may see in it an open invitation to “enjoy” the pleasures of this world since God Himself pervades it. Vast interest is generated by this controversial point.

#### The Lord Pervades this World

1 The Lord is described here using a verb that has two meanings. From the ‘As’ Dhatu, we get **Vaasya**, meaning a ‘dwelling’; or **Vastra**, meaning ‘clothing’. The world could be taken as the Lord’s dwelling or His clothing. Some even take the Lord as ‘clothing’ for the world and interpret it as “the world is coated or clothed with a veneer of Truth”.

There is no controversy about the word **Isha**, which means the Atman or Self.

The implications of this meaning are many. Not even a dust particle should be considered unimportant. If it is, it would show that our realization of God is incomplete.

Secondly, it tells us that there is something in this world which is not perishable like all the things we see in it. All the objects may have a span of life, but the indwelling Presence of God in them is permanent, it does not die. It means that there is a truth principle in it, and that the appearance of it, which we see with our senses, is a delusion. What we see with the eye is not the whole truth. In fact, what the eye sees is entirely an illusion. How does it come to be covered up with this layer of truth? How do we behold this unseen truth in all objects? These questions arise immediately in the mind of the thinker.

#### God Is Not Remote From Us

2 The Lord is not remote from His creation. He pervades it. Here we have a vision of a God that is really close to us. He is all around us. We can worship Him in many ways. We can worship Him even by using the many forms we have in the world to represent Him.

The usual concept of a ruler is that he sits far away and governs with a sceptre in his hand. That is completely ruled out. What we see unfolding is that He rules with our consent and full participation. In fact, if He IS pervading everywhere, He alone exists. We are all part of a universal Mind and cannot help but fulfill the purposes of that Mind.

If God is in everything, then where is the unreality of this world? That is another enquiry to be examined carefully. An all-pervading God means that the world is only an apparent reality. There is a delusion by which we do not see the Lord in it. That is what we are given to discover for ourselves through a spiritual life. God-vision is something within our horizon, if only we learn how to correct our vision and behold Him in the world.

God is the primary Reality and the physical world the secondary reality. From seeing only a solid physical dynamic world full of variety to one which is pervaded by a single entity is a huge shift that we have to learn to make. Vedanta is the science by which we obtain the knowledge that enables us to do this.

There can be Consciousness without thought but there cannot be thought without Consciousness. The Reality is beyond 'thought', but thought is a stage in its plan. In this way the Upanishad is raising our vision of God. As we get lifted to a higher outlook, life itself becomes more fragrant. We are moving from an "onion and garlic" smelling world of our making, to a sweet, fragrant one of the Lord!

### **The Concept of Renunciation**

**3** The third quarter presents before us a means by which the highest vision can be directly experienced by us. This vision of God is not just a theory but we are told that it can be attained through renunciation.

This raises the question of what is the concept of renunciation presented by the Upanishadic seer. We cannot see the 'veneer of Truth' at present, but we are told it is there. To behold it we need to renounce our present view of life. The suggestion is very direct that renunciation of the false values to which we cling will lead us to the correct vision of seeing the Lord in its place. We are seeing the ornaments before us in the world, and are forgetful of the gold that they are made of. When we take our attention away from the ornaments and learn to see only the gold, we will come close to understanding what is to be done to behold the Lord that pervades this world. There is something that presently colours or clouds our vision – a cosmic delusion – and by finding out the means to clear it, we can hope to arrive at the vision given here by the sage.

We do not have to renounce the world. All false notions are to be dropped or RENOUNCED. However, the Indian tradition is built on actual renunciation as a way of life among earnest spiritual seekers. This verse is being addressed to such aspirants alone. They may be Sannyasins who have taken the pledge to give up all material pursuits and focus only on acquiring spiritual wealth. Or they may be seekers who still perform their functions as before but with a new outlook imbued by the presence of the Divine. An inner renunciation of desire for sensuality is demanded and an aspiration for divinity has to replace it.

"Give up the falsity of the world, and enjoy the divinity in it." That summarises the view of renunciation proposed here.

Sri Shankaracharya in his Bhashya also reminds us that 'Bhunj' means "protect" as well as "enjoy". This would mean either that the enjoyment would have to be in such a manner that one's overall well-being will not be compromised; or it could mean purely that

“we should protect or save ourselves from the falsity of this world.” The latter is more in line with the characteristic of the Bhashyacharya.

### **Do Not Covet Another's Wealth**

**4** This line comes almost out of context in the verse, unless we understand renunciation in its correct perspective. If we have genuinely taken to heart that it means renunciation of all false values, then this instruction not to covet another person's wealth is practical *proof* of it. By demonstrating the morality in this instruction, we become eligible to take the verse as applying to us. It is certainly meant for a high calibre of seeker.

Guruji gave us an example from his life as a young Brahmachari posted in Bhopal at the Birla Mandir there. He lived very austere. The Pujari, noticing this, used to keep aside some Prasad specials for Guruji. He would take him aside into the sanctum and give him his special quota, which Guruji accepted as the Lord's Prasad. Others may have looked with jealousy at this, but in this there was no coveting of another's share. It was legitimately given to him due to his spirit of renunciation.

## **1.2 THE PATH OF KARMA YOGA**

### **Verse 2:      *Dedicated Loving Service***

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः ।

एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे

॥ २॥

1	<i>Kurvan eva iha karmaani,</i>	<i>Performing works here in this world,</i>
2	<i>jijeevishet shatagm samaah;</i>	<i>one should desire to live a full hundred years.</i>
3	<i>evam tvayi na anyathaa itah asti,</i>	<i>This alone is the path; there is no other.</i>
4	<i>na karma lipyate nare.</i>	<i>Action does not cling to a man following this path.</i>

It is very clear that this verse is addressing a more common set of people than the first Mantra. From the very sincere and committed seekers who have no attraction for the world, we shift to the virtuous householder who has to play his role in society, yet he is God-fearing and desires to make some spiritual progress in his life.

**1** The standard demanded of the virtuous householder is lower than that expected of a Sannyasin. Karma Yoga is most suited to his capacity. He is shown the right means – Karma Yoga – to earn wealth and fulfil his desires legitimately. Karma Yoga is the devotional path of service to the Lord.

**2 Aim to live a hundred years:** This is the only instruction given in this Pada. We see here the Upanishadic style which uses minimum words to bring out maximum meaning. The Upanishad expects us to reflect deeply to grasp what it is implying in such terse language.

Living the clean life of a Karma Yogi he is sure to “live a full hundred years”, the expected life-span for healthy human beings.

**Jijeevishet:** “should desire”; this verb is in the Imperative Mood, suggesting that it is an injunction for the householder to follow this path of Karma.

The reference to a hundred years life-span is for the sake of providing the normal incentive for performance of action for the type of person that is being addressed. It is usual for man to expect some reward for his actions. Since selfish interest is being ruled out here, an alternative incentive would be long life. To the genuine seeker of the first type, the life-span is immaterial; it is the quality of life and the principles one lives for that count, not the length of life of this physical body.

**3** Such Karma alone can reduce the bundle of Karmic impressions that we come with at birth to work out in this lifetime. By doing one's actions and duties in the right spirit of selflessness, the action will never "cling" to him.

**4 Na Lipyate:** "not clinging"; this clinging refers to the bondage that results from doing action indiscriminately. The wrong actions will, of course, bind one by incurring bad Karma whose fruits will be pain, sorrow, disease, and so on. But even virtuous actions can bind unless they are done as a dedication to the Lord. This dedication is suggested here indirectly by "not clinging".

**Kurwaan:** This verb is in *Parasmai Pada*, i.e. a verb form which expresses an action done "for others, not for oneself"; an action done for oneself is placed in *Atmane Pada* in Samskrit grammar. Thus in the very form of the word, selflessness is implied. It means the action has to be dedicated to 'Paramatman'. Such dedication renders the action powerless to bind one to Samsara since it creates no Karmic reaction.

### **1.3 THE PATH OF SORROW**

#### **Verse 3:      *The Sunless Worlds***

असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसाऽऽवृताः ।  
तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः

॥ ३॥

1	<i>Asuryaah naama te lokaah,</i>	<i>Sunless (demoniac) are those worlds,</i>
2	<i>andhena tamasaa aavritaah;</i>	<i>and enveloped in blinding gloom,</i>
3	<i>taagm te pretya abhi-gacchhanti,</i>	<i>to which go, after death, those</i>
4	<i>e ke cha aatma hanah janaah.</i>	<i>people who are slayers of their own souls.</i>

It is interesting to note that in Shankaracharyaji's Bhashya a comment is made that in comparison to the fit student for Vedanta who possesses all the Sadhana Chatustaya, even some people who may be considered very respectable in the eyes of the world, would pass as "Asuric" beings on Shankaracharya's scale of values!

What happens to such people? This verse is devoted to answering this question in the hope that those reading it would take added care to avoid such a lifestyle.

