

preceptor. Once he had to go to Allahabad for the *Kumbhamelā*. He boarded a train which was overcrowded. He noticed that a lady had placed her trunks and things on the seat. Sometime passed and he approached her and requested her to share the seat. He had called her mother. To a Hindu, the greatest honour shown to a woman is to call her mother. But this lady only wanted to pick fault with this *brahmacārin*, she did not accept the sacred conception which is associated with motherhood. She told him that since she had not been friendly with his father, how could she be his mother. Being a student, he was not well versed in the ways of the world. So he got confused and apologised and called her sister. Hearing this, she told him that he was implying that her mother had been friendly with his father. The *brahmacārin* was thoroughly confused by now and he called her daughter. Whereupon the woman told him that he was insinuating that her mother had been friendly with him. The *brahmacārin* addressed her as the Divine Mother, Devi. Hearing this she told him that since she did eat goat how could he call her Divine Mother. By then the train had reached the next station. The *brahmacārin* was so confused that he got off there.

Words like mother, sister, daughter have very sacred associations, but even they can be *text-tortured*. These words can be distorted to convey something which the person who is using them could never have meant. Therefore, once faithlessness takes root in our mind, it becomes impossible to find out the real meaning or purpose of a text, or even the meaning of the words of a preceptor.

There is a prayer in the *Rg Veda*:¹⁰ 'We want faith to be established in us during the morning prayers. We invite *śraddhā*, we invite faith. At noon we invite faith. When the sun sets we invite faith. Oh *śraddhā* remove all the faithlessness in us.' Even in our daily life we are able to do most of the things only by trusting someone. For example, we go to a barber. We trust that he will not behead us while he is shaving with a sharp razor. If we start doubting and cannot trust, then we cannot go to a barber. Or, a person may get married to a girl who is a complete stranger. At night he might be afraid that she might kill him, but he has trust. When modern scholars study the *Vedās* and other such scriptures, they try to point out the contradictions in them.

They merely want to prove what is already in their mind. For example, they have accepted the dictum that ideas are continuously evolving. So, an earlier work cannot contain a higher idea, a higher concept. The moment they come across a higher concept, they try to break it down in such a way that it becomes a lower concept. If they find a developed language in the earlier tradition, they promptly conclude that this must be a later addition to the work, because this higher language could not have been evolved by the earlier authors. That is the reason why they study the *Vedās*, the holy scriptures, and instead of seeking spiritual enlightenment from them or acquiring certain value systems described in them, they are continuously striving to find just the opposite of it. Just as blind faith should be avoided, similarly faithlessness should also be avoided.

Another conception which *Sanātana Dharma* has always emphasised is that no man can be free of illusion, negligence and desire. It is in the very nature of every human being to have illusions about something or someone. Similarly no matter how careful we are, there will be times when we will neglect a particular aspect. And there is also wish-fulfillment. If we really want to see a thing, we will see it even if it is not present there. If we examine the development of sciences, the development of philosophies, we find that there are many instances where a man who has discovered great things, neglected certain aspects.

There is a story. Einstein and Max Planck were once discussing a particular topic. Though Einstein himself had discovered the theory of quantum, yet he was convinced that this uncertainty factor could not be in the nature of things. So he was continuously working to find out a way to eliminate this uncertainty factor in physics. Quantum is a factor which deals with uncertainty. Einstein told Max Planck that God does not play dice with us. If in the very nature of things uncertainty is present, it is like playing dice. Max Planck told Einstein to stop preaching to God what He ought to do and what He ought not to do. Both were scientists of the highest calibre, but they had a particular wish. Einstein did not want to see uncertainty, even though it is present. He wanted to eliminate it. Since every man has this

fault in him, that is why when we accept the word of another person we must have this attitude that it can be developed further. It may be true that we are utilising the knowledge that he has given us; but we have the capacity to go ahead, to move further on. Knowledge cannot be like a blind alley; that once we have attained it, no further progress can be made. So, faith is not merely faith in what is being said, but faith in our own self. Unless we have that faith in our own self, we will only see a book as authoritative or an individual as authoritative and we will not be able to progress further towards the goal. Many of us fall into this.

Sampūrṇānanda was a great man. He has recorded his childhood experiences. He was a student of Sanskrit. One day he saw his teacher going to the bathroom at dusk. Young that he was, he wanted to play a practical joke. He told one of his friends that one should not go to the bathroom at dusk. He records that his teacher heard this and did not go to the bathroom. The teacher did not even enquire whether this was mentioned in any of the scriptures. This is the case with many of us. We come across a writing, say, in a magazine. We do not even try to find out the source of that particular verse, whether it is authoritative, who said it and in what context it was said, what is the purpose of saying it. Without analysing any of these things, we read an article in a magazine and we are convinced that it must be true. Whenever we come across any passage, we must analyse. That is why when we read the *Upaniṣads* or the *Gītā* or the *Mahābhārata* or any of the ancient works, there are definite rules which have to follow. We must find out what the book starts with and what it ends with. Whenever a person wants to convey something, he will first make an assertion, then give evidence and eventually come to a conclusion.

There must be a relationship between what is asserted at the beginning and the conclusion at the end. That shows what the particular author or speaker is trying to convey. We also have to be conscious of the particular new message which that book is trying to convey. For example, if we read a book in physics, mathematics is taken for granted. It will build on that assumption. Similarly, when we try to preach a spiritual message, it has to be conveyed in a certain way, using certain methods, which the other person is aware of.

We take those things for granted. It is not necessary that the particular method which we have chosen is true. As in the case of physics we take mathematics for granted, because the purpose is not to teach mathematics, but physics. Similarly, when we read the epics, we may come across many events which we may not understand. Nevertheless, we should try to find out what new message that particular incident or epic is trying to convey. Then we must examine whether any particular idea has been repeatedly emphasised in that book. The idea a person wants to convey, he will repeat it again and again. He may also say something by the way, but that is not what he is trying to convey. We must examine how he builds up his argument, what is the rationale that he gives for a particular idea. Unless we follow this method to study the particular work, we will never be able to find out the true message of that particular book.

It is true that often we not able to trace these steps ourselves and that is why we need a preceptor, a person who has mastered that particular work and hence he is able to guide us. But the important point is that he guides us through these steps. He tells us the steps. This is something like attending a class in mathematics. If the teacher just gives us the answer to the question then we cannot say that we are learning mathematics. Therefore, he teaches us the particular steps which lead us to the answer. It is only then that we can say that we have studied mathematics. Similarly, when a preceptor teaches a text, he will adopt these steps. He is able to guide us along those lines, but if he merely says that this is the essence of this book, then this knowledge will be of no use to us. It will never give us the certainty that is needed.

There are two types of certainty we live with—one is what Ācārya Śaṅkarā calls the *avicārita* and the other is *vicārita*. Supposing we see two trees at a great distance and they appear to be one, we are more or less certain about what we have seen. But if someone questions us whether we are sure, our reply will be that is what we feel, that is what we think. On the other hand if a pea has been placed on our palm, we look at the pea. Now, if someone questions us whether we are sure that it is a pea, we say with confidence that we are

sure that it is a pea. So, when we see a thing from a distance, we are not confident about it. The same is true of spiritual experiences. As long as we have only a blurred vision of these experiences, we can never be sure about them. But once we have experienced them clearly and repeatedly, then only can we be absolutely confident. It is then that we can say that faith has become absolutely connected with our way of action, the way we will act from then onwards. It is this faith which is being described here in the *Upaniṣad*.¹¹

Realise it through faith. Faith is one of the most important means, however, it has to be developed. Doubts have to be removed; but they have to be removed properly. For example, we see things all around. Though it is true that we see things, yet the preconceived notions which we have will more or less determine how we will see a particular thing. But there are philosophers who jump to a brilliant conclusion: Because we cannot perceive anything without being influenced by preconceived notions, there is nothing which is not a preconceived notion. Hence, the tendency is to believe that all sensuous knowledge is no knowledge, because in a particular case, sensuous knowledge has been controlled by our preconceived notions. Now this is self-contradictory, because if we say that a particular experience is an illusion then we have to assert what the true experience is. Supposing we have seen a snake in dim light, but when we shine a torch on it, we find that it is a rope. Once we have seen it as a rope, we are able to assert that the snake was unreal. So the unreality of the snake depends on the reality of the rope. If we say that all experience is an illusion, the question remains illusion with respect to what? Similarly it is true that when we observe an object, we only observe its quality. We are able to see its form, i.e., quality of the substance, we are able to see its colour, we are able to touch it and find out whether it is soft or hard. All these are sensations. Now, it may be asked here whether there is nothing else to observe apart from those sensations. We believe that nothing else is present. But this is a mistake we make. Unless there was an existence, a being, it would not have been possible for us to perceive those qualities because qualities have to rest in some matter which has an existence of its own. Hence, the concrete act of knowing itself means that there is a knower and there is something which is be-

ing known. When we assert that there is no substance which is being known, we are putting ourselves in a state of contradiction which will eventually lead to faithlessness. Similarly when we make a scientific or a philosophical interpretation of the cosmos, we find certain forms in it. We find a system in it. At present we are not able to discover that system because we are imposing a preconceived system on it. It is not that we have a preconceived and presupposed mould in which we are putting the cosmos, the world.

