

THE GLORY OF THE UPANISHAD AND THE ULTIMATE WONDER OF COSMIC BRAHMAN

There is a divinity and dignity in each one of us. God sleeps in the minerals, wakes in the vegetables, walks in the animals and thinks in man. In this supreme dimension God is universal; he belongs to the lowliest or the highest, the paraya or the Prince. The Lord illumines all existence and makes us one in Creation. In this large vision, humanity is one single sweeping brotherhood, some are rogis, others are bhogis and a few rare evolved sources are yogis. The Brahmakumari movement is universal united by equity, equality and intensity of Bhakti and divinity in everyone. The founder of this great movement was a rich jeweler but when he realized that real jewel is Shiva Baba he gave away his huge wealth converted this vast asset into a spiritual movement and preached the noblest Truth. It began in a small way but the treasure of its Truth was luminous and spread everywhere. Purity was its conscience. Rarest of the rare were women every cell of whom is purity, probity, integrity and fraternity. Every centre represented the teaching of Brahma Baba and its inspiration came from Shiva Baba. The finest value of spiritual essence in the simplest life was regarded as the loftiest goal. Every little man has the sacredness in him and can transform the pleasures of the earth into the treasures of heaven. This structural basic is the essence of India's Vedic culture. The Vedas have been amplified by the Upanishads and metamorphosed into a New World Order. This in turn has been illumined by the ethos by Brahma Baba of Mount Abu. His teachings have simplified Indian culture and made it the highest estate of the universal civilization.

Max Muller regarded Rig Veda ‘the first word spoken by the Aryan man’. These aryan envisioned Truth without inhibitions and asked deeper questions. Evolving from this vigorous investigation came the Upanishadic monism. Says Nehru:

“The Upanishads are instinct with a spirit of inquiry, of mental adventure, of a passion for finding out the truth about things. The search for this truth is, of course, not by the objective methods of modern science, yet there is an element of the scientific method in the approach. No dogma is allowed to come in the way.”

*(The Discovery of India—By
Jawaharlal Nehru—Page 89)*

So marvellous has been this philosophical continuity reaching civilization’s acme, that Max Muller, more than a century back, paid a rare tribute to it:

If we were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And If I were to ask myself from what literature we here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw the corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India.

(Ibid. Page 88-89)

Rajaji, in an eloquent passage, writes of the Upanishads:

The spacious imagination, the majestic sweep of thought, and the almost reckless spirit of exploration with which, urged by the compelling thirst for truth, the Upanishad teachers and pupils dig into the “open secret” of the universe, make this most ancient of the world’s holy books still the most modern and most satisfying.

How emphatic is Nehru on the spirit of enquiry in the Upanishads:

The dominating characteristic of the Upanishads is the dependence on truth. Truth wins ever, not falsehood. With truth is paved the road to the Divine. And the famous invocation is for light and understanding. Lead me from the unreal to the real? Lead me from darkness to light! Lead me from death to immortality.

(Ibid: Page 90)

Oft quoted is the tribute by Schopenhauer, the pessimist:

In the whole world there is no study ... so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads ... (They) are products of the highest wisdom ... It is destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people. And again : The study of the Upanishads has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.

(Ibid. Page 92-93)

This remarkable spiritual summation was based on scientific investigation, fearless interrogation, experiential validation, not priestly rituals and non-stop chants. However, clerical orthodoxy invaded the free thought and adventurous search of the Upanishads. And this decline and fall is mentioned with distress by Aurobindo:

If an ancient Indian of the time of the Upanishad, of the Buddha, or the later classical age were to be set down in modern India ... he would see his race clinging forms and shells and rags of the past and missing nine-tenths of its nobler meaning ... he would be amazed by the extent of the mental poverty, the immobility, the static

repetition, the cessation of science, the long sterility of art, the comparative feebleness of the creative intuition.

(Ibid. Page 96)

Vedanta, with its intellectual pursuits, had even ridiculed the rituals in the Vedas. Where the mind is free from purohit domination and the head holds direct conversation with the heavens, superstitious rites are pushed aside.

Adi Shankara gave life and power to the spiritual empire of India and restored the Upanishads to their sublime scientific status. Time and again when decadence infected Indian culture some vigorous spirit rose to win back its puissance and experimental elan. In a later era, Vivekananda imparted a revolutionary thrust to the emaciated spiritual poverty of India. “Go back to your Upanishads, the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy; and part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things” thundered the Swamiji. I would rather see everyone of you rank atheists than superstitious fools, for the atheists if alive, you can make something of him. But if superstition entered the brain is gone” With the tremendous power of the Upanishadic teachings coursing through his veins, Swamiji exhorted Indians in words which reflected the pristine strength of Vedanta:

In the words of the Christians—you cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time... Throw away everything, even your own salvation, and go and help others ... The nation is sinking; the curse of unnumbered millions is on our heads—those to whom we have been giving ditch-water to drink, when they have been dying of thirst, and while the perennial river of water was flowing past; the un-numbered millions whom we have allowed to starve in sight of plenty; the unnumbered millions to whom we have talked of Advaita and whom we have hated with all our strength ... Wipe off this blot! “Arise and Awake”.