**1** From the Vedantic standpoint, Hell is where there is total forgetfulness of our true nature of Self-hood. The physical characteristics of hell commonly described are immaterial; hell is a mental condition of moral depravity. Poverty can become a positive contributor towards God-remembrance, in which case it would be considered to be a blessing.

**2-3** Such people go to regions of blinding gloom on departing from the earth-plane. The Asuric worlds are blindingly gloomy and dark. It is not a very welcoming place to be.

Some even consider that this world itself is such a place. More pitiable than poverty-stricken conditions are the affluent conditions devoid of any spirituality.

**4** There are several types of people who will qualify in this category:

- i) The normally ignorant ones;
- ii) the very ambitious ones;
- iii) as above but with the added vice of having arrogance and wickedness;
- iv) the indolent and lazy ones, good for nothing, living only to eat and sleep;
- v) the Asura who lives only to indulge himself in vile carnal pleasures that are demeaning, intoxicating, vulgar, destructive of one's character and shameless.

### **Suicide – “Slayers of Their Souls”**

One who identifies only with his body is the one who is truly ignorant. However learned he may be in the eyes of the world, if he has no idea of the Self and no desire to know more about it, then he is an ignorant person destined to run out a wretched, meaningless life.

Such people, who are described here as “slayers of their souls”, are committing spiritual suicide. They are the real suicide victims, not just those who take their own life.

However, talking of suicide, Guruji said that it was an insult to the great opportunity they have been given to progress in this human birth. One may understand taking one's life once, but to take it in the spiritual sense birth after birth was unpardonable.

Some people falsely console themselves with the belief that once they have the human birth they will never lose it. That is only their belief. Guruji did not hide the fact that it was easily possible for one to be born in lower bodies if one misused the human birth. A priceless treasure has to be guarded, else it will be taken away. That is easy for anyone to understand.

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# ISHAVASYA UPANISHAD

Wave 2: Verses 4-8 (5 No.)

## MEDITATIONS on the Self

### Verse 4:      *The Elusive Self or Atman*

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो  
नैनहेवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत् ।  
तद्धावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठत्  
तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति

॥ ४ ॥

1	<i>Anejat ekam manasah javeeyah,</i>	<i>The Self is the motionless one, yet it is swifter than the mind.</i>
2	<i>na enat devaah apnuvan poorvam-arshat;</i>	<i>The Devas (senses) cannot overtake It, for It runs before them.</i>
3	<i>tat dhaavatah anyaan- atyeti tishthat,</i>	<i>Than others who run after It, It overtakes them while sitting!</i>
4	<i>tasmin apah maatar- ishwaa dadhaati.</i>	<i>In It, as water by the air, all actions of all living beings are supported.</i>

The next five verses (4-8) are Upasanas or meditations on the Self so that we understand what our spiritual goal, our true being, the Self, really is. These verses sound like riddles. The Self is who we are at the core of our heart. There must be something very special about the Self that frees people who realize It, and keeps in bondage those who live in forgetfulness of It.

**1** The Self is motionless as it occupies everything in the universe. There is no place where it is not. If you were sitting in a local train in India, you would know exactly what this means. The local trains are full to capacity with passengers. Passengers hang out of the doorways. There is no standing space, even in the aisles. How does one move in a cramped situation like that? The Self is in such a situation with regard to the vast universe. Every cubic inch of it is occupied by It, so it has nowhere to move!

In spite of being motionless, it is swifter than anything else.

**2** The Devas are the mind and senses. The deluded mind, not aware of who the Self is, tries to catch it conceptually in so many different ways through different philosophies, and, of course, it never succeeds. The Self, as it were, is always ahead of the mind. It can never be reached even by the instruments of the mind, namely, the senses.

The senses are here depicted as police officers sent out by the mind with warrants to 'arrest' the Self. The Self eludes them all; they fail totally to catch it. The tongue fails to describe It. The eye cannot have even a glimpse of It. It is the same with the other senses. When they try finding It in the external world, they cannot find a trace of the Self.

**3** So the mind tries to search for the Self within. The mind is told that It is seated in the heart, that It is in the core of one's being. Even this 'sitting' Self cannot be caught! Why?

Even the mind that tries to concentrate and meditate is filled with thoughts running about everywhere. The thoughts draw its attention, and once that happens, how can the mind settle on the Self? No matter how much it meditates, it seems a futile exercise to hunt down the Self. The Self simply cannot be arrested by any officers which the mind deploys, whether externally or internally.

**4** The Self seems to have found a perfect hiding place. However, although it evades the officers hunting for It, It leaves Its scent everywhere. But the best sniffer dogs cannot seem to pick up this scent. There are umpteen clues that tell us that It is around somewhere. Most notable among them is Life itself! If the Self were not around, where does Life come from? The Life-force enlivens our body and mind; by the signs of life we infer the presence of the Self. The Prana or life-force supports all living beings. Without Prana, the body dies. All activity of the body is also an expression of this life-force, whether it is physical action or mental activity. Yet the Self is too subtle for us catch it!

The scenario may be compared to this illustration: The secret police are hot on the heels of a serial murderer, but they just cannot pin him down. Every few days, a crime takes place which is a replica of all the previous crimes. So, the police know that the culprit is around, and that he is somewhere within their clutches. Yet he cannot be traced!

The truth is that the instruments we have employed are not the right means to obtain Knowledge of the Self. The means are powerless to locate the Self. The mind is the Drishtha (the 'seen') while the Self is the Drishya (the 'Seer'). The seen can never comprehend the seer. [Refer to *Drg-Drishya Viveka*, Text 13.] It is impossible for the mind to have knowledge of the Self. In fact, it is only when the mind's activity ceases completely that the Self reveals itself fully.

### **Verse 5: Finding the Correct Means**

तदेजति तन्नैजति तदूरे तद्वन्तिके ।

तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः

॥ ५॥

1	<i>Tat ejati tat na ejati,</i>	<i>That (the Atman) moves and yet It moves not;</i>
2	<i>tat doore tat u antike;</i>	<i>It is far away and yet It is near;</i>
3	<i>tat antah asya sarvasya,</i>	<i>It is within all of this;</i>
4	<i>tat u sarvasya asya baahyatah.</i>	<i>and yet It is also outside of all this.</i>

This second verse dealing with the "Riddles", places before us more clues as to where the Self could be hiding. The whole hunt seems to be a futile exercise. The point being made is that we are using the wrong means to discover the Self. Until we adopt the right means, it is going to be impossible to find the Self.

To know if a flower is real or artificial what are the right means? It cannot be the **eyes**; the artificial flower looks identical to the real. It cannot be the **ear**; both remain as dumb as doorposts. It cannot be the **nose** because the artificial flower has been sprayed with the same scent as a real one. The 'touch test' too is not conclusive; both flowers can feel the same to the **skin**.

The answer is **Time**. If given sufficient time, the real flower will fade while the artificial flower will not. Time is the correct means to ascertain the truth about the flower.

**1-4** In the same way, this verse gives us the strongest hint that we are seeking the Self with the wrong means. The Self is beyond all mental concepts. Far and near, within and outside, moving and unmoving – all these are concepts in the mind, based on time and place. They tell us that with the mind we can never ‘catch’ the Self. The mind and the Self are in two totally different realms of reality.

Such verses are deliberate and quite common in Vedantic literature. The author knows that it is only when the mind is compelled (by such contradictions) to abandon its pet ideas, will it quieten down and make it possible for the Self to shine forth of its own accord. Verses such as this do not allow one to form a concept. When the mind is forced to stop making concepts, that is the only time it can get close to understanding what the Reality is. It may feel uncomfortable in the zone it is being pushed into but at least it has a better chance there than in its own fanciful conceptual world.

The contradictions themselves need not be taken seriously, nor is it necessary to find philosophical explanations for them. That would only lead to building up more concepts.

Guruji added a riddle of his own: “Which runs faster, heat or cold?” Answer: “Heat – you can catch a cold quite easily!”

Reading such verses has bewildered many people. There was one Western critic who said, “The Upanishads are a blabbering in early childhood.” Well, if that is so, then the blabbering was done in perfect Samskrit!

Guruji defended these verses purely on the basis of logic, leaving out all emotional reasons there may be, such as defending one’s “national pride” and so on. He said it was all to do with which standpoint we are observing from. The standpoint from the perspective of the body and mind (the Upadhis) will naturally be diametrically opposite to the standpoint from the Self, which is the standpoint the Upanishads are pointing to.

The view from the ground is always different from the view at the top of the mountain. Common experience is at ground level and God-experience is at the mountain-top. The viewpoints are bound to differ. From ground level it is not possible to understand what it is like at the top. This is what is being highlighted by verses such as verses 4-8.