As mentioned earlier, we may make a mistake and we may read something which is not present; but the cosmos itself has an intelligible system, and therefore it is not only that we are imposing a system on it, but it has a system of its own. This system discloses itself to the reflective mind. Unless there is faith, no scientific or philosophical enquiry can be taken up, no metaphysics can be built up. The faith that something is present which we are trying to read, which we are trying to find out is important. Ācārya Śaṅkarā says that it is not that we are imposing a system on the cosmos, but the cosmos has its own system which we try to read by adopting an intellectual approach, an emotional approach. That is why the *Upaniṣads* deal with cosmological, metaphysical, psychological, ethical, aesthetical, epistemological, ontological, sociological, spiritual and religious aspects. All these aspects are discussed in the *Upaniṣads* because life is a whole. Unless we are able to bring everything together in a unified interpretation, we cannot live purposefully. The universe is a system which we have to read and find out. There are two ways of doing this, a scientific way and a philosophical or metaphysical way. It is a sort of two way traffic. Either we look at the world and analyse it, analyse the finite things, which will eventually lead to the observation that there is a spiritual reality which gives substance to all this variety. This is the scientific approach. That is, we take the experience as it is, analyse it in such a way that it leads to a meaning or a purpose and thereby reach the conclusion that whatever the basis of the being is, it is infinite, it is of the very nature of existence because it is a being, it is conscious and blissful—*ananta-saccidānanda*. By perceiving the variety and working our way backwards, we reach the origin. The other approach is the spiritual one in which we first contact through deep medita-

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tion, *samādhī, ananta-saccidānanda*. Having contacted it, we are able to deduce how the variety has come into being. The interesting point is that both these approaches lead to the same result and these identical results give us complete faith in what we have attained. This faith is not in relation to something which is theoretical or academic. It is something we have to live with. It attaches a value to human life and its experience and is able to interpret all our experiences in a purposive way. This is the true purpose of philosophy.

Unfortunately, in Europe this trend got diverted when Christianity insisted that its message of salvation did not depend on reflection. The moment we build a wall that the final goal has been achieved and no further progress can be made, we stop looking at things reflectively. Hence, in Europe philosophy became academic. (For the present, we will not discuss Marx who was the only one who rebelled against this after several centuries.) Therefore analysis of things was confined to University teachers and students who were studying the subject. It lost all contact with life as such. On the other hand in India, we have always insisted that the aspirant has to be open-minded and that unremitting mental effort is necessary to attain the highest goal. The highest goal is not something which has been attained by a particular person at a particular time, but it is something which everyone has to discover for himself by exerting himself.

However, when the revelation loses the sense of mystery then it ceases to be the real spiritual search, the real spiritual hankering. It is then that religion begins to degenerate into either Sociology or Psychology or even Politics, because spiritual effort is lacking. Religion is no longer used to scale spiritual heights, to attain the beatific vision because that beatific vision has already been attained. So religion disintegrates. It no longer guides us towards a higher goal—the spiritual goal. Religion then becomes a University or an academic subject, something we learn by rote, certain creeds and credos we believe in or we are supposed to believe in, and there the matter ends. It is no longer a search.

Revelation means to reveal and not to veil. Yet most of the time revelation is used to veil the search, to veil the reality. This is because we do not want to face the reality and because we feel that some observations will contradict cer-

tain religious principles which we believe are final. Revelation means revealing, that is, removing the veil. The illusion is to be removed through this continuous mental effort. Thus faith is not believing in certain things but, as pointed out by Pitāmaha, *Avehi*—it has to be realised because it is *nigūḍhā*. It was earlier said that *Brahma Vidyā* is *nigūḍhā*, that is, it is hidden and we have to reveal it, realise it and experience it. Thus, faith is a guide to experience and does not mean merely believing a thing.¹²

We will discuss *bhakti* or devotion later. We will see how that is necessary for attaining the final spiritual beatitude.

LECTURE THREE

We were discussing how Āśvalāyana goes to *paramēsthī-pitāmaha* and asks him to lead him to the knowledge of the Supreme. Pitāmaha reveals to him the path that will lead him to the final goal. The first point we discussed was faith: *Śraddhā-bhakti-dhyānayogā-davehi*, i.e., know the Supreme Being through faith, *śraddhā*. The next point to be discussed is *bhakti*. This is often translated in English as devotion. Though we may use the term, but we should be clear that there is a definite difference between devotion and *bhakti*. The word devotion comes from the term 'to devote' which, in its Latin root, means to dedicate oneself by vows. We take a vow and we dedicate ourselves to that particular thing, to that particular person, to that particular ideal, to that particular goal. In short, the sense of duty is important here—we have taken a vow and we stick to it. The idea of devotion implies a sense of duty. The two great Ācāryas of *bhakti*—Nārāda and Śāṇḍilya—have written *bhakti sūtras*. While defining *bhakti*, both have used the word love. According to Nārāda¹³ and Śāṇḍilya,¹⁴ *bhakti* is supreme love towards the Supreme Being, i.e., God. Here the idea is not that of duty, but of love. The word love itself is derived from an Indo-European root which in Sanskrit is read as *lubh* 'to attract'. In Hindi too, we sometimes use the term *lubhānā*—*Usne mera man ko lubhāyā*: 'He attracted me towards himself.' So the word love implies that a thing in itself has a basic quality to attract. The feeling which arises out of this attraction is called love and, therefore, the real meaning of *bhakti* refers to love and not to duty.

Historically, we can see a fundamental difference between the approach of the Semetic religions and that of Hinduism.

As most of you know God created angles. One of them was Lucifer. Later, God created man and He asked all angels to bow down before man. However, Lucifer refused. He said that he was not going to bow down to anything which was created. He would bow down only before God. When he refused to obey God, he was called Satan. This illustration shows that Lucifer did not lack in love, but he lacked in duty. He did not obey God. As far as the Semetic religions are concerned love is not enough, they attach importance to obedience. Hinduism, on the other hand, emphasises love. There is no doubt that we also attach great importance to obedience, but that is as long as we are following the path of action, *karma*. But when we transcend it, we enter *bhakti*, and that is when we have love for God. We absorb the sense of duty to such an extent that we will automatically do our duty. The emphasis here is not on duty but on love. Now what does love imply? Yajñavalkya says in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* that the main centre of love is always our own self.¹⁵ We love every thing which is related to us. If a thing is not related to us, we cannot love it. To put it in a very gross way, your wife is very nice, but your love is such that she is nice to you. However, if she ceases to be nice to you, and if she entertains other men, do you still feel that she is loving you? No matter how much you love her, love will be always related to your own self. When a person says 'I love without any desire', what is known as *ahaitukī bhakti*, even then the question arises: do you enjoy loving that person? The answer will be 'yes'. If it is painful to love him or her, you will not love him or her. You may be dutiful to him or her, whatever the case may be. But it is an entirely different thing to be dutiful and to be loving. Yajñavalkya asserts that love in essence is always connected with our own self.

We may ask ourselves how can we supremely love any thing, because when we love something, we are loving its contact with us, its connection with us. In short, we are loving ourselves more than that particular subject or object. How can we say that love for God has to be supreme? The *Upaniṣad* says that we have to first analyse what our own real self is.¹⁶ The *Upaniṣad* goes on to say that in the beginning there was only one Supreme Being. Before creation, He alone was present. Out of Himself, He has created all be-

ings including me, that is, the soul. In other words, we can say that in the beginning I was one with God, because before creation He alone existed. Therefore, I was part and parcel of Him, I was one with Him. Now I have become divided, I have become separated, I have lost that unitive experience. All my actions are eventually to gain this unity. I am pinning for this unity and because this unity is real, after the creation ceases, it will continue to be real. Even during this period, it is not unreal. Hence, I am actually loving my real nature, my true nature, which is God. Since it is my real nature, my true nature, I can love it supremely because it is not something different. But one must develop faith in this unity. That is why we discussed *śraddhā*, an intellectual conviction, an emotional feeling and certitude that this is the truth. As long as I believe that God is entirely different from me, that supreme love will not spring forth, *bhakti* will not be aroused. Hence, love is actually identical with Śiva.

There is a book *Tirumandiram* in which the author Tirumūlāra says that the ignorant person believes that love and Śiva are two different entities. He does not know that love is Śiva. Once he realises this, he remains possessed of love, which is Śiva. That is why in many of our scriptures we come across the statement that we do not want any thing from *bhakti*; *bhakti* itself is our goal because this love is of the very nature of Śiva. Just as I love myself and because He is myself, therefore, He is of the nature of love. We may call Him *prema vighraha*. He may take any form. This can be illustrated with the example of light.

Light takes the form of the object on which it falls. If it falls on a flower, it takes the form of a flower; if it falls on a jug, it takes the form of a jug; if it falls on a human being, it takes the form of a human being. Similarly, Śiva being of the form of love, whatever He touches becomes of the form of love. Since He resides within love, the very experience of love is really the love of Śiva. Śiva manifests Himself in the form of love by entering into the innermost being of the devotee and communing with him. We know that knowledge is of the form of God; whenever we know a thing, the knowledge of that object is not in our mind, but it is ray of God which touches our mind to make it conscious, to make it the knower. It is this quality which differentiates any living being, any soul, from an inert thing. The mind itself is not conscious, it is made conscious

by the touch of God. As soon as that touch is withdrawn, the mind becomes as unconscious as it ever was. Modern psychologists, studying the mind, say that it is constituted million times more of unconsciousness than consciousness. What does unconsciousness mean? It is inert. Only that particular part of the mind which shines through the light of God, through the light of consciousness, becomes conscious. Similarly, whenever a person knows a thing, he can immediately feel that it is the touch of God which is making him know a thing, because it is He who is consciousness. Since He is of the form of love, the moment we feel love towards anyone or anything, we should know that it is the Lord who is touching us. It is true, however, that by knowing limited objects, we are not able to contact God directly. But we are being contacted by Him and by realising this fact, we move closer and closer to Him. It must be mentioned here that by loving limited objects we will not move closer to God, but by realising that the touch of love is His touch will transform us. We will no longer be conscious of the object of love, but of love itself which is God; it is He who is touching us.

Since God enters our mind in the form of love, the devotee feels that God has been trapped inside him, because the feeling of love is within. We come across many devotees who say that they have captured God. Or, they have made Him a prisoner in their heart, in their mind. There is a famous story of Sūrdāsa. The Lord came to him and in a playful mood He went away. Whereupon Sūrdāsa says, 'You have run away because I am blind, but can you run away from my heart? I have captured you there.' Because love has entered our being, our mind, we feel that we have captured God.

