

Bhagavan Sri Sankara on God, the Soul and the Universe.

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(Continued from the previous number)

WHAT REALLY AILS US

And this analysis of our subject not merely throws light on our real nature and goal but also leads us naturally on to and throws splendid light on our Disease and its cure, too. For the Adwaita Siddhanta (Monistic Doctrine) tells us that the world is nothing in itself but only as we ourselves create it. It is we that make it or mar it. The nature of the soul and the mind being understood, all we have now to do is to catch hold of the latter, clip its wings, check its wayward and fickle tastes and tendencies, attune it to the former and turn it theretowards. Says the *Smṛiti*:—

‘मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः ।’

“The mind is the cause of man's slavery as well as of his emancipation from bondage.”

For example, a king may be rolling in wealth and yet may be discontented, while a poor man may be not only contented but in positive peace, happiness and joy. What is it that makes the difference? It surely cannot be the external things that make the poor man happy, for he has no such wealth. And if externals can make for happiness, why do we find people living in luxury and yet in sorrow? The modern tendency is to create and supply lots of really unrequired things and they say, *the supply creates the demand, i. e.*, they seek to multiply “wants” artificially. This is not right. Because, when you multiply and increase your wants, rest assured, you divide and

reduce your happiness. What happens to a numerator when you increase the denominator? The value of the fraction decreases. As Carlyle beautifully points out (in his “Sartor Resartus”), the value of a fraction increases not so much by increasing its numerator as by decreasing its denominator. But we are going on multiplying our wants and the result is, we are suffering. It is thus our own mental conceptions of the needs of life and our standard of happiness that are responsible for all the trouble. Similarly, how is it that the same man who was once living quite comfortably on Rs. 50 a month and rises to a position wherein he earns Rs. 1000 a month, retires on a pension of Rs. 500 a month and finds it difficult—nay, impossible,—to live thereon in comfort and positively suffers? It is because the mind has accustomed itself to a certain artificial standard and goes on pestering him therefor. The fewer our wants, the greater our happiness. If we adopt the principle of Plain Living and High Thinking, we shall be more happy. When a thing is expected and there is a disappointment, suffering ensues; but if, while hoping for the best, we are prepared for the worst, there is no disappointment and no resultant suffering. All this merely illustrates the effect of our own *mind* on and its responsibility for our happiness and misery.

To take another instance,—suppose a father living in Madras has a son living in Bombay and earning Rs. 500 a month, and that son dies; but the news is not communicated to the father. He goes on joyfully with the idea of his son being

hale and well and wealthy; and it is only when he comes to hear of the lad's death that he begins to suffer. Or again, suppose the newspapers announce that such and such a person has died and suppose the newspaper report is incorrect and the son is really alive. You find the father suffering because he has got the wrong idea on his head that his son is dead. So it is not the fact of the son's death or welfare but the father's idea (right or wrong) that his boy has expired or is doing well that is really and actually responsible for his sorrow or joy. And this is all that Idealism postulates.

Similarly, when a man abuses you fiercely, his mouth may ache and his body may ache (as the *physical* result of his mind-ache and his mouth-ache); but surely your ear cannot—at any rate, physically—ache, in consequence of all that abuse. And yet, why do you suffer? Because, in all such cases, your feeling of sorrow is not the physical effect—on your ear—of the physical sound heard by you but merely of what your *mind* has told you about the meaning and implications of his words. And a still worse kind of instance often happens when two persons are talking at a great distance from you and you not merely do not hear them but cannot perhaps understand even a syllable of that language which they are conversing with each other in; and yet you suspect or *imagine* to yourself that they are *perhaps* saying something against you, and straightway you begin to suffer. Thus it is not even what they were actually saying but what your own *mind fancies* that *perhaps* they were talking about you, which really causes your suffering. In fact, it is your own guilty conscience that makes you a coward and a sufferer. Similarly, a thief who sees a policeman coming behind him by the merest chance (without having any suspicion of the man being a thief) jumps to the conclusion that the policeman is coming along to arrest him, perhaps rushes on and attacks the poor unsuspecting policeman or at least

tries to flee and thereby perchance excites suspicion, betrays himself and gets arrested. This, too, is an instance of the "guilty conscience" making cowards of us all. The same is the case with absconders from justice, whose life is one perpetual hell because of the ever-present fear of detection and to whom actual arrest often brings real and positive *relief* from incessant torture. Now, all these are things which come from within ourselves; and it is the *mind* that is responsible for them.