### **Verse 6:      *The Jnani – Seer of the Self***

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।  
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते

॥ ६॥

1	<i>Yah tu sarvaani bhootaani,</i>	<i>He who sees all beings and forms,</i>
2	<i>aatmani eva anupashyati;</i>	<i>in the Self, he alone really sees;</i>
3	<i>sarva bhooteshu cha aatmaanam,</i>	<i>he also sees the Self in all beings and forms,</i>
4	<i>tatah na vijugupsate.</i>	<i>thereafter, he feels no hatred towards anyone.</i>

A vision of Self-realisation is presented before us by the Rishi. The same vision is presented to us in the Bhagavad Geeta. A characteristic of the God-realised person is that his horizons extend beyond his personal boundaries, and become unlimited. It is impossible for us to step into his shoes and get a glimpse of the world that he sees.

There are two sides to the coin of an expanded vision of life:

- i) Seeing all beings in the Lord, i.e. as being superimposed on the Lord; and
- ii) Seeing the Lord in all beings, i.e. the Lord as the Substratum of all beings.

### **Seeing All Beings in the Lord**

**1-2 Sarvaani Bhootaani:** “all beings”. This term occurs very frequently in Vedantic literature, and specifically refers to every creature living in the world without any exception.

All beings are seen as being superimposed on the Lord. In that lies their equality. They are equal in terms of them being superimpositions. Since all superimpositions are regarded as being unreal, the equality of all beings really means that all beings are equally unreal! Their common unreality makes them equal. They are equal with respect to their unreality.

### **Seeing the Lord in All Beings**

**3** Now we look at the same equality from the side of Reality, i.e. the Lord. With respect to the Lord, He is the Substratum of all beings.

Since all beings have the Lord as their substratum, they are equal. In that fact lies their equality. They are equal in terms of having the same common Substratum to their existence. Since the Substratum is always regarded as being Real, the equality derived in this way means that all beings are in essence Real! Their common Reality makes them equal. They are equal with respect to their Reality.

Thus, both sides of the coin of an expanded vision bring us to the fact of the equality of all beings. From one side we see the common unreality of all; from the other side we see the common Reality of all. It is only in terms of pure unreality or pure Reality that all beings are equal. True Equality is thus a preserve of the realised saint; we have no access to it.

### **The Roots of Inequality in Living Beings**

The moment we take into account other considerations, the equality is no longer there. Let us explore this statement a little further and discover from where inequality arises:

When we view things from our individual mental or physical level, all sorts of inequalities begin to surface. The view changes altogether from the saint’s view. We are no longer looking at equal beings, but we see an amazing variety of beings. Not only are our bodies of all shapes and sizes from creature to creature, but our minds are even more varied, between creatures as well as within the same species of creatures. Within the human species alone, we find an incredible variation in mental types.

We are now in a position to draw the following conclusion: Equality, whether of unreality or of Reality, is seen only when we come out of our individuality and enter universality. As long as we are locked in individuality, we see only **Inequality** alone at every turn of the eye! From individuality, it is impossible to even imagine what equality is like, except theoretically. Conversely, from universality, it is hard to imagine what inequality is like, except from recollections of the days of our own ignorance!

### **The Reward of Realisation – A Society Free of Hate**

**4** The vision of unity in diversity is the most essential reward of realisation. But there is a secondary reward which is mentioned in this verse – the birth of universal **Love**.

God-realisation spells the death of individuality and the birth of universality. In the Geeta, the term **Sarvatma Bhava** is used to express the feeling of inter-connectedness that God-realisation brings into the life of a saint. This feeling is the touchstone of practical spirituality. It is the essence of realization; the acid-test of God-realisation; the confirmation of having broken through the boundary of individuality.

When one has such an integrated vision of life, it becomes impossible *to hate* any being. Dislike and hatred only come when we see others as different from us. The practical way in which realization alters our whole view of life and promotes the good of all mankind is that negative feelings cannot arise in a realised person. The Sarvatma Bhava is the only guarantee that ensures the absence of all negative feelings in man.

This may sound Utopian, but in it lies the solid contribution of spirituality towards the progress of man. A civilisation free from hatred and suspicion can become a reality only through the spiritual progress of man, and in no other way.

Sarvatma Bhava is the grand vision that dissolves all problems between man and man. Even if this feeling is not actually attained as a result of direct realisation or spiritual perfection, its theoretical understanding can help. To hold such an attitude of mind as a principle to live by can make a big difference to our relationships. In other words, even a theoretical understanding of this Truth can help to improve our attitude towards others. Thus, an educational system which promotes this Truth can go a long way to build good human beings, even if it does not go all the way and build God-realised sages!

The person who keeps this principle in mind becomes more understanding. He can place himself in the shoes of others and understand their feelings. He becomes free from rage and heated exchanges which characterize the politics of today. The vision presented here is the foundation for better, improved relationships.

### **Verse 7: *Freedom From Delusion & Sorrow***

यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।

तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः

॥ ७ ॥

1	<i>Yasmin sarvaani bhootaani,</i>	<i>When all beings and forms</i>
2	<i>aatmaa eva abhoot vi-jaanatah;</i>	<i>have become one in his own Self – knowing thus,</i>
3	<i>tatra kah mohah kah shokah,</i>	<i>how can he feel delusion and grief thereafter,</i>
4	<i>ekatvam anu-pashyatah.</i>	<i>who sees oneness (non-duality) alone everywhere?</i>

The previous verse and this one give the fruit or result of the meditation that has been taught in verse 1, 4 and 5.

**1-2** The experience of oneness with all beings comes as a result of the precious knowledge of discovering one's Self. It has been described in the previous verse.

**3 Kah Mohah:** We have seen that experience frees us from hate. It also frees us from delusion once and for all. Delusion was responsible for the feeling of separation in the first place; now the reverse occurs as oneness frees us from that delusion.

**Kah Shokah:** At the same moment, grief and sorrow also end. The delusion had caused us to live our life incorrectly. The incorrect living caused us to experience much pain and sorrow. With the destruction of delusion, that sorrow also falls away from our life.

**4 Ekatvam:** “Oneness”. The following logical results follow this experience:

- i) The person does not see objects as ‘mine’ or ‘his’ or ‘not mine’.
- ii) There is no more love and hate for objects, no more likes and dislikes.
- iii) One transcends all pleasure and pain, having become firmly fixed in Oneness.
- iv) There is no triad of experiencer, experiencing and experienced.
- v) There is no more any duality of subject and object. The waves and ocean are both seen as water alone. The blazing sparks are not different from the fire producing them.

**Two Examples:**

Guruji was reminded of a simple illustration to show oneness. On a train journey, a man was sleeping on the upper berth and a lady was knitting on the lower berth. Unknowingly, she had connected a thread from the jersey of the man sleeping above and was busy knitting away. As her jersey grew in size, the man’s jersey was disappearing! Nature is like that, too – what gets destroyed in one place gets rebuilt in another.

The second example is of a little girl in the kitchen making rotis. She made them in all shapes and sizes, each one looking like a map of some country. The mother was not satisfied with the effort. She took the whole lot and lumped it all together to restart the whole process. Creation, too, is a series of such events of building, breaking down and re-building.

Guruji stressed that the present subject, union with the Self, is all about us. We should never forget that we are talking about our real Being. Then we will not view all these as strange experiences that occur only to others; we can and should experience them for ourselves.

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**Verse 8:      *How the Lord Governs***

स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रण-

मस्नाविरं शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।

कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयम्भू-

र्याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः

॥ ८ ॥

1	<i>Sah paryagaat shukram akaayam avranam</i>	<i>He (the Atman) is all-pervading, bright, bodiless and immaculate (scatheless);</i>
2	<i>asnaaviragm shuddham apaapa-viddham;</i>	<i>He is without muscles, pure, and unpierced by evils;</i>
3	<i>kavih maneeshee paribhooh, swayambhooh yaathaa-tathyatah</i>	<i>He is wise, omniscient, transcendent, and self-existing; and the respective</i>
4	<i>arthaan vyadadhaat shaashwateebhyah samaabhyah.</i>	<i>functions and duties are allotted by Him alone to the Creator for eternity.</i>

**1-3** Here, Guruji took great care to help us on how to understand each of these word descriptions of the Self. He said we should take a word at a time, close our eyes and ponder over its meaning within, feeling always that the description is of our true nature. We should feel that quality in our very being.



**4** As was mentioned in verse 1, the Lord is not a dictatorial King. He is within all creation. The function of governing this world is allocated to various Deities according to their capacity to handle the respective duties. These Deities are agents on behalf of God.

#### **How Duties are Given to Deities**

About the allocation of duties in this manner, Guruji introduced the idea of superimposition of Brahman or the Self upon the various range of minds and bodies of varying capacities. He emphasized that even the Creator Himself is a being like us but with an enormously powerful cosmic mind and cosmic body. If we were to drop these superimposed subtle bodies from all the various created beings, then they would all be identical to Brahman. This is the meaning of the Mahavakya “I am Brahman” and the subject of all other Mahavakyas, which is “Jiva-Brahma-Aikya”. They all instruct that the Jiva and Brahman are identical. The way to see this as the Truth is to disengage our awareness from all our Upadhis (body, mind and intellect), and fix it on the Self.