This love has the capacity to make our mind dissolve. The mind loses its egoness whenever love becomes completely unified with it. As long as the feeling is 'I love', the duality remains. But once the realisation dawns that 'I love Him who is of the very form of love', then the mind starts melting. The devotee says that everything we do should be done by melting in love: Praise Śiva melting in love. We all repeat the name of the Lord—we may do *japa* or we may recite the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* or *Śivasahasranāma*, whatever we do we are praising Him. At the end of the sacred mantras we are told that if we recite them, we will gain such and such thing. What is our experience? We recite them every day, but

nothing happens. Why? The reason is that we do not recite them melting in love. Our mind is absolutely hard and frozen. It is not ready to melt and is afraid of losing its individuality. If we can praise Him melting in love, we can experience Him that very moment. We must seek the Primal Being melting in love.

If we want to know Him, we will follow the path of knowledge. But why is it that even when we study the *Upaniṣads*, repeat all the arguments, and teach others, we still do not feel it in our own heart. Why is it that it does not become a living thing for us? The answer is that we have not sought the Primal Being melting in love. We have not loved Him as the very core of our being. The moment we do this consciously, Śiva bestows the love of union, granting the gift of loving Him alone. This is what we mean by supreme love. As long as we love Him along with something else, He is not near us, but the moment we love Him and Him alone, we experience that union, a gift that He bestows on us. He is always ready to bestow that gift on us, but we must be able to receive it. The Lord takes infinite forms to attract us because our love for Him can never be even an infinitesimal part of the love that He has for us. Most of the time we feel that it is we who love God. Limited as we are, our love can only be limited. Whereas His love for us is infinite because He is infinite. That is why being the pure, the purest, He still comes down to us in our every day life, but we do not recognise Him.

There is an interesting story. There was once a small village where people were not at all interested in spirituality. One day a beautiful maiden came to the village to sell flowers. She would come to the village every day and the young men of that village were attracted to her. They all approached her and told her that they wanted to marry her. Upon hearing that she said that she could not marry all of them. They agreed with her. She asked them whether they knew about a particular *Upaniṣad*. But they informed her that they had not even heard of it. Whereupon she told them that who ever could memorise it would be the right man for her. They agreed and approached the village teacher and inquired about that particular text. It took them a few weeks to memorise it, but many of them were just not capable of

memorising it and they gave up. Eventually about thirty men completed the task and approached the young maiden. She told them that it was wonderful that they had memorised it. But she could not marry all of them. So she added that who ever tried to understand the meaning of this particular work, she would marry him. The young men began to study Sanskrit which took them several months. Having mastered the *Upaniṣad*, five young men approached her and told her to test their knowledge. The young maiden told them that she did not doubt them but she could not marry as there were five of them. So she told them that who ever realised this particular teaching in the innermost of his being, she would marry him. Several months passed by and there was only one young man who had completely dedicated himself and had realised the truth. He told the young maiden that he had realised it. Hearing this, she invited him to her house in the evening to meet her parents. The young man went to her house and met her parents. The parents welcomed him and told him that they had been looking forward to this meeting. They told him that the young maiden was in her room and he could go and meet her in her room. The door of the room was open and the path led to a river. There were footprints. He followed her footprints and when he reached the river, he found that there were only two sandals—golden sandals—and nothing else. He was surprised. He looked back and found that the house was no longer there. Since he had already realised the truth, it immediately dawned on him that it was the Lord Himself who had taken the pain to guide him through this.

This story shows that the Lord is ever present, every ready to guide us. Even when there is absolutely no love towards Him, He approaches us and possesses every part of our mind, but we do not pay any attention. We are not ready to accept it. It must be remembered that it is love which mollifies, love which softens a person and melts the heart. No other passion can ever melt the heart or soften it as love can. When we love someone, we are ready to pass ourselves into the person whom we love. Love, like a fluid, gently glides us. In Sanskrit, one of the terms for love is *sneha* which also means grease or oil. Just as an object glides smoothly when oiled, similarly love helps us to glide smoothly into divinity, without any trouble whatsoever. For this reason

the scriptures lay down that the two fundamental things which guide a person to the highest vision are *yogā* and *bhakti*. *Yogā* is like the life force for the spiritual person and love is like the motion which glides it through. It is the combination of these two, therefore, it is said: *śraddhā, bhakti, dhyāna, yogādvēhi*. The moment love for God becomes manifest, dispassion, i.e., *vairāgya* can be easily practised by that person. Most of the time we try to practise dispassion without having passion for God. There is a Sanskrit verse which says that passion for God and dispassion for the world are actually two sides of the same coin. Dispassion makes us forget ourself and the feeling of belonging to the Lord becomes most important. But this love can be attained only when it is communicated to us by those who have this love in them.

Teaching King Rahugana the *Bhāgavata* says¹⁷ that this love cannot be attained by practising austerity—*Tapasānayāti*, we may observe all the fasts, we may perform what is known as *pañchāgnitapa* during the month of June with four fires burning around us and the fifth, the burning sun. We may practise all these great austerities but Rahugana *taī tapasānayāti*, that is, these austerities will not lead to this love. *Naceyānā*, that is, we may perform the greatest sacrifices—*asvamedha, vājapeya somayāga*—but it will not awaken love in our heart. *Nirvapanād grhādvā*, we may leave our homes and live alone in the forests, but it will not lead to love. *Nachandasā*, we may study the *Vedās* and the scriptures and recite them but it will not lead to love. *Vināmahatpādarajōbhi*, that is, by coming in contact with only those people who have realised this love within themselves, we are able to realise it. We have seen in our daily lives that even if we have not perceived something directly, we are get attracted to it when we hear about it from someone else. Businessmen know the secret of this and that is why they spend large sums of money only on advertisements. A few seconds on television means thousand of rupees yet they spend it, why? Businessmen know that by hearing about a product people will be attracted to it, particularly if they know that the person advocating it is an authority on it. For example, a film actor is chosen to represent a product—a necktie or a suiting—which makes a person beautiful. Or a lady, say, an actress, may be selected for the advertisement of a lipstick

or such other product. We may ask why does this happen. The answer is that businessmen are conscious of the fact that this particular person is regarded beautiful by one and all. Hence, she knows what she is talking about and when she says that a particular product is best for such and such result, we are attracted. In other words, we are attracted by hearing about something and even more attracted when we know that the person who is talking is an authority. Herein lies the secret of advertising.

The *Śivapurānā*¹⁸ has discussed the impact on us when we see others worshipping. There is an interesting story in the *Purānās*. There was once a king who had gone hunting. In olden days hunting was a common sport. When the king reached the forest, the tribal people were summoned as they knew where the game could be found. A *Bhil* or tribesman was appointed to spot the lions. Every day the Bhil would observe the king worship a particular Śivaliṅga with flowers and water, in a very devoted way. While worshipping—because the king was a great devotee—his heart would melt and tears of love would flow out of his eyes and he would be absolutely lost to the world. As the king was camping there, he was staying in a tent. The Bhil would peep through the slit in the tent and was moved by what he saw and he wanted to have that love for that image. At the end of the month when the king was going back, he asked that Bhil—because he had worked very hard—to name anything he wanted. The Bhil asked the king whether he would give him whatever he asked for. The king told him that he would. Whereupon the Bhil asked him for the Śivaliṅga. The king wanted to know what he would do with it as it would be of no use to him. The king told him to ask for riches and diamonds. But the Bhil remained firm and only desired the Śivaliṅga. The king was in a dilemma as he could not part with his chosen idol, but he had another one similar to it which he gave to the Bhil and told him to worship it regularly and use sacred ash, that is, *chitā bhasma*, or the ash produced when a human being is burnt. The Bhil began to worship regularly. The love for the liṅga had awakened when he had seen the king in love, and therefore, he also felt that love. He continued to worship and twelve years passed by. His love had grown immensely and so had the love of his wife towards the deity. Once during the rainy season, it poured

for several weeks continuously. The Bhil searched for the sacred ash, but he could not find it anywhere because of the rain. That day when he sat down to worship, he told his wife that he would fast unto death as he was unable to give to the Lord what he had been asked to give. Therefore, there was no point in keeping this body, which could not worship the body of the Lord. His wife told him to stop worrying and she offered to sit in the hut while he set fire to it so that he could get ashes for his worship. He asked her whether she would make such a great sacrifice. She told him that it was no sacrifice because to give something to another whom one loves supremely is a matter of joy to oneself and one does not feel that one is being deprived of something. Hence, she would not be deprived of the body by this act. The hut along with his wife was burnt and the Bhil collected the ashes and performed the worship. Every day after worship he would call his wife to bring the food to be offered to the Lord. As was his habit and without realising what he was doing, he called out to his wife and she came with the food. Then the truth immediately dawned on him and he wondered from where had she appeared since she had been burnt along with the hut. She told him that she had set the hut on fire and the next thing she knew was that he was calling her and the food was ready. Now, such intensity of love was born in them only because they had seen the king worshipping with such intense love. The important point is that they continued to worship the Lord for twelve years.

