

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda-  
Volume 9- Lectures and Discourses

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# Chapter 1

## The Women of India

### THE WOMEN OF INDIA

(New Discoveries, Vol. 2, pp. 411-26.)

The following lecture was delivered at Cambridge, December 17, 1894, and recorded by Miss Frances Willard's stenographer.

Swami Vivekananda faced bigotry in America on several issues of Indian culture — one was the Indian woman. Naturally he sought to correct Western misconceptions. When he lectured in his own country, however, there was no greater advocate for improving the life of Indian women than the Swami.

In speaking about the women of India, ladies and gentlemen, I feel that I am going to talk about my mothers and sisters in India to the women of another race, many of whom have been like mothers and sisters to me. But though, unfortunately, within very recent times there have been mouths only to curse the women of our country, I have found that there are some who bless them too. I have found such noble souls in this nation as Mrs. [Ole] Bull and Miss [Sarah] Farmer and Miss [Frances] Willard, and that wonderful representative of the highest aristocracy of the world, whose life reminds me of that man of India, six hundred years before the birth of Christ, who gave up his throne to mix with the people. Lady Henry Somerset has been a revelation to me. I become bold when I find such noble souls who will not curse, whose mouths are full of blessing for me, my country, our men and women, and whose hands and hearts are ever ready to do service to humanity.

I first intend to take a glimpse into times past of Indian history, and we will find something unique. All of you are aware, perhaps, that you Americans and we Hindus and this lady from Iceland [Mrs. Sigrid Magnusson] are the descendants of one common ancestry known as Aryans. Above all, we find three ideas wherever the Aryans go: the village community, the rights of women and a joyful religion.<sup>[1]</sup>

The first [idea] is the system of village communities — as we have just heard from Mrs. Bull concerning the North. Each man was his own [lord?] and owned the land. All these political institutions of the world we now

see, are the developments of those village systems. As the Aryans went over to different countries and settled, certain circumstances developed this institution, others that.

The next idea of the Aryans is the freedom of women. It is in the Aryan literature that we find women in ancient times taking the same share as men, and in no other literature of the world.

Going back to our Vedas — they are the oldest literature the world possesses and are composed by your and my common ancestors (they were not written in India — perhaps on the coast of the Baltic, perhaps in Central Asia — we do not know).

Their oldest portion is composed of hymns, and these hymns are to the gods whom the Aryans worshipped. I may be pardoned for using the word gods; the literal translation is “the bright ones”. These hymns are dedicated to Fire, to the Sun, to Varuna and other deities. The titles run: “such-and-such a sage composed this verse, dedicated to such-and-such a deity”.

In the tenth chapter comes a peculiar hymn — for the sage is a woman — and it is dedicated to the one God who is at the background of all these gods. All the previous hymns are spoken in the third person, as if someone were addressing the deities. But this hymn takes a departure: God [as the Devi] is speaking for herself. The pronoun used is “I”. “I am the Empress of the Universe, the Fulfiller of all prayers.” (Vide “Devi Sukta”, Rig-Veda 10.125)

This is the first glimpse of women's work in the Vedas. As we go on, we find them taking a greater share — even officiating as priests. There is not one passage throughout the whole mass of literature of the Vedas which can be construed even indirectly as signifying that woman could never be a priest. In fact, there are many examples of women officiating as priests.

Then we come to the last portion of these Vedas — which is really the religion of India — the concentrated wisdom of which has not been surpassed even in this cen-

ture. There, too, we find women preeminent. A large portion of these books are words which have proceeded from the mouths of women. It is there — recorded with their names and teachings.

There is that beautiful story of the great sage Yājñavalkya, the one who visited the kingdom of the great king Janaka. And there in that assembly of the learned, people came to ask him questions. One man asked him, "How am I to perform this sacrifice?" Another asked him, "How am I to perform the other sacrifice?" And after he had answered them, there arose a woman who said, "These are childish questions. Now, have a care: I take these two arrows, my two questions. Answer them if you can, and we will then call you a sage. The first is: What is the soul? The second is: What is God?" (Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 3.8.1.—12.)

Thus arose in India the great questions about the soul and God, and these came from the mouth of a woman. The sage had to pass an examination before her, and he passed well.

Coming to the next stratum of literature, our epics, we find that education has not degenerated. Especially in the caste of princes this ideal was most wonderfully held.

In the Vedas we find this idea of marrying — the girls chose for themselves; so the boys. In the next stratum they are married by their parents, except in one caste.

Even here I would ask you to look at another side. Whatever may be said of the Hindus, they are one of the most learned races the world has ever produced. The Hindu is the metaphysician; he applies everything to his intellect. Everything has to be settled by astrological calculation.

The idea was that the stars govern the fate of every man and woman. Even today when a child is born, a horoscope is cast. That determines the character of the child. One child is born of a divine nature, another of a human, others of lower character.

The difficulty was: If a child who was of a monster-character was united with a child of a god-character, would they not have a tendency to degenerate each other?

The next difficulty was: Our laws did not allow marriage within the same clans. Not only may one not marry within his own family — or even one of his cousins — but one must not marry into the clan of his father or even of his mother.

A third difficulty was: If there had been leprosy or phthisis or any such incurable disease within six generations of either bride or bridegroom, then there must not be a

marriage.

Now taking [into account] these three difficulties, the Brahmin says: "If I leave it to the choice of the boy or girl to marry, the boy or girl will be fascinated with a beautiful face. And then very likely all these circumstances will bring ruin to the family". This is the primary idea that governs our marriage laws, as you will find. Whether right or wrong, there is this philosophy at the background. Prevention is better than cure.

That misery exists in this world is because we give birth to misery. So the whole question is how to prevent the birth of miserable children. How far the rights of a society should extend over the individual is an open question. But the Hindus say that the choice of marriage should not be left in the hands of the boy or girl.

I do not mean to say that this is the best thing to do. Nor do I see that leaving it in their hands is at all a perfect solution. I have not found a solution yet in my own mind; nor do I see that any country has one.

We come next to another picture. I told you that there was another peculiar form of marriage (generally among the royalty) where the father of the girl invited different princes and noblemen and they had an assembly. The young lady, the daughter of the king, was borne on a sort of chair before each one of the princes in turn. And the herald would repeat: "This is Prince So-and-so, and these are his qualifications". The young girl would either wait or say, "Move on". And before the next prince, the crier would also give a description, and the girl would say, "Move on". (All this would be arranged beforehand; she already had the liking for somebody before this.) Then at last she would ask one of the servants to throw the garland over the head of the man, and it would be thrown to show he was accepted. (The last of these marriages was the cause of the Mohammedan invasion of India.) (Vide prince, who became the Queen of Delhi.) These marriages were specially reserved for the prince caste.

The oldest Sanskrit poem in existence, the Rāmāyana, has embodied the loftiest Hindu ideal of a woman in the character of Sitā. We have not time to go through her life of infinite patience and goodness. We worship her as God incarnate, and she is named before her husband, Rāma. We say not "Mr. and Mrs.," but "Mrs. and Mr." and so on, with all the gods and goddesses, naming the woman first.

There is another peculiar conception of the Hindu. Those who have been studying with me are aware that the central conception of Hindu philosophy is of the Absolute; that is the background of the universe. This Absolute Being, of whom we can predicate nothing, has Its powers spoken of as She — that is, the real personal God in India is She. This Shakti of the Brahman is

always in the feminine gender.

Rama is considered the type of the Absolute, and Sita that of Power. We have no time to go over all the life of Sita, but I will quote a passage from her life that is very much suited to the ladies of this country.

The picture opens when she was in the forest with her husband, whither they were banished. There was a female sage whom they both went to see. Her fasts and devotions had emaciated her body.

Sita approached this sage and bowed down before her. The sage placed her hand on the head of Sita and said: "It is a great blessing to possess a beautiful body; you have that. It is a greater blessing to have a noble husband; you have that. It is the greatest blessing to be perfectly obedient to such a husband; you are that. You must be happy".

Sita replied, "Mother, I am glad that God has given me a beautiful body and that I have so devoted a husband. But as to the third blessing, I do not know whether I obey him or he obeys me. One thing alone I remember, that when he took me by the hand before the sacrificial fire — whether it was a reflection of the fire or whether God himself made it appear to me — I found that I was his and he was mine. And since then, I have found that I am the complement of his life, and he of mine".

Portions of this poem have been translated into the English language. Sita is the ideal of a woman in India and worshipped as God incarnate.

We come now to Manu the great lawgiver. Now, in this book there is an elaborate description of how a child should be educated. We must remember that it was compulsory with the Aryans that a child be educated, whatever his caste. After describing how a child should be educated, Manu adds: "Along the same lines, the daughters are to be educated — exactly as the boys".<sup>[2]</sup>

I have often heard that there are other passages where women are condemned. I admit that in our sacred books there are many passages which condemn women as offering temptation; you can see that for yourselves. But there are also passages that glorify women as the power of God. And there are other passages which state that in that house where one drop of a woman's tear falls, the gods are never pleased and the house goes to ruin. Drinking wine, killing a woman and killing a Brahmin are the highest crimes in the Hindu religion. I admit there are condemnatory sentences [in some of our books]; but here I claim the superiority of these Hindu books, for in the books of other races there is only condemnation and no good word for a woman.

Next, I will come to our old dramas. Whatever the books say, the dramas are the perfect representation of society as it then existed. In these, which were written from four

hundred years before Christ onward, we find even universities full of both boys and girls. We would not [now] find Hindu women, as they have since become cut off from higher education.<sup>[3]</sup> But [at that time], they were everywhere pretty much the same as they are in this country — going out to the gardens and parks to take promenades.

There is another point which I bring before you and where the Hindu woman is still superior to all other women in the world — her rights. The right to possess property is as absolute for women in India as for men — and has been for thousands and thousands of years.

If you have any lawyer friend and can take up commentaries on the Hindu law, you will find it all for yourselves. A girl may bring a million dollars to her husband, but every dollar of that is hers. Nobody has any right to touch one dollar of that. If the husband dies without issue, the whole property of the husband goes to her, even if his father or mother is living. And that has been the law from the past to the present time. That is something which the Hindu woman has had beyond that of the women of other countries.

The older books — or even newer books — do not prohibit the Hindu widows from being married; it is a mistake to think so. They give them their choice, and that is given to both men and women. The idea in our religion is that marriage is for the weak, and I don't see any reason to give up that idea today. They who find themselves complete — what is the use of their marrying? And those that marry — they are given one chance. When that chance is over, both men and women are looked down upon if they marry again; but it is not that they are prohibited. It is nowhere said that a widow is not to marry. The widow and widower who do not marry are considered more spiritual.

Men, of course, break through this law and go and marry; whereas women — they being of a higher spiritual nature — keep to the law. For instance, our books say that eating meat is bad and sinful, but you may still eat such-and-such a meat — mutton, for instance. I have seen thousands of men who eat mutton, and never in my life have I seen a woman of higher caste who eats meat of any kind. This shows that their nature is to keep the law — keeping more towards religion. But do not judge too harshly of Hindu men. You must try to look at the Hindu law from my position too, for I am a Hindu man.

This non-marriage of widows gradually grew into a custom. And whenever in India a custom becomes rigid, it is almost impossible to break through it — just as in your country, you will find how hard it is to break through a five-day custom of fashion. In the lower castes, except two, the widows remarry.

There is a passage in our later law books [which states] that a woman shall not read the Vedas. But they are

prohibited to even a weak Brahmin. If a Brahmin boy is not strong-minded, the law is applied to him also. But that does not show that education is prohibited to them, for the Vedas are not all that the Hindus have. Every other book women can read. All the mass of Sanskrit literature, that whole ocean of literature — science, drama, poetry — is all for them. They can go there and read everything, except the [Vedic] scriptures.<sup>[4]</sup>

In later days the idea was that woman was not intended to be a priest; so what is the use of her studying the Vedas? In that, the Hindus are not so far behind other nations. When women give up the world and join our Order, they are no longer considered either men or women. They have no sex. The whole question of high or low caste, man or woman, dies out entirely.

Whatever I know of religion I learned from my master, and he learned it of a woman.

Coming back to the Rajput woman, I will try to bring to you a story from some of our old books — how during the Mohammedan conquest, one of these women was the cause of what led to the conquest of India.

A Rajput prince of Kanauj — a very ancient city — had a daughter [Samjukta]. She had heard of the military fame of Prithvi Raj [King of Ajmere and Delhi] and all his glory, and she was in love with him.

Now her father wanted to hold a Râjasuya sacrifice, so he invited all the kings in the country. And in that sacrifice, they all had to render menial service to him because he was superior over all; and with that sacrifice he declared there would be a choice by his daughter.

But the daughter was already in love with Prithvi Raj. He was very mighty and was not going to acknowledge loyalty to the king, her father, so he refused the invitation. Then the king made a golden statue of Prithvi Raj and put it near the door. He said that that was the duty he had given him to perform — that of a porter.

The upshot of the whole affair was that Prithvi Raj, like a true knight, came and took the lady behind him on his horse, and they both fled.

When the news came to her father, he gave chase with his army, and there was a great battle in which the majority of both armies was killed. And [thus the Rajputs were so weakened that] the Mohammedan empire in India began.

When the Mohammedan empire was being established in northern India, the Queen of Chitore [Râni Padmini] was famed for her beauty. And the report of her beauty reached the sultan, and he wrote a letter for the queen to be sent to his harem. The result was a terrible war between the King of Chitore and the sultan. The Mohammedans invaded Chitore. And when the Rajputs found they could not defend themselves any more, the

men all took sword in hand and killed and were killed, and the women perished in the flames.

After the men had all perished, the conqueror entered the city. There in the street was rising a horrible flame. He saw circles of women going around it, led by the queen herself. When he approached near and asked the queen to refrain from jumping into the flames, she said, "This is how the Rajput woman treats you", and threw herself into the fire.

It is said that 74,500 women perished in the flames that day to save their honour from the hands of the Mohammedans. Even today when we write a letter, after sealing it we write "74½" upon it, meaning that if one dares to open this letter, that sin of killing 74,500 women will be upon his head.

I will tell you the story of another beautiful Rajput girl.<sup>[5]</sup> There is a peculiar custom in our country called "protection". Women can send small bracelets of silken thread to men. And if a girl sends one of these to a man, that man becomes her brother.

During the reign of the last of the Mogul emperors — the cruel man who destroyed that most brilliant empire of India — he similarly heard of the beauty of a Rajput chieftain's daughter. Orders were sent that she should be brought to the Mogul harem.

Then a messenger came from the emperor to her with his picture, and he showed it to her. In derision she stamped upon it with her feet and said, "Thus the Rajput girl treats your Mogul emperor". As a result, the imperial army was marched into Rajputana.