Among these Deities, the foremost is Ishwara, the Supreme Creator. He is allocated rulership over the whole of creation. He is associated with the Total Mind and Total Body so He appears to be infinitely greater than each individual human being. Yet, if we remove the superimpositions from Ishwara and remove them from the Jiva or individual as well, there is no difference between the two. We would see the common essence of both of these, despite one being a Devata of the highest order, and one a puny human being severely limited by a small body and limited mind.

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## ISHAVASYA UPANISHAD

Wave 3: Verses 9-14 (6 No.)

### The Integration of KNOWLEDGE

IN THIS SECTION of 6 verses, we have two sets of 3 verses, each set following the same pattern. These are mystical verses and require the help and guidance of a Teacher to explain them. They have many interpretations, according to the orientation of the various schools of thought. They address the eternal problem facing man: Does the solution to the problems in life lie in Action & Devotion or in pure Knowledge? Is the solution secular or spiritual? How are we to view the manifested and the Unmanifested levels of creation?

This problem is tackled in both sets of verses. The first set tackles it from the individual's standpoint, i.e. from the Microcosmic level, known as *Vyashti*. The second set tackles the same problem from the cosmic standpoint, i.e. the Macrocosmic level, known as *Samashti*.

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#### A. AVIDYA & VIDYA:

##### The Microcosmic Perspective

In the first case, the two avenues open to man are termed Avidya and Vidya. These represent the path of Action and of Knowledge respectively. The former concerns the activities of man aimed at survival of his civilization, including the knowledge of all secular matters. Relative to the ultimate standpoint of Vedanta, this is classified as the realm of Avidya or ignorance.

The latter concerns the knowledge of matters related to the spirit of man, and deals with knowledge of God. This knowledge is grouped together and given the name of Religion. This pathway is all that is "other-worldly", and makes us look at the life hereafter, the life in heaven or hell as we know it. Vedanta's goal falls in neither of these two categories.

The problem of man has always been which path does he follow – the secular or the religious? Proponents of both these paths tend to be extremists, restricting themselves to solely one of these realms to the complete neglect of the other. A die-hard materialist want nothing to do with God; and a die-hard religionist wants nothing to do with the world. The Vedantin says that both these approaches are wrong. A happy combination of these two avenues in life has to be sought and practised. That is the way for man's emancipation.

Man has to use his discrimination and common sense and not go to the extremes; the middle path is recommended by the sage of this Upanishad. This is the way forward that is most conducive to his spiritual and material well-being. We cannot have a world without God, nor can we have a God without the world as long as we are locked in our body-consciousness. Both aspects need to be taken into consideration in our individual lives.

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## **B. SAMBHOOTI & ASAMBHOOTI:**

### **The Macrocosmic Perspective**

In the second case, taking the cosmic approach, the two methods open to man are termed Sambhooti and Asambhooti. These represent the two major dividing lines in creation, namely the manifested world (Sambhooti) made of the five elements, and the unmanifested or causal world (Asambhooti) prior to the birth of the elements. The former is the Effect we see as this universe and the latter is the unmanifested Cause of it.

At the cosmic manifested level, creation includes both the gross as well as subtle manifestations (the mind, intellect, ego, life-forces, etc). The subtle is also part of the manifested world although we cannot grasp it with our senses. This realm is headed by **Hiranyagarbha**, who is the “First-born” within this realm, and everything else that is created falls under him. Technically, Hiranyagarbha is Consciousness that is associated with the subtle level of manifestation. This realm is referred to as **Sambhooti** in this Upanishad.

Higher than Hiranyagarbha lies the realm of **Ishwara**, which is the pure Causal world. This realm consists of the Supreme Being in association with His creative power called Maya, constituted of the three Gunas in equilibrium. Nothing is manifest in creation yet. This realm of Ishwara is what the Upanishad refers to as **Asambhooti**.

As in the microcosmic level, here also the tendency is for us to concern ourselves only with one and ignore the other, for precisely the same reasons. Worshippers of the material manifestations adopt Hiranyagarbha as their supreme Deity. Under Him come Indra, Agni, Vayu, Varuna, etc, in Vedic times; and Deities like Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Devi, Hanuman, etc, in post-Vedic or Puranic times. The common name for these is “Personal Gods”. In contrast, worshippers of Ishwara fix their concentration on the “Impersonal God”, as symbolised in Om, Brahman, Atman, etc. The divide is further differentiated by classifying the former worship as **Bhakti** (Devotion) and the latter as **Jnana** (Knowledge).

The same remarks as for combining Avidya with Vidya apply equally to a combination of Sambhooti and Asambhooti. In their combined worship lies the happiness of man. When both are taken care of, we have the proper development and unfolding of all aspects of man’s life. The Truth conveyed to us by the Upanishad is that man is a spiritual being having a material association in this universe. Both realms need to be taken into consideration and given their due for the overall well-being of man. This overall well-being is referred to here as “conquest over Death” (no more pain, sorrow, suffering, fear, etc), under Avidya and Sambhooti; and as the attainment of “Immortality” (no more death, rebirth, transmigration, Samsara, etc), under Vidya and Asambhooti.

The “well-being” is described in other ways, too, according to the leanings of the school of thought. The highest goal set out in the Upanishads is **Sadya Mukti** or immediate liberation from the cycle of worldly life. A second-tier means to this goal is provided for as **Krama Mukti**, or gradual liberation, leading from Karma to Upasana and then to Jnana. The former can be attained in this birth itself, whereas in the latter evolution continues in the higher heavens such as Brahmaloaka until the same final liberation is attained.

With this background or overview, the verses can be read with more clarity and understanding of their full import and meaning. The ‘mystery’ shrouding the verses has been cleared. We can now take up a detailed study of the verses.

## **A. AVIDYA AND VIDYA**

### **Verse 9:      *Worship of Avidya & Vidya***

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽविद्यामुपासते ।

ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ विद्यायां रताः

॥ ९॥

1	<i>Andham tamah pravishanti</i>	<i>They enter into blinding darkness</i>
2	<i>ye avidyaam upaasate;</i>	<i>who are worshippers of Avidya alone;</i>
3	<i>tatah bhooyah iva te tamah</i>	<i>but they enter even greater darkness</i>
4	<i>ye u vidyaayaam rataah.</i>	<i>who verily are worshippers of Vidya alone.</i>

### **Verse 10:      *The Fruits of Avidya & Vidya***

अन्यदेवाहुर्विद्ययाऽन्यदाहुरविद्यया ।

इति श्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे

॥ १०॥

5	<i>Anyat eva aahuh vidyayaa,</i>	<i>One thing, they say, is obtained from Vidya,</i>
6	<i>anyat aahuh avidyayaa;</i>	<i>and another thing, they say, from Avidya;</i>
7	<i>iti shushruma dheeraanaam,</i>	<i>Thus we have heard from the wise,</i>
8	<i>ye nah tat vicha-chakshire.</i>	<i>who have explained it to us.</i>

### **Verse 11:      *Combining Avidya & Vidya***

विद्यां चाविद्यां च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।

अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते

॥ ११॥

9	<i>Vidyaam cha avidyaam yah,</i>	<i>Vidya (knowledge) and Avidya (ignorance) – he who</i>
10	<i>tat veda ubhayam saha;</i>	<i>knows them both together (at the same time),</i>
11	<i>avidyayaa mrityum teertvaa,</i>	<i>he overcomes death through Avidya</i>
12	<i>vidyayaa amritam ashnute.</i>	<i>and obtains immortality through Vidya.</i>

In this second set of three verses, in **9** the fruits Avidya and Vidya, when worshipped alone, are given; in **10** their fruits are compared to each other (again, note that they not *opposed* to each other), and in **11** is given the fruit of combining both of them.

The problem before us is to find the right interpretation of Avidya and Vidya so that it fits all three verses without contradiction. Further, we also need to explain what is meant by ‘death’ and ‘immortality’ in the last verse.

The dictionary meanings of the two terms are “*knowledge*” and “*ignorance*”.

Three options are examined:

#### **A. Combining Darkness & Light:**

Avidya = Ignorance or delusion, the very opposite of Self-knowledge.

Vidya = Atma Vidya, the knowledge of the Self.

#### **B. Combining Karma Yoga & Jnana Yoga:**

Avidya = the path of Karma Yoga, purification through devotional action.

Vidya = Sadhana Chatustaya, the preparation for Jnana Yoga.

**C. Combining Karma with Karma Yoga:**

Avidya = the path of Karma, simply as a means to earn wealth.

Vidya = the path of Karma Yoga, purification through devotional action.