Often we are neither intense nor do we continue to worship for as long as is necessary. Intensity and duration both are important as, for example, when we want to cook rice. There is the famous story of Bīrbal, which most of us have heard. In an attempt to teach Akbar a lesson, Bīrbal tried to cook *khichri* rice, by putting rice in a bowl which was about 20 feet away from the fire. When Akbar asked him as to how it would be cooked from that distance, Bīrbal told him that if the fire was there long enough, the rice would be cooked. Akbar, however, informed him that the rice would not be cooked from that distance. The idea was to teach Akbar who had asked a brahmin to stand in Yamuna during the month of January. Akbar had told the brahmin that if he could do it, he would be suitably rewarded. He knew that nobody would be able to stand in the icy cold water in winter. The

next morning when the brahmin came to Akbar after suffering that torture and asked for his reward, Akbar did not want to part with the money. Akbar asked the brahmin what was he looking at while standing in water. The brahmin told him that he was looking at a lamp in Akbar's room. Whereupon Akbar told him that he was getting fire or heat from there. Bīrbal was trying this experiment to teach Akbar a lesson. So when Akbar said that the rice could not be cooked from that distance, Bīrbal reasoned with him that if the brahmin could get heat from a far away lamp, the rice would also be cooked. Thus, no matter for how long the rice is placed near the fire, if the fire is not intense enough the rice will not be cooked. On the other hand, no matter how intense the fire is, if the rice is not put on the fire for a sufficient amount of time, say, for a few minutes, then the rice will not be cooked. Even if the rice is placed for a few seconds on a fire with temperatures high enough to melt iron, it will not be cooked. Hence, adequate duration and proper intensity is required. Similarly, we must have intensity of love. A minimum intensity is needed and then it must be practised for a certain duration, then only love will be awakened.

This is possible again due to His grace, that is why the *Purāṇā* says⁴⁹ that this one-pointed love is born only out of grace. We have to wait for His grace, and develop a sense of faith. When our faith reaches a particular intensity, only then will the grace of the Lord be able to enter our heart. Since our heart is such a stony substance, that no matter how much grace the Lord wants to bestow upon us, we are not able to receive it. And it is through faith that we are able to receive it. Slowly, as love enters our heart, it melts more and more and eventually it melts into the very essence of love. That is why it is said *Śraddhā-bhakti-dhyāna-yogādavehi*. Faith, love or devotion, we may say, eventually leads to concentration of the mind.

LECTURE FOUR

We have been discussing definite ways which lead to the highest vision of the Lord. We have dealt with faith and love. The *Upaniṣad* goes on to describe in detail *dhyāna yogā* or the meditation aspect—*dhyāna yogādavehi*. There are three concepts of meditation, contemplation and concentration which are very similar to each other. We will deal with each one of them separately.

The word concentration basically means moving to the centre. Though it is now an archaic word, earlier it was used in music-concentre. That is, we start with different notes and then come back harmoniously to one central note. Concentre means coming back to the centre. Similarly, in concentration we have one thought in front of us, we may move away from that but eventually we come back to that central thought again and again. Here the important point is to bring back the mind to the centre. This is the first stage of meditation or *dhyāna*. Whatever thought we are thinking of, or the particular form of the Lord we are meditating upon, say, His different features, or if we are thinking of a concept, the different ways in which that particular concept can be viewed, but all the time we come back to the central theme.

From concentration we move on to meditation. The word meditation means that we ponder over a concept again and again, repeat that concept. In concentration, our thoughts do go out but we bring them back to the centre. Whereas in meditation, we do not allow our thoughts to go out at all, we ponder over that particular subject or idea that we are meditating upon. Here the emphasis is on the idea or the particular form that we are meditating upon. If we are meditating upon a form, in concentration, we may move

from His foot slowly to His head. We may even think of His ornaments, His clothes, but it must all be related to the Lord. Similarly, if we are thinking of a particular concept—His all-pervasiveness—we may think of other things, but again and again we come back to the central thought, that it is He who has taken all the various forms. On the other hand in meditation we ponder over only that particular thought and not interrelated thoughts. Or, if we are thinking of the Lord, we think of His face or His feet, but we do not move from one to the other.

In contemplation we go deeper still. The word comes from intensely gazing at the temple. The word contemplation actually includes the term 'temple'. Here we direct our gaze intensely at a particular thought or a particular form. We do not even ponder over it, but we are merely conscious of it, e.g., His eye; or if we are thinking of a thought, we may be conscious of Him as all-pervasive just as the sky is all-pervasive. In meditation, we are able to think about all-pervasiveness whereas in contemplation we do not think about all-pervasiveness. Just as space is all-pervasive, we merely gaze intensely at that concept.

These are the three different stages. Technically, of course, they are called *saṁyam*. Once we have faith and love, we are able to glide into these stages easily. Without these two prerequisites this process becomes difficult. To help ourselves to reach these stages, we must avoid listening to that which distracts our mind, not only at the time of meditation but at all times because the mind is a peculiar instrument. The mind absorbs thoughts, unconsciously and consciously. Even if we negatively think about something, it will enter into our unconscious mind and it will come out at any given moment. This explains how ungodly, vicious, wrong thoughts about other people at other times—I am not talking about meditation time—distract us when we sit for meditation. So we must avoid all that which distracts us from God.

We must strive to overcome as far as possible the sense of possessiveness, whether in relation to things or people. What Kṛṣṇa calls in the *Gītā*, *nirmama*: not mine. We have to get rid of the thought that anything belongs to us. It must be remembered that this takes time and we cannot

hope to achieve this immediately. Slowly, we have to overcome the thought that anything or any person belongs to us. We have to see all relations through God: we are not directly connected but we are connected through God. We must develop the idea of *nirmama* both in relation to people and things. We should not indulge in useless talk particularly about others and their faults. This is a pastime which most people find enjoyable. If we start speaking ill of any one, the other person who is listening will even forget to eat his food because he enjoys it so much. A person who wants to enter the depth of meditation must avoid indulging in this, because this leads to the idea of separation. We have to dive deep into meditation to attain unitary consciousness. Anything which divides us is going to be an obstruction in our way. We must also avoid excessive fasting as much as we should avoid over-eating. That is why the *Gītā* says,²⁰ 'If you fast too much, the elements of your body, i.e., the *tridhātus*, are disturbed and you will not be able to dive deep into meditation; if you eat too much then also you will not be able to dive deep into meditation.' As far as possible we must avoid study of worldly subjects. A friend once mentioned that he often used to hear that one should not read newspapers in the morning. But he grasped its importance only once. He recalled that one day while he was entering his meditation room, he saw that the newspaper vendor had thrown the paper in the verandah, and he saw the headlines 'Kennedy killed'. Following the rule he did not stop to read the paper, but proceeded towards his meditation room. He recalled that throughout his hour long meditation, he was not able to meditate about God at all. Repeatedly, the thought came back to him—why was Kennedy killed? Who killed him? What happened? All the worldly subjects that we study and read about distract our mind. We must spend more and more time on scriptural studies, which aid us in meditation. We must also avoid sleeping too much or too little. As we dive deeper and deeper into it, the realisation dawns. We must remember that we do not always acquire knowledge by reading. Most of the knowledge, deep knowledge, that we acquire is through meditation.

Once a man came to Banaras to become a monk. There are regular courses one has to go through to become a monk. He must study the scriptures thoroughly and also go

through other spiritual practices. The man approached one teacher who told him to start studying a particular work—*Laghu-Kaumudī*. The man came from the village and was not an intellectual. Some time passed and he told his teacher that he could not study. The teacher told him that after he became a monk, everybody would respect him. People would come and ask questions and if he was unable to answer them, it would be dishonour to the order. The teacher emphasised that it was important to study otherwise there was no point in becoming a monk. Hearing this, the man approached another teacher and yet another teacher, but whoever he went to, they all emphasised *Laghu-Kaumudī*. He was not able to dive into it. At last he went to a teacher who inquired as to what he wanted. Before he could say anything he started crying. With great love and compassion, the teacher inquired as to what the matter was. The man told him that he wanted to become a monk and all the preceptors he had approached had asked him to study *Laghu-Kaumudī* which he was not capable of studying. The teacher felt compassion for the man and he told him that he could become a monk, provided he agreed not talk to any one until the teacher allowed him to do so. The man readily agreed to that. The teacher asked him to meditate within his body itself, as the abode of all that exists.²¹ Our body is the small universe. If we meditate in it and dive deep within, we are able to experience all that is in the external world in our own self. Hence, he was asked to meditate within his body as if it was the abode of the whole universe. He was to think of his spinal cord as the *mahāmeru*; his *pingalā* and *idā* as the Ganga and the Yamunā; *susumnā* as Saraswatī; *prāna* and *apāna* as the moon and the sun; his mind as *hiranyagarbha*. He went deeper and deeper into meditation because he was practising absolute silence.

Silence is very important as it puts an end to any talk that we would have with another person. Unless we repond, the talks do not proceed. Certain experiments have been conducted in the United States, where people were asked to just observe silence for a week, two weeks and it was found that the mind was able to observe things which it was not able to observe previously. The penetrating power of the mind increases when we practise silence. This man continued to practise silence, meditating in this particular way. Twelve

years passed and he realised the final truth, it was then that the teacher told him that he could talk to other people because had he talked earlier, as the other preceptors had told him, he would not have been able to answer the questions posed by people and that would have brought dishonour to the robes.

Through meditation, by diving deep, we are able to contact the reality which we are able to know through the scriptures indirectly. Through meditation we have the direct experience. The phrase used here is *dhyānayogā davehi*. *Yogā* refers to eight different steps which lead to this higher meditation. The word *yogā* has been particularly mentioned here because before entering meditation we must develop what are called *yama* and *niyama*. Ācārya Sureśwara says²² that the things that have to be developed as a mental culture are called *yamas*,²³ *manah prasadaḥ*—being calm under all circumstances, *santōṣaḥ*—being happy with whatever we have at any given moment, *maunam*—the tendency to keep silent most of the time, *indriyanigraha*—control over the senses. All these constitute the mental culture. They are the first step towards entering these higher states.

We can always practise meditation, but practising meditation does not necessarily bring us nearer God. The *Purāṇās* have discussed many great ṛṣis who dived deep into austerities and meditations, and developed immense powers, but they fell because they had not developed *yama*—the mental culture. Manu goes to the extent of saying that a person who does not follow *yama* falls, even if he practises *niyama* completely and thoroughly.²⁴ Sureśvarācārya says that that which is practised physically by the body is called *niyama*.²⁵ For example, *tapah*—austerity—is a physical, bodily phenomenon which we have to practise, bearing all pain that afflicts the body without trying to remove it or fight it, prostrating before the Lord, circumambulating the Lord. All these things are done through the body. First, we must develop our mental culture, then *niyama*, austerity, etc. It is only then that we should try to enter the depth of meditation. Otherwise we will gain powers, no doubt, through meditation; but meditation will not lead us towards the Lord. The powers may eventually lead to our downfall.