In despair the chieftain's daughter thought of a device. She took a number of these bracelets and sent them to the Rajput princes with a message: "Come and help us". All the Rajputs assembled, and so the imperial forces had to go back again.

I will tell you a peculiar proverb in Rajputana. There is a caste in India called the shop class, the traders. They are very intelligent — some of them — but the Hindus think they are rather sharp. But it is a peculiar fact that the women of that caste are not as intelligent as the men. On the other hand, the Rajput man is not half as intelligent as the Rajput woman.

The common proverb in Rajputana is: "The intelligent woman begets the dull son, and the dull woman begets the sharp son". The fact is, whenever any state or kingdom in Rajputana has been managed by a woman, it has been managed wonderfully well.

We come to another class of women. This mild Hindu race produces fighting women from time to time. Some

of you may have heard of the woman [Lakshmi Bai, Queen of Jhansi] who, during the Mutiny of 1857, fought against the English soldiers and held her own ground for two years — leading modern armies, managing batteries and always charging at the head of her army. This queen was a Brahmin girl.

A man whom I know lost three of his sons in that war. When he talks of them he is calm, but when he talks of this woman his voice becomes animated. He used to say that she was a goddess — she was not a human being. This old veteran thinks he never saw better generalship.

The story of Chand Bibi, or Chand Sultana [1546 - 1599], is well known in India. She was the Queen of Golconda, where the diamond mines were. For months she defended herself. At last, a breach was made in the walls. When the imperial army tried to rush in there, she was in full armour, and she forced the troops to go back.<sup>[6]</sup>

In still later times, perhaps you will be astonished to know that a great English general had once to face a Hindu girl of sixteen.

Women in statesmanship, managing territories, governing countries, even making war, have proved themselves equal to men — if not superior. In India I have no doubt of that. Whenever they have had the opportunity, they have proved that they have as much ability as men, with this advantage — that they seldom degenerate. They keep to the moral standard, which is innate in their nature. And thus as governors and rulers of their state, they prove — at least in India — far superior to men. John Stuart Mill mentions this fact.

Even at the present day, we see women in India managing vast estates with great ability. There were two ladies where I was born who were the proprietors of large estates and patronesses of learning and art and who managed these estates with their own brains and looked to every detail of the business.

Each nation, beyond a general humanity, develops a certain peculiarity of character — so in religion, so in politics, so in the physical body, so in mental habitude, so in men and women, so in character. One nation develops one peculiarity of character, another takes another peculiarity. Within the last few years the world has begun to recognize this.

The very peculiarity of Hindu women, which they have developed and which is the idea of their life, is that of the mother. If you enter a Hindu's home, you will not find the wife to be the same equal companion of the husband as you find her here. But when you find the mother, she is the very pillar of the Hindu home. The wife must wait to become the mother, and then she will be everything.

If one becomes a monk, his father will have to salute him first because he has become a monk and is therefore superior to him. But to his mother he — monk or no monk — will have to go down on his knees and prostrate himself before her. He will then put a little cup of water before her feet, she will dip her toe in it, and he will have to drink of it. A Hindu son gladly does this a thousand times over again!<sup>[7]</sup>

Where the Vedas teach morality, the first words are, "Let the mother be your God" (Taittiriya Upanishad 1.11.) — and that she is. When we talk of woman in India, our idea of woman is mother. The value of women consists in their being mothers of the human race. That is the idea of the Hindu.

I have seen my old master taking little girls by the hands, placing them in a chair and actually worshipping them — placing flowers at their feet and prostrating himself before these little children — because they represented the mother God.

The mother is the God in our family. The idea is that the only real love that we see in the world, the most unselfish love, is in the mother — always suffering, always loving. And what love can represent the love of God more than the love which we see in the mother? Thus the mother is the incarnation of God on earth to the Hindu.

"That boy alone can understand God who has been first taught by his mother." I have heard wild stories about the illiteracy of our women. Till I was a boy of ten, I was taught by my mother. I saw my grandmother living and my great-grandmother living, and I assure you that there never was in my line a female ancestor who could not read or write, or who had to put "her mark" on a paper. If there was a woman who could not read or write, my birth would have been impossible. Caste laws make it imperative.

So these are wild stories which I sometimes hear — such as the statement that in the Middle Ages reading and writing were taken away from Hindu women. I refer you to Sir William Hunter's History of the English People, where he cited Indian women who could calculate a solar eclipse.

I have been told that either too much worship of the mother makes the mother selfish or too much love of the children for the mother makes them selfish. But I do not believe that. The love which my mother gave to me has made me what I am, and I owe a debt to her that I can never repay.

Why should the Hindu mother be worshipped? Our philosophers try to find a reason and they come to this definition: We call ourselves the Aryan race. What is an Aryan? He is a man whose birth is through religion. This is a peculiar subject, perhaps, in this country; but the idea is that a man must be born through religion, through prayers. If you take up our law books you will

find chapters devoted to this — the prenatal influence of a mother on the child.

I know that before I was born, my mother would fast and pray and do hundreds of things which I could not even do for five minutes. She did that for two years. I believe that whatever religious culture I have, I owe to that. It was consciously that my mother brought me into the world to be what I am. Whatever good impulse I have was given to me by my mother — and consciously, not unconsciously.

“A child materially born is not an Aryan; the child born in spirituality is an Aryan.” For all this trouble — because she has to make herself so pure and holy in order to have pure children — she has a peculiar claim on the Hindu child. And the rest [of her traits] is the same with all other nations: she is so unselfish. But the mother has to suffer most in our families.

The mother has to eat last. I have been asked many times in your country why the [Hindu] husband does not sit with his wife to eat — if the idea is, perhaps, that the husband thinks she is too low a being. This explanation is not at all right. You know, a hog’s hair is thought to be very unclean. A Hindu cannot brush his teeth with the brushes made of it, so he uses the fibre of plants. Some traveller saw one Hindu brushing his teeth with that and then wrote that “a Hindu gets up early in the morning and gets a plant and chews it and swallows it!” Similarly, some have seen the husband and wife not eating together and have made their own explanation. There are so many explainers in this world, and so few observers — as if the world is dying for their explanations! That is why I sometimes think the invention of printing was not an unmixed blessing. The real fact is: just as in your country many things must not be done by ladies before men, so in our country the fact is that it is very indecorous to munch and munch before men. If a lady is eating, she may eat before her brothers. But if the husband comes in, she stops immediately and the husband walks out quickly. We have no tables to sit at, and whenever a man is hungry he comes in and takes his meal and goes out. Do not believe that a Hindu husband does not allow his wife to sit at the table with him. He has no table at all.

The first part of the food — when it is ready — belongs to the guests and the poor, the second to the lower animals, the third to the children, the fourth to the husband, and last comes the mother. How many times I have seen my mother going to take her first meal when it was two o’clock. We took ours at ten and she at two because she had so many things to attend to. [For example], someone knocks at the door and says, “Guest”, and there is no food except what was for my mother. She would give that to him willingly and then wait for her own. That was her life and she liked it. And that is why we worship

mothers as gods.

I wish you would like less to be merely petted and patronized and more to be worshipped! [You], a member of the human race! — the poor Hindu does not understand that [inclination of yours]. But when you say, “We are mothers and we command”, he bows down. This is the side then that the Hindus have developed.

Going back to our theories — people in the West came about one hundred years ago to the point that they must tolerate other religions. But we know now that toleration is not sufficient toward another religion; we must accept it. Thus it is not a question of subtraction, it is a question of addition. The truth is the result of all these different sides added together. Each of all these religions represents one side, the fullness being the addition of all these. And so in every science, it is addition that is the law.

Now the Hindu has developed this side. But will this side be enough? Let the Hindu woman who is the mother become the worthy wife also, but do not try to destroy the mother. That is the best thing you can do. Thus you get a better view of the universe instead of going about all over the world, rushing into different nations and criticizing them and saying, “The horrid wretches — all fit to be barbecued for eternity!”

If we take our stand on this position — that each nation under the Lord’s will is developing one part of human nature — no nation is a failure. So far they have done well, now they must do better! [Applause]

Instead of calling the Hindus “heathens”, “wretches”, “slaves”, go to India and say, “So far your work is wonderful, but that is not all. You have much more to do. God bless you that you have developed this side of woman as a mother. Now help the other side — the wife of men”.

And similarly, I think (I tell it with the best spirit) that you had better add to your national character a little more of the mother side of the Hindu nature! This was the first verse that I was taught in my life, the first day I went to school: “He indeed is a learned man who looks upon all women as his mother, who looks upon every man’s property as so much dust, and looks upon every being as his own soul”.

There is the other idea of the woman working with the man. It is not that the Hindus had not those ideals, but they could not develop them.

It is alone in the Sanskrit language that we find four words meaning husband and wife together. It is only in our marriage that they [both] promise, “What has been my heart now may be thine”. It is there that we see that the husband is made to look at the Pole-star, touching the hand of his wife and saying, “As the Pole-star is fixed in the heavens, so may I be fixed in my affection to thee”. And



the wife does the same.

Even a woman who is vile enough to go into the streets can sue her husband and have a maintenance. We find the germs of these ideas in all our books throughout our nation, but we were not able to develop that side of the character.

We must go far beyond sentiment when we want to judge. We know it is not emotion alone that governs the world, but there is something behind emotion. Economic causes, surrounding circumstances and other considerations enter into the development of nations. (It is not in my present plan to go into the causes that develop woman as wife.)

So in this world, as each nation is placed under peculiar circumstances and is developing its own type, the day is coming when all these different types will be mixed up — when that vile sort of patriotism which means “rob everybody and give to me” will vanish. Then there will be no more one-sided development in the whole world, and each one of these [nations] will see that they had done right.

Let us now go to work and mix the nations up together and let the new nation come.

Will you let me tell you my conviction? Much of the civilization that comprises the world today has come from that one peculiar race of mankind — the Aryans.<sup>[8]</sup>

[Aryan] civilization has been of three types: the Roman, the Greek, the Hindu. The Roman type is the type of organization, conquest, steadiness — but lacking in emotional nature, appreciation of beauty and the higher emotions. Its defect is cruelty. The Greek is essentially enthusiastic for the beautiful, but frivolous and has a tendency to become immoral. The Hindu type is essentially metaphysical and religious, but lacking in all the elements of organization and work.

The Roman type is now represented by the Anglo-Saxon; the Greek type more by the French than by any other nation; and the old Hindus do not die! Each type has its advantage in this new land of promise. They have the Roman's organization, the power of the Greek's wonderful love for the beautiful, and the Hindu's backbone of religion and love of God. Mix these up together and bring in the new civilization.

And let me tell you, this should be done by women. There are some of our books which say that the next incarnation, and the last (we believe in ten), is to come in the form of a woman.

We see resources in the world yet remaining because all the forces that are in the world have not come into use. The hand was acting all this time while other parts of the body were remaining silent. Let the other parts of the body be awakened and perhaps in harmonious action all the misery will be cured. Perhaps, in this new land, with this new blood in your veins, you may bring in that new civilization — and, perhaps, through American women.

As to that ever blessed land which gave me this body, I look back with great veneration and bless the merciful being who permitted me to take birth in that holiest spot on earth. When the whole world is trying to trace its ancestry from men distinguished in arms or wealth, the Hindus alone are proud to trace their descent from saints.

That wonderful vessel which has been carrying for ages men and women across this ocean of life may have sprung small leaks here and there. And of that, too, the Lord alone knows how much is owing to themselves and how much to those who look down with contempt upon the Hindus.

But if such leaks there are, I, the meanest of her children, think it my duty to stop her from sinking even if I have to do it with my life. And if I find that all my struggles are in vain, still, as the Lord is my witness, I will tell them with my heartfelt benediction: “My brethren, you have done well — nay, better than any other race could have done under the same circumstances. You have given me all that I have. Grant me the privilege of being at your side to the last and let us all sink together”.

## 1.1 Footnotes

- [1] Since Swami Vivekananda's time there has been more research on the spread of the Aryan culture.
- [2] Note: The text of this sentence is not found in the extant Manu Samhitā. Vide Mahānirvāna Tantra 8.47.
- [3] Since Swami Vivekananda's time, higher education among women in India has spread rapidly.
- [4] Today Indian women are no longer barred from reading any scriptures — Vedic or non-Vedic.
- [5] Chārumati, or Rupamati, daughter of Vikram Singh, King of Kishangarh, in Rajasthan. Charumati is the heroine of Rājasimha, a Bengali historical novel written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.
- [6] The soldiers were so impressed with Chand Bibi's military prowess and courage that they referred to her as Chand Sultana, which means “Chand — the Empress”.
- [7] This custom is a gesture meant to acknowledge the mother not only as the first teacher and preceptor in one's life, but also as an embodiment of the all-loving God.
- [8] It may be noted here that today many historians and anthropologists would describe the Aryans as a linguistic group rather than a race. — Publisher.

## Chapter 2

# The First Step towards Jnana

### THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS JNANA[6]\*

[A Jnâna-Yoga class delivered in New York, Wednesday, December 11, 1895, and recorded by Swami Kripananda]

The word Jnâna means knowledge. It is derived from the root Jnâ — to know — the same word from which your English word to know is derived. Jnana-Yoga is Yoga by means of knowledge. What is the object of the Jnana-Yoga? Freedom. Freedom from what? Freedom from our imperfections, freedom from the misery of life. Why are we miserable? We are miserable because we are bound. What is the bondage? The bondage is of nature. Who is it that binds us? We, ourselves.

The whole universe is bound by the law of causation. There cannot be anything, any fact — either in the internal or in the external world — that is uncaused; and every cause must produce an effect.

Now this bondage in which we are is a fact. It need not be proved that we are in bondage. For instance: I would be very glad to get out of this room through this wall, but I cannot; I would be very glad if I never became sick, but I cannot prevent it; I would be very glad not to die, but I have to; I would be very glad to do millions of things that I cannot do. The will is there, but we do not succeed in accomplishing the desire. When we have any desire and not the means of fulfilling it, we get that peculiar reaction called misery. Who is the cause of desire? I, myself. Therefore, I myself am the cause of all the miseries I am in.

Misery begins with the birth of the child. Weak and helpless, he enters the world. The first sign of life is weeping. Now, how could we be the cause of misery when we find it at the very beginning? We have caused it in the past. [Here Swami Vivekananda entered into a fairly long discussion of “the very interesting theory called Reincarnation”. He continued:]

To understand reincarnation, we have first to know that in this universe something can never be produced out of nothing. If there is such a thing as a human soul, it cannot be produced out of nothing. If something can be pro-

duced out of nothing, then something would disappear into nothing also. If we are produced out of nothing, then we will also go back into nothing. That which has a beginning must have an end. Therefore, as souls we could not have had any beginning. We have been existing all the time.