Let us take up each one and see if it fits all the three verses:

**A. Combining Darkness & Light:** This is the standard interpretation of the terms, without any reference to the context. It is quite clear that we cannot accept these literal meanings because Knowledge and Ignorance are diametrically opposed to each other. They cannot be combined. Hence we have to drop this interpretation.

**B. Combining Karma Yoga & Jnana Yoga:** This is a feasible possibility because both are of the same type – both are Yogas. They can be combined with each other. However, the Vidya here is taken as the preparatory stage of Jnana Yoga. What happens when the preparation is over and one is ready to start the path in earnest? At that point the person has to separate from Karma Yoga. The two paths then cannot go together from that point onwards. It will be equivalent to the first option.

**C. Combining Karma & Karma Yoga:** This is the case that fits the present context. It is like one who combines a regular earning job (Karma) with a hobby (Upasana).

This interpretation takes **Vidya** to be an intermediate type of knowledge: It drops the level of Vidya from knowledge of the Self, yet keeps it raised above secular knowledge. It is that knowledge which is sufficient for the performance of Upasanas prescribed by the scriptures for purification of the mind. It can include knowledge of devotional worship, knowledge of the science of Karma Yoga (actions done as selfless service), and knowledge of the performance of rituals.

Knowledge of this intermediate type is like a ‘hobby’ that takes the person forward in spiritual life, while he still does a full-time ‘job’ for earning wealth.

The ‘job’ side of his life will fall under **Avidya**. It requires him to do some legitimate Karmas for the upkeep of his family. (It is most likely that such a person will be a householder, although that is not a pre-condition.) Such actions and the secular knowledge required for it is classified as Avidya.

The fruit of Avidya is the maintenance of the body and the household. The fruit of Vidya is the development of the Spirit. It may occupy secondary place to the earning, but there could come a time when the person starts applying more effort to the Upasana than to his job. If this becomes very intense, he may decide to leave his job and do Upasana all the time for the love of God. In this case he will be like the one who drops his job in order to pursue his hobby.

Combining a job and a hobby is quite commonplace. In the same way combining Karma with worship is quite common. One gains freedom from ‘death’ – which could mean freedom from poverty, hardship, diseases, pains, etc. – by doing the ‘job’ called Avidya; and relative immortality through pursuing the ‘hobby’ of Vidya. [Absolute immortality as defined in Vedanta can come only through Self-knowledge, and that has been excluded here.] Relative immortality refers to life in higher planes of existence. For example, there are heavenly worlds where one does not age, and feels no hunger or thirst, etc.

The human being is a spiritual being with a material body. Both have to be taken care of. It is not advisable to be completely immersed in the world of sense pleasures; nor is

it advisable to be completely immersed in study of scriptures, gaining more in scholarship, and avoiding one's responsibility to care for the body. *Hating the world is worse than being attached to it.*

These higher planes could mean a place or Loka in the heavenly worlds after death, or it could be taken as a higher standard of living in this world itself. In either case it implies progress towards a life of goodness, morality, virtue and well-being, free from the hardship endured by the less endowed.

**A Non-Religious (Secular) Interpretation:**

The third option above can include the following purely secular interpretation: This considers living a purely secular life, with no link to religious life. Avidya would refer to a labourer's life where no knowledge at all is required. Such people are considered ignorant, but they have a virtue of having very little ego. They endure great hardship, which comes to their lot due to poverty and dullness of intellect. Yet they live very good, pure, simple lifestyles as peasants. That is the fruit of this Avidya.

Vidya, in this case, refers to secular knowledge as gained in the universities. He who gets educated and strives to understand more about the world he lives in, graduates and earns well in some profession. He has a better standard of living than the man of Avidya, but that is all. Spiritually he is still ignorant. In fact, because of his wealth and knowledge, he becomes more egoistic, proud, and even arrogant, and that places him in greater darkness than the simple darkness of the peasant.

Combining these two would give one the fruit of a better living from the Vidya and an egolessness and endurance gained from the Avidya type of life. The hardship takes one across death, and the learning takes one to 'immortality' or fame in this world.

This option, although it fits all three verses, may not be favoured because it does not bring in the *spiritual* dimension of life, which is the purpose of an Upanishad.

Now we consider the second set of 3 verses, dealing with the Unmanifest and the Manifest. This is a lot more difficult to understand than the first, on Avidya and Vidya.

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## **B. SAMBHOOTI & ASAMBHOOTI**

### **Verse 12:      *Worship of Unmanifest & Manifest***

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽसम्भूतिमुपासते ।  
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ सम्भूत्यां रताः

॥ १२॥

1	<i>Andham tamah pravishanti</i>	<i>They enter into blinding darkness who</i>
2	<i>ye asambhootim-upaasate;</i>	<i>aim to conquer the Unmanifest cause of creation;</i>
3	<i>tato bhooya iva te tamo</i>	<i>but they enter into even greater darkness</i>
4	<i>ya u sambhootyaagm ratah.</i>	<i>who aim to conquer the Manifest creation itself.</i>

### **Verse 13:      *The Fruits of Unmanifest & Manifest***

अन्यदेवाहुः सम्भवादन्त्यदाहुरसम्भवात् ।  
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे

॥ १३॥

5	<i>Anyat eva aahuh sambhavaat,</i>	<i>One thing, they say, is obtained from the Manifest,</i>
6	<i>anyat aahuh asambhavaat;</i>	<i>and another thing, they say, from the Unmanifest;</i>
7	<i>iti shushruma dheeraanaam,</i>	<i>Thus we have heard from the wise,</i>
8	<i>ye nah tat vicha-chakshire.</i>	<i>who have explained it to us.</i>

### **Verse 14:      *Combining Unmanifest & Manifest***

सम्भूतिं च विनाशं च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।  
विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा सम्भूत्याऽमृतमश्नुते

॥ १४॥

9	<i>Sambhootim cha vinaasham cha,</i>	<i>The Manifest and the Unmanifest (Vinasham) –</i>
10	<i>yah tat veda ubhayam saha;</i>	<i>he who knows them both together (at the same time),</i>
11	<i>vinaashena mrityum teertvaa,</i>	<i>overcomes death through the Unmanifest*,</i>
12	<i>Sambhootyaa amritam ashnute.</i>	<i>and obtains immortality through the Manifest*.</i>

\* In Option E below, Sri Shankaracharyaji swaps Unmanifest with Manifest.

In this second set of three verses, in **12** the fruits Sambhooti and Asambhooti, when worshipped alone, are given; in **13** their fruits are compared to each other (again, note that they not *opposed* to each other), and in **14** is given the fruit of combining both of them.

The problem before us is to find the right interpretation of Sambhooti and Asambhooti so that it fits all three verses without contradiction.

The dictionary meanings of these two terms are “manifest” and “unmanifest”.

The two options examined are:

#### ***D. Combining Destruction of Life Undivine & Construction of Life Divine:***

Asambhooti = Destroying undivine tendencies in the unmanifested (causal) plane.

Sambhooti = Seeing the Divine in all manifested life at the subtle and gross planes.

#### ***E. Combining Meditation on Impersonal God & Personal God:***

Asambhooti = Meditation on the unmanifest, Impersonal Nirguna Brahman.

Sambhooti = Meditation on the manifest, Personal Saguna Brahman.

#### **F. Combining Jnana & Bhakti:**

Asambhooti = Knowledge of the unmanifest, Impersonal Nirguna Brahman.

Sambhooti = Devotion and surrender to the manifest, Personal Saguna Brahman.

Let us take up each of these and see how they fit all the three verses:

#### **D. Combining Destruction of Life Undivine & Construction of Life Divine:**

This interpretation was given to Pujya Swami Chinmayanandaji by his Guru, Swami Tapovanji. It has the advantages of being based purely on Vedantic principles, seeing that we are dealing with a Vedantic text; and being free from the controversy we shall see in option E.

Asambhooti: The “unmanifest” here refers to latent desires called Vasanas, and reside at the causal level of existence. The old life is governed by subconscious Vasanas or tendencies that all souls are born with. At the root of these tendencies lies Cosmic Delusion or Ignorance, named **AVIDYA** in the previous set of verses. Living in Avidya leads to “blinding darkness”.

A new life is ushered in when, through **Vairagya** the Sadhaka eliminates his Vasanas bit by bit, until they are fully destroyed. The fruit of such a Sadhana is the end of death. The absence of Vasanas means no future birth ever again. He is liberated from transmigration.

Sambhooti: At the “manifest” level of life, the Vasanas of the causal level wreak havoc at the subtle and gross levels. They create all sorts of complications in our lifestyle – our habits, our actions, our thoughts, etc – and life flows into the channel of sorrow and grief. When Vasanas are not checked, it is impossible to arrest the build-up of sorrow in life. This is described as “even greater darkness”.