The *Upaniṣad* goes on to describe what should not be con-

sidered as means—faith, love, meditation and *yogā* are means to that knowledge,²⁶ but *nakarmanā*, i.e., action, and *prajayā*, i.e., progeny and wealth, are not the means to attain the beatific vision. These are the known means to attain anything in the universe. If we want to acquire any thing, we have to do something to acquire it or we may acquire it through wealth. Hence, these are the means to acquire through worldly objects. But ignorance can never be dispelled through action. There is a reason behind it: all actions are due to false identification with the body and mind. Unless we identify ourself with the body, we cannot act. Unless we identify ourself with the mind, we cannot act. Hence, this false identification with the body and mind makes them appear to be conscious, because it is we who are actually conscious. False identification implies that it is born out of ignorance. That which is born out of ignorance cannot destroy ignorance. All actions ensue due to attachment to a result. We want to gain something therefore we act. Either we want to reach a place, or we want to change a thing for better or for worse, whatever we want to attain is apart from our own self. If destruction of ignorance was the result of something, then it can never be eternal because that which is produced can never be infinite. From the scriptural standpoint, all the scriptural actions have been ordained to attain certain results. Nowhere in the scriptures has any action been enunciated as dispelling ignorance or leading to knowledge. If the scriptures say that any action will lead to salvation, then since actions are of different types, salvation will also be of different degrees. Hence, a person performing a hundred *aśvamedhas* will achieve greater liberation than a person performing only two *aśvamedhas*. Actions vary. If liberation is attained, knowledge is acquired through action, then liberation cannot be of the same degree. It will be different.

Actions are always performed with the ego—'I am going to do such and such thing.' Therefore, when we perform action with the ego, how can it lead to egolessness. Of course, the question remains that some action or the other we will be continuously engaged in. How is it connected with knowledge or liberation? Actually, knowledge is expressed in the following terms: 'I am a non-doer, I am a non-actor. My body-mind complex is to be acted upon not by me but

by God.' We have to become like a flute. The sound comes out of the flute and it seems as if the flute itself is producing the music, but it is the musician who produces the music by playing on it. Similarly, we have to make ourselves the best instrument for God to act through us. It is only then that we acquire the knowledge: 'I am the non-actor; it is He who is playing through my body-mind complex.'

As long as we have our own egos to work with, it is not possible to attain this egoless state. Thus, action or wealth or progeny which are considered to be the means to attain worldly things cannot be the means to attain liberation. On the contrary, the *Upaniṣad* says²⁷ that this is possible by getting rid of the idea: 'I am an actor, that it is I who enjoys things. Let God act through me, let God enjoy through me. I am only going to be an instrument.' In other words, by renouncing the idea of action, we are able to attain egolessness.²⁸ That supreme bliss is hidden in our own heart. It is in that experience the *paramahamsās*—the *yatis*—enter. Whoever has had this experience is really a *paramahamsā*. The *Upaniṣad* goes on to say²⁹ that those who have determined the real essence and purpose of the *Vedās* as God realisation—*Vedānta-vijñāna-suniścitārthāḥ*. The *Vedās* are not meant as a guide to attain worldly pleasures. It is true that the *Vedās* do tell us the means to attain worldly objects, wealth, son, or even a kingdom. However, the real purpose, the real meaning of the *Vedās*, is not that we should attain those things through the *Vedās*, but to know that everything can be attained through God. Whatever can be attained through any worldly means can be attained through God. Thereby, we are able to divert our attention wholly to God and not merely a part of it, as many people feel that worldly things have to be done in a worldly way and a part of our lives can be dedicated to God. The *Vedās* have described all the different *karmas*—*sakāma karmas*—so that we are able to realise that even if we get anything from the world, we could have got the same through God Himself and, therefore, we can meditate on Him with our wholehearted love and attention. This renunciation leads us to the realisation that we will not get anything from anyone apart from God.

There is a story about Upamanyu. He wanted milk so he

asked his mother to give him milk. His mother was a poor Brahmin and she could not afford to give him milk. She asked him to meditate on Śiva who gives everyone everything. She, however, added that He would give everything only if Upamanyu did not depend on anything else. Upamanyu went away—his *āshrama* is near Kedar Nath—and dedicated himself totally to meditate on Śiva. Some time passed and Śiva came in the guise of Indra and offered to grant him any boon that he wanted. Upamanyu told him that he had recognised him and he would not ask for anything from him as he was Indra. He added that he would accept only that which is given by Śiva. Hearing this Śiva, in the guise of Indra, told him that Śiva himself did not have anything so how could He possibly give anything to someone else. He added that Śiva's body is smeared with ashes of the dead and since he has nothing to eat, he consumes poison. So how could He give anything. Upamanyu told him to stop as he was not willing to hear anything against Śiva, his chosen deity. It was Śiva Himself who had assumed the form of Indra as he assumes all other forms. He revealed his Śiva form to Upamanyu and asked him to name any boon. Upamanyu told the Lord that he did not desire anything as he was satisfied. Śiva told him that he had wanted milk so he gave Upamanyu the ocean of milk. This story illustrates the concept of complete dedication: we want nothing from any one else apart from the Lord. To bring out this idea clearly, the *Vedās* have laid down *sānyāsa yogā*—renouncing all other help, we are able to attain Him.³⁰ It is through this certitude and this process of *sādhanā* that the aspirant is able to reach that Brahman experience at the end when all the creation has dissolved. Having outlined the steps involved in the spiritual process, the *Kaivalya Upaniṣad* goes on to give a detailed description of meditation.³¹

Viviktadeśa—for doing anything seriously, a proper place is necessary. If we want to do business, we have to visit places like Bombay or Calcutta; even an ordinary businessman will make any amount of money there. If we have to deal with government permits and quotas we have to visit Delhi, because it is in Delhi where we can contact the various officers and get our permits and quotas. If we want to set up an industry, we have to find out where the

infrastructure is available. It is very easy for a person to say that start an industry in a tribal area. But without the necessary infrastructure, it is not practicable for us to undertake any serious industrialisation there. So, we must find out where the necessary infrastructure is available. In the same way, if we want to practise meditation it must be done in *viviktadeśa*, i.e., in a pure place. Every place has its own vibrations and associations. Wherever a particular thing is continuously practised, it leaves certain vibrations there.

A monk once went for *cāturmāsya* to a particular place. In *cāturmāsya* monks stay only in one place for two months. Having reached the destination, he told his devotees that he could not stay in that house. It was a garden house. They inquired as to what the matter was. The monk told them that he did not get proper vibrations in that house and, therefore, he could not stay there for two months. The devotees then found another house for him and he went there. But some young people wanted to find out what the matter was. Eventually, they found out that the master of that particular garden house had lived with a woman without getting married to her. They also had children. Though this incident had taken place long ago, say, forty, fifty, or sixty years ago and people had completely forgotten about it; yet the vibrations remained. Wherever a vicious act is done, it leaves its own impressions. In the same way there are associations. If we go to a place of pilgrimage, like Varanasi, we have a certain association with that place. On the other hand, if we go to a slaughter house, completely different associations will arise in our mind. So when we want to practise meditation, the place must be pure, sacred and clean.

Details regarding this are given in the other *Upaniṣads*. This *Upaniṣad* only mentions *viviktadeśa*—a cave, the bank of a river, the top of a mountain, all these places help a person who wants to practise meditation. In the term *vivikta dēśē, ch* includes time. There are definite times when the atmosphere is surcharged with spiritual vibrations, for example, early morning. A person who gets up at 4 o'clock in the morning is not going to engage in any other worldly act. All such activity starts after eight o'clock. The atmosphere at that time is surcharged by people who are engaged in some

kind of quiet activity. Even if they are not meditating, they may be studying, or they may even be going out for a walk. This is not the time when vicious acts are done. Some of us may have driven out of town. The best time is to leave at 4 o'clock in the morning because at that time all those alcoholic truck drivers go off to sleep. The whole night they will be driving but in the morning they go off to sleep. Atmospheric vibrations at dusk time are helpful. Similarly, certain days like *aṣṭamī, caturdaśī, amāvasyā, pūrṇīmā* help a person who practises meditation. Our mind is also linked with the phases of the moon. That is why if a person goes mad, we call him a lunatic. Luna means moon. Something has gone wrong with his moon. *Cakāra*³²—definite postures also aid in meditating on different forms of the Lord.³³ For instance, if we meditate on Brahmā, *hamsāsana* is helpful.³⁴ Whereas if we meditate on Viṣṇu, *nāgāsana* is useful.³⁵ *Siddhāsana* aids in meditating on Rudra. In other words, there are definite poses which help us to meditate on a particular form or even on a particular idea.³⁶ If we want to meditate conceptually, *nirālambana yogā*, meditate on the *nirālambana*, a particular *āsana* has been prescribed which assists in this.

Suci—purity of the body-mind complex is essential. This is attained after we have had our bowel movements, had a bath and purified our self. All these activities lead to a state where we become tensionless. These things have to be practised to know their results. Every thing cannot be known through logic; we have to be rational. Rationale means logic along with experience; both have to be combined. There are many things which a person practising meditation finds helpful.

Once I was suffering from some disease and a doctor, well known to me, examined me after some other doctors had seen me. Though I had been taking medicines for a long time yet there was no improvement. The doctor prescribed some drugs and I noticed that they were more or less the same combination, which the other doctors had prescribed earlier, only the trade mark was different. So, I told him that I had already tried these medicines. He laughed and said that it was not merely the medicine which helped. If I took the medicines he had prescribed, there would be an improvement. So, there is an individual connection with every spiritual practice. There are some people who are able to

meditate only at midnight. They are not able to meditate in the morning. These individual differences have to be taken into account.