Then again, if we did not exist previously, there is no explanation of our present existence. The child is born with a bundle of causes. How many things we see in a child which can never be explained until we grant that the child has had past experience — for instance, fear of death and a great number of innate tendencies. Who taught the baby to drink milk and to do so in a peculiar fashion? Where did it acquire this knowledge? We know that there cannot be any knowledge without experience, for to say that knowledge is intuitive in the child, or instinctive, is what the logicians would call a “petitio principii”.[7]\*

It would be the same [logic] as when a man asks me why light comes through a glass, and I answer him, “Because it is transparent”. That would be really no answer at all because I am simply translating his word into a bigger one. The word “transparent” means “that through which light comes” — and that was the question. The question was why light comes through the glass, and I answered him, “Because it comes through the glass”.

In the same way, the question was why these tendencies are in the child. Why should it have fear of death if it never saw death? If this is the first time it was ever born, how did it know to suck the mother’s milk? If the answer is “Oh, it was instinct”, that is simply returning the question. If a man stands up and says, “I do not know”, he is in a better position than the man who says, “It is instinct” and all such nonsense.

There is no such thing as instinct; there is no such thing as nature separate from habit. Habit is one’s second nature, and habit is one’s first nature too. All that is in your nature is the result of habit, and habit is the result of experience. There cannot be any knowledge but from experience.

So this baby must have had some experience too. This fact is granted even by modern materialistic science. It proves beyond doubt that the baby brings with it a fund

of experience. It does not enter into this world with a “tabula rasa” — a blank mind upon which nothing is written — as some of the old philosophers believed, but ready equipped with a bundle of knowledge. So far so good.

But while modern science grants that this bundle of knowledge which the child brings with it was acquired through experience, it asserts, at the same time, that it is not its own — but its father’s and its grandfather’s and its great-grandfather’s. Knowledge comes, they say, through hereditary transmission.

Now this is one step in advance of that old theory of “instinct”, that is fit only for babies and idiots. This “instinct” theory is a mere pun upon words and has no meaning whatsoever. A man with the least thinking power and the least insight into the logical precision of words would never dare to explain innate tendencies by “instinct”, a term which is equivalent to saying that something came out of nothing. But the modern theory of transmission through experience — though, no doubt, a step in advance of the old one — is not sufficient at all. Why not? We can understand a physical transmission, but a mental transmission is impossible to understand.

What causes me — who am a soul — to be born with a father who has transmitted certain qualities? What makes me come back? The father, having certain qualities, may be one binding cause. Taking for granted that I am a distinct soul that was existing before and wants to reincarnate — what makes my soul go into the body of a particular man? For the explanation to be sufficient, we have to assume a hereditary transmission of energies and such a thing as my own previous experience. This is what is called Karma, or, in English, the Law of Causation, the law of fitness.

For instance, if my previous actions have all been towards drunkenness, I will naturally gravitate towards persons who are transmitting a drunkard’s character. I can only take advantage of the organism produced by those parents who have been transmitting a certain peculiar influence for which I am fit by my previous actions. Thus we see that it is true that a certain hereditary experience is transmitted from father to son, and so on. At the same time, it is my past experience that joins me to the particular cause of hereditary transmission.

A simply hereditary transmission theory will only touch the physical man and would be perfectly insufficient for the internal soul of man. Even when looking upon the matter from the purest materialistic standpoint — viz. that there is no such thing as a soul in man, and man is nothing but a bundle of atoms acted upon by certain physical forces and works like an automaton — even taking that for granted, the mere transmission theory would be quite insufficient.

The greatest difficulties regarding the simple hypothesis of mere physical transmission will be here: If there be no such thing as a soul in man, if he be nothing more than a bundle of atoms acted upon by certain forces, then, in the case of transmission, the soul of the father would decrease in ratio to the number of his children; and the man who has five, six or eight children must, in the end, become an idiot. India and China — where men breed like rats — would then be full of idiots. But, on the contrary, we find that the least amount of lunacy is in India and China.

The question is, What do we mean by the word transmission? It is a big word, but, like so many other impossible and nonsensical terms of the same kind, it has come into use without people understanding it. If I were to ask you what transmission is, you would find that you have no real conception of its meaning because there is no idea attached to it.

Let us look a little closer into the matter. Say, for instance, here is a father. A child is born to him. We see that the same qualities [which the father possesses] have entered into his child. Very good. Now how did the qualities of the father come to be in the child? Nobody knows. So this gap the modern physicists want to fill with the big word transmission. And what does this transmission mean? Nobody knows.

How can mental qualities of experience be condensed and made to live in one single cell of protoplasm? There is no difference between the protoplasm of a bird and that of a human brain. All we can say with regard to physical transmission is that it consists of the two or three protoplasmic cells cut from the father’s body. That is all. But what nonsense to assume that ages and ages of past human experience got compressed into a few protoplasmic cells! It is too tremendous a pill they ask you to swallow with this little word transmission.

In olden times the churches had prestige, but today science has got it. And just as in olden times people never inquired for themselves — never studied the Bible, and so the priests had a very good opportunity to teach whatever they liked — so even now the majority of people do not study for themselves and, at the same time, have a tremendous awe and fear before anything called scientific. You ought to remember that there is a worse popery coming than ever existed in the church — the so-called scientific popery, which has become so successful that it dictates to us with more authority than religious popery.

These popes of modern science are great popes indeed, but sometimes they ask us to believe more wonderful things than any priest or any religion ever did. And one of those wonderful things is that transmission theory, which I could never understand. If I ask, “What do you mean by transmission?” they only make it a little easier

by saying, "It is hereditary transmission". And if I tell them, "That is rather Greek to me", they make it still easier by saying, "It is the adherence of paternal qualities in the protoplasmic cells". In that way it becomes easier and easier, until my mind becomes muddled and disgusted with the whole thing.

Now one thing we see: we produce thought. I am talking to you this evening and it is producing thought in your brain. By this act of transmission we understand that my thoughts are being transmitted into your brain and your mind, and producing other thoughts. This is an everyday fact.

It is always rational to take the side of things which you can understand — to take the side of fact. Transmission of thought is

perfectly understandable. Therefore we are able to take up the [concept of] transmission of thought, and not of hereditary impressions of protoplasmic cells alone. We need not brush aside the theory, but the main stress must be laid upon the transmission of thought.

Now a father does not transmit thought. It is thought alone that transmits thought. The child that is born existed previously as thought. We all existed eternally as thought and will go on existing as thought.

What we think, that our body becomes. Everything is manufactured by thought, and thus we are the manufacturers of our own lives. We alone are responsible for whatever we do. It is foolish to cry out: "Why am I unhappy?" I made my own unhappiness. It is not the fault of the Lord at all.

Someone takes advantage of the light of the sun to break into your house and rob you. And then when he is caught by the policeman, he may cry: "Oh sun, why did you make me steal?" It was not the sun's fault at all, because there are thousands of other people who did much good to their fellow beings under the light of the same sun. The sun did not tell this man to go about stealing and robbing.

Each one of us reaps what we ourselves have sown. These miseries under which we suffer, these bondages under which we struggle, have been caused by ourselves, and none else in the universe is to blame. God is the least to blame for it.

"Why did God create this evil world?" He did not create this evil world at all. We have made it evil, and we have to make it good. "Why did God create me so miserable?" He did not. He gave me the same powers as [He did] to every being. I brought myself to this pass.

Is God to blame for what I myself have done? His mercy

is always the same. His sun shines on the wicked and the good alike. His air, His water, His earth give the same chances to the wicked and the good. God is always the same eternal, merciful Father. The only thing for us to do is to bear the results of our own acts.

We learn that, in the first place, we have been existing eternally; in the second place that we are the makers of our own lives. There is no such thing as fate. Our lives are the result of our previous actions, our Karma. And it naturally follows that having been ourselves the makers of our Karma, we must also be able to unmake it.

The whole gist of Jnana-Yoga is to show humanity the method of undoing this Karma. A caterpillar spins a little cocoon around itself out of the substance of its own body and at last finds itself imprisoned. It may cry and weep and howl there; nobody will come to its rescue until it becomes wise and then comes out, a beautiful butterfly. So with these our bondages. We are going around and around ourselves through countless ages. And now we feel miserable and cry and lament over our bondage. But crying and weeping will be of no avail. We must set ourselves to cutting these bondages.

The main cause of all bondage is ignorance. Man is not wicked by his own nature — not at all. His nature is pure, perfectly holy. Each man is divine. Each man that you see is a God by his very nature. This nature is covered by ignorance, and it is ignorance that binds us down. Ignorance is the cause of all misery. Ignorance is the cause of all wickedness; and knowledge will make the world good. Knowledge will remove all misery. Knowledge will make us free. This is the idea of Jnana-Yoga: knowledge will make us free! What knowledge? Chemistry? Physics? Astronomy? Geology? They help us a little, just a little. But the chief knowledge is that of your own nature. "Know thyself." You must know what you are, what your real nature is. You must become conscious of that infinite nature within. Then your bondages will burst.

Studying the external alone, man begins to feel himself to be nothing. These vast powers of nature, these tremendous changes occurring — whole communities wiped off the face of the earth in a twinkling of time, one volcanic eruption shattering to pieces whole continents — perceiving and studying these things, man begins to feel himself weak. Therefore, it is not the study of external nature that makes [one] strong. But there is the internal nature of man—a million times more powerful than any volcanic eruption or any law of nature — which conquers nature, triumphs over all its laws. And that alone teaches man what he is.

"Knowledge is power", says the proverb, does it not? It is through knowledge that power comes. Man has got to know. Here is a man of infinite power and strength. He

himself is by his own nature potent and omniscient. And this he must know. And the more he becomes conscious of his own Self, the more he manifests this power, and his bonds break and at last he becomes free.

How to know ourselves? the question remains now. There are various ways to know this Self, but in Jnana-Yoga it takes the help of nothing but sheer intellectual reasoning. Reason alone, intellect alone, rising to spiritual perception, shows what we are.

There is no question of believing. Disbelieve everything — that is the idea of the Jnani. Believe nothing and disbelieve everything — that is the first step. Dare to be a rationalist. Dare to follow reason wherever it leads you.

We hear everyday people saying all around us: “I dare to reason”. It is, however, a very difficult thing to do. I would go two hundred miles to look at the face of the man who dares to reason and to follow reason. Nothing is easier to say, and nothing is more difficult to do. We are bound to follow superstitions all the time — old, hoary superstitions, either national or belonging to humanity in general — superstitions belonging to family, to friends, to country, to fashion, to books, to sex and to what-not.

Talk of reason! Very few people reason, indeed. You hear a man say, “Oh, I don't like to believe in anything; I don't like to grope through darkness. I must reason”. And so he reasons. But when reason smashes to pieces things that he hugs unto his breast, he says, “No more! This reasoning is all right until it breaks my ideals. Stop there!” That man would never be a Jnani. That man will carry his bondage all his life and his lives to come. Again and again he will come under the power of death. Such men are not made for Jnana. There are other methods for them — such as bhakti-yoga, Karma-Yoga, or Râja-Yoga — but not Jnana-Yoga.

I want to prepare you by saying that this method can be followed only by the boldest. Do not think that the man who believes in no church or belongs to no sect, or the man who boasts of his unbelief, is a rationalist. Not at all. In modern times it is rather bravado to do anything like that.

To be a rationalist requires more than unbelief. You must be able not only to reason, but also to follow the dictates of your reason. If reason tells you that this body is an illusion, are you ready to give it up? Reason tells you that heat and cold are mere illusions of your senses; are you ready to brave these things? If reason tells you that nothing that the senses convey to your mind is true, are you ready to deny your sense perception? If you dare, you are a rationalist.

It is very hard to believe in reason and follow truth. This whole world is full either of the superstitious or of half-hearted hypocrites. I would rather side with super-

stition and ignorance than stand with these half-hearted hypocrites. They are no good. They stand on both sides of the river.

Take anything up, fix your ideal and follow it out boldly unto death. That is the way to salvation. Half-heartedness never led to anything. Be superstitious, be a fanatic if you please, but be something. Be something, show that you have something; but be not like these shilly-shallyers with truth — these jacks-of-all-trades who just want to get a sort of nervous titillation, a dose of opium, until this desire after the sensational becomes a habit.

The world is getting too full of such people. Contrary to the apostles who, according to Christ, were the salt of the earth, these fellows are the ashes, the dirt of the earth. So let us first clear the ground and understand what is meant by following reason, and then we will try to understand what the obstructions are to our following reason.

The first obstruction to our following reason is our unwillingness to go to truth. We want truth to come to us. In all my travels, most people told me: “Oh, that is not a comfortable religion you talk about. Give us a comfortable religion!”

I do not understand what they mean by this “comfortable religion”. I was never taught any comfortable religion in my life. I want truth for my religion. Whether it be comfortable or not, I do not care. Why should truth be comfortable always? Truth many times hits hard — as we all know by our experience. Gradually, after a long intercourse with such persons, I came to find out what they meant by their stereotypical phrase. These people have got into a rut, and they do not dare to get out of it. Truth must apologize to them.

I once met a lady who was very fond of her children and her money and her everything. When I began to preach to her that the only way to God is by giving up everything, she stopped coming the next day. One day she came and told me that the reason for her staying away was because the religion I preached was very uncomfortable. “What sort of religion would be comfortable to you?” I asked in order to test her. She said: “I want to see God in my children, in my money, in my diamonds”.

“Very good, madam”, I replied. “You have now got all these things. And you will have to see these things millions of years yet. Then you will be bumped somewhere and come to reason. Until that time comes, you will never come to God. In the meantime, go on seeing God in your children and in your money and your diamonds and your dances.”

It is difficult, almost impossible, for such people to give up sense enjoyment. It has grown upon them from birth to birth. If you ask a pig to give up his sty and to go into your most beautiful parlour, why it will be death to the pig. "Let go, I must live there", says the pig.

[Here Swami Vivekananda explained the story of the fishwife: "Once a fishwife was a guest in the house of a gardener who raised flowers. She came there with her empty basket, after selling fish in the market, and was asked to sleep in a room where flowers were kept. But, because of the fragrance of the flowers, she couldn't get to sleep for a long time. Her hostess saw her condition and said, 'Hello! Why are you tossing from side to side so restlessly?' The fishwife said: 'I don't know, friend. Perhaps the smell of the flowers has been disturbing my sleep. Can you give me my fish-basket? Perhaps that will put me to sleep'."][8]\*

So with us. The majority of mankind delights in this fish smell — this world, this enjoyment of the senses, this money and wealth and chattel and wife and children. All this nonsense of the world — this fishy smell — has grown upon us. We can hear nothing beyond it, can see nothing beyond it; nothing goes beyond it. This is the whole universe.