A new life begins when, by **Viveka** or discrimination between the Self and the not-Self, life is divinised by the conscious cultivation of virtue and removal of vice. This divinisation brings the fruit of immortality. One becomes a ‘God’ on earth, gaining immortal fame among men; he also gains spiritual immortality by becoming One with Reality.

Vairagya and Viveka are products of **VIDYA** or Knowledge. Asambhooti represents Vairagya, while Sambhooti represents Viveka. Combining them is the meaning of verse 14. Death is averted by the Vairagya or detachment of Asambhooti, while immortality is gained by the Viveka or aspiration of Sambhooti in the intellect.

This interpretation has a great simplicity, beauty and attractive charm in it for the practical seeker of liberation. It is a unique contribution coming from the Himalayan Sage Tapovanji, a man of Vairagya and Viveka. Its pure Vedantic approach steers it clear of all controversy. It is therefore the one that Swami Chinmayanandaji prefers.

However, Sri Shankaracharyaji, for an equally valid reason, opts for the next two interpretations, which are closely related.

#### **E. Combining Meditation on Impersonal God & Personal God:**

This option, which also meets with the requirements of all three verses, is supported by none other than Sri Shankaracharyaji himself. The view taken is not restricted to Vedanta, but takes into account the social and philosophical upheavals of his time. There was much debate at that time, circa 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E., which persists even to this day, as to which was the true God to be worshipped. Was it the Impersonal God of the Vedas, or was it the Personal Gods of the Puranas? Seen in this context, Sri Shankaracharyaji’s approach is quite justified, even though it may inevitably encourage some controversy.

Our discussion follows the same pattern as under point **D**:

Asambhooti: here “*unmanifest*” refers to the Causal State of the universe. Nothing is yet created but creation has been conceived as a ‘Master Plan’ about to be put into action through the power of **Maya** (Prakriti). We place ourselves in the shoes of the omnipotent and omniscient Lord, the supreme Creator of the worlds, namely, **Ishwara**. Whom does He worship? The Impersonal, Formless, Attributeless, unconditioned Lord, the **Nirguna Brahman**, the Reality Itself. To start off with this meditation or Upasana, one is bound to face “blinding Darkness”. It is like a primary school child sitting in the PhD class!

If one succeeds in it, the fruit of this meditation is the overcoming of Maya, the destruction of Delusion or Ignorance, the root cause of worldly existence. When Delusion is conquered, one recognises Reality as his own Being, and attains Immortality (*note below*).

Sambhooti: Here “*manifest*” refers to the whole of creation, both subtle (mental) and gross (physical). The Womb of Creation is **Hiranyagarbha**, who appoints Divine beings called Deities to govern it. Meditation on these Deities is meditation on the conditioned Lord, the **Saguna Brahman** with form and attributes. This meditation is within the reach of most worshippers who have advanced sufficiently to realise that the world is governed in an organised manner. However, this meditation is fraught with “even greater darkness” as one pins his faith on Deities who themselves are part of Creation. One faces the danger of being ‘trapped’ in creation with a Personal God. A safety feature in this meditation is to regard the Deity as Ishwara Himself.

The fruits of this worship come in the form of intellectual, mental and physical excellence, but there is no removal of Ignorance until he obtains knowledge of the Self. The excellence attained by meditating on the Saguna Brahman frees one from the fear of ‘death’ (see note below).

The combination of these two would lead to the fruits of both, namely, conquest over death and immortality. This is equivalent to Liberation while living.

Note: Sri Shankaracharya has had to swop Unmanifest and Manifest in lines **3** and **4** of verse **14**. Freedom from fear of death is the maximum fruit obtained from Saguna meditation. Immortality is obtained only through Nirguna meditation. Hence the need for the re-arrangement of the fruits. Sri Shankaracharyaji takes recourse to a fine grammatical rule in Samskrit to justify this change. This is dealt with after point **F**, for those interested.

#### **F. Combining Jnana & Bhakti:**

This follows a similar pattern to option **E**. Asambhooti refers to **Jnana** or Knowledge of the Self or Unmanifest Supreme Reality, the Impersonal God; Sambhooti refers to **Bhakti** or Devotion to the Deities ruling the Manifest Unreality, i.e. the Personal Gods.

Jnana without Bhakti leads to “blinding darkness”; Bhakti without Jnana leads to “even greater darkness”. It is said, “Knowledge without devotion is *lame*, while devotion without knowledge is *blind*.” Another proverb says, “Knowledge and devotion are like one’s two legs; without either one, one cannot walk.” Through sayings like these, the Bhakta is encouraged to obtain knowledge, and the Jnani is encouraged to develop love for God.

The sensible and correct approach is to always combine Jnana and Bhakti. By this combined method, the fruits of both are obtained, namely, freedom from fear of death through Bhakti, and Immortality through Jnana.

Thus the ageold controversy between Bhakti and Jnana is put to bed by the Rishi.

## THE CONTROVERSIAL ASPECT

Where does the controversy come in? In this option, there needs to be a correction made to the first line of verse 14. As it stands, Sambhooti and a completely new term, Vinasha, are named, which compel one to take Vinasha to mean Asambhooti. However, Vinasha, which means destruction, can only take place on the manifested (subtle and gross) world, not the unmanifested (causal) world. It therefore can only apply to Sambhooti, which would now appear twice.

The duplication is avoided by Sri Shankaracharya by suggesting that the word Sambhooti is really supposed to be Asambhooti. There is a grammar rule where the 'A' is dropped when a word is preceded by another word ending in 'A'. In this case the previous word is in the previous verse! – it is 'Chakshirah' which has changed to 'Chakshire'.

The controversy hinges on this fine grammatical point, but Sri Shankaracharya, a master of Samskrit grammar, is pretty sure of his stance. For suggesting this change based on a grammar rule, Sri Shankaracharya has initiated a controversy that still rages among scholastic Vedantins. To genuine seekers, there is no problem. Any interpretation which helps them to evolve is acceptable – that is the approach of a true seeker. Intellectual controversies mean nothing to the genuine seeker.

What do we learn from such passages in the scriptures that are interpreted more in the light of Samskrit grammar than on Vedanta principles? Guruji gave us three reasons why this is considered permissible:

- i) It broadens our outlook, albeit only for academic interest.
- ii) It gives people who have such desires as to attain these other worlds a chance to fulfill their wishes legitimately.
- iii) Those who seek liberation need to know these things to develop their Vairagya. The seeker is sure to reflect thus: "I can attain these worlds with all this huge effort, but at the end I will not be liberated. I gain nothing substantial. Is it worth it?"

The Brahma Jnani replies, "Enough is enough. Now stick to Brahma Jnana."

Guruji made another interesting comment: "Vedanta is like keeping accounts. Every cent has to be accounted for. If the two sides do not balance we should hunt out the error. Even if the error is in our favour, we should not permit it – it means there is a problem somewhere! Vedantic enquiry demands such strict intellectual honesty in order to succeed."

The whole matter brings out Sri Shankaracharya's intellectual honesty to stick to the Truth without any compromise. If compromise is to be made, let it rather be in grammar than in Vedanta!

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## ISHAVASYA UPANISHAD

Wave 4: Verses 15-17 (3 No.)

*"The VISION of TRUTH"*

### Verse 15:     ***The Face of Truth***

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।

तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये

॥ १५॥

1	<i>Hiranmayena paatrena,</i>	<i>By a golden vessel or lid</i>
2	<i>satyasya apihitam mukham;</i>	<i>is the face of Truth covered;</i>
3	<i>tat twam pooshan apaavrinu,</i>	<i>O Sun, remove the covering (or open the lid)</i>
4	<i>satya dharmaaya drishtaye.</i>	<i>so that I may behold the Truth I am striving for.</i>

[This verse forms the Theme Song of the Upanishad Ganga TV series produced by the Chinmaya Mission screened weekly on DD2 since 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012, over one year. At Sandeepany, the class was availed the opportunity of seeing each episode live on TV.]

This verse pairs up well with the opening verse which stated that the whole world was “covered” or “enveloped” by the Truth. Here, in a prayer addressed to the Divine, the seeker prays to the Sun (the deity of the physical sun) to remove that covering so that he may be behold the Truth. The similarity of the two verses is in conformity with the scriptural practice of **Upakrama-Upasamhara**, to convey the subject essence at the beginning and the end of the text. For this reason, Maadhyandina considers this to be the last verse of the Upanishad. Rishi Kanva considers verses **15-18** to form one concluding prayer to the whole Upanishad. In both cases the idea of the scriptural practice is accepted.

### The Covering of Truth

**1-2** We cannot look at the sun due to its brilliance; the very brilliance of the sun acts as a screen to shield it from our view. The Truth also has a “golden disc” shielding it from our vision. We cannot see the Truth because it is too brilliant. The *brilliance* can be thought of as an Upadhi which hides the Truth. An Upadhi, like our body and mind, is a de-limiter; it limits the the appearance of a thing; it attenuates the intensity of a thing by making the thing appear less intense than the original.