The militant spirituality and the radical majesty of the Upanishads is urgently relevant and burningly important to India to-day and, in a larger sense, to the world itself. We cannot recite inertly the Isopanishad, for instance, without sharing the global, universal, cosmic sweep of the verses. There are no narrow walls, no barren deserts in the poetry of the Upanishads, and that is precisely the creed that we need in a warring world threatening to break up any moment because bloodshot materialism grips it in its deadly clasp and the moral and spiritual values, which are indispensable for man's ultimate point of view, man is surrendering to **bhoga** and a few, going to the other extreme of asceticism, are giving up to **tyaga** or abandonment of material things altogether in a mood of foolish illusionism. Humanity must find a new material, spiritual synthesis, a divinised humanism, a vigorous compassion for creation and feeling of ecological integrity.

We live in a period of crisis, the crisis of character, of morality, of integrity. We are on the verge of collapse because a vulgar fall pulls down those higher values which are our lofty Upanishadic legacy. The Constitution of India speaks of fundamental duties (51 A) obligated on every citizen. One of the principal mandates so laid is 'to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture'. Dialectically speaking, this cultural factor, rooted in the Upanishads, is perhaps the most potent weapon in our battle for unity of the nation and even peaceful international coexistence. It is a pity, though, that humanity, Indian and other, is lost in high technology, and chases crazy satisfaction and power intoxication, subverting that noble synthesis where life and worldliness are real in a relative sense but the deeper spiritual springs, more enduring, fertilize and stabilise society and reduce entropy. We have, therefore, to focus much more on the positive

message of the Upanishads, altho' the fact remains that where there is religion we sink in its ritualism and where there is crass atheism we sterilize our capacity to rise to the skies and crawl on the mire., Said Goethe:

The greater part of all the mischief in the world arises from the fact that men do not sufficiently understand their own aims. They have undertaken to build a tower and spend no more labour on the foundation than would be necessary to erect a hut.

Adi Shankara, whose mortal life was brief but genius superlative, revolutionized our cultural fibre, fought cant and cult and specious erudition, and battled thro' the length and breadth of Bharat to establish, by conquests of reactionary critics, the authentic monism of advaita with a noble fire unparalleled in the spiritual odysseys of the world. He has been an Everest light for the ages. As a teenage man he began his divine mission when Hindu India was dissipating its soul and Buddhist India, falling into degenerate days and vicious ways, was betraying the buddha himself. No crusade or jehad could compare with Operation Renaissance, Shankara executed single-handed, spanning on foot the vast land from end to end, walking and debating, composing and discoursing, and, with the powerless power of a sovereign **sannyasin** and energised by the boundless gifts of Sharada Devi, spreading the Upanishadic essence of the Self. He taught, like a master spirit the presence of the One in everything and everything in the Self, of the Reality which transcends relative realities, of the Truth which eludes grasp because of contradictory versions and perceptions of portions and the all-embracing realisation 'Thou art That'! Be your religion what it may, the Shankara encyclopedia supports, not subverts, its indefinable, ineffable creedal core—provided you are ready to drop the dross, sacrifice

the superficials and dare to seek its undying light. In that sense, he is a universal torch, humanity's missionary.

A synthesis of the materialism of West and the spirituality of the East in language appealing to the modern mind is an exhortation if we listen to Vivekananda when I quote in concluding this article:

Feel, my children, feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden; feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad.

We talk foolishly against material civilization. The grapes are sour... Material civilization, nay even luxury, is necessary to create work for the poor. Bread; I do not believe in a God, who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven. Pooh; India is to be raised, the poor are to be fed, education is to be spread, and the evil of priestcraft is to be removed...more bread, more opportunity for everybody....

Let us not be victims of our imbecile idea of development which really means progress of the material conditions of living as well as advance of the mental, moral and spiritual dimensions. The ultimate end of which will be a realization of who am I. Gandhiji rightly treasured the idea of development when he said:

The Gandhian concept of development rejected the idea that it should aim primarily at the creation of material wealth or the satisfaction of insatiable, endlessly multiplied needs. 'In so far as we have made the modern materialistic craze our goal,' he wrote, 'so far are we going downhill in the path of progress.'

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V.R. KRISHNA IYER