All this talk about heaven and God and soul means nothing to an ordinary man. He has heaven already here. He has no other idea beyond this world. When you tell him of something higher, he says, "That is not a comfortable religion. Give us something comfortable". That is to say that religion is nothing but what he is doing.

If he is a thief and you tell him that stealing is the highest thing we can do, he will say, "That is a comfortable religion". If he is cheating, you have to tell him that what he is doing is all right; then he will accept your teaching as a "comfortable religion". The whole trouble is that people never want to get out of their ruts — never want to get rid of the old fish-basket and smell, in order to live. If they say, "I want the truth", that simply means that they want the fish-basket.

When have you reached knowledge? When you are equipped with those four disciplines [i.e. the four qualifications for attainment discussed in Vedantic literature: discrimination between the real and the unreal, renunciation, the six treasures of virtue beginning with tranquillity, and longing for liberation]. You must give up all desire of enjoyment, either in this life or the next. All enjoyments of this life are vain. Let them come and go as they will.

What you have earned by your past actions none can take away from you. If you have deserved wealth, you can bury yourself in the forest and it will come to you. If you have deserved good food and clothing, you may go to the north pole and they will be brought to you. The polar

bear will bring them. If you have not deserved them, you may conquer the world and will die of starvation. So, why do you bother about these things? And, after all, what is the use of them?

As children we all think that the world is made so very nice, and that masses of pleasures are simply waiting for our going out to them. That is every schoolboy's dream. And when he goes out into the world, the everyday world, very soon his dreams vanish. So with nations. When they see how every city is built upon ruins — every forest stands upon a city — then they become convinced of the vanity of this world.

All the power of knowledge and wealth once made has passed away — all the sciences of the ancients, lost, lost forever. Nobody knows how. That teaches us a grand lesson. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and vexation of the spirit. If we have seen all this, then we become disgusted with this world and all it offers us. This is called *Vairāgya*, non-attachment, and is the first step towards knowledge.

The natural desire of man is to go towards the senses. Turning away from the senses takes him back to God. So the first lesson we have to learn is to turn away from the vanities of the world.

How long will you go on sinking and diving down and going up for five minutes, to again sink down, again come up and sink, and so on — tossed up and down? How long will you be whirled on this wheel of Karma — up and down, up and down? How many thousands of times have you been kings and rulers? How many times have you been surrounded by wealth and plunged into poverty? How many thousands of times have you been possessed of the greatest powers? But again you had to become men, rolling down on this mad rush of Karma's waters. This tremendous wheel of Karma stops neither for the widow's tears nor the orphan's cry.

How long will you go on? How long? Will you be like that old man who had spent all his life in prison and, when let out, begged to be brought back into his dark and filthy dungeon cell? This is the case with us all! We cling with all our might to this low, dark, filthy cell called this world — to this hideous, chimerical existence where we are kicked about like a football by every wind that blows.

We are slaves in the hands of nature — slaves to a bit of bread, slaves to praise, slaves to blame, slaves to wife, to husband, to child, slaves to everything. Why, I go about all over the world — beg, steal, rob, do anything — to make happy a boy who is, perhaps, hump-backed or ugly-looking. I will do every wicked thing to make

him happy. Why? Because I am his father. And, at the same time, there are millions and millions of boys in this world dying of starvation — boys beautiful in body and in mind. But they are nothing to me. Let them all die. I am apt to kill them all to save this one rascal to whom I have given birth. This is what you call love. Not I. Not I. This is brutality.

There are millions of women — beautiful in body and mind, good, gentle, virtuous — dying of starvation this minute. I do not care for them at all. But that Jennie who is mine — who beats me three times a day, and scolds me the whole day — for that Jennie I am going to beg, borrow, cheat and steal so that she will have a nice gown.

Do you call that love? Not I. This is mere desire, animal desire — nothing more. Turn away from these things. Is there no end to these hideous dreams? Put a stop to them.

When the mind comes to that state of disgust with all the vanities of life, it is called turning away from nature. This is the first step. All desires must be given up — even the desire of getting heaven.

What are these heavens anyhow? Places where to sing psalms all the time. What for? To live there and have a nice healthy body with phosphorescent light or something of this kind coming out of every part, with a halo around the head, and with wings and the power to penetrate the wall?

If there be powers, they must pass away sooner or later. If there is a heaven — as there may be many heavens with various grades of enjoyment — there cannot be a body that lives forever. Death will overtake us, even there.

Every conjunction must have a disjunction. No body, finer or coarser, can be manufactured without particles of matter coming together. Whenever two particles come together, they are held by a certain attraction; and there will come a time when those particles will separate. This is the eternal law. So, wherever there is a body — either grosser or finer, either in heaven or on earth — death will overcome it.

Therefore, all desires of enjoyment in this life, or in a life to come, should be given up. People have a natural desire to enjoy; and when they do not find their selfish enjoyments in this life, they think that after death they will have a lot of enjoyment somewhere else. If these enjoyments do not take us towards knowledge in this life, in this world, how can they bring us knowledge in another life?

Which is the goal of man? Enjoyment or knowledge? Certainly not enjoyment. Man is not born to have

pleasure or to suffer pain. Knowledge is the goal. Knowledge is the only pleasure we can have.

All the sense pleasures belong to the brute. And the more the pleasure in knowledge comes, these sense pleasures fall down. The more animal a man is, the more he enjoys the pleasures of the senses. No man can eat with the same gusto as a famished dog. No man was ever born who could feel the same pleasure in eating as an ordinary bull. See how their whole soul is in that eating. Why, your millionaires would give millions for that enjoyment in eating — but they cannot have it.

This universe is like a perfectly balanced ocean. You cannot raise a wave in one place without making a hollow in another one. The sum total of energy in the universe is the same throughout. You spend it in some place, you lose it in another. The brute has got it, but he spent it on his senses; and each of his senses is a hundred times stronger than that of man.

How the dog smells at a distance! How he traces a footstep! We cannot do that. So, in the savage man. His senses are less keen than the animal's, but keener than the civilized man's.

The lower classes in every country intensely enjoy everything physical. Their senses are stronger than those of the cultured. But as you go higher and higher in the scale, you see the power of thought increasing and the powers of the senses decreasing, in the same ratio.

Take a [brute], cut him [as it were] to pieces, and in five days he is all right. But if I scratch you, it is ten to one you will suffer for weeks or months. That energy of life which he displays — you have it too. But with you, it is used in making up your brain, in the manufacture of thought. So with all enjoyments and all pleasures. Either enjoy the pleasure of the senses — live like the brute and become a brute — or renounce these things and become free.

The great civilizations — what have they died of? They went for pleasure. And they went further down and down until, under the mercy of God, savages came to exterminate them, lest we would see human brutes growling about. Savages killed off those nations that became brutalized through sense enjoyment, lest Darwin's missing link would be found.

True civilization does not mean congregating in cities and living a foolish life, but going Godward, controlling the senses, and thus becoming the ruler in this house of the Self.

Think of the slavery in which we are [bound]. Every beautiful form I see, every sound of praise I hear, immediately attracts me; every word of blame I hear

immediately repels me. Every fool has an influence over my mind. Every little movement in the world makes an impression upon me. Is this a life worth living?

So when you have realized the misery of this physical existence — when you have become convinced that such a life is not worth living — you have made the first step towards Jnana.



## Chapter 3

# Bhakti-Yoga

### BHAKTI-YOGA

(New Discoveries, Vol. 3, pp. 543-54.)

[A bhakti-yoga class delivered in New York, Monday morning, January 20, 1896, and recorded by Mr. Josiah J. Goodwin]

We finished in our last [class the subject] about Pratikas. One idea more of the preparatory Bhakti, and then we will go on to the Parâ, the Supreme. This idea is what is called Nishthâ, devotion to one idea.

We know that all these ideas of worship are right and all good, and we have seen that the worship of God, and God alone, is Bhakti. The worship of any other being will not be Bhakti, but God can be worshipped in various forms and through various ideas. And we have seen that all these ideas are right and good, but the difficulty is here: If we just stop with this last conclusion, we find that in the end we have frittered away our energies and done nothing.

It is a great tendency among liberal people to become a jack-of-all-trades and master of none — to nibble a little here and there and, in the long run, find they have nothing. In this country it many times grows into a sort of disease — to hear various things and do nothing.

Here is the advice of one of our old Bhaktas: “Take the honey from all flowers, mix with all with respect, say yea, yea to all, but give not up your seat”. This giving not up your own seat is what is called Nishtha. It is not that one should hate, or even criticize, the ideals of other people; he knows they are all right. But, at the same time, he must stick to his own ideal very strictly.

There is a story of Hanumân, who was a great worshipper of Râma. Just as the Christians worship Christ as the incarnation of God, so the Hindus worship many incarnations of God. According to them, God came nine times in India and will come once more. When he came as Rama, this Hanuman was his great worshipper. Hanuman lived very long and was a great Yogi.

During his lifetime, Rama came again as Krishna; and Hanuman, being a great Yogi, knew that the same God

had come back again as Krishna. He came and served Krishna, but he said to him, “I want to see that Rama form of yours”. Krishna said, “Is not this form enough? I am this Krishna; I am this Rama. All these forms are mine”. Hanuman said, “I know that, but the Rama form is for me. The Lord of Jânaki (Janaki is a name of Sitâ.) and the Lord of Shri ( Shri is a name of Laksmi.) are the same. They are both the incarnations of the Supreme Self. Yet the lotus-eyed Rama is my all in all”. This is Nishtha — knowing that all these different forms of worship are right, yet sticking to one and rejecting the others. We must not worship the others at all; we must not hate or criticize them, but respect them.

The elephant has two teeth coming out from his mouth. These are only for show; he cannot eat with them. But the teeth that are inside are those with which he chews his food. So mix with all, say yea, yea to all, but join none. Stick to your own ideal of worship. When you worship, worship that ideal of God which is your own Ishta, your own Chosen Ideal. If you do not, you will have nothing. Nothing will grow.

When a plant is growing, it is necessary that it should be hedged round lest any animal should eat it up. But when it has become strong and a huge gigantic tree, do not care for any hedges — it is perfect in itself. So when just the seed of spirituality is growing, to fritter away the energies on all sorts of religious ideas — a little of this and a little of that: a little of Christianity, a little of Buddhism, and, in reality, of nothing — destroys the soul.

This [acceptance] has its good side; and in the end we will come to it. Only do not put the cart before the horse.

In the first place, we are bound to become sectarians. But this should be the ideal of sectarianism — not to avoid anyone. Each of us must have a sect, and that sect is our own Ishta — our own chosen way. However, that should not make us want to kill other people — only to hold onto our own way. It is sacred and it should not be told to our own brothers, because my choice is sacred, and his [also] is sacred. So keep that choice as your own. That should be the [attitude of] worship of everyone.

When you pray to your own Ideal, your own Ishta, that is the only God you shall have. God exists in various phases, no doubt, but for the time being, your own Ishta is the only phase for you.

Then, after a long course of training in this Ishta — when this plant of spirituality has grown and the soul has become strong and you begin to realize that your Ishta is everywhere — [then] naturally all these bondages will fall down. When the fruit becomes ripe, it falls of its own weight. If you pluck an unripe fruit it is bitter, sour. So we will have to grow in this thought.

Simply hearing lectures and all this nonsense — making the Battle of Waterloo in the brain, simply unadjusted [undigested?] ideas — is no good. Devotion to one idea — those that have this will become spiritual, will see the light. You see everyone complaining: “I try this” and “I try that”, and if you cross-question them as to what they try, they will say that they have heard a few lectures in one place and another, a handful of talks in one corner and another. And for three hours, or a few days, they worshipped and thought they had done enough. That is the way of fools, not the way to perfection — not the way to attain spirituality.

Take up one idea, your Ishta, and let the whole soul be devoted to it. Practise this from day to day until you see the result, until the soul grows. And if it is sincere and good, that very idea will spread till it covers the whole universe. Let it spread by itself; it will all come from the inside out. Then you will say that your Ishta is everywhere and that He is in everything.

Of course, at the same time, we must always remember that we must recognize the Ishtas of others and respect them — the other ideas of God — or else worship will degenerate into fanaticism. There is an old story of a man who was a worshipper of Shiva. There are sects in our country who worship God as Shiva, and others who worship Him as Vishnu. This man was a great worshipper of Shiva, and to that he added a tremendous hatred for all worshippers of Vishnu and would not hear the name of Vishnu pronounced. There are a great number of worshippers of Vishnu in India, and he could not avoid hearing the name. So he bored two holes in his ears and tied two little bells onto them. Whenever a man mentioned the name of Vishnu, he moved his head and rang the bells, and that prevented his hearing the name.

But Shiva told him in a dream, “What a fool you are! I am Vishnu, and I am Shiva; they are not different—only in name. There are not two Gods”. But this man said, “I don't care. I will have nothing to do with this Vishnu business”.

He had a little statue of Shiva and made it very nice, built an altar for it. One day he bought some beautiful incense

and went home to light some of the incense for his God. While the fumes [smoke] of his incense were rising in the air, he found that the image was divided into two: one half remained Shiva, and the other half was Vishnu. Then the man jumped up and put his finger under the nostril of Vishnu so that not a particle of the smell could get there.

Then Shiva became disgusted, and the man became [was turned into] a demon. He is [known as] the father of all fanatics, the “bell-eared” demon. He is respected by the boys of India, and they worship him. It is a very peculiar kind of worship. They make a clay image and worship him with all sorts of horrible smelling flowers. There are some flowers in the forests of India which have a most pestilential smell. They worship him with these and then take big sticks and beat the image. He [the “bell-eared” demon] is the father of all fanatics who hate all other gods except their own.

This is the only danger in this Nishthâ Bhakti — becoming this fanatical demon. The world gets full of them. It is very easy to hate. The generality of mankind gets so weak that in order to love one, they must hate another; they must take the energy out of one point in order to put it into another. A man loves one woman and then loves another; and to love the other, he has to hate the first. So with women. This characteristic is in every part of our nature, and so in our religion. The ordinary, undeveloped weak brain of mankind cannot love one without hating another. This very [characteristic] becomes fanaticism in religion. Loving their own ideal is synonymous with hating every other idea.

This should be avoided and, at the same time, the other danger should be avoided. We must not fritter away all our energies, [otherwise] religion becomes a nothing with us — just hearing lectures. These are the two dangers. The danger with the liberals is that they are too expansive and have no intensity. You see that in these days religion has become very expansive, very broad. But the ideas are so broad that there is no depth in them. Religion has become to many merely a means of doing a little charity work, just to amuse them after a hard day's labour — they get five minutes religion to amuse them. This is the danger with the liberal thought. On the other hand, the sectarians have the depth, the intensity, but that intensity is so narrow. They are very deep, but with no breadth to it. Not only that, but it draws out hatred to everyone else.