We can take an ordinary example of the country’s President. If we are asked to go and meet the President, we make special arrangements to do so. We are awed by the greatness of the ‘Upadhi’ of the President’s Office. His status far exceeds that of our own and so we stand in awe of him. But the family members of the President do not see his ‘Office’. They are quite at ease with him, even when he is in his office.

When we actually meet the President, we say, “Oh, he is such a simple person. He even shook my hand! And he smiled at me!” Every little act of his fills us with wonder. So, too, it is with Truth, whose Upadhis are enormous. It is so well hidden. It cannot be seen just for a song. One has to become worthy of seeing It.

Some commentators interpret the disc or cover to mean Maya Herself. This is slightly different from seeing it as an Upadhi. Upadhis are a product of Maya. With reference to Truth, the Upadhi is Maya.

### **The Expanded Meaning of Truth**

**3a Pooshan:** In Vedic times, the Personal Gods were the Deities of the respective elements. The Puranic Deities came at a later period. The Sun Deity is addressed by many names, according to the aspect of it being invoked. Here the name **Pooshan** is being used. ‘Pooshan’ means “*nourisher or sustainer*”. The Sun, though it remains still, is the source of the energy which makes the whole universe dynamic and powerful. The Sun provides the driving force. In the Vedic scriptures, the Sun is the perfect symbol for the Atman or Self within each individual. The Atman, too, fulfils the same function as Pooshan, the Sun.

Pooshan is a very appropriate choice of word in another context. ‘Pooshan’ expands the scope of meaning for Truth. It not only means the Sun, but it is also a name for Ishwara, the supreme Creator. It is also a name for Consciousness or Existence itself, which is the supreme Reality, the Absolute Brahman. Thus, by using the word Pooshan, the Truth could be interpreted to mean relative truth or Absolute Truth; meaning that the Truth is both transcendental (beyond creation) as well as imminent (within creation).

### **The Prayer of the Seeker**

**3-4** The seeker of Truth, the devotee, asks Pooshan to uncover the disc. The conversation between devotee and Pooshan can be imagined as follows:

Pooshan: “Why, what do you want to see?”

Devotee: “O Sun, I wish to behold the face of Truth.”

Pooshan: “But what is so special about you that I should uncover the Truth for your sake?”

Devotee: “Believe me, Sun, I am a **Satya Dharmaaya**, a practitioner of Truth. I do the Upasana for Truth daily. Can you not please grant me my heart’s desire?”

Pooshan: “Well, let me check out your records first to see if your request is valid. I will get back to you by email.”

Devotee: “O, don’t check too thoroughly, please! I know I have made many errors in my Upasana. Be a little lenient with me if you do find anything wrong.”

The devotee leaves, only to trouble Pooshan again the next day at the first crack of dawn. Still no email. He goes the next day, and the next....until his wish is finally granted.

Truly, Guruji’s subtle ways to get the message through to us has to be commended!

Guruji followed this with a delightful story of a little boy who asked Santa Claus for some special gifts on Christmas. “Santa, will you give me a video-game machine, a laptop, an i-pad, a cellphone with lots of games in it, and...”

Santa said, “Wait a minute. I will check out what good deeds you have done for the current year.”

The boy quickly replied, “Oh, Santa, just the video-game machine will do!”

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**Verse 16: The Vision of Truth**

पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य  
व्यूह रश्मीन् समूह तेजः ।  
यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि  
योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि

॥ १६॥

1	<i>Pooshan ekarshe yama soorya praajaapatya</i>	<i>O Sun the Nourisher, O sole Seer, O controller of all, O Soorya, the son of Prajapati!</i>
2	<i>vyooha rashmeen samooaha tejah;</i>	<i>Disperse thy rays and gather up thy fiery Light...</i>
3	<i>yat te roopam kalyaana- tamam tat te pashyaami</i>	<i>O That! What an auspicious Form is Thine – O That most glorious Form do I behold!</i>
4	<i>yah asau asau purushah sah aham asmi.</i>	<i>That is This...It is This Supreme Self within me, He, indeed, am I!</i>

**1** So, following up on his request in the previous verse, the devotee returns the next day and continues to glorify the Sun with some more beautiful praises. He is **Pooshan**, the Nourisher of all beings. He is **Ekarsha**, the sole Seer who provides the light by which all others may see. Seer could also mean a Rishi, as the Sun resembles a great Being stalking the sky from east to west, keeping a watch on everything that is going on. Thus He is also called **Yama**, the controller of all. All activity on earth begins when He rises, and stops when He sets.

**2** The same request, as made on the previous day, is repeated again today, and every day until it is answered.

**3** Soon Pooshan has checked out the seeker's records. He brings good tidings – the devotee is found to be eligible, indeed! The moment has come for the 'golden disc' to be uncovered. The blessed vision materializes....

The devotee takes in his first glimpse and exclaims, "O It's You! What an auspicious Form You have!"

He recognizes what he sees, and finds that it is he himself that is there! What a wonder! **Sah Aham Asmi** – "He, indeed, am I!" he rejoices, echoing the sacred Mahavakyas of the *Upanishads*. The Truth has dawned upon him. The ecstatic moment of realisation has come at last! Pooshan has graciously obliged him by lifting his veil.

**Yat...Tat**, "That" refers to the Supreme Being, Brahman, pervading all creation; whereas **Asau, Asau**, "This, This" refers to the very same Being dwelling in the seeker's heart, the Lord as the indwelling Presence. He sees no difference between them.

The sun, too bright to be seen during the day, is seen in all its glory at sunrise and sunset. Hence, these two periods are especially auspicious for meditation upon the Divine. Every seeker of Truth uses these periods of Sandhya for deep spiritual contemplation.

Having seen the vision of Truth, the "death" of the ego-consciousness has occurred. This is the only death that is significant in Vedanta. Immortality follows this death. This is explained more in the next verse...

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### **Verse 17:     *The Approach of Death***

वायुरनिलममृतमथेदं भस्मांतं शरीरम् ।

ॐ क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर

॥ १७ ॥

1	<i>Vaayuh anilam amritam atha idam</i>	<i>Let my Pranas merge into all-pervading air.</i>
2	<i>bhasmaantam shareeram;</i>	<i>Let this body be burnt to ashes.</i>
3	<i>om, krato smara kritam smara,</i>	<i>Om, O my mind, remember what you did!</i>
4	<i>krato smara kritam smara.</i>	<i>O my mind, remember what you did!</i>

#### **Daily Prayer of a God-fearing Devotee**

This verse is commonly interpreted as a prayer of a dying man to the Lord. Sri Shankaracharya says that these verses, **15-17**, are Upasaka Mantras, and do not arise from a Jnani. A Jnani who has attained realization of the Self will not have such a prayer in mind. It is a devotee's prayer for enlightenment along his spiritual journey. They are, indeed, verses that are truly rich in devotional fervour.

**1-2** For a sage who has beheld the Vision of Truth, death matters little; hence, if we are talking of death in its conventional sense, we may safely deduce that this cannot be a sage's prayer. Also the prayer need not be of an 'old dying man on his deathbed', waiting for death to come! It would and should be a prayer of any ardent, God-fearing devotee of any age. Every striving devotee prays in this manner daily. Death's arrival is certain – yet uncertain in a way, for it could be on this very day. There is no actual 'deathbed' upon which to welcome its arrival.

**3-4** Besides the above reason, there is another that confirms the same deduction. The devotee addresses his mind, asking it to remember all its past deeds. Again, as above, a sage is free from all his Karmic accounts – both Sanchita and Agama (past and future). Past and future deeds only trouble the ordinary striving human soul.

The typical human soul is bound to the earth-plane by its Karmas or deeds. All actions done with a selfish motive leave a scar of 'Karma' behind it which has to be paid for when the time for it is ripe. The devotee of God knows this too well, and therefore prays to his mind daily, "O mind! remember all those deeds you have done. Face them boldly, for you cannot escape them." By remembering this, the devotee makes a firm determination daily not to commit any misdeed on that day. To remember death daily in this attitude is a most effective way to stick to the path of Dharma or Righteousness.

#### **Spiritual Interpretation of Death**

Verses **15-17** can be interpreted as being not about a dying man, but a dying "ego".

The meaning of death need not be taken literally as above. It can be taken in its spiritual sense also. There is a Vedantic interpretation of 'death'. Spiritual Death is considered to be the death of one's ego-consciousness. Swami Chinmayanandaji used to say that at the time when a devotee goes into meditation, the Ego gets terribly scared, for its death could come in that session itself. So, at all costs it tries to prevent us from meditating, for the sake of its own existence!