The body should be erect as far as possible.³⁷ During meditation—*atyāśramasthaḥ*—we must completely dissociate ourselves from the body, because caste, *varṇā* or *āśrama* are in relation to the body. The *Sūta Samhita* says³⁸ that a person who knows that caste, station of life, etc., are associated merely with the body, and not with the self or with the mind, is able to completely dissociate himself from all bodily connections when he is meditating. We must try to see³⁹ the one who is beyond the three states of consciousness. While referring to the three states of consciousness, the *Upaniṣad* states that we are merely the witness of these three states of consciousness. It is by asserting this that we are able to perceive ourselves in unitary consciousness with the Lord. As long as we do not transcend the consciousness of the body and its associated ideas, we are not able to dive deep. Having controlled the senses,⁴⁰ and with our heart full of love we must mentally prostrate before our own teacher. The teacher is the one who has imparted the knowledge to us. There is no doubt that the knowledge can be found in the scriptures; but words change in their connotational meanings, idioms differ. It is not easy to determine the real purpose of the scriptures.

After experiencing this truth in his own life, the guru or the teacher is able to give it to us directly. The guru himself has received it in an unbroken succession. Today we come across interesting statements. When people ask their guru as to who his guru was and how did he get the knowledge, the reply is: 'I have received it myself.' When people hear this they feel that if he could acquire knowledge on his own so can they. The unbroken chain of imparting knowledge is important. A ceremony called *gotrācara* is performed as part of the marriage rituals, in this seven generations of the two families are enumerated. If, for a marriage we want to know about seven generations of the two families, then we must also find out about seven generations of our guru. By thinking of him, we are actually thinking of the knowledge that we have received. Then we start meditating.⁴¹ First, formless meditation is described, because this *Upaniṣad* follows that pattern. The *Upaniṣad* first describes the difficult

aspect and then goes on to an easier concept. We meditate in the centre of our heart because that is the place where we feel anything. It is true that there are different centres in our spinal cord. From the base or *mūlādhāra* up to the head or *sahasrāra*, there are different centres and we can meditate on any one of them; but it is easy to meditate on the heart centre because we always think of the centre of the heart as our own self. While meditating on this centre, we should feel that it is *viraja*, i.e., bereft of all impurities. All impurities are in the body and the mind. Whereas when we turn within it is *viraja*, it is faultless. The important point to note is that it is faultless and not that it will *become* faultless. Meditation is never in relation to something in the future. It is that which exists at this moment. It is bereft of all sorrow because it is of the form of bliss. *Acintyam*—we cannot conceive of Him, He takes infinite forms. It is of the form of quietude and unmanifest. While talking of these concepts we have to use words because these concepts can be described only through words. So, when we meditate on a formless thing, words become important. We may select only one word or we may select several words. Initially, we can select a number of words and then slowly come back to only one word, as we go deeper and deeper in our meditation. We must think of it as the eternal witness, it is He who knows every thing. That is the form of meditation. Let the mind be seen, no matter what thoughts come to the mind we should not worry about them. But we should not identify ourselves with that particular mental mode. For a person who is unable to do this, the *Upaniṣad* suggests that he choose a particular form.⁴² He may take the help of *Om*. *Umā* is actually *Om* with a minor change of words, because *Uma* is U-ma-a. If we say U-ma, it becomes a-u-ma which is *Aum*. If we repeat *Umā* rapidly *Umā Umā* it becomes *Aum*. When we choose a particular form, we may think of the Lord with three eyes, the blue-throated form of Śiva. The important thing here is that we must identify with that particular form and know the importance of that form. What are the three eyes of the Lord? If we merely think of them as eyes, it will not help us. It is through knowledge, volition and action—*jñāna, icchā, kriyā*—that everything is attained. So, the Lord has three eyes which are always open. Similarly, we must try to harmonise our knowledge, our action and our volition.

Again and again, the *Vedās* emphasise⁴³ that whenever we worship a deity, we must identify ourselves with that deity. The Lord is *nīlakanṭham*—blue throated. Why is He blue throated? He drank the poison which was going to burn up the whole universe. Similarly, we must be ready to accept all the poison. Today things are different. No one is willing to take any blame upon himself. All the time we try to put the blame on someone else. The entire nation, the whole culture, is suffering because of that. We never stop and ask ourselves where have we gone wrong. We are a part of the nation. If something is wrong with the nation, it is we who have also committed some mistake. Instead of correcting ourselves, we are all the time trying to find fault with others. *Nīlakanṭham* is a person who is able to drink the poison, even though he is not responsible for it. The Lord did not take part in the churning of the nectar but still He accepted it. A person who is able to do that, he alone is fit to meditate on the blue-throated Lord. In this way whatever the concept, whether we associate it with words, or whether we associate it with form, it is the association which should be prominent in the mind and that should enter our own life.

The *Upaniṣad* goes on to say that we may select a number of forms, any form that we like.⁴⁴ It is He alone who is Brahmā, Śiva, Indra, Aksara, Swarāt, Viṣṇu, the vital breath, which is meditated upon by *yogis*. It is immaterial which form we select, but once we have chosen one form we must stick to it and completely absorb the ideas relating to it and identify ourselves with the Lord. Eventually, we have to think of the Lord not merely in that particular form but in all forms. The *Upaniṣad* says⁴⁵ that we have to see that it is He who has become everything. *Sa eva sarvaṃ yadbhūtam*—whatever has happened earlier is Him, whatever will happen in the future is also Him. He is the eternal one. In the beginning we choose a particular form, but eventually we have to transcend that form and see the Lord as the reality behind the whole universe.⁴⁶ *Sarvabhūtathamātmānam*—the Lord is present in all beings and all beings are inherently present in Him. It is expressed in both ways. Just as gold takes the form of different ornaments, so also the Lord takes the form of everything. Gold is the ornament and the ornament is gold because if we merely say that gold is the ornament, it seems as if gold is something apart from the

ornament. This is a mistake we often make even in the case of Godhead. Each atom at each moment is nothing but God. It is not that we will perceive God or we will conceive God, whatever we may choose to call it. To begin with we may feel that we will realise Him in a particular way. However, when we realise we find that every atom at every moment is nothing but Him alone. To achieve this absolute identity, we do not have to search for God outside this universe. The whole universe including our own body-mind complex and the ego within is nothing but His manifestation. It is a mistake, an illusion, to think that our ego is distinct from the universal ego. Attaining this vision leads to the final beatitude. To attain this, the *Upaniṣad* mentions the *Om̐kāra*,⁴⁷ that is, continuously seeking refuge in *Aum* and meditating on the Lord in this way. The allegory is that our body is like the lower firewood and *Om̐kāra* is like the upper firewood, when we churn the two firewoods, fire manifests itself. Similarly, when we repeat that *Om̐kāra* in our body, present in our heart, then that knowledge springs forth. The process of meditation has been outlined in the *Upaniṣads*. This very form also takes the form of the cognising self, that is how we are able to know Him immediately. We will discuss this later.

LECTURE FIVE

We have discussed faith, love and meditation. Now we will proceed to the most difficult part of this work. Though generally, I prefer not to end in the most difficult part, but as this particular *Upaniṣad* follows this process, we have to go through it. We will now discuss what is it that we realise. *Śraddhā, bhakti, dhyāna, yogā* are the means; but means to what? *Avehi* or realise God; have a direct experience. Thus, we have to discuss something which is not only a difficult concept, but also there are verbal difficulties when we deal with the English language. The concept of *ātman* is not present in any language, other than Sanskrit. Generally, when we translate it into English we use two words—consciousness or the self. Unfortunately, both these words refer to a limited conception. We are always conscious of something, and we are separate from what we are conscious of. Consciousness always implies a dichotomy between the subject, the experiencer, and the object or that which is being experienced. The same is true of the word self. The moment we say, 'I myself saw it', we really mean that nobody else, but 'me'. Whether we use the word self or we use the word consciousness, the idea of *ātman* cannot be conveyed. *Ātman* refers to the existence of consciousness. We have to use a word in which there is no dichotomy between the subject and the object. It is the experience itself, not experience of or experience by. The *Upaniṣad* describes the process of trying to understand it.⁴⁸

In order to explain this consciousness, the analysis of 'I' becomes important. We find ourselves in three states of consciousness. We are awake, just as we are awake now, where we perceive objects through our senses and our mind. There

is the 'I' associated with the body-mind complex and there is the external world of which we are conscious. But there is another world which we perceive—*swapna saṁvāh*—the dream world. In the dream world we perceive in the same way as we are perceiving now, but not through our senses, and without any external world. We project our own impressions and we are conscious of them. But we are not conscious of them as projections. Sometimes, we may even project during the waking state. But when we project during the waking state, for example, in a dimly lit room, we may see a rope as a snake. The snake is not there, it is a projection of our mind. The first step is to perceive something. We are not able to perceive that object as a rope, but our eyes have gone there and have observed something which is not clear and so the projection takes place. In the waking state also, when there is an illusory perception, the senses come into play. But in the dream state there are no senses; we do not perceive anything which is present; there is only a projection. We are conscious during the waking state and we are also conscious during the dream state. When we enter the state of deep sleep, i.e., dreamless sleep, we do not project anything; but our consciousness remains and that is the reason why upon waking up, we are able to say that we slept soundly, we did not know anything there. We did not know anything there, or there was nothing there we were conscious of.