Now, if we can avoid both these dangers and become as broad as the uttermost liberals and as deep as the bluest fanatic, then we will solve the problem. Our idea is how that can be done. It is by this theory of Nishtha — knowing that all these ideals that we see are [good] and true, that all these are so many parts of the same God

and, at the same time, thinking that we are not strong enough to worship Him in all these forms, and therefore must stick to one ideal and make that ideal our life. When you have succeeded in doing that, all the rest will come. Here ends the first part of Bhakti: the formal, the ceremonial and the preparatory.

You must remember that the first lesson in this Bhakti was on the disciple. Who is the disciple? What are the necessary qualifications for a disciple? You read in the scriptures: "Where the speaker is wonderful, so is the listener. When the teacher is wonderful, so is the taught. Then alone will this spirituality come".

Mankind generally thinks that everything is to be expected from the teacher. Very few people understand that they are not fit to be taught. In the disciple first this is necessary: that he must want — he must really want spirituality.

We want everything but spirituality. What is meant by want? Just as we want food. Luxuries are not wants, but necessities are wants. Religion is a necessary thing to very few; and to the vast mass of mankind it is a luxury. There are a hundred things in life without which they can live, until they come to the shop and see a new and artistic something and they want to buy it. Ninety-nine and nine-tenths per cent of mankind comes to religion in this way. It is one of the many luxuries they have in life. There is no harm in this. Let them have all they want; but they are entirely mistaken if they think they can fool God. He cannot be fooled. They will only fool themselves and sink down lower and lower until they become like brutes. Those therefore will become spiritual who want [spirituality] — who feel the necessity of religion, just as they feel the necessity of clothes, the necessity of work, the necessity of air to breathe.

A necessary thing is that without which we cannot live; and a luxury is that which is simply the gratification of a momentary desire.

The second qualification in the disciple is that he must be pure; and the other is that he must be persevering — he must work. Hearing is only one part; and the other part is doing.

The second necessity in Bhakti was the teacher. The teacher must be properly qualified. The main idea in that lecture was that the teacher must have the seed of spirituality. The teacher is not a talker, but the transmitter of spiritual force which he has received from his teacher, and he from others, and so on, in an unbroken current. He must be able to transmit that spiritual current.

When the teacher and the taught are both ready, then the

first step in bhakti-yoga comes. The first part of bhakti-yoga is what is called the preparatory [stage], wherein you work through forms.

The next lecture was on the Name — how in all scriptures and in all religions Name has been exalted and how that Name does us good. The Bhakti-Yogi must always think that the Name itself is God — nothing different from God. The Name and God are one.

Next, it was taught how, for the Bhakti-Yogi, humility and reverence are necessary. The Bhakti-Yogi must hold himself as a dead man. A dead man never takes an insult, never retaliates; he is dead to everyone. The Bhakti-Yogi must reverence all good people, all saintly people, for the glory of the Lord shines always through His children.

The next lesson was on the Pratikas. In that it was taught that Bhakti is only when you worship God. Worshipping anyone else is not Bhakti. But we can worship anything we like if we think it is God. If we do not think it is God, that worship is not Bhakti. If you think it is God, it is all right.

There was a certain Yogi who used to practise meditation in a lonely part of the forest, on the banks of a river. There was a poor cowherd, a very ignorant man, who used to tend his herd in that forest. Every day he used to see this same Yogi meditating by the hour, practising austerities, living alone and studying. Somehow the cowherd got curious as to what he did. So he came to the Yogi and said, "Sir, can you teach me the way to God?" This Yogi was a very learned, great man, and he replied, "How will you understand God — you common cowherd? Blockhead, go home and tend your cows and don't bother your head with such things".

The poor fellow went away, but somehow a real want had come to him. So he could not rest, and he came again to the Yogi and said, "Sir, won't you teach me something about God?"

Again he was repulsed: "Oh, you blockhead, what can you understand of God? Go home". But the cowherd could not sleep; he could not eat. He must know something about God.

So he came again; and the Yogi, in order to quiet the man, as he was so insisting, said, "I'll teach you about God".

The man asked, "Sir, what sort of being is God? What is His form? How does He look?"

The Yogi said, "God is just like the big bull in your herd. That is just God. God has become that big bull".

The man believed him and went back to his herd. Day and night he took that bull for God and began to worship it. He brought the greenest grass for that bull, rested close to it and gave it light, sat near it and followed it. Thus days and months and years passed. His whole soul was there [in the bull].

One day he heard a voice, as it were, coming out of the bull. "The bull speaks!" [the cowherd thought.]"

"My son, my son."

"Why, the bull is speaking! No, the bull cannot speak."

Again he went away, and sat near meditating in great misery of his heart. He did not know anything. Again he heard the voice coming out of the bull: "My child, my child".

He went near. "No, the bull cannot speak." Then he went back again and sat despondent.

Again the voice came, and that time he found it out. It was from his own heart. He found that God was in him. Then he learned the wonderful truth of the Teacher of all teachers: "I am with thee always". And the poor cowherd learned the whole mystery.

Then he goes back to the Yogi, and when he is at some distance the Yogi sees him. The Yogi has been the most learned man in the country, practising austerity for years — meditating, studying. And this cowherd, an ignorant blockhead, never studied a book nor learned his letters. But he comes — his whole body, as it were, transfigured, his face changed, the light of heaven shining round his face. The Yogi got up. "What is this change? Where did you get this?"

Sir, you gave me that."

"How? I told you that in joke."

"But I took it seriously. And I got everything I wanted out of that bull, for is He not everywhere?"

So that bull was the Pratika. And that man worshipped the bull as his Pratika — as God — and he got everything out of it. So that intense love — that desire — brings out everything. Everything is in ourselves, and the external world and the external worship are the forms, the suggestions that call it out. When they become strong, the Lord within awakens.

The external teacher is but the suggestion. When faith

in the external teacher is strong, then the Teacher of all teachers within speaks; eternal wisdom speaks in the heart of that man. He need not go any more to any books or any men or any higher beings; he need not run after supernatural or preternatural beings for instruction. The Lord Himself becomes his instructor. He gets all he wants from himself. [There is] no more need to go to any temple or church. His own body has become the greatest temple in the world, and in that temple lives the Lord of Creation. In every country great saints have been born, wonderful lives have been [lived] — coming out of the sheer power of love.

So all these external forms of Bhakti — this repetition of the Name, worship of Pratika, this Nishtha, this Ishta — are but the preparations until that eternal power wakes up. Then alone comes spirituality — when one goes beyond these laws and bounds. Then all laws fall down, all forms vanish, temples and churches crumble into dust and die away. It is good to be born in a church, but it is the worst possible fate to die in a church. It is good to be born in a sect, and the worst possible thing to die in a sect with sectarian ideas.

What sect can hold a child of the Lord? What laws bind him? What forms shall he follow? What man shall he worship? He worships the Lord Himself. He Himself teaches him. He lives in the temple of all temples, the Soul of man.

So this is the goal towards which we are going — the supreme Bhakti — and all that leads up to this is but preparation. But it is necessary. It prepares the infinite Soul to come out of this bondage of books and sects and forms; these [ultimately] fly away and leave but the Soul of man. These are superstitions of an infinite amount of time. This "my father's religion", "my country's religion", or "my book", or my this and that, are but the superstition of ages; they vanish. Just as when one is pricked with a thorn he takes another thorn to get the first out and then throws both of them away, so this superstition is in us.

In many countries — even into the soft brains of little babies — are put the most horrible and diabolical nonsense, as sect ideas. Parents think they are doing good to the child, but they are merely murdering it to satisfy Mrs. Grundy. What selfishness! There is nothing that men out of fear of themselves or out of fear of society will not do. Men will kill their own children, mothers will starve their own families, brothers will hate brothers to satisfy forms — because Mrs. So-and-so will be pleased and satisfied.

We see that the vast mass of mankind is born in some church or temple of [some religious] form and never comes out of it. Why? Have these forms helped the

growth of spirituality? If through these forms we step onto the highest platform of love, where forms vanish and all these sectarian ideas go away, how is it that the vast majority of men are always grovelling in some form or another? They are all atheists; they do not want any religion.

If a man comes to this country without any friend or without knowing anyone — supposing he is a blackguard in his own country — the first thing he will do in this country will be to join a church. Will that fellow ever have religion?

Do you mean to say that those women who go to churches to show their dresses will ever have religion or will come out of forms? They will go back and back. And when they die, they will become like animals.

Do you mean to say that those men who go to church to look at the beautiful faces of women will ever have religion? Those who have certain social religions — because society requires that they shall belong to Mr. So-and-so's church or because that was their father's church — will they ever have religion? They understand certain broad views, but they must keep a certain social position — and will keep it through eternity.

What you want, you get. The Lord fulfils all desires. If you want to keep a certain position in society you will do so; if you want the church, you will get that and not Him. If you want to play the fool all your life with all these churches and foolish organizations, you will have them and have to live in them all your lives. "Those that want the departed, go to the departed and get ghosts; but those that love Him, all come to Him." So those that love Him alone will come to Him, and those that love others will go to wherever they love.

That drill business in the temples and churches — kneeling down at a certain time, standing at ease, and all that drill nonsense, all mechanical, with the mind thinking of something else — all this has nothing to do with real religion.

There was a great prophet in India, Guru Nānak, born [some] four hundred years ago. Some of you have heard of the Sikhs — the fighting people. Guru Nanak was [the founder and also] a follower of the Sikh religion.

One day he went to the Mohammedans' mosque. These Mohammedans are feared in their own country, just as in a Christian country no one dare say anything against their religion. . . . So Guru Nanak went in and there was a big mosque, and the Mohammedans were standing in prayer. They stand in lines: they kneel down, stand up, and repeat certain words at the same times, and one fellow leads. So Guru Nanak went there. And when the mullah was saying "In the name of the most merciful and kind God, Teacher of all teachers", Guru Nanak began

to smile. He says, "Look at that hypocrite". The mullah got into a passion. "Why do you smile?"

"Because you are not praying, my friend. That is why I am smiling."

"Not praying?"

"Certainly not. There is no prayer in you."

The mullah was very angry, and he went and laid a complaint before a magistrate and said, "This heathen rascal dares to come to our mosque and smiles at us when we are praying. The only punishment is instant death. Kill him".

Guru Nanak was brought before the magistrate and asked why he smiled.

"Because he was not praying."

"What was he doing?" the magistrate asked.

"I will tell you what he was doing if you will bring him before me."

The magistrate ordered the mullah to be brought. And when he came, the magistrate said, "Here is the mullah. [Now] explain why you laughed when he was praying".

Guru Nanak said, "Give the mullah a piece of the Koran [to swear on]. [In the mosque] when he was saying 'Allah, Allah', he was thinking of some chicken he had left at home".

The poor mullah was confounded. He was a little more sincere than the others, and he confessed he was thinking of the chicken, and so they let the Sikh go. "And", said the magistrate [to the mullah], "don't go to the mosque again. It is better not to go at all than to commit blasphemy there and hypocrisy. Do not go when you do not feel like praying. Do not be like a hypocrite, and do not think of the chicken and say the name of the Most Merciful and Blissful God".

A certain Mohammedan was praying in a garden. They are very regular in their prayers. When the time comes, wherever they are, they just begin, fall down on the ground and get up and fall down, and so on. One of them was in a garden when the call for prayer came, so he knelt there prostrate on the ground to pray. A girl was waiting in the garden for her lover, and she saw him on the other side. And in her hurry to reach him, she did not see the man prostrate and walked over him. He was a fanatical Mohammedan — just what you call here a Presbyterian, the same breed. Both believe in barbecuing eternally.

So you can just imagine the anger of this Mohammedan when his body was walked over — he wanted to kill the girl. The girl was a smart one, and she said, “Stop that nonsense. You are a fool and a hypocrite”.

“What! I am a hypocrite?”

“Yes, I am going to meet my earthly lover, and I did not see you there. But you are going to meet your heavenly lover and should not know that a girl was passing over your body.”

## Chapter 4

# The Mundaka Upanishad

### THE MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

(New Discoveries, Vol. 3, pp. 557-68)

[A Jnâna-Yoga class delivered in New York, January 29, 1896, and recorded by Mr. Josiah J. Goodwin]

In the last Jnana-Yoga (Vide [6]Complete Works, II.) lecture, we read one of the Upanishads; we will read another [the Mundaka Upanishad]. Brahmâ was the first of the Devas, the Lord of this cycle and its protector. He gave this knowledge of Brahman, which is the essence of all knowledge, to his son Atharvan. The latter handed it over to his son Angiras, he to his son, Bharadvâja, and so on.

There was a man called Shaunaka, a very rich man, who went to this Angiras as a learner. He approached the teacher and asked him a question. "Tell me, sir, what is that which, being known, everything else is known?"

One [knowledge] is supreme and the other is inferior. The Rig-Veda is the name of one of the different parts of the Vedas. Shikshâ is the name of another part. All different sciences are inferior. What is the supreme science? That is the only science, the supreme science, by which we reach the Unchangeable One. But that cannot be seen, cannot be sensed, cannot be specified. Without colour, without eyes, without ears, without nose, without feet — the Eternal, the Omnipresent, the "Omnipenetrating", the Absolute — He from whom everything comes. The sages see Him, and that is the supreme knowledge.

Just as the Urnanâbhi, a species of spider, creates a thread out of his own body and takes it back, just as the plants grow by their own nature, and all these things are yet separate and apparently different (the heart is, as it were, different from the other parts of a man's body; the plants are different from the earth; the thread is different from the spider — yet they [the earth, the spider and so on] were the causes, and in them these things act), so from this Unchangeable One has come this universe.

First, out of Brahman comes the knowledge of desire

and from that comes the manifestation of Creator, or the Golden Womb. From that comes intelligence, from that, matter and all these different worlds.

This is the truth — that for those who want to come to salvation or attain to other enjoyments, various ways are told in the Vedas.

Then it [the Mundaka Upanishad] goes on to say how they will reach these blessings. When they die they will go through the sun's rays to places which are very beautiful, where after death they will go to heaven and live for some time, but from there they will again fall.

Here are two words — Ishtam and Purtam. Sacrificial and other rituals are called Ishtam, and Purtam is making roads, building hospitals and so on. "Fools are they who think that rituals and doing good work are high and that there is nothing higher." They get what they desire and go to heaven, but every enjoyment and every sorrow must have an end. And so that ends, and they fall back and back and become men again, or still lower. Those that give up the world and learn to control the senses live in a forest. Through the rays of the sun they reach that immortality where lives He who is the Absolute.

Thus the sage, examining all desires of good or evil works, throws away all duties and wants to know that, getting which there is no more return, no more change. And to know that, he goes to the Guru, the teacher, with fuel in his hand.