THE REAL CURE

If, on the other hand, we learn from the Vedānta what the real nature of our *Atmā* (Soul) is and what our goal (उत्सव) is, if we realize within ourselves that Divine *Ananda-Svarūpa* concealed within us, learn the path of correct meditation (निदिध्यासन) and seek to reach Him straight (just as an arrow reaches its mark and becomes one with it), then Boundless Joy is ours, *now and here*. If we go on thinking about our sorrows and magnifying them, we shall feel them all the more; because, according to what is called अमरकौटिल्याय, it is an inexorable Law of nature that what we constantly think about, that we *Realize* and *Suffer*. This is the practical psychology which modern doctors apply in the sick-room; and this is the secret of Hypnotism and Mesmerism. The old Paurānic episodes tell us that the monsters Hirnyākṣa, Hiranyakāśipu, Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa, Kamsa and others saw God face to face at the time of their death. How was this? It was because, all along, they (अपश्यन्स्वप्नं ब्रह्म) were always thinking about Him by day and dreaming of Him at night, although not out of Love but only out of hatred and fear. But whatever the motive was, they did go on thinking about Him and meditating on Him; and the result was, we are told, that and they actually visualized Him at the last moment of their lives. Of course, there was this inevitable difference that they saw Him only in the shape in which they had

—irritated on Him. The *Bhakta* (devotee) always thinks of Him as Bhagavān (the Lord), the Father, the *Guru* (Master) and so on and therefore eventually sees Him as such; while those who think about Him as their enemy end by actually seeing Him as their enemy.

And (from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's वाक्येण) we have already seen how even when there is the external light of the noon-day sun of midsummer around you, you may deliberately shut your eyes and refuse to see it; but when there is internal illumination, you can see both internally and externally, because it is, after all, the mind that does everything for you. Get and have that mind under your own control. Always aim at the Goal; and you will surely reach the Goal and achieve perfect success all-round.

And what and where is this grandest of all Goals,—nay, our only true Goal? As we have pointed out already, it is Absolute Oneness with God, the सर्वव्यापी (all-pervading and all-permeating), who is everywhere and therefore within ourselves too. If, thus, Īśwara is both outside of us and inside us, too, what then about this body of ours? It is merely an outer covering or rather sheath of the Soul within. If we realize this fact and (detaching ourselves from our illusions about and consequent slavery to the body, senses and mind) realize the Divine Nature of the Soul within, our success is assured. Such is our lofty objective and such the simple path thereto. What loftier goal can we seek and what simpler means can we imagine?

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

At this point, you may ask: "Yes, if we are God, *i. e.*, *Sat-Chit-Ananda-Svarūpa*, and if death, ignorance and sorrow are only *Upalakṣaṇas* which come from extraneous causes—from outside—, why then should we do anything for ourselves? Will not ignorance and unhappiness—like the heat of the hot water—gradually go

on decreasing and finally leave us off altogether?" And our answer is this: "Yes, hot water left to itself will certainly cool itself automatically down in due course; but we never said that it will cool down even if it is kept on on the fire. No, on the other hand, it will become hotter still. So also, if the causes that are responsible for unhappy life are kept up and continued, *i. e.*, if the अज्ञान (ignorance) and दुष्कर्म (sins) are to be retained, how will the resultant sorrow and suffering diminish and how can we automatically go back to our मूलस्वरूपमूलक्षण of Ineffable and External Bliss?"

