

# The Upanishads: India's Soul-Offering

by SRI CHINMOY

(The following lecture was delivered at Princeton University on October 22, 1971, by Sri Chinmoy Kumar Ghose. Born in Bengal, in 1931, he joined at the age of twelve a spiritual community—Ashram—in South India where he remained for twenty years. There, his practice of intense inner disciplines led to his early attainment of the fullest spiritual enlightenment, the Realisation of God.

From earliest youth, he wrote poems in his native Bengali language, winning his first prize at the age of thirteen in nationwide competition with poets of mature years. His literary production soon expanded to include poetry in English, as well as plays and philosophical essays which were widely published and deeply appreciated throughout India where he was, in addition, recognized as a spiritual teacher of rare eminence.

Sri Chinmoy came to the West in 1964 and has made his home here since that time. More than a dozen Sri Chinmoy Centres, dedicated to the Master's teachings and ideals, have been established in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Europe and the Far East. Two years ago, Sri Chinmoy was invited to conduct regular weekly meditation for United Nations delegates and staff. His Tuesday noon hour meditation services at the United Nations Church Centre in New York are now widely recognized and have been the subject of several articles in *The New York Times*, *New York Daily News* and other publications.

In the course of spreading his message, the Master has lectured at the world's great universities, including Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Oxford, Cambridge, and Tokyo. He delivers the monthly Dag Hammarskjold Lecture Series at the United Nations, and he has been a guest on a number of television and radio shows here and abroad.

A great teacher and philosopher, Sri Chinmoy has written extensively on Yoga, meditation and Eastern spirituality. Five publishing houses including Harper & Row have published his writings—eleven books in all.)

India's soul-offering is the perennial light of the Upanishads. The Upanishads offer to the world at large the supreme achievement of the awakened and illumined Hindu life.

The Vedas represent the cow. The Upanishads represent milk. We need the cow to give us milk, and we need milk to nourish us.

The Upanishads are also called the Vedanta. The literary meaning of Ve-

danta is "the end of the Vedas," "anta" means "end." But the spiritual meaning of Vedanta is "the cream of the Vedas, the pick of the inner lore, the aim and the goal of the inner life." Muktikopani-shad tells us something quite significant. "Tilishu tailavat Vede Vedantah Sus-pratishthitah." "Like oil in the sesame seed, Vedanta is established essentially in every part of the Veda."

The Upanishads tell us that there are

two types of knowledge: a Higher Knowledge and a lower knowledge. Paravidya is the Higher Knowledge and Aparavidya is the lower knowledge. The Higher Knowledge is the discovery of the soul. The lower knowledge is the fulfilment of the body's countless demands.

According to our Indian tradition, there are 1,180 Upanishads. Each comes from one branch, shakha, of the Vedas. Out of these, two hundred Upanishads made their proper appearance, and out of these two hundred, one hundred and eight Upanishads are right now traceable. If a seeker wants to get some glimpse of truth, light, peace and bliss, then he must assiduously study these one hundred and eight Upanishads. If a real seeker, a genuine seeker, wants to get abundant light from the Upanishads, then he has to study thirteen principal Upanishads. If he studies the principal Upanishads, and at the same time wants to live the truth that these Upanishads embody, then he will be able to see the face of Divinity and the heart of Reality.

The thirteen principal Upanishads are: Isha, Katha, Kena, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Chandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Svetasvatara, Kaivalya and Muktikopanishad.

"Tade yati. . . ." "That moves and that moves not. That is far, and the same is near. That is within all this, that is also without all this."

The Isha Upanishad has this special message for us. To the desiring mind, this message is vapid, nebulous, puzzling and confusing. To the aspiring heart, this message is inspiring and illumining. To the revealing soul, this message is fulfilling and immortalising. Brahman, God, in his absolute aspect is

immutable; but in his conditioned aspect he is ever-changing, ever-transforming, ever-evolving, ever-revealing, ever-manifesting and ever-fulfilling.

Again, the Isha Upanishad reconciles the work and knowledge, the One and the Many, the impersonal God and the personal God, in a striking manner. Work done detached is real knowledge. When we consciously try to see God in everything, in everybody, we soulfully offer ourselves to dedicated action. This knowledge is action. The One and the Many: we need the One for our self-realisation; we need the Many for our self-manifestation. The impersonal God and the personal God: when we live in the impersonal God, we see Truth in its illuminating Vision; and when we live in the personal God, we see Truth in its revealing Reality.

The Son of God declared, "I and my Father are one." The Chandogya Upanishad makes a bold statement, to some extent more daring, and at the same time more convincing. "Tat Twam asi." "That thou art." What does it mean? It means you are no other than God. Who else is God if not you?

A God-lover knocked at God's Heart-door. God, from within, said, "Who is it?"

The God-lover said, "It is I." The door remained locked. The man knocked and knocked. Finally he went away.

After an hour he came back again. He knocked at God's Heart-door. God, from within, said, "Who is it?"

The God-lover said, "It is I." The door remained locked. The man knocked and knocked at the door in vain. Finally he left.

After another hour, again he came back and knocked at God's Heart-door.



From within, God said, "Who is it?"