There is a myth in our country about going to the Guru with fuel in one's hands as a sign of helping him in making sacrifices, as he will not take presents.

Who is a teacher? He who knows the secrets of the scriptures, he whose soul has gone unto Brahman, who does not care for works or going to heaven or all these things.

Unto such a disciple, who has controlled his mind, has become peaceful and calm, has given up all this tremendous wave that rises in the mind by desire ("I will do this and that" and all those desires which are at best only dis-

turbing, such as name and fame, which impel mankind to do all sorts of things) — to that disciple in whom all these vexatious desires have been calmed down, the teacher teaches the way which is the science of Brahman, by which he can know that One who never changes and who is the Truth.

Then comes what he [Angiras] taught:

This is the truth, O gentle one, as from a mass of burning flame myriads of sparks come out of the same nature as the fire, even so from this Unchangeable One all these forms, all these ideas, all this creation, come out; and unto Him it [the creation] goes back.

But the Eternal One is everlasting, formless, without beginning, inside and outside of every being — beyond all life, beyond all mind, the Pure One, beyond even the unchangeable, beyond everything. From Him is born the vital principle. From Him comes the mind. From Him come all organs of the senses. From Him are air, light, water and this earth which holds all beings. These heavens are, as it were, His head; His eyes, the sun and moon. The cardinal points are, as it were, His ears. The eternal knowledge of the Vedas is, as it were, His manifested speech. His life is the air. His heart is this universe; His feet, this world. He is the Eternal Self of every being.

From Him have come the different Vedas. From Him have come the gods of the Sādhyas. The latter are superior men, much higher than ordinary men and very much like the gods.

From Him are all men. From Him are all animals. From Him is all life; from Him, all the forces in the mind; from Him all truth, all chastity. The seven organs are all from Him. The seven objects of perception are from him; the seven actions of perception are from Him. From Him are the seven worlds in which the life currents flow. From Him are all these seas and oceans. From Him are all rivers that roll into the sea; from Him are all plants and all liquids.

He is the inside. He is the inner Soul of every being. This great Purusha, this great One — He is this universe, He is the work, He is the sacrifice. He is Brahman, and He is the trinity. He who knows Him frees his own soul from the bond of ignorance and becomes free.

He is the bright one. He is inside every human soul. From Him are all name and form; all the animals and men are from Him. He is the one Supreme. He who knows Him becomes free.

How to know Him? Take this bow, which is the Upanishad, the knowledge of the Vedanta; place upon that bow the sharpened rod [arrow] of worship; stretch that bow by what? — by making the mind of the same form as He, by knowing that you are He. Thus strike at it; strike at that Brahman with this rod. This One is the bow. This human mind is the rod [arrow]. Brahman is the object which we want to hit. This object is to be hit by concentrating the mind. And just when the rod

has hit [its mark], the rod penetrates into the object and becomes one with it — a unity. Even so, this soul, the rod, is to be thrown upon the object so that it will become one with It — in Whom are the heavens, this earth and the skies, in Whom are the mind and all that lives.

In the Upanishads there are certain passages which are called the great words,[7]\* which are always quoted and referred to.

In Him, that One — in Him alone, the Atman — exist all other worlds. What is the use of all other talk? Know Him alone. This is the bridge over this life to reach universality.

He [Angiras] goes on to show a practical way. So far it is very figurative.

Just as all the spokes of a wheel meet at the axle, even so in this body is that place from which all the arteries flow and at which they all meet. There, meditate upon the Om that is in the heart. May thou succeed. May the gentle one with success attain the goal. May you go beyond all darkness to Him who is omniscient, the All-Knowing. His glory is in heaven, on earth and everywhere.

He who has become the mind, the Prânâ, He who is the leader in the body, He who is established in the food, the energy of life. By supreme knowledge the sages see Him whose nature is bliss, who shines as immortality. (Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.8.) (This is another of the sentences very much quoted.)

There are two words: one is Jnâna, the other Vijnâna. Jnana may be translated as science — this means intellectual [knowledge] only — and Vijnana as realization. God cannot be perceived by intellectual knowledge. He who has realized [the Self] by that supreme knowledge — what will become of that man?

All the knots of the heart will be cut asunder. All darkness will vanish forever when you have seen the Truth.

How can you doubt? How foolish and childish you will think these fights and quarrels of different sciences and different philosophies and all this. You will smile at them. All doubts will vanish, and all work will go away. All work will vanish.

Beyond, the golden sheath is there — without any impurity, without parts [indivisible] — He, the Brahman. His is the brightness, the Light of all light — the knowers of the Atman realize Him as such. And when you have done that, the sun cannot illumine, nor the moon, nor the stars. A flash of lightning cannot illumine the place; it is mental — away, deep in the mind. He shining, everything else shines; when He shines within, the whole man



shines. This universe shines through His light.

Take such passages [for memorizing] later on, when studying the Upanishads.

The difference between the Hindu mind and the European mind is that whereas in the West truths are arrived at by examining the particular, the Hindu takes the opposite course. There is no [such] metaphysical sublimity as in the Upanishads.

It [the Mundaka Upanishad] leads you on, beyond the senses — infinitely more sublime than the suns and stars. First Angiras tried to describe God by sense sublimities — that His feet are the earth, His head the heavens. But that did not express what he wanted to say. It was in a sense sublime. He first gave that idea to the student and then slowly took him beyond, until he gave him the highest idea — the negative — too high to describe.

He is immortal, He is before us, He is behind us, He is on the right side, He is on the left, He is above, He is beneath.

Upon the same tree there are two birds with most beautiful wings, and the two birds always go together — always live together. Of these, one is eating the fruits of the tree; the other, without eating, is looking on. So in this body are the two birds always going together. Both have the same form and beautiful wings. One is the human soul, eating the fruits; the other is God Himself, of the same nature. He is also in this body, the Soul of our soul. He eats neither good nor evil fruits, but stands and looks on.

But the lower bird knows that he is weak and small and humble, and tells all sorts of lies. He says he is a woman, or he is a man or a boy. He says he will do good or do bad; he will go to heaven and will do a hundred sorts of things. In delirium he talks and works, and the central idea of his delirium is that he is weak.

Thus he gets all the misery because he thinks he is nobody. He is a created little being. He is a slave to somebody; he is governed by some god or gods, and so is unhappy.

But when he becomes joined with God, when he becomes a Yogi, he sees that the other bird, the Lord, is his own glory. “Why, it was my own glory whom I called God, and this little “I”, this misery, was all hallucination; it never existed. I was never a woman, never a man, never any one of these things.” Then he gives up all his sorrow.

When this Golden One, who is to be seen, is seen — the Creator, the Lord, the Purusha, the God of this universe — then the sage has washed off all stains of good and bad deeds. (Good deeds are as much stains as bad deeds.) Then he attains to total sameness with the Pure One. The sage knows that He who is the Soul of all souls —

this Atman — shines through all.

He is the man, the woman, the cow, the dog — in all animals, in the sin and in the sinner. He is the Sannyâsin, He is in the ruler, He is everywhere.

Knowing this the sage speaks not. (He gives up criticizing anyone, scolding anyone, thinking evil of anyone.) His desires have gone into the Atman. This is the sign of the greatest knowers of Brahman — that they see nothing else but Him.

He is playing through all these things. Various forms — from the highest gods to the lowest worms — are all He. The ideas want to be illustrated.

First of all the writer showed us the idea that if we want to get to heaven and all these places, we will get there. That is to say, in the language of the Vedas, whatever one desires that he sees.

As I have told you in previous lectures, the Atman neither comes nor goes. It has neither birth nor death. You are all omnipresent, you are the Atman. You are at this moment in heaven and in the darkest places too. You are everywhere. Where are you not? Therefore how can you go anywhere? These comings and goings are all fictions — the Atman can never come nor go.

These visions change. When the mind is in a particular condition it sees a certain vision, dreams a certain dream. So in this condition, we are all seeing this world and man and animals and all these things. But in this very place, this condition will change. And the very thing we are seeing as earth, we shall see as heaven, or we may see it as the opposite place or as any place we like.

All this depends on our desires. But this dream cannot be permanent, just as we know that any dream in the night must break. Not one of these dreams will be permanent. We dream that which we think we will do. So these people who are always thinking in this life of going to heaven and meeting their friends, will have that as soon as their dream of this life is ended. And they will be compelled by their desires of this life to see these other dreams. And those who are superstitious and are frightened into all such ideas as hell will dream that they are in the hot place. Those whose ideas in this life are brutal — when they die, will become pigs and hogs and all these things. With each one, what he desires he finds.

This book starts by telling us that those who know nothing better than a little road-making or hospital-building and such good works will have a good dream when they die. They will dream that they are in a place where they will have god-bodies and can eat anything they like, jump about, go through walls and so on, and sometimes come down and startle someone.

In our mythology there are the Devas, who live in heaven, and the Devakas, who are very much the same but a little more wicked. The Devas are like your angels, only some of them from time to time become wicked and find that the daughters of men are good. Our deities are celebrated for this sort of thing. What can you expect of them? They are here — simply hospital-makers — and have no more knowledge than other men. They do some good work with the result that they become Devas. They do their good work for fame or name or some reward and get this reward, dreaming that they are in heaven and doing all these things.

Then there are demons who have done evil in this life. But our books say that these dreams will not last very long, and then they will either come back and take the old dream again as human beings, or still worse. Therefore, according to these books, it behooves every sensible, right-thinking man, once and for all, to brush aside all such foolish ideas as heavens and hells.

Two things exist in the world — dream and reality. What we call life is a succession of dreams — dream within dream. One dream is called heaven, another earth, another hell, and so on. One dream is called the human body, another the animal body, and so on — all are dreams. The reality is what is called Brahman, that Being who is Existence, Knowledge, Bliss.

He is the Guru — the sage who wants to get rid of all these dreams, to stand aside and know his own nature — who wants to go beyond this self-hypnotism.

When we desire, we are hypnotizing ourselves. Just as I desire “I will go to heaven”, that hypnotizes me, and I begin to find I am in heaven directly I die, and will see angels and all sorts of things. I have seen about fifty people who have come from death’s door, and they all have told me stories about being in heaven. These are the mythologies of our country, and it shows that it is all hypnotism.

Where Western people make a great mistake is here. So far as you have these ideas of heaven and hell, we agree with you. But you say this earth is real. That cannot be. If this is real, heavens and hells are real, because the proof of each of these is the same. If one is a hypnotic condition, the whole of it must be so.

Vedantists say that not only are heavens hypnotic, but so is this life and everything here. Some people want to go from one hypnotic condition to another, and these are what we call the fools of the world — the Samsârins, the travellers who go from dream to dream, from one hypnotic trance to another. For fifty years they are under the idea that they are men and women.

What nonsense is [this — ] a man or a woman in the soul? It is terrible hypnotism. How can the soul have any sex? It is self-hypnotism. You have hypnotized yourself and think you are men and women. If we are fools, we will again hypnotize ourselves and want to go to heaven, and hear all this trash of gods and goddesses and all sorts of humbug, and will kneel down and pray, and have god-bodies by the millions to worship on thrones. At the end, we have to hypnotize ourselves again.

We are all in the same boat here, and all who are in the same boat see each other. Stand aside — free, beyond dream and hypnotism. Some fools have hypnotized themselves that they have bodies and wives and all these things. I also am a fool and have hypnotized myself that I have senses and all these things. So we are all in the same boat and see each other. Millions of people may be here whom we do not see, touch or feel. Just as in hypnotism there may be three books before you, but you are hypnotized and are told that one of them does not exist. And you may live for a year in that condition and never see it. Suppose thirty men are under the same hypnotic influence and are told that this book does not exist. Those who are in this condition will all fail to see the book. Men, women, animals are all hypnotized, and all see this dream because they are all in the same boat.

The Vedanta philosophy says that this whole universe — mental, physical, moral — is hypnotic. Who is the cause of this hypnotism? You yourself are to blame. This weeping and wailing and knocking your heads into corners [against brick walls, as it were] will not do you the least good.

However, knocking everything [that is hypnotic] on the head [leads to] what is called non-attachment; and clinging to more and more hypnotism is attachment. That is why in all religions you will find they wanted to give up the world, although many of them do not understand it. These fellows used to starve themselves in a forest and see the devil coming to them.

You have heard those wonderful stories of India — of how those magicians can make a man see a rope rise from the ground to the skies. I have not seen any of them. One of the Mogul emperors, Jahangir, mentions it. He says, “Allah, what do these devils do? They take a rope or a chain, and the chain is thrown up and up until it becomes firm — as if it were stuck to something. Then they let a cat go up the chain — then a dog, then a wolf, then a tiger, then a lion. All walk up the chain and vanish. Sometimes they will send men up the chain. Two men will go up and begin to fight, and then both of them vanish. And after a while you hear a noise of fighting — and [then] a head, a hand, and a foot fall. And, mind you, there are two or three thousand people present. The fellow showing it has only a loincloth on”. They say this is hypnotism — throwing a net over the audience.

That is what they call their science. It exists within

a certain limit. But if you go beyond this limit or come within it, you do not see it. The man who is playing does not see anything. So if you stand near him, you do not see anything. Such is the hypnotism here.

So we have first to get beyond the circle (Jnana) or stand within the circle of the hypnotism (Bhakti) with God, the great Player who is playing all these things — the whole universe He projects.

Chapter after chapter comes and goes. This is called Mâyâ, the power which creates all these tremendous things. He who is the ruler of this Maya, is God; and he who is ruled by Maya [is the soul]. Just as in the case of that chain — so the man who was standing in the centre had the power and was not deluded, but all that audience was governed by Maya. So that portion of Atman which rules Maya is called God, and the little bits of the Atman deluded by it are called souls — you and I.

The Bhakta says, Crawl nearer and nearer to the hypnotist, and when you get to the centre you do not see anything. You get clear of it.

The Jnâni does not care to undergo all this trouble — it is a dangerous way. Unless a man becomes a lunatic, when he finds himself covered with mud, will he take more mud to wash himself? So why increase the hypnotism? Get out of the circle; cut it off and be free. When you are free you will be able to play, even without being caught yourself. Now you are caught, then you will catch — that will be all the difference.

Therefore in the first part of this book, we are told that we must give up all this idea of heaven and of birth and death and so on. It is all nonsense; no man was ever born or ever died. They are all in hypnotism. So is eternal life and all this nonsense. Heaven is hypnotism and so is earth.

It is not as materialists say: that heaven is a superstition and God is a superstition, but he himself is not a superstition. If one is superstition — if one link is nonexistent — the whole chain is nonexistent. The existence of the whole chain depends on the existence of one link — and that of one link, on the whole.