Hereon you may ask:—"Yes, but, when God alone is Real and all else is false (मिथ्या), why should we distinguish between two मिथ्या: *i. e.* पुण्य and पाप (good and evil), to discard the latter and perform the former?" And the answer is given by the Sanskrit maxim:

‘कण्टकं कण्टकेनैव गरेण च यथा गरम् ।’

Suppose you have a thorn which has stuck into the sole of your foot and you naturally wish to remove the pain caused by that thorn, how do you remove it? Is it not by means of a needle, pin or another thorn? Will you say that both are thorns and one is as bad as the other? Of course, both are equally thorns; but the difference between them is that one is a pain-giving thorn, while the other is a pain-removing thorn. And similarly, the doctor removes one virulent poison by means of what he tells you is its "antidote" but what is really a still more virulent poison. No doubt, both of them are poisons; but there is this vital difference between the two that the first is a life-killing poison and the antidote is the life-saving poison for you under those particular circumstances. Exactly so here: पाप and पुण्य are no doubt both मिथ्या and equally मिथ्या; but there is this difference between them that the former is that sort of manifestation of मिथ्या which (as the Śāstras declare, and

experience shows) gives pain and causes suffering; while the latter is that kind of manifestation of मिथ्या which (according to the Scriptures and experience, too) gives pleasure and causes joy. If you have no objection to *pain*, you ~~will~~ have no objection to *sin*. But if you ~~are~~ *pleasure*, you must *perform* पुण्य. And after all our Śāstras do teach us that just as after the original thorn is removed by the other thorn both the thorns are thrown away, so, too, after पुण्य has done its work as the antidote to पाप, both must be thrown away.

‘उभे पुण्यपापे विधूय’

The next question that may—nay, ought to—be asked by the inquirer is: “Yes, if one commits no further sin at all and thus metaphorically takes away the fire from underneath the water, should not the water, now automatically cool down? If so, is it not sufficient to say: ‘Sin no more’? Why should ~~we~~, ~~we~~ and विद्वान् (study, investigation and meditation) of the true nature of the Soul and its identity with God be also enjoined as the means to Self-realisation and the Joy thereof?”

The answer to this question is twofold:—

(1) Yes, if the fire is removed altogether and for ever, the water *must* cool down; but the time it will take for doing so will depend not on your wishes but on the temperature which it has already been raised to. But if, owing to unbearable thirst, you cannot bear to wait so long and must drink the water earlier, it will not do to say: “Let the water cool down of itself in due course”; you will have to adopt *positive* methods of your own (*i.e.*, pouring it from one vessel to another, keeping it in ice and so on) to *aid* it to cool down sooner. Exactly so here. We have committed lots and lots of पाप, not merely in this birth but also in millions of previous existences; and naturally lots and lots of sorrow, suffering

and misery are lying to our account. Now, if *you* are willing and prepared to bide the whole time until all these will have completely exhausted themselves and can go on without committing further sins in the meantime, *we* have no objection. But this you feel to be impossible; and you want to get over the whole thing sooner. If *you* do not feel any pain, sorrow and suffering, *we* do not ask you to undergo any treatment. But the experience of sufferings is there; and, so long as the experience is there, the remedy too is necessary. To vary the metaphor, if you see no objectionable reflection in the mirror, you need *not* close your eyes; but so long as you do see the प्रतिबिम्ब and so long as you do not wish to do so, you *will* have to shut your eyes. Just so here. If you *have* no sorrows and are in eternal and perennial Joy, you have already achieved, accomplished and fulfilled your purpose and reached your goal; there is no further श्रम required for you. But, if you suffer and *wish* to be rid of it, then, just as there is *positive* action for cooling down the hot water more speedily, so here, too, you will have to perform the positive action of going through the साधन (*i.e.*, श्रवण, मनन and other means) prescribed for speedily getting over all your accumulated पाप and expediting the advent of मोक्ष (emancipation).