When we analyse these three states of consciousness, we find the means by which we experience change. But 'I' myself—the conscious being—remains the same. That is why I am trying to connect all the three states. I am able to say that though now I am observing this world, in the state of deep sleep I did not observe anything, because there was nothing to observe. Now I can recall that it was I who did not know anything there. It was I who projected everything during the dream state, and it is I who is conscious of the fact that the projected world did not exist, that everything was hidden during the deep sleep state. So, the 'I' remains the same through these different states. The states come and go over the substratum, that is, the consciousness which is me. Things that come and go do not affect the substratum. When I am in a state of deep sleep, nothing exists; but when I am in the waking state,

everything is manifested, differentiated. The *Upanisad* says⁴⁹ that it is from that state of undifferentiated self that everything comes out, whether it is the vital energy, the mind, or the senses. During that state everything was there unmanifest, and when I am in the waking state, everything is manifested out of that particular state of undifferentiation. When we analyse ourselves in this way, we realise that there is a consciousness bereft of all adjuncts like the senses, the mind and ignorance. The consciousness remains unchanged. When we further analyse we realise that as far as our experience goes, it is true that there is one consciousness. But the question arises: Is there different consciousness in different souls, in different body-mind complexes? If we were to remove these three adjuncts, the three states of consciousness, then there is no way we can say that there is anything which differentiates one consciousness from the other. We are conscious of ourselves as 'I'. That is why the word 'I' has no real plural. When we say he and they, by 'they' we mean he + he + he + he. When we say thou and you, we mean thou + thou + thou + thou. But when we say I and we, it does not mean I + I + I + I. This is the reason why consciousness, without referring to these three states, can be only unitary.

The *Upanisad* says⁵⁰ that Śiva, the soul of all souls, the foundation of the world, is consciousness. He is the greatest, yet the subtlest. This is something akin to sky or space. Space is all-pervasive. Therefore, it has the highest measure, yet space is the subtlest, because we cannot perceive it through our senses. Similarly, this consciousness is prevalent everywhere, because unless there is a conscious being to know anything, we cannot say that something exists. Consciousness as a substratum is present in every part of the universal being and yet if we want to know it as consciousness, as an object, we can never know it. We can only know it as our own self: 'I am conscious'. This is the only way we can know consciousness. This consciousness lights up all these different states.⁵¹

Once we are able to experience this consciousness which lights up not only our waking state but the waking state of all beings, lights up the dreamless sleep not only in us but in all beings, then we know that the universal consciousness present in all beings is manifesting itself through different

body-mind complexes. This can be understood with the example of electricity. Electricity is manifested in a small bulb, say, a 25 watts bulb and a 1,000 watts bulb. Electricity in these two bulbs is not different. Its manifestation varies because of differences in the bulbs. Similarly, it is the unitary consciousness which is expressing itself through all the body-mind complexes. However, we do see differences. One person is a great intellectual, another person is not able to understand even the most ordinary things of life. One person is able to love the whole humanity whereas another person cannot love even his own wife. All these differences are not because of consciousness, that is, differences in consciousness, but are due to the fact that that particular body-mind complex is limited. It is the same consciousness which is playing everywhere and it is through that consciousness that 'I' become conscious. When we take refuge in that, then we are continuously conscious of our self as ego consciousness. But once we are able to contact that foundation which makes us conscious, then we become conscious of the fact that God has endowed us with the greatest gift He could have given. In the beginning we feel that the ego is an obstruction. But if we look at inert matter, unconscious matter, it can never know anything. It is because He has endowed us with this ego that we are able to observe anything, we are able to feel anything. This ego is not a burden on us, it is Śiva's gift to us, His greatest gift. We have misused it by forgetting that this is His gift, and by assuming that the ego is conscious by its own power. That is the mistake we make. The moment we realise that it is the consciousness which is playing through this ego, then we know that it is His greatest gift to us.⁵²

Then we are able to see *tridhāna* in all the three states of consciousness; in all the forms, it is He, the consciousness, which is being manifested. In us He is manifesting His ego as the *bhokta*, the enjoyer. Again, it is that same consciousness which is expressing itself as *bhogyā*, the object of enjoyment, because even the object of enjoyment is a projection on our mind by the cosmic mind. Often we feel that there are objects which we are able to pursue. But have we ever stopped and analysed how can an object be observed by consciousness. What is the relationship between the two? There cannot be any exchange between the conscious and

the unconscious, unless there is a bridge in between. That is why some schools of thought, the materialist schools of thought, and even modern scientists to a great extent, adopt the attitude that consciousness is only a result of a physical phenomenon. They try to reduce consciousness in physical terms. For instance, I see a man. What happens? Certain light rays travel and fall on the retina which is a physical phenomenon. Then certain electric conductions take place in the brain which is also physical. The question remains: electric conduction has taken place, but how is it being observed? What is it that is observing it? We can reproduce all the phenomena of looking at a picture or at a man through a camera but it will not know. What is it that makes it conscious? How is it connected? The attempt is to reduce consciousness to unconsciousness: something happens in the brain. The Upanisadic seers were not satisfied with this explanation. According to them, the consciousness of that man is being produced in me by another consciousness, i.e., the universal consciousness. To put it in simple language, God is projecting on my mind the image of a man because God is omnipresent, He is able to project that image on all the people for any length of time. When I see an object, the object is nothing but the projection of God on my ego consciousness. So it is He who has taken the form of that object or subject. He, again, has endowed me with the ego as the subject—*bhokta bhōgyanch yadbhavet*. When I perceive this, I find that it is the same consciousness which is playing subjectively and objectively. That is the *cinmātrō ham sadāsivah*, the reality behind my being is the *Sadā-Siva*. He is known through all these adjuncts, but without these adjuncts, He can never be known. The eternal knower knows without any instrument, but we know Him only through these instruments. Hence it is He who takes all the forms.

There is an interesting story. During a war a particular fort was surrounded by the enemy on all sides. As the gates of the fort were locked, the enemy could not enter it. But the enemy had guns and other ammunition and soon everyone in that fort was killed. There was an outer army which the enemy did not know about. Only one person was present as he had not been killed. He would put gun powder in guns placed at different positions within the fort. Sometimes he would fire the gun from one side, sometimes

from the other side, leading the enemy to believe that there was an entire army within the fort. In the meantime, the enemy forces came to know that the army of the king, who owned the fort, was on its way from another fort. After hearing this news, the enemy forces wanted to find somehow or other a solution to the problem, as war was going on. They sent an emissary with the message that they were ready to compromise. The man inside the fort sent a reply that if they were allowed to go out with all their arms and ammunition they would give up the fort. The enemy agreed to this. The man walked out and he was alone. The enemy inquired about the army. Whereupon the man told them that he was the army. He was firing the different guns from different points.

We are more or less in a similar position. I am using the eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc., but the one who is utilising them is only one. There are not several individuals in me. Similarly, there are not several individuals in this universe. It is that one consciousness which is utilising all the different bodies and minds. It is He who becomes the *draṣṭā, śrotā, mantā vijñātā*.

Āśvalāyana reflected and practised this again and again until the truth dawned upon him. The *Upaniṣads* do not tell us that the results will follow only after our death. That is one of the greatest contributions of the *Upaniṣads*. They say that the experience that we are talking about can be had here and now. Āśvalāyana practised it, experienced it and he tells us about his experience:⁵³ 'I am that non-dual absolute, who existed before creation as an unmanifested phenomenon. From that state of consciousness all have come into being, remain as long as they are associated with that consciousness and eventually dissolve into that consciousness.'⁵⁴ 'I am the subtlest and yet omnipresent. All this variety of the universe has come out of that consciousness, which is universal. He is the oldest and yet He is the youngest.' In this way Āśvalāyana communicated whatever he had experienced. Let us try to understand this in another way. A person is wearing trousers, a shirt, a waistcoat, a coat, and a neck-tie. He is wearing all these clothes. All these clothes appear absolutely different to us, but if we were to ask a tailor, he would immediately say that these

clothes have been made from a particular cloth. The tailor does not have to destroy the different forms in which the cloth has been cut. The trousers remain trousers; the coat remains a coat; and yet the tailor knows that these have been made from one single cloth. Similarly, we do not have to dissolve anything; it is not that the world will not exist. It is only that we will be able to perceive the basic unity which is present, in spite of the fact that all this variety is being observed, because we know that everything exists, everything is known. If we say that a thing is different from that what exists, then it is not there. Everything is an extension, is a manifestation of existence. If we say that a thing can never be known by anyone, then we may as well say that it does not exist, it is not there. Everything that exists must be associated with knowledge, with consciousness. That is what is known as metaphysical cancellation in Vedānta. We do not cancel out things, we only metaphysically cancel it.

Ācārya Śaṅkarā has pointed out that if by reaching the goal, the world ceases to exist, it would have ceased to exist long ago when Śuka and Vāmadeva realised God and we would not have found the world. So the world continues to exist as it is, but we are able to perceive the truth of this world. We will continue to play with all the senses, even after this realisation. Āśvalāyana says,⁵⁵ 'It is not the hand that grasps. I am able to grasp without the hand, I grasp the thing with my hand no doubt, but now I have grasped this hand. Only by this hand, by utilising it, I have grasped the object.' The object is being grasped by the hand. But how is this hand being grasped? We see with our eyes; but with what do we see the eye itself, because we know that we are seeing with our eyes. We do not look at our eyes with the eyes. So the eye perceives, but we are able to perceive, the consciousness is able to perceive, without the help of the eye. A word is heard by the ears, but how are we able to hear the fact that the ears have heard a word? There is no other ear there to hear it. That is why Āśvalāyana says *acintya saktih*. This consciousness has infinite powers. It is able to do everything without the help of any instrument, because even when it is utilising the instrument or seems to utilise the instrument, the utilisation of that instrument is only through its *acintya saktih* i.e., infinite power. That is why this

consciousness is beyond all adjuncts. Adjuncts belong to consciousness, but consciousness is the controller, and not the adjuncts. That is why we get into difficulty. The ego is a particular instrument through which consciousness is able to observe a thing in a specific form. Let us consider an example to understand this clearly. We look at a pencil with our naked eyes, but with our naked eyes we cannot perceive the pores which are in the wood of which the pencil is made. If we see the pencil under a microscope all the holes in that wood become visible. But then we are not able to see the whole pencil. In other words, if we want to see a minute part of the pencil, we cease to see the whole pencil, and if we want to see the whole pencil, we cannot look at it minutely. With a microscope we are able to observe the minutest part of the pencil, but not the whole pencil. Similarly, when consciousness wants to see a thing specifically, it has to work through the ego, but through the ego we can never perceive the whole universe. The same consciousness with its own *māyāsakti*, with its own power, is able to see everything in the world. At the same time with the help of different egos, it is able to observe the minute parts. Both cannot be done by the same adjunct. Āśvalāyana says⁵⁶ that all the *Vedāntas*, all the *Vedās* are pointing to this particular knowledge and general knowledge simultaneously, because it is by pointing out both that one is able to see that both the cosmic adjunct and the individual adjunct are only adjuncts. Once this knowledge is attained, all dualities cease to exist.