The God-lover said, "My eternal Beloved, it is Thou." God immediately opened his Heart-door.

When a seeker feels this kind of intimate and inseparable oneness with God, God opens his Heart-door to him and offers him his very Throne.

The Upanishadic seers did not feel the necessity to go to any spiritual centre, no necessity to go to a temple, no, not even to hear a talk, not to speak of a sermon, no, not even to study books. God was their only outer book and God was their only inner Teacher. God-Realisation was their only necessity, and God-Manifestation was their only reality.

The great German philosopher Schopenhauer voiced forth, "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death. They are the products of the highest wisdom. They are destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people."

The Upanishads offer us three lessons, and no more. The first lesson is Brahman. The second lesson is atman. The third lesson is jagat. Brahman is God, atman is the soul, and jagat is the world. Meditate on Brahman. When we meditate on Brahman, our life grows into immortalising bliss; and when we do not forget the soul, our life becomes a conscious and speedy evolution; when we do not neglect the world, our life becomes fulfilling manifestation.

If you study the Upanishads not in a cursory or perfunctory manner, but with the mind's clarity, then you will see that Brahman, God and you, you and God, are eternal. And if you study the Upanishads with your heart's re-

ceptivity, you will see that God and yourself are equal. And finally, when you study the Upanishads with your soul's light, you will come to realise that there in heaven you are the realised and esoteric God, and here on earth you are the manifested and exoteric God.

"Nayamatma Vala Hinena Lavya." "This soul cannot be won by the weakling." The inner strength dethrones the idol which has been installed by fear and doubt. When your inner strength comes to the fore the poltroon, the doubter, will be changed, transformed into the soul's effulgent light.

The Upanishads are the obverse of the coin of which the reverse is consciousness. Now there are three states of consciousness: Jagriti, Swapna and Sushupti. Jagriti is the waking state, Swapna is the dreaming state, Sushupti is the state of deep sleep. Now there is also another state of consciousness which is called Turiya, the pure consciousness of the Transcendental Beyond, Turiya. Mandukyopanishad offers us a most significant gift. It tells us about the Universal Soul. The Universal Soul has two aspects: Vaisvanara and Virat. The microcosmic aspect is called Vaisvanara, the macrocosmic aspect of the Universal Soul is called Virat. Jagriti, the waking state, Vaisvanara (the physical condition), the letter "a" from "aum," the sound symbol of Prakriti, the primal energy, form the first part of Reality. Swapna, the dreaming state, Taijasa, the brilliant intellectual impressions, "u" from "aum," form the second part of Reality. Sushupti, the state of deep sleep, Prajna, the intuitive knowledge, "m" from "aum," form the third part of Reality. Now the fourth part, Turiya: Turiya at once embodies these three states and transcends these

three states of consciousness. On the one hand, it is one part of the four parts; on the other hand, it is the culminating whole, the end, the Goal itself. Turiya is the Reality eternal, beyond all phenomena, Turiya is the Transcendental Brahman, Turiya is Satchidananda, existence, consciousness and delight.

It is here, in the Turiya, that a highly advanced seeker in the spiritual life or a spiritual Master can actually hear the soundless sound "Aum," the supreme secret of the Creator.

The supreme wealth of the Upanishads is the Self. "Yato vacho nivartante aprapya manasa saha." "Whence the words, the power of speech, come back with the mind baffled, the Goal unattained." This Self cannot be won by the mental brilliance. It can be won only with an aspiring heart and a dedicated life.

Again, this Transcendental Self is covered here in the world of relativity by five distinct sheaths: Annamaya kosha, the gross physical sheath, Pranamaya kosha, the sheath of the vital force, Manomaya kosha, the mental sheath, Vijnanamaya kosha, the sheath of the advanced and developed knowledge, finally, Anandamaya kosha, the sheath of bliss. Now there are three types of bodies corresponding to these five sheaths. These bodies are called Sthula sharira, Sukshma sharira and Karana sharira. Sthula means gross

physical, sharira means body, sukshma the subtle, karana means causal. The physical body, the subtle body and the causal body. The physical body, Sthula sharira, comprises Annamaya kosha, the material substance; Sukshma sharira, the subtle body, comprises Pranamaya kosha, Manomaya kosha and Vijnanamaya kosha. Karana sharira, the causal body, comprises Anandamaya kosha, the sheath of bliss.

On a dark and tenebrous night the glow-worms appear. They offer their light and they feel that it is they who have chased the darkness away. After a while, the stars start shining, and the glow-worms realise their insufficient capacity. Their pride pales into insignificance. After some time the moon appears. When the moon appears, the stars see and feel how dim and insignificant their light is in comparison to the light of the moon. In a few hours the sun appears. When the sun appears, the joy and pride of the moon again is smashed. The sunlight chases away all darkness, and the light of the glow-worms, stars, and the moon, pales into insignificance. Now this is the planet sun. Each of us has an inner sun. This sun is infinitely more powerful, more beautiful, more illumining than the planet. When this sun dawns and shines, it destroys the darkness of millennia. This sun shines through Eternity. This inner sun is called the Self, the Transcendental Self.