(2) And besides, what *does* the removal of the fire from beneath the heated water really mean, imply and involve? This question can be answered only by finding out what that fire in this case actually is. The Śāstras say: ‘अविद्याकामकर्मविज्ञाने’; and our experiences too teach us that there are three things which bind us down and are responsible for our coming again and again into these various bodies of ours, wherein under the limitations of our temporary habitation we forget the Divinity of our own real Self. And what are these? They are (1) Ignorance of our Infinite *Svarūpa* (2) the consequent Desires for this and that

petty thing and (3) the foolish actions which we perform for realizing these desires of ours. The ignorance leads to the wishes, and the wishes to the actions; and, to suffer the results of these deeds, we take birth in different bodies and become bondslaves thereto and to our senses, mind, intellect and the world. So, unless the root cause of bondage (viz., ignorance) goes, our bondage can never cease. In other words, the Fire that we have to remove from the water of Blissful Self-Realization is Ignorance; and until, by श्रवण, मनन and निदिध्यासन we have actually removed that fire of Ignorance, we cannot be said to have removed the metaphorical Fire at all. This should suffice to show why श्रवण and other Sādhanas (means) are really necessary.

THE RESULT

And this is the frame of mind enjoined on us in our worship of God:—

‘सोऽहंभावेन पूजयेत् ।’

“Worship Him, absolutely identify yourself with Him.”

Of one who has tuned his mind to this tune, *Srimad Bhāgavata* says:—

‘सर्वभूतेषु यः पश्येद् भगवद्भावमात्मनः ।
भूतानि भगवत्यात्मन्येष भागवतोत्तमः ॥’

“The best devotee of God is he who sees God and himself in all things and sees all things in God and himself.”

And, in the *Gītā* the Lord Himself says:—

‘वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ।’

“Rarest of the rare is that high-souled one who looks upon all things as Vāsudeva, i.e., the all-pervading Lord.”

And, regarding such a person, Yama (the Lord of Death) says to his Myrmidons (the यमदूतः):—

‘सकलमिदमहं च वासुदेवः
जनपुमान् परमेश्वरः स एकः ।’

इति मतिरचला भवत्यनन्ते
हृदयगते ब्रज तान् विहाय दूरान् ॥’

“Those whose minds are concentrated on Him with devotion dwelling in their hearts and with the firm conviction that all this world, themselves and He, the all-pervading one, are ONE; i.e., the Supreme Soul and Supreme Lord of all—leave them at an enormous distance and flee from them (for they have transcended Death and are no longer within your jurisdiction or even mine).”

How this happy consumation is finally achieved, we shall now proceed to and consider.

THE RATIONALE OF IT

When we have reached this stage of ज्ञान (wisdom) and perform only निष्कामकर्म (unselfish action), we do things merely because it is our duty to do them, not because of any attachment to or desire for the fruits of such action. And what is the result? The huge and vast treasures of sin and sorrow earned, accumulated and hoarded up by us in the past drop off. No अविद्या means no काम; no काम means no कर्म; and no कर्म means no जन्म, i.e., the whole cycle of births and deaths is transcended and Emancipation (मोक्ष) obtained.

Yes, new Karma may not arise; but what about past Karmas? And the answer is given by the *Vedānta-Sūtra*:

‘तदधिगम उत्तरपूर्वाघयोरश्लेषविनाशौ’

(followed by the next one about पाते तु, etc.), which means that the Jñāni's संचित (or stored up) Karma is burnt out or destroyed, his आगामि (i.e., new) कर्म—being निष्काम (unselfish)—falls off, i.e., does not bring him back to birth; and, as for the प्रारब्ध कर्म (that part of the past कर्म which is responsible for and has already begun to produce its results in this birth), that too falls away, having been worked out

during the present life in the enjoyment (or suffering) of its fruits. And when this happens, the appropriate simile therefor would be the case of a man whose bank-boards have perished, whose new earnings are all and whose cash on hand has been spent up so he has no money left. So, too, the ~~man~~ whose ~~life~~ ~~has perished~~ whose ~~work~~ ~~is spent~~ whose ~~work~~ ~~has been spent off~~ has no hope of any sort left to cause him to take birth again. And what happens to him? Say the Vedas:—

‘तस्य तावदेव चिरं यावन्न विमोक्षेऽथ संपत्स्ये ।’

“The delay in his reunion with his Divine nature is only till his ~~work~~, too, is exhausted.” And, that, too, having now been accomplished,

‘न तस्य प्राणा उक्कामन्ति ।’

“His breath does not go out and take him over to any other world (because he has no ~~work~~ left to work out anywhere.”