If there is no heaven, there is no earth; and if there is no God, there is no man. You are under this hypnotism; and as long as you are under it, you will have to see God and nature and the soul. And when you are beyond this hypnotism, God will vanish[8]\* — so will nature, and so will the soul.

Therefore, first of all, we will have to give up all these ideas of God and heaven and enjoying the fruits of these; and all that going to heaven will be one more dream.

Next, after showing these things, the book goes on to

tell us how to get out of this hypnotism. And the one idea that is brought out through all these ideas is to be one with that Universal Being. The thing manifested — the Universal Being — is not anything of these; these are all nonsense — Maya. (The Swami has been discussing the two aspects of Maya. On the previous page, ([9] a few paragraphs earlier) he described Maya as the power of Brahman; here he is referring to Maya as the world-appearance.) But that upon which all these things are being played — the background upon which all this picture is written — [is we ourselves]; we are one with Him [that Universal Being]. You know you are one with Him, only you must realize it.

He gave us two words: one is intellectual knowledge, and the other is realization. That is to say, intellectual assent is within this realization, and realization is beyond it. Therefore intellectual assent is not sufficient.

Every man can say this theory is right, but that is not realization; he must realize it. We can all say we understand that this is hypnotism, but that is not realization. That will be when the hypnotism will break — even for a moment. It will come in a flash; it must come. If you struggle it will come.

When it does vanish, all idea of body will go along with it — that you have sex or body — just as a lamp blows out. Then what will become of you? If some part of your Karma remains, this world will come back again — but not with the same force. You have known that it is what it is; you will know no more bondage. So long as you have eyes you will have to see; or ears [you will have to] hear — but not with the same force.

I had read all sorts of things about the mirage, but had never seen it before until about four years ago when I was travelling in western India. Of course, as a Sannyasin I was travelling on foot, making my slow marches. So it took me about a month to travel through that country. Every day I saw such beautiful lakes and the shadows of trees on the shores of those lakes, and the whole thing was quivering in the breeze — and birds flying, and animals. Every day I saw this and thought what a beautiful country it was. But when I reached some village, I found it was all sand. I said, How is it?

One day I was very thirsty and thought I would drink a little water at the lake. But when I approached, it disappeared, and with a flash [the thought] came into my mind: “This is the mirage about which I read all my life”. But the strange thing is that I was travelling for a month and could never recognize that it was a mirage — and in one moment it vanished. I was very glad to know this was the mirage about which I had read all my life.

Next morning I saw the lake again, and along with it came the idea: “That is the mirage”. All that month I had been seeing the mirage and could not distinguish between reality and mirage. But in that one moment I caught the idea.

From that time, when I see a mirage, I will say, “That is a mirage”, and never feel it. Such will it be with this world when the whole thing will vanish once; and after that, if you have to live out your past work, you will not be deceived.

Take a carriage with two wheels. Suppose I cut one of the wheels from the axle. The other wheel will run for some time by its past momentum and will then fall. The body is one wheel, and the soul another; and they are joined by the axle of delusion. Knowledge is the axe which will cut the axle, and the soul will stop immediately — will give up all these vain dreams.

But upon the body is that past momentum, and it will run a little, doing this and that, and then it will fall down. But only good momentum will be left, and that body can only do good. This is to warn you not to mistake a rascal for a free man. It will be impossible for that [free] man to do evil. So you must not be cheated.

When you become free the whole hypnotism has vanished and you know the distinction between the reality and the mirage. [The mirage] will no more be a bondage. The most terrible things will not be able to daunt you. A mountain [could] fall upon you, but you will not care. You will know it for a mirage.

## Chapter 5

# History of the Aryan Race

### HISTORY OF THE ARYAN RACE[6]\*

[A Jnâna-Yoga class delivered in London, England, on Thursday morning, May 7, 1896, and recorded by Mr. Josiah J. Goodwin]

I have told you how I would divide the subject into four Yogas, but, as the bearing of all these various Yogas is the same — the goal they want to arrive at is the same — I had better begin with the philosophical portion: the Jnana-Yoga. Jnâna means knowledge, and, before going into the principles of the Vedanta philosophy, I think it is necessary to sketch in a few words the origin and the beginning and the development — the historical portion of that system. Most of you are now familiar with the words Arya and Aryan, and many things have been written on these words.

About a century ago there was an English judge in Bengal, Sir William Jones. In India, you know, there are Mohammedans and Hindus. The Hindus were the original people, and the Mohammedans came and conquered them and ruled over them for seven hundred years. There have been many other conquests in India; and whenever there is a new conquest, the criminal laws of the country are changed. The criminal law is always the law of the conquering nation, but the civil law remains the same. So when the English conquered India, they changed the criminal law; but the civil law remained. The judges, however, were Englishmen and did not know the language of the country in which the civil laws were written, and so they had to take the help of interpreters, lawyers of India, and so on. And when any question about Indian law arose, these scholars would be referred to.

One of these judges, Sir William Jones, was a very ripe scholar, and he wanted to go to the fountain-head himself, to take up the language himself and study it, instead of relying upon these interpreters who, for instance, might be bribed to give any verdict. So he began to study the law of the Gentoos, as the Hindus were called. Gentoos is probably a form of the word gentile, used by the Portuguese and Spaniards — or “heathen”, as you call it now. When the judge began to translate some of the books into

English, he found that it was very hard to translate them correctly into English at first hand. What was his surprise when he found that if he translated them first into Latin, and next into English, it was much easier. Then he found in translating that a large number of Sanskrit words were almost the same as in Latin. It was he who introduced the study of Sanskrit to the Europeans. Then as the Germans were rising in scholarship — as well as the French — they took up the language and began to study it.

With their tremendous power of analysis, the Germans found that there was a similarity between Sanskrit and all the European languages. Among the ancient languages, Greek was the nearest to it in resemblance. Later, it was found that there was a language called Lithuanian, spoken somewhere on the shores of the Baltic — an independent kingdom at that time and unconnected with Russia. The language of the Lithuanians is strikingly similar to Sanskrit. Some of the Lithuanian sentences are less changed from Sanskrit forms than the northern Indian languages. Thus it was found that there is an intimate connection between all the various languages spoken in Europe and the two Asiatic languages — Persian and Sanskrit. Many theories are built upon it as to how this connection came. Theories were built up every day, and every day smashed. There is no knowing where it is going to stop.

Then came the theory that there was one race in ancient times who called themselves Aryans. They found in Sanskrit literature that there was a people who spoke Sanskrit and called themselves Aryans, and this is mentioned also in Persian literature. Thus they founded the theory that there was in ancient times a nation [of people] who called themselves Aryans and who spoke Sanskrit and lived in Central Asia. This nation, they said, broke into several branches and migrated to Europe and Persia; and wherever they went, they took their own languages. German, Greek and French are but remnants of an old tongue, and Sanskrit is the most highly developed of these languages.

These are theories and have not been proved yet; they are mere conjectures and guesses. Many difficulties come in the way — for instance, how the Indians are dark and the Europeans are fair. Even within the same nations speaking these languages — in England itself — there are many with yellow hair and many with black. Thus there are many questions which have not yet been settled.

But this is certain, that all the nations of Europe except the Basques, the Hungarians, the Tartars and the [Finns?] (Vide [7]Complete Works, VIII.) — excepting these, all the Europeans, all the northern Indians and the Persians speak branches of the same language. Vast masses of literature are existing in all these Aryan tongues: in Greek, in Latin, in modern European languages — German, English, French — in ancient Persian, in modern Persian and in Sanskrit.

But in the first place, Sanskrit literature alone is a very big mass. Although, perhaps, three-fourths of it has been destroyed and lost through successive invasions, yet, I think, the sum total of the amount of literature in Sanskrit would outbalance any three or four European languages taken together, in number of books. No one knows how many books are there yet and where they are, because it is the most ancient of all these Aryan languages. And that branch of the Aryan race which spoke the Sanskrit language was the first to become civilized and the first to begin to write books and literature. So they went on for thousands of years. How many thousands of years they wrote no one knows. There are various guesses — from 3000 B.C. to 8000 B.C. — but all of these dates are more or less uncertain.

Each man in writing about these ancient books and dates is first of all prejudiced by his earlier education, then by his religion, then by his nationality. If a Mohammedan writes about the Hindus, anything that does not glorify his own religion he very scrupulously pushes to one side. So with the Christians — you can see that with your own writers. In the last ten years your literature has become more respectable. So long as they [the Christians] had full play, they wrote in English and were safe from Hindu criticism. But, within the last twenty years, the Hindus have begun writing in English, so they are more careful. And you will find that the tone has quite changed within the last ten or twenty years.

Another curiosity about the Sanskrit literature is that it, like any other language, has undergone many changes. Taking all the literature in these various Aryan languages — the Greek or the Latin or all these others — we find that all the European branches were of very recent date. The Greek came much later — a mere child in comparison with the Egyptian or the Babylonian.

The Egyptians and the Babylonians, of course, are not Aryans. They are separate races, and their civilizations antedate all the European civilization. But with the exception of the ancient Egyptians, they were almost coeval [with the Aryans]; in some accounts, they were even earlier. Yet in Egyptian literature, there are certain things to be accounted for — the introduction of the Indian lotus on old temples, the lotus Gangetic. It is well known that this only grows in India. Then there are the references to the land of Punt. Although very

great attempts have been made to fix that land of Punt on the Arabs, it is very uncertain. And then there are the references to the monkeys and sandalwood of southern India — only to be found there.

The Jews were of a much later date than the Greek Aryans. Only one branch of the Semitic race of Babylon and this nondescript, unknowable race — the Egyptians — were much older than the Aryans, except the Hindus.

So this Sanskrit has undergone very much change as a matter of course, having been spoken and written through thousands of years. It necessarily follows that in other Aryan languages, as in Greek and Roman, the literature must be of much later date than Sanskrit. Not only so, but there is this peculiarity, that of all regular books that we have in the world, the oldest are in Sanskrit — and that is the mass of literature called the Vedas. There are very ancient pieces in the Babylonian or Egyptian literature, but they cannot be called literature or books, but just a few notes, a short letter, a few words, and so on. But as finished, cultured literature, the Vedas are the oldest.

These Vedas were written in the peculiar archaic Sanskrit, and for a long time — even today — it is thought by many European antiquarians that these Vedas were not written, but were handed down by father to son, learned by rote, and thus preserved. Within the last few years, opinion is veering round, and they are beginning to think that they must have been written in most ancient times.

Of course they have to make theories in this way. Theory after theory will have to be built up and destroyed until we reach truth. This is quite natural. But when the subject is Indian or Egyptian, the Christian philosophers rush in to make theories; while if the subject is nearer home, they think twice first. That is why they fail so much and have to keep on making fresh theories every five years. But this much is true, that this mass of literature, whether written or not, was conveyed and, not only that, but is at the present day conveyed by word of mouth. This is thought to be holy.

You find in every nation when a new idea, a new form, a new discovery or invention comes in, the old things are not brushed aside all at once, but are relegated to the religion of holiness. The ancient Hindus used to write on palm leaves and birch bark; and when paper was invented they did not throw aside all the palm leaves, but used to consider writing on palm leaves and birch bark holy. So with the Jews — they used to write only on parchment, and parchment is now used for writing in their temples. So you find when new customs come in, the old ones become holy. So this form of transmitting the literature of the Vedas from teacher to disciple by word of mouth, al-

though antiquated and almost useless now, has become holy. The student may refresh his memory by books, but has to learn by word of mouth of a teacher. A great many modifications will always gather round such a fact to make its holiness more rational, but this is the law.

These Vedas are a vast mass of literature by themselves. That is to say, in those ancient times, in every country, religion was the first ideal to spring out of the heart of man, and all the secular knowledge that men got was made over to religion.

Secondly, people who deal with religion and in later times came to be called priests — being the first thinkers of every nation — not only thought about religious subjects, but secular matters also; and, as such, all knowledge was confined to them. These masses of knowledge — both secular and religious — will always be gathered together and made into a vast mass of literature.

In much later times, this is the case. For instance, in studying the Bible of the Jews, we find the same thing. The Talmud contained a vast mass of information on all subjects and so did the Pentateuch. In the same way, the Vedas give information on various subjects. They have come together and form one book. And in later times, when other subjects were separated from religion — when astronomy and astrology were taken out of religion — these subjects, being connected with the Vedas and being ancient, were considered very holy.

Almost the largest portion of the Vedas has been lost. The priests who carried it down to posterity were divided into so many families; and, accordingly, the Vedas were divided into so many parts. Each part was allotted to a family. The rituals, the ceremonies, the customs, the worship of that family were to be obtained from that [respective] portion of the Vedas. They preserved it and performed all the ceremonies according to that. In course of time, [some of] these families became extinct; and with them, their portion of the Vedas was lost, if these old accounts be true.

Some of you know that the Vedas are divided into four parts. One is called the Rig-Veda, another Yajur-Veda, another Sâma-Veda, and the fourth Atharva-Veda. Each one of these, again, was divided into many branches. For instance, the Sama-Veda had one thousand branches, of which only about five or six remain; the rest are all lost. So with the others. The Rig-Veda had 108, of which only one remains; and the rest are all lost.

Then [there were] these various invasions. India has been the one country to which every nation that has become strong wants to go and conquer — it being reputed to be very rich. The wealth of the people had become a fable, even in the most ancient history. [Many foreign invaders] rushed to become wealthy in India and conquered the country. Every one of these invasions destroyed one or more of these families, burned many libraries and

houses. And when that was so, much literature was lost. It is only within the last few years that ideas have begun to spring up about the retention of these various religions and books. Before that, mankind had to suffer all this pillaging and breaking down. Most stupendous creations of art were lost forever. Wonderful buildings — where, from a few bits of remnants now in India, it can be imagined how wonderful they were — are completely gone. . . .

[The fanatical belief of many of these invaders into India is] that those who do not belong to their sect have no right to live. They will go to a place where the fire will never be quenched when they die; in this life they are only fit to be made into slaves or murdered; and that they have only the right to live as slaves to “the true believers”, but never as free men. So in this way, when these waves burst upon India, everything was submerged. Books and literature and civilization went down.

But there is a vitality in that race which is unique in the history of humanity, and perhaps that vitality comes from non-resistance. Non-resistance is the greatest strength. In meekness and mildness lies the greatest strength. In suffering is greater strength than in doing. In resisting one’s own passions is far higher strength than in hurting others. And that has been the watchword of the race through all its difficulties, its misfortunes and its prosperity. It is the only nation that never went beyond its frontiers to cut the throats of its neighbours. It is a glorious thing. It makes me rather patriotic to think I am born a Hindu, a descendant of the only race that never went out to hurt anyone, and whose only action upon humanity has been giving and enlightening and purifying and teaching, but never robbing.