Talking of his own experience, Āśvalāyana says,⁵⁷ 'Virtue and vice, *puṇya* and *pāpa*, cannot touch me. They can touch only the adjuncts, but once I know that I am beyond these adjuncts, neither a thing can be called virtuous nor vicious. This is an important point to note, because the question often arises that God makes us do everything, but does He make us commit crimes as well. Those who do not ponder metaphysically would probably say that all bad acts are done by the individual while all good acts are being done by God. That is a metaphysical impossibility. If the ego can do a wrong act it can also do a right act. Hence, we have to take a definite stand: either it is the ego which is the actor, or it is the consciousness which is the actor. That consciousness is present everywhere, but because we identify ourselves with the body-mind complex, we feel that we have

committed a crime or we have done a virtuous act. But when we realise that it is the consciousness which is playing in us, we know that we have neither done a good thing nor have we done a bad thing. It is only through the body-mind complex that the consciousness has acted; depending upon the frame of mind, it has acted in a particular way. Let us consider the illustration of electricity again. In western countries when people are put to death by the government or by the jury, they are electrocuted. Is electricity responsible for their electrocution? There is no doubt that electrocution has been possible through electricity, but electricity is not responsible. The same is true here. It is the consciousness which has acted through the body-mind complex. But it is the body-mind complex which is instrumental and not the consciousness. If body-mind is corrected, the wrong action will not take place. So *punya* and *pāpa*—virtue and vice—are not connected with us as consciousness. They are connected only with the body-mind complex. The change that we seek is in this complex and not in the consciousness. That is why consciousness is neither born nor does it die, nor is connected with the body, the senses or even with the external objects, the earth, fire, water and all other elements. Consciousness is not affected by any of these.

When Āśvalāyana narrated his experience, Brahmā-prajāpati agreed that he had attained the highest knowledge. The guru is not only necessary to teach us the method, to show us the goal, but he is also necessary to tell us whether we have reached the final destination. That is why throughout the ages this knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation. The tradition is not merely in an individual. Throughout the ages there have been great sages who have recorded their experiences and it is by referring to all those experiences that we are able to verify whether our knowledge is right or wrong. It is true that by reading them we do not attain knowledge, but we do become aware of the fact whether our knowledge is correct or false. For example, if a person does not see red colour as red; he is colour blind. The very fact that his experience differs from the experience of all others indicates that there is something wrong with his eyes. He cannot say that since he has perceived red as only a shade of black, his experience is true knowledge. Similarly, the highest experience has to be

verified by all those who have practised those spiritual disciplines. If a person says, 'Only I see it, I perceive it like this, no one else need perceive it like this', then we have to say that his knowledge is incorrect. That is why the tradition maintained is able to give us the final authority to say whether we have attained that state or not.

The *Upaniṣad* goes on to say,⁵⁸ 'Whoever attains this as the centre of his consciousness, in the centre of his heart, who is able to perceive it directly that he is partless, he is whole, he is non-dual, he is the witness of all the egos, beyond being and non-being, he has attained the final realisation.' Having described this highest realisation, the *Upaniṣad* prescribes a simple path for those who are not able to reach these heights.⁵⁹ They must first get rid of all sinful activities. Some of the sinful activities have been described here. These encompass all the impurities of the mind which may be present, all the sinful acts. In our tradition, drinking of liquor, stealing of gold and killing of a brahmin are considered to be among the grave sins. These have been enumerated here. By implication all of them have to be taken. How do we get rid of them—*yaḥ śatrudriyamadhīti*. Sins can be removed by contemplating again and again on the all-pervasive nature of the Lord. There are sixty-six *mantras* in this particular passage called *śatrudriya* where the Lord is described as all. This beautiful passage clearly enunciates that *vaiṅcate*—a person who steals; and *parivaṅcate*—a person who commits dacoity; are also due to that energy only. By continuously repeating this thoughtfully, perceiving everything as a manifestation of God, all the sinful tendencies of the mind can be slowly overcome.

The mind commits a sin under the false knowledge that it is able to do something. The moment it realises that no matter how sinful an act we may commit, we will not gain what we want to gain, it will withdraw from that sinful act. As I told you earlier, there are good propagandists, what businessmen today call PROs for sins, but not for virtuous acts. Every one believes that one cannot win a case in a court without speaking a lie. True enough, but the question is has the other party adhered to the truth? Both parties have lied, but only one party has won. The lawyers have even better PROs. They say that it is by speaking a lie that they have

won. They will never say that by telling a lie they have also lost the case. But continuously emphasising that things can be attained by wrong means, sinful acts are made to appear profitable.

Long ago in 1941-42 and even prior to that there was no such thing as 'black market'. Later rationing was introduced and medicines were controlled. If a person needed a medicine, he went to the shop and the shopkeeper would ask him to come late in the night when it was dark. Hesitatingly, he would give the medicines, all the time afraid that somebody would see. Slowly, we have reached a stage where right in the middle of say, Chandini Chowk, a person in broad daylight and in front of every one will say that if one wants a thing in black, one can get it. Contraband goods are sold openly. Why? The reason is that it is continuously emphasised that this is the only way we can conduct business. The question remains: have we gained anything by it? Only the figures have changed. When one person commits a sin, say, black marketing, he gains something or seems to gain it. But what happens is that what he has earned as black money from one source, he has to pay that money as black money to another source. For instance, a person earns money by selling silver wares in the black market and then he buys land. Whatever black money he has earned he has to give to the dealer for the land. Has he gained anything? Sin never brings us any benefit. We make a mistake when we think that it will be able to give us something.

Avimukta means a realised teacher. That is why the *Upaniṣad* goes on to say⁶⁰ that by taking refuge in a teacher who is absolutely liberated the knowledge will dawn. *Avimukta kṣetra* also means Banaras. The eye-brows are also called *avimukta kṣetra* and by continuously meditating at this particular point, according to one's capacity, the light of consciousness will dawn. Or, we can go to a holy place where everybody is engaged in holy acts so that we get those vibrations, or we can live with a preceptor who will continuously guide us towards this goal. By following any of these methods, *atyāśramī*, we are able to go beyond our body-mind complex and attain this knowledge which will liberate us and we will realise that it is the unitary consciousness which alone exists and is prevalent everywhere.

We have discussed the *Kaivalya Upaniṣad* in these five lectures. We began with a discussion of the pre-requisites. Control of the senses, control of the body, etc., are absolutely necessary if we want to go beyond this world, which is differentiated, to the world of unitary consciousness, where there is absolutely no differentiation. If we want to undertake this journey and move from this painful existence to that blissful state, the first pre-requisite is that we control our senses and body. We also discussed the concept of faith. Without faith no movement can take place because *śraddhā* is what leads to *pravṛtti*, that is, what makes us do things. In the absence of faith, we cannot give ourselves wholeheartedly to anything. From faith we moved on to love, that is, devotion to God, because unless we have love for Him, we will never be able to contact Him as He cannot be contacted by any other means. We also discussed the process of meditation and, finally, the object of meditation, the result that has to follow. By following this path, we will enter that blissful state where variety will no longer be distracting but Śiva will be manifested in everything. This knowledge, as I pointed out, is being given to us continuously.

In this particular age—the *Kaliyuga*—we are intellectually aware all the time. Modern man is more intellectual than anything else. The *Upaniṣads* give us the bare data of experience, that is the foundation. It was built up by Ācārya Śaṅkarā 1200 years ago in a logical, rational way. That is why his disciple Padmapāda refers to him as *anumārdhavigraham*. *Anumā* means inference—logical inference. Identified with his work Ācārya Śaṅkarā can be seen as having two equal parts which are complementary to each other, *ardhavigraham*, one half is the experience, the other half is the logical representation. That has been his greatest contribution. Twelve hundred years have passed since he gave us this knowledge. Singlehandedly, he transformed the whole society. He had absolute faith that truth will always triumph. We find the Upanisadic saying *Satyameva jayate* written in all places. Though it may be not desirable to say this, but the fact is that from the highest officer to the lowest chowkidar, everyone is absolutely convinced that it is the untruth which ultimately triumphs.

Ācārya Śaṅkarā made no compromises. He had absolute faith and his love of God was immense. There is not a single place of pilgrimage where he did not go and sing hymns in praise of the Lord. He was full of love for God and had gone deep in his meditations. When he was staying at Śrīsāila near Nagarjuna Sagar, today there is a dam at this site, he said,⁶¹ 'When will my meditation be so deep?' He goes on to say 'staying here in a cave, I will be so absorbed that the vines will go round my body, thinking that it is inert and small insects will build nests in my ears, thinking that this is only a place—an inert place.' That was the depth of his meditation. As far as knowledge is concerned, he has handed down to us the commentaries on the *Upaniṣads*, the *Gītā*, the *Brahma Sūtra*, etc., by which we are able to logically know things. In conclusion, it may be said that it is the realisation of our self as consciousness which is the final aim of our having taken birth in a human body. No matter how much we are able to do anything externally, unless we are able to make that contact with Śiva, with the supreme consciousness, everything remains superficial. Unless we are able to contact Him, it is of no value what we do in the external world.