‘एव एव चरन्ति’

(i. e., he becomes one—here—with the All-pervading Almighty God Himself). A worldly illustration will make this clearer. Suppose there is a convict not released but transferred from one jail to another: there is always a *police escort* that takes him over from the former to the latter; but, if he is released altogether, no police escort is sent with him. Similarly, when the *Jiva* (the Individual Soul) is not released from bondage but has to go from one body-prison to another, the *breath* (like the police escort) accompanies him thither; but when he is liberated altogether, the breath does not accompany and take him anywhere, because he has no particular place to go to but has become one with the Infinite *Paramātmā* Himself.

This is how, if we follow the path prescribed for us by our ancient Maharṣis

(Great Seers), we shall go back to where we fell from, i. e., God. We had dropped down to आकाश, वायु, अग्नि, जल, and पृथ्वी; and now, by following जनि विपरीतक्रम (as the great saint Swami Sadāśivendra Saraswati describes it), i. e., in the contrary order to that of our involution), we reach back to our ~~वैकल्य~~ (oneness). This is how the Soul's Evolution becomes complete and we thereby fulfil the lofty purpose of human life in which the grand privilege has been vouchsafed to us to meditate about things, think them out and do the right thing. Other bodies—e. g., of birds, beasts, insects and even angels—are purely भोगक्षेत्र, i. e., therewith we can only do the things that we are bound by our previous *karma* to perform and reap the fruits of past (and present) actions; but the human body is a कर्मक्षेत्र, whereby we not only reap the fruits of our past and present deeds but can also perform new actions which can unlock the portals of मोक्ष (Emancipation), too, for us. This *human body* of ours is therefore the greatest of all privileges conceivable. So, while we have our human existence in this world, let us fix our gaze, rivet our vision and concentrate our attention on the *Paramātmā* (God) hidden within ourselves. If this is done, we are on the right path already and bound to reach our Goal. It is not correct to say that, as we have certain duties to perform and certain things to do in the ordinary affairs of life, therefore we cannot attend to these higher things (because we cannot find the *time* to do them). No, the Vedānta does *not* ask us to discard our duties and come over to this path. On the contrary, it teaches us to perform our duties all the more efficiently and perfectly and, while attending thereto, to concentrate our mind—at the same time—on this side. This is the beauty of it. There was King Janaka who did it: he did not neglect the duties of his kingly office even in one respect; and yet, at the same time, he had his mind concentrated on the *Paramātmā*,

~~This is the way to realize our oneness~~
~~with God~~

THE WORLD-THEATRE

One more question may be asked: "Yes, but how is this *possible*?" Even granting (according to the analytical teleological and ontological arguments afore-adumbrated and elaborated for proving Idealism) that we are really सत्, चित् and आनन्द and that death, ignorance and sorrow are only superimposed upon us by *Māyā* and so forth, how *can* the *Jñāni*, while actually feeling the physical pains and sufferings from which (thanks to his प्रसव) even he is not exempt, still realize and feel the स्वरूपभूत आनन्द (the inherent Divine Bliss) within? And this question *must* be answered, because on its satisfactory answer depends the doctrine of जीवमुक्ति (i. e., the Bliss of the Liberated Soul, while still here below). विदेहमुक्ति (Bliss after death) is easy enough to postulate; but Bliss here and now—in the very midst of all our pains and turmoils, trials and tribulations—is a harder nut to crack; and this therefore *must* be done well, the answer is given by Śrī Vidyāraṇya in his *Pañchdaśī* as follows:—

‘मार्गे गन्त्रोद्भवोः श्रान्तौ समायासप्यद्वृत्तान् ।
जानन् धैर्याद्द्रुतं गच्छत्यन्यस्तिष्ठति दीनधीः॥’

“Of two travellers who are equally footsore and utterly done up, that one who knows that the end of the journey is near, picks up courage, endures his fatigue and pushes on (to reach home and find there a haven of rest where he can stretch his limbs, sleep out his exhaustion and recuperate); but the other one—not knowing the nearness of his destination and imagining that he has an infinitely long journey still before him—breaks down in despair, refuses to move further and dies in misery !”

