

## OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

This evening I come before you in a capacity differing somewhat from that of previous occasions when I have lectured at this Institute of Culture. On those occasions I was a guest, but now I am a host, and I am extremely happy to be here in Calcutta, after nearly thirteen years in New Delhi, to work as Secretary in this important branch of the Ramakrishna Mission.

The subject of my talk to you this evening, and this talk will be the first of a series of studies of the great spiritual literature of India comprised in the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, is one which is in the very spirit of this Institute—'Our Spiritual Heritage'. This Institute seeks to assimilate the spiritual legacy of humanity, of both East and West. And part of that legacy of humanity is the eternal legacy of India which is spiritual through and through. The visions which have been embodied in the immortal literature of this country, particularly in the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, have something eternal about them. They are the visions of the seers, sages, and thinkers of ancient India. These visions were embodied in a cultural experiment which involved a seventh of the human race. The continuity down the ages, right down to our own time, of this vision of the sages is one of the most impressive features of world history. Other things in world history may come and go, but the visions of the sages of the Upaniṣads remain for ever.

So we find that this theme, India's spiritual heritage, is one that is dear to the hearts of men and women in both East and West. In my travels in various countries, this is the thing that impressed me most—this response of the human mind everywhere to India's spiritual heritage. Going beyond all other considerations, whether of geography, history, or political and economic systems, is the appeal of this Indian message to the human heart. There is one India which, like other nations, has its political, social, economic, and other limitations; there is, however, another India, unlimited in range and scope, which has borne witness to the reality of the highest in man and nature, which has bequeathed to the world visions of human glory and greatness. It is these visions

which can well form the sheet anchor of man's collective and individual existence in the modern world.

The tremendous response which Swami Vivekananda's utterances aroused in the West was not an isolated or freakish event in history. The modern world has been in search of universal values for some centuries. There are today the world over, including the communist countries, as I myself experienced, an increasing number of people, including young people, who respond to the philosophical and spiritual heritage of India when they get a chance to hear or know about it. This message of India has nothing credal, nothing dogmatic or sectarian about it, for it speaks in terms of man's development, his progress, his achievement of the highest excellence. It is just this that the world is waiting for. In Czechoslovakia, people told me that their inherited idea of religion and philosophy had been quite different, and that they had felt greatly impressed with the way the Vedānta expressed the idea of man's development of total excellence. This idea has nothing parochial about it; it is not tied down to any particular credal or social or political expression, but is universal and human. They were very much impressed with these ideas, and their response was immediate.

It is my sad experience that the world knows very little of this aspect of Indian thought. In fact, even in India itself, people do not yet realize what treasures there are in their own heritage. Yet we do not speak of our spiritual heritage merely as a national heritage, as a matter of national glory. When we speak of these things it is the glory of man as man that becomes the theme. Man in India has achieved certain greatnesses, he has scaled great heights of experience, and he has left these as a legacy for the rest of humanity. We do not claim a copyright for them, for the great achievements of man in one place are the achievements of man everywhere. Today we hear much about man climbing Mount Everest and other high peaks. India has climbed the heights of experience and of greatness, and this is her legacy to the whole world, a legacy which has nothing parochial or narrow about it, but which speaks of the highest attainments of the human mind, of human thought, of man's total excellence.

### *The Challenge of Human Experience*

The long line of evolution through which life has passed has revealed to man great visions of beauty, of strength,

of power, of greatness. India carried these forward to their highest levels of expression. India asked, ages ago, 'What is the highest excellence of man?' This question was tackled by her with a thoroughness which is very impressive. Man, endowed with a body, with the senses, with various capacities, has yet to rise to the point of his highest excellence, which he has in a small measure even in his very childhood. The achievement of this highest excellence is the product of a converging life endeavour; it is education and religion in one. India tackled this fundamental problem very early in her cultural history through a creative minority of sages and thinkers. The results of their investigations into this problem have come down to us in that immortal literature, the Upaniṣads. This literature is immortal because its theme is immortal. Man's supreme excellence, say the Upaniṣads, consists in transcending his limitations of the senses. We have transcended many things. Our animal ancestry we have transcended to some extent in this human psycho-physical organism, but this is not the last, nor the highest, achievement. Even man's technical achievements up to date do not touch a fringe of his total possibilities; in spite of these intellectual developments, he has still about him and in him much of the primeval evolutionary slime; he has to shed much of his animal ancestry. He represents a great advance in evolution, but evolution has still greater heights to scale in him and through him. The present state is only a passing phase; man is not yet; he has to surpass himself and achieve still higher levels of expression.