The great saint and follower of Gandhiji, Vinoba Bhave, gives a novel interpretation to this verse. His view may be paraphrased as follows: "Here is a meditator who has gained the vision of the Truth. Is it by his own efforts alone that he reached there? No, only when

the Lord showers His Grace on him, does he behold the Divine Vision. Therefore, the devotee says here 'Remember, remember' twice. The first time it means, 'Remember the Sadhana you did to get to this point.' And the second time it means, 'Remember what God did for you', showering you with His Grace, so that you could behold His vision!"

Some devotees smear ashes on their forehead as a reminder that the body, too, will one day turn to ashes only. We call the ashes 'holy' because the thought behind applying them is a holy one. However, if we get attached to these ashes and use it as a symbol to proclaim our spiritual leanings, then the 'holy' ashes can easily become 'unholy'!

Nevertheless, they are traditionally chanted at the bedside of a dying man. The idea is that when the dying man hears them, he will not be afraid of Death.

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# ISHAVASYA UPANISHAD

Wave 5: Verse 18 (1 No.)

***“The ASPIRATION of Devotees”***

**Verse 18: A Prayer World Peace**

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान्  
विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।  
युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो  
भूयिष्ठां ते नमौक्तिं विधेम

॥ १८ ॥

1	<i>Agne naya supathaa raaye asmaan</i>	<i>O Agni, lead us to “Wealth” by good means.</i>
2	<i>vishwaani deva vayunaani vidwaan;</i>	<i>O Lord of the world, you know all the good ways.</i>
3	<i>yuyodhi asmat juhuraanam enah</i>	<i>Remove from us our leaning towards crooked ways.</i>
4	<i>bhooyishthaam te nama-uktim vidhema.</i>	<i>We offer to Thee this our best prayer.</i>

## **The Range of the Worshipper**

This Mantra is well known among all Hindus, in India as well as the diaspora. Verses such as this in the Upanishads, emphatically show that the Upanishads promote Bhakti, and are not against it as some would believe! Devotion pulsates all around it. Devotion is for all.

**1a Agne:** “O Agni!” The prayer is addressed to the Fire Deity himself. Usually, this Deity delivers our message to any of the other Devatas; he is the ‘Speed Post’ service of the Cosmos. It is Agni again, at the cremation ceremony, who leads the individual soul after death to its final resting place in the ethereal worlds. He is the presiding Deity of Tapas or austerity by which one is put through the fire of purification.

**1b Raaye:** “to wealth”. This is wealth that is uncontaminated by smuggling, gambling, cheating, extortion, and other unethical practices. Wealth truly defined is the welfare of all. It is the wealth of *virtue* and *lofty values*. No one can steal this wealth, and with this wealth alone can material wealth be earned. A third definition of wealth is the wealth of Givine Grace which is bestowed by God Himself. For a devotee, the Lord is his highest wealth. The devotee is asking Agni to lead him to his Beloved Lord.

**1c Supathaa:** “by a good path”; just as the idea of wealth varies from person to person, so does the ‘Path’ leading to it. We have already said it should be a virtuous path. Here the choice is among the many paths of virtue, namely, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga or Jnana Yoga, and numerous other spiritual paths having many names. People have a natural leaning towards a particular path. They may follow it as is their inclination without criticising any other path, or choose aspects from many paths. This is Integral Yoga.

Thus, we see how broad is the range of devotee who is here addressing the Lord.

## **The Range of the Worshipped**

**2a Vishwaani Deva:** “Lord of the World”. The Lord being addressed covers a wide range. This is not a narrow, sectarian prayer, but one that suits every citizen, every country.

The worshipper recognises that fellow worshippers may be addressing the same Lord by many different names. All are accepted. There is no differentiation of religion, caste, creed and any other man-made distinctions.

**2b Vayunaani:** “*different ways*”. There are various approved paths that lead one to the Lord. The prayer is addressed to the Lord who is the author of them all. All the good paths in the world are welcomed without any distinction. Goodness has no barrier, no favoured race, class or country. The highway to the Lord has many lanes to suit the worshipping traffic!

Again, we note that universality rings in this prayer from end to end.

### **The Commitment & Confession of Man**

**3** Here we see that man, the devotee, is fully aware of his own responsibilities. The first two Padas show that he is conscious that the acquisition of “Wealth” has to be done only by righteous means, and there are many such ways to attain it. In this Pada, man shows that he is equally conscious that the transgressor is him, and not the Lord. He humbly submits to the Lord that any path other than the virtuous one originates from him. He pleads guilty for all such “crooked ways”.

By thus taking full responsibility for all the crooked ways, man makes a commitment to the Lord to do his utmost to avoid not only executing them, but also avoid creating them in the first place. The whole chain of thought by which such crooked ways are conjured up in his mind is being referred to. He commits himself to removing this entire chain of thought. Man is aware of the sinister attraction latent in man for committing sin by violating the divine laws for selfish gain. Implicit in his appeal to the Lord is his readiness to correct himself morally.

**4** Man is also fully aware that Peace can come only when everyone together decide to tread the path of Virtue, to live for each other and not against each other.

There is great depth of sincerity in the above prayer. The devotee’s heart which has such a feeling of contrition bursts open in words of prayer in this final verse. How true are the wise words of Gandhiji, “In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than to have words without a heart!”

### **A Conversation Worth Remembering**

Gurujī assisted us in the proper interpretation of this important Prayer by bringing the spirit of the prayer to life through the following conversation between the devotee and the Lord:

**Devotee:** “Lord, You are All-knowing. You know all the Jivas and all their Karmas. So You please decide which path will be the right one for us individually. Take us by that path which You know to be the best for us.”

**The Lord:** (*wanting to test His devotee*) “I have already checked your records. I have already given you what you deserve. You do not qualify for anything more. I cannot give you what you are asking for.”

**Devotee:** (*not letting the Lord slip away from his palms*) “Then, Lord, tell me where do I stand. Am I really a zero? Have I not got some plus points to my credit?”

**The Lord:** (*consoling*) “You are not a zero-point devotee. There is some score on your chart, but it is not enough to get you there.”

**Devotee:** (*pleadingly*) “Lord, you are not only All-knowing, but also All-powerful they say. Will you not remove the crooked attraction of sin from my heart and the hearts of all men? Please remove our negative ways and habits. You can do so, as You are all-powerful. And if we have committed any sins along the way, please forgive us for them also. You are, indeed, all-powerful; only You can do this! Do You not remember what You promised us in the Geeta – ‘I shall save you from all sins’.”

**The Lord:** (*matching the devotee’s stubbornness word for word*) “Okay, but you have to do something in return for Me, will you?”

**Devotee:** (*puzzled by the Lord’s counter request*) “But we are such limited beings, what can we offer to You that You do not already have?”

**The Lord:** “There is something which you have, and which I do not. You can give Me that.”

**Devotee:** (*excitedly*) “Lord, is there really something like that, or are You just kidding me? I would like to know what it is. It sounds like we can make a good deal.”

**The Lord:** “Dear devotee, you see, I do not have any Ego. You have a lot of it. You can give Me your ego. Then I will do My side of the deal and save you quite easily.”

**Devotee:** (*thrilled to know that he can give the Lord something he has*) “O really Lord? Look, I have realised for some time now that I must get rid of it somehow, but I did not know how. I agree to surrender my Ego to You! I will be so happy to dispose of it. There is only problem – it is deep inside me. You must do the Ego-ectomy operation and extract it Yourself. Then You can have it for free! I am most grateful to You for this deal. You have given me a ray of hope.”

And so the unique relationship between the Lord and devotee goes on and on! It is always fresh from day to day. There is never a feeling like, “Oh, how many times I am saying the same thing to the Lord!”

In this way, the devotee makes the feeling for each day’s prayer unique for that day.

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## **ISHAVASYA & GEETA COMPARED**

There is an amazing similarity between the message of this Upanishad and the Bhagavad Geeta. Gurujii listed some of the similarities as follows:

1. Geeta has 18 Chapters; Ishavasya Upanishad has 18 verses.
2. The Geeta opens with a message on despondency. Here, too, there is a message for the man under delusion.
3. The message on death is in Geeta Chapter 8. Here it is in Verse 17.
4. The Asuric Buddhi described in Discourse 16, may be compared with verse 3.
5. Here we have seen the Self is in all, and all are in the Self. This is also expressed in Geeta in chapters 10 and 11.
6. The vision of Truth in verse 16 compares with Arjuna's vision in Chapter 11.
7. The Path of Karma Yoga of Geeta is found in verse 2 in Isavasya Upanishad.
8. The Path of Bhakti Yoga of Geeta is also found here in verses 15 to 17.

There are other similarities, but this list covers the common ground between the two scriptural texts sufficiently to convince us that universal Truth is proclaimed in both.

## **CONCLUDING PEACE CHANT**

### ***Shanti Mantra (as at Beginning)***

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

***Om Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaat Poornam-Udachyate;  
Poornasya Poorna-maadaaya Poorna-mevaa-vasishyate.  
Om Shaantih! Shaantih! Shaantih!!***

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**Om Tat Sat !**