To elucidate this point more clearly, let us imagine ourselves going to see a theatrical performance where, say, the

story of Bhagavān Śrī Rāma is being enacted; and suppose we see there the spectacle of His consort Bhagavati Sitā Devi (whom we Sanātanadharmi Hindus revere and adore as the World-Mother) being threatened by the monster Rāvaṇa and weeping bitterly. How is it that we can go on quietly enjoying the scene; and, in case the person playing the part of Rāvaṇa plays his part with expert skill, how *can* we even cry “*Encore, Encore*” ? And, alongside of that picture of ourselves, consider this second picture, wherein we see a ruffian in the streets trying to lay his defiling hands on a woman (hitherto absolutely unknown to us) with intent to outrage her modesty and wherein we rush forth forthwith upon the fellow in a tremendous fury, and chastise him severely—nay, within an inch of his life. In both cases, the evidence given by our eyes, ears and other senses is exactly the same, i. e., that a ruffian is seeking to injure a helpless woman; and the only factor that may—and ordinarily must—cause a difference in the attitude of the onlooker is that Sitāji is our beloved Mother, while the other woman is an utter stranger. And yet, what a contrary result is there that we do not resent, and do nothing to check, the outrage on the former, but are furious about the latter. What is the reason for these seemingly unnatural attitudes and activities of ours? Is it not that, in the former case, although all your *senses* do tell you that Rāvaṇa is threatening and Sitādevi is sobbing and so on, yet, you *know*—in your mind and in your heart—that the persons before you are *not* Rāvaṇa and Sitā but so-and-so and so-and-so (who are perhaps your own maternal uncle and your younger brother respectively, the latter not being even a girl in reality) and, knowing this *beforehand*, you deliberately purchased a ticket for seeing the show and are actually enjoying it, whereas, in the second case, you *believe* the evidence of your senses and think the two persons to be a real ruffian and a real woman in deadly terror of him. In other

words, your feelings and resultant actions are dependent not on what, on the seeming evidence of your senses, you seem to see and hear but on whether or not you *imagine* the thing seen by you to be truly what it seems to be. Now let us apply this illustration to the case of the Realist and the Vedānti and see what follows. Both may—in the evidence of the physical senses—want to see and hear the same sights and the same sounds and yet there is this vital, radical and fundamental difference between the two that the Dvaiti (the Realist) *thinks* all his pains and sufferings to be *real* and therefore becomes a prey to dejection and despair, while the Advaiti (the *practical* Vedānti) *knows* all his pains and sorrows to be *illusory* (just like the Rāvaṇa and the Sitā Devi of the drama) and can therefore—in spite of the evidence of his own physical senses to the contrary—remain unperturbed, nay, positively cheerful and joyous.

THE RĀSĀ-LĪLĀ

What the real position is between God and the Soul and how it all works itself out, is beautifully taught to us in the celebrated *Rāsā-līlā* of the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which has generally been misunderstood, misrepresented and mischievously vilified by thousands of interested or designing persons and ignorant people, but which is the grandest of grand expositions, in reality, of the great and eternal Cosmic Dance which Almighty God is ever dancing with the world, "The Song of Solomon" (of the Bible) may be described as nothing but a faint shadow of a dim reflection of a single small ray out of a huge pencil of rays emanating from the mighty Sun of *Rāsā-līlā* (of *Srīmad-Bhāgavata*). We need not go into a full, detailed and elaborate analysis of the रासपञ्चक but shall merely content ourselves with giving the barest gist of it here. It portrays before our imaginations—in the most picturesque manner conceivable—the basic Truth as to how God and Cosmos

carry on their interrelationship. You have the Lord's Dance thus described:—

‘अङ्गनामङ्गनामन्तरा माधवो
सधवं सधवं चान्तरेणाङ्गना ।
इत्यन्वयित्वे सपङ्कले मध्यगः
सङ्कले वेणुना देवकीनन्दनः ॥’