Three-quarters of the wealth of the world has come out of India, and does even now. The commerce of India has been the turning point, the pivot, of the history of the world. Whatever nation got it became powerful and civilized. The Greeks got it and became the mighty Greeks; the Romans got it and became the mighty Romans. Even in the days of the Phoenicians it was so. After the fall of Rome, the Genoese and the Venetians got it. And then the Arabs rose and created a wall between Venice and India; and in the struggle to find a new way there, America was discovered. That is how America was discovered; and the original people of America were called Indians, or “Injuns”, for that reason. Even the Dutch got it — and the barbarians — and the English and they became the most powerful nation on earth. And the next nation that gets it will immediately be the most powerful.

Think of all this mass of energy that our nation displays — where does it get it? In India, they are the producers and you are the enjoyers, no doubt. They produced this — the patient, toiling millions of Hindus under the whip and slavery of everyone. Even the missionaries,

who stand up to curse the millions of India, have been fattened upon the work of these millions, and they do not know how it has been done. Upon their blood the history of the world has been turning since we know history, and will have to turn for thousands of years more. What is the benefit? It gives that nation strength. They are, as it were, an example. They must suffer and stand up through all, fighting for the truths of religion — as a signpost, a beacon — to tell unto mankind that it is much higher not to resist, much higher to suffer, that if life be the goal, as even their conquerors will admit, we are the only race that can be called immortal, that can never be killed. (Vide [8]Complete Works, IV)

Where are the Greeks today — they whose armies marched over the whole world? Gone, thousands of years — nobody knows where. Vanished, as soon as the barbarians of the north came and attacked them. Where are the mighty Romans, whose cohorts came and trampled the face of the earth? Where are they today? Gone — vanished like the morning dew, and left behind in the march.

But here are the Hindus — three hundred million strong. And think of the fertility of the race! They can increase more than the whole world can kill them. This is the vitality of the race. Although not belonging very much to our subject, I wanted to bring these things before you.

Generally the uneducated minds, the vulgar minds of every nation, like the vulgar mobs in every big city, cannot grasp, cannot see, cannot understand, any fine movement. The causes, the real movements in this world of ours, are very fine; it is only the effects that are gross and muscular. The mind is the real cause of this body, the fine movements behind. The body is the gross, the external. But everyone sees the body; very few see the mind. So with everything; the masses, the brutal, ignorant masses of every race, see a triumphant procession, stampeding horses, arms and cannonades, and these they understand. But those fine, gentle workings that are going on behind — it is only the philosopher, the highly cultivated man or woman, that can understand.

To return to our Vedanta, I have said that the Sanskrit in which the Vedas were written is not the same Sanskrit in which books were written about a thousand years later than the Vedas — the books that you read in your translations of poets and other classical writers of India. The Sanskrit of the Vedas was very simple, archaic in its composition, and possibly it was a spoken language. But the Sanskrit that we have now was never a spoken language, at least for the last three thousand years. Curiously enough, the vast mass of literature was written in a language which was dead, covering a period of three thousand years. Dramas and novels were written in this dead language. And all the time it was not spoken in the homes; it was only the language of the learned.

Even in the time of Buddha, which was about 560 years before the Christian era, we find that Sanskrit had ceased to be a spoken language. Some of his disciples wanted to teach in Sanskrit, but the master studiously refused. He wanted to teach in the language [of the people], because he said he was the prophet of the people. And that is how it has come about that the Buddhistic literature is in Pali, which was the vernacular of that time.

This vast mass of literature — the Vedas — we find in three groups. The first group is the Samhitās, a collection of hymns. The second group is called the Brāhmanas, or the [group dealing with different kinds of] sacrifice. The word Brahmana [by usage] means [what is achieved by means of] the sacrifice. And the other group is called the Upanishads (sittings, lectures, philosophic books). Again, the first two parts together — the hymns and the rituals — are called the Karmakānda, the work portion; and the second, or philosophic portion (the Upanishads), is called the Jñānakānda, the knowledge portion. This is the same word as your English word knowledge and the Greek word gnōs — just as you have the word in agnostic, and so on.

The first portion is a collection of hymns in praise of certain gods, as Agni, fire; Mitra, the sun; and so forth. They are praised and oblations are offered to them. I have said these hymns are to the gods. I have used the word gods until I make you familiar with the Sanskrit word Deva, because the word gods is very misleading. These Devas mean the “bright ones”, and gods in India are less persons than positions. For instance, Indra and Agni are not names of particular persons, but particular posts in this universe. There is the post of President, the presiding post over certain elements, the presiding post over certain worlds, and so forth. According to these theologians, you and I — most of us — probably have been some of these gods several times. It is only temporarily that a soul can fill one of these positions. And after his time is over, he gives way; another soul is raised from this world by good works and takes that position — he becomes [for example] Agni. In reading Sanskrit philosophy or theology, people always get bothered by the changing of these gods. But this is the theory — that they are names of positions, that all souls will have to fill them again and again; and these gods, when the soul has attained to that position, can help mankind. So gifts and praise are offered to them. How this idea came to the Aryans we do not know, but in the earliest portion of the Rig-Veda we find this idea perfected and completed.

Behind and beyond all these Devas and men and animals and worlds is the Ruler of this universe, Ishvara — somewhat similar to what in the New Testament is called God the Creator, Preserver, the Ruler of this universe. These Devas are not to be confused with Ishvara at all, but in the English language you have the same word for both. You use the word God in the singular and the plural. But



the gods are the bright ones — the Devas — and God is Ishvara. This we find even in the oldest portions of the Vedas.

Another peculiarity is that this Ishvara, this God, is manifesting Himself in all these various forms of bright ones. This idea — that the same God manifests Himself in various forms — is a very rudimentary idea of the Vedas, even in the oldest portions. There was a time when a sort of monotheistic idea entered the Vedas, but it was very quickly rejected. As we go on, perhaps you will agree with me that it was very good that it was rejected.

So we find in these oldest portions of the Samhitas that there were these various Devas — [being praised as] the manifestations of someone very much higher than they [had left] behind, so that sometimes each one of them was taken up and adjectives piled on it and at last it was said, “You are the God of the universe”. Then such passages as this occurred: “I am God, worshipped as the fire”, and so forth. “It is the One; sages call Him variously.” “He is that one existence; the sages call Him by various names.” This I ask you to remember, because this is the turning point, the key-note of all thought that India has produced — “He is that One Being; sages call Him variously.” All Hindu philosophy — either theistic or atheistic or monotheistic, dualistic or nondualistic — has that as the core, the centre. And by thousands of years of culture in the race, it is impossible for the Hindu race to go [away from] that idea.

That germ became a big tree; and that is why there was never a religious persecution in India, at least by the Hindus. That explains their liberality and welcome to any religion from any part of the world which came to settle there. That is how, even at the present day, Indian Rajas go and perform Mohammedan ceremonies and enter Mohammedan mosques, although [some] Mohammedans took the first opportunity to kill a number of “the heathens”.

“He is the One Being; sages call Him variously.”

There have been two theories advanced in modern times with regard to the growth of religions. The one is the tribal theory; the other is the spirit theory. The tribal theory is that humanity in its savage state remains divided into many small tribes. Each tribe has a god of its own — or sometimes the same god divided into many forms, as the god of this city came to that city, and so on; Jehovah of this city and of such-and-such mountain [came to such-and-such city or mountain]. When the tribes came together, one of them became strong.

Take the case of the Jews. They were divided into so many tribes, and each tribe had a god called either Baal or Moloch which in your Old Testament is translated as “the Lord”. There was the Moloch of this state and

that state, of this mountain and that mountain, and there was the Moloch of the chest, who used to live in a chest. This latter tribe became strong and conquered the surrounding tribes and became triumphant. So that Moloch was proclaimed the greatest of all Molochs. “Thou art the Java [?] of the Molochs. Thou art the ruler of all the Baals and Molochs.” Yet the chest remained. So this idea was obtained from tribal gods.

There is the other theory of Spiritualism — that religion begins with the worship of ancestors. Ancestor worship was among the Egyptians, among the Babylonians, among many other races — the Hindus, the Christians. There is not one form of religion among which there has not been this ancestor worship in some form or other.

Before that they thought that this body had a double inside it and that when this body dies the double gets out and lives so long as this body exists. The double becomes very hungry or thirsty, wants food or drink, and wants to enjoy the good things of this world. So he [the double] comes to get food; and if he does not get it, he will injure even his own children. So long as the body is preserved the double will live. Naturally the first attempt, as we see, was to preserve the body, mummify the body, so that the body will live forever.

So with the Babylonians was this sort of spirit worship. Later on as the nations advanced, the cruel forms died out and better forms remained. Some place was given to that which is called heaven, and they placed food here so that it might reach the double there. Even now the pious Hindus must, one day a year at least, place food for their ancestors. And the day they leave off [this habit] will be a sorry day for the ancestors. So you also find this ancestor worship to be one cause of religion. There are in modern times philosophers who advance the theory that this has been the root of all religions. There are others who advance the theory that the root of all religions was the tribal assimilation of gods into one.

Among the Jews of the Old Testament you do not find any mention of soul. It is only in the Talmud that it is found. They got it from the Alexandrians, and the Alexandrians from the Hindus — just as the Talmud had [developed] later on the idea of transmigration of the soul. But the old Jews had grand ideas of God. The God of the Jews developed into the Great God — the Omnipotent, Omniscient, All-Merciful — and all this came to them from the Hindus, but not through the idea of the soul. So Spiritualism could not have played any part in that, because how could the man who did not believe in any soul after death have anything to do with Spiritualism?

On the other hand, in the oldest portion of the Vedas, there is very little of Spiritualism, if anything at all. These Devas [of the Vedas] were not [related to Spiritualism] — although later on they became so; and this

idea of Someone behind them, of whom they were manifestations, is in the oldest parts.

Another idea is that when the body dies, the soul [which] is immortal remains beatified. The very oldest Aryan literature — whether German or Greek — has this idea of soul. The idea of soul has come from the Hindus.

Two people have given all the religion to the world — the Hindus and the Jews. But it is only with the Hindus that the idea of soul comes at first, and that was shared by the Aryan races.

The peculiarity you find is that the Semitic races and the Egyptians try to preserve the dead bodies, while the Aryans try to destroy them. The Greeks, the Germans, the Romans — your ancestors before they became Christians — used to burn the dead. It was only when Charlemagne made you Christians with the sword — and when you refused, [he] cut off a few hundred heads, and the rest jumped into the water — that burying came here. You see at once the metaphysical significance of burning the dead. The burying of the dead (Preserving the dead by the burying of the body.) can only remain when there is no idea of the soul, and the body is all. At best there came the idea later on that this very body will have another lease of life, after so many years — mummies will come out and begin to walk the streets again.

But with the Aryans the idea was from the first that the soul is not the body, but would live on. There are some old hymns in the Rig-Veda: when the bodies are burnt they say, “Take him gently, purify him, give him a bright body, take him to the land where the fathers live — wherethere is no more sorrow and where there is joy forever”. (Rig-Veda 10.16.4.)

It is curious that though in modern times many hideous and cruel forms of religion crept into India, there is one peculiar idea that divides the Aryan from all other races of the world: that their religion, in the Hindu form, accepted this Indra as one [with the Ultimate Reality]. Three-quarters of the mythology of the Vedas is the same as that of the Greeks; only the old gods became saints in the new religion. But they were originally the gods of the Samhitas.

One other peculiarity we remark — that it is a cheerful, joyful, at times almost hilarious religion; there is not a bit of pessimism in it. The earth is beautiful, the heavens are beautiful, life is immortal. Even after death they get a still more beautiful body, which has none of the imperfections of this body, and they go to live with the gods and enjoy heaven forever.

On the other hand, with the Semitic races, the very first inception of religion was one of horror. A man crouched in his little house for fear. All round his house were those doubles. The family ancestors of the Jews were there,

ready to pounce upon anybody and tear him to pieces if bloody sacrifices were not given to them. Even when you find that this [double] idea coagulated into one — “Thou art the Elohim of the Jews, Thou art the Elo[him] of the [Babylonians?]” [9]\* — even then the idea of sacrifice remained.

The idea of sacrifice in India was not with this first portion. But in the next portion we find the same idea in India too, in the Brahmanas. The idea of sacrifice was originally simply giving food [to the gods], but gradually it was raised and raised until it became a sacrifice to God. Philosophy came in to mystify it still more and to spin webs of logic round it. Bloody sacrifices came into vogue. Somewhere we read that three hundred bullocks have been roasted, or the gods are smelling the sacrifices and becoming very glad. Then all sorts of mystical notions got about — how the sacrifice was to be made in the form of a tri-angle or a square, a triangle within a square, a pentagon, and all sorts of figures. But the great benefit was the evolution of geometry. When they had to make all these figures — and it was laid down strictly how many bricks should be used, and how they should be laid, and how big they should be — naturally geometry came [into being]. The Egyptians evolved geometry [by] their [irrigation] — [they] made canals to take the Nile water inside their fields — and the Hindus, by their altars.

Now there is another particular difference between the idea of sacrifice in India and [that] of the Jews. The real meaning of sacrifice is worship, a form of worship by oblations. At first it was simply giving food to the bright ones, or the higher beings. They had gross food just as we have. Later on philosophy stepped in and the idea came that they, being higher beings, could not eat the same food as we do. Their bodies are made of finer particles. Our bodies cannot pass through a wall; theirs find no resistance in gross material. As such, they cannot be expected to eat in the same gross way as we do.

[Some parts of the transcription of the remaining portion of this lecture, recorded by Mr. J. J. Goodwin, were found in a severely damaged condition. Hence we have reproduced below only the legible fragments as they appeared in the original.]

. . . “O Indra, I offer you this oblation. O Agni, I offer you this oblation.” The answer is that these words have a mystical power in Sanskrit. And when a man, in a certain state of mind, pronounces these words, he sets in motion a set of psychological causes, and these causes produce a certain effect. That is the evolution of thought.

To make it clearer, suppose a man was childless and wanted a son. He worshipped Indra, and if he got a son he said Indra gave him the son. Later on they said Indra did not exist. Who, then, gave him the son? The whole

thing is a matter of cause and effect. . . . .

They said it was not giving the gods food, but simply laying my sins upon the head of another victim. "My sins go upon the goat's head, and, if the goat be killed, my sins are forgiven." That idea of sacrifice of the Jews never entered India, and perhaps that has saved us many a pang, many a trouble.

Human nature is selfish, and the vast majority of men and women weak; and to teach vicarious sacrifice makes us more and more weak. Every child is taught that he is nothing until the poor fellow becomes hypnotized into nothing. He goes in search of somebody to cling onto, and never thinks of clinging to himself. . . . (Vide [10]Complete Works, VIII for similar ideas.)

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