The Upaniṣads took up this challenge, the challenge of human evolution, of deeper levels of human experience, and they forged ahead to scale the peaks of thought and experience. They gave us visions of man's true excellence as consisting in the realization of his immortal divine nature. This is the theme of the Upaniṣads, and this theme they have imparted to a whole cultural experiment, for it became the theme of Indian culture as well. In our time, this theme found glorious expression in Sri Ramakrishna. There is a continuity from the Upaniṣads to Sri Ramakrishna, and that continuity is one of the most impressive aspects of world history. No culture can be continuous in historical expression unless it has kept alive within itself the vision of the eternal and the imperishable. Only when a culture raises its edifice on the rock bottom

of experience, when it has seen and touched the fundamentals of life, only then does it succeed in ensuring its unity and continuity; then it becomes a beacon light, inspiring human life age after age.

This is how we view the history of India; India tackled life from various angles. Many people have a wrong notion that Indian thought tackled only the idea of man as a religious aspirant, searching for the secret of other-worldly or transcendental values. But that is not correct. We find that the Indian nation experimented with and developed all aspects of life, individual and collective: social organization, political systems, positive sciences, arts and literature, and various forms of happy, joyous living. The history of India reveals that there was no lack of emphasis on a life of joy; the life of the citizen is to be a happy one from every point of view.

But along with this, another development of thought took place which, starting as a critique of all relativistic views of man and the universe, reached its development in the vision of the One *behind* the many, and its consummation in the vision of the One *in* the many, the One *as* the many. Having achieved a modicum of security and welfare in the social field, the creative minds of the community began to forge ahead, asking more and more fundamental questions. Is this psycho-social individual, the psycho-physical being, the last stage in evolution? Or can it evolve into something higher still? Of course, these questions were the product of the creative thinking of a few people only, those who had the capacity, the flair, for this type of adventure. It is only a few gifted minds who, in any given society, participate in the quest for fundamental truth; and these may belong to any strata of society. As we turn the pages of the Upanishads, we come across, among its creative thinkers, men, women, and children, intellectuals, kings, and common men. What impresses us is the persistence with which these thinkers ask this one question: What is perfection? What is the highest level of human existence? Endowed with clarity of mind and purity of living, these thinkers achieved the answer to this question through a life of self-discipline and meditation; and in beautiful expositions, impressive dialogues, and fine snatches of poetry they bequeathed it to posterity. This is what has made this literature immortal.

### The True Nature of Man

Romain Rolland, in his book, *The Life of Ramakrishna*, writes (Sixth Edition, p. 13):

'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years spiritual life of three hundred million people.'

That a man like Sri Ramakrishna (A.D. 1836-1886) could appear in our time and live such a glorious life is entirely due to the fact of this continuity of India's spiritual tradition. It is a perennial river, flowing down the ages. Many of us, perhaps, do not know it. Many of us, perhaps, have not been able to take advantage of it. For some it is too lofty a theme. But all who hear about it look up to it in wonder and in admiration. There is a verse in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (II. 29) which says:

*Āścaryavat paśyati kaścidenam  
āścaryavat vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ;  
Āścaryavat cainam anyāḥ śrṇoti  
śrutvāpyenam veda na caiva kaścit—*

'Some look upon this Ātman as a wonder, some speak of it as a wonder, some hear of it as a wonder, but, in spite of all this, few truly know this Truth, the eternal glory of man!'

What, then, is this 'eternal glory of man'? It is his inborn divine nature, birthless, deathless, pure, and holy. He is not the body, nor the senses; these are but the instruments of his manifestation and action in the spatio-temporal world. He is the limitless One expressing itself through the little finite forms of body and mind. This is the true nature of man. This is not a mere philosophical concept, but a realized fact. All sensitive minds are inspired by these ideas. They inspired people at the time when the Upaniṣads were composed; they inspired people a thousand years later; and today, after three or four thousand years, they still inspire us. Neither the phenomenal progress of science and technology, nor the wealth and power of the modern world, has been able to reduce the relevancy of these ideas of the Upaniṣads; they have only increased it. The world is seeking for precisely this spiritual growth for man; it is the only means of breaking through the stagnation which has come upon the human mind. 'The human mind has lost its bearings in the delusion of wealth and power', *pramādyantam vittamohena mūḍham* (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, II. 6). Continued stagnation means death