The सङ्कले (dancing ring or circle) consists of the Lord and the innumerable Jīvas (individual souls) constituting the universe (and allegorically described as Gopis, to symbolize the relationship of husband and wife that ought to be felt and realized between God and every soul). On each side of each girl in that circle and in the centre of the circle, too, there is the Lord dancing and playing, on His flute, the *Music of the Spheres*. Well, this teaches us that, while the souls—the manifestations—are infinite in number, the Lord Himself is one; and all around you (to the sides, in front and so on) you have to realize and *visualize* Him (as the Gopis did). Now, the story proceeds further and narrates that, while the play

‘व्यसक्तः स्वप्रतिविम्बविभ्रमः ।’

(quoted and explained already) is going on apace, the Gopis develop *ahankāra* (pride, vanity and self-importance in the petty sense of the term). And lo; the Lord, whom they had all been singing, dancing and playing joyously with,

‘प्रसङ्गवत् प्रसङ्गवत् तत्रैवान्तरधीयत ।’

(i. e. disappears suddenly and altogether). Thereupon, cast into the deepest depths of dejection and despair, they search long and laboriously for Him in all directions but see only darkness all around. And then, retiring from their fruitless *external* search for Him and gradually forgetting themselves altogether in absolute self-surrender to Him, they reach the stage.

‘तन्मनस्कास्तदालापास्तद्विचेद्यास्तदात्मिकाः ।’

(i. e., all their thoughts are concentrated on Him, all their talk is of Him and all their actions are echoes of Him: and thus, losing even the consciousness of their separate physical identity, they become merged into and one with Him). And, then, what happens ?

‘तासामाविरभूच्छौरिः स्सयमानमुखाम्बुजः ।’

He reappears smiling, amidst them and all around them, here, there and everywhere as before, and resumes His Ecstatic Song and Dance of Universal and Eternal Cosmic Joy ineffable. The moral of the Episode is so clear, plain, simple and obvious that he who runs may read. If and when *भक्त* comes up, the Vision of God all around us disappears and sheer darkness engulfs us and when we cast off our petty *Ahankāras* and merge ourselves into Him in perfect self-surrender, we see Him everywhere around us and within ourselves and sing and dance our lives through in one continuous all-glorious Song and Dance of Ecstatic Illumination, Joy and Bliss. In other words, *Nara* (Man) has become—while still in the flesh, here below—and stays for ever, *Nārāyaṇa* (God). Once again, let us ask, what higher goal can there be than this of oneness with God:

and what simpler path thereto can there be than this that has been expounded by the Vedānta ?

CONCLUSION

Such, then, is the Vedānta and such its sublime teachings as to our Goal, the Path thereto and so forth. These sublime teachings of the Vedānta were analysed and condensed (about a myriad years ago)—into the form of Sūtras or Aphorisms by Mahārṣi Vedavyāsa; and Bhagavān Ādi Śankarāchārya, who incarnated about 2500 years ago to bring illumination to the ignorant minds in Kaliyuga (the present Iron Age), elucidated the meaning of Mahārṣi Vedavyāsa's Brahma-Sūtras (Vedānta aphorisms), the Upaniṣads the Gītā, etc., in his monumental Bhāṣyas (Expositions) thereof.

To Him therefore, the great Master of us all, let us conclude with our heart's tribute and homage:—

उद्धारार्थं मुमुक्षोररचिषत पुरा^१ ब्रह्मसूत्राणि यानि
कृष्णद्वैपायनेन श्रुतिपरमतिनाम्नायशीर्षार्थवक्त्रा ।
कृत्वा भाष्यं तदीयं निखिलबुधनुतं गूढतत्त्वोपदेष्टा
निद्वैतानन्ददायी भुवि जयति सदा बङ्करो देशिकेन्द्रः ॥
॥ ओं तत्सन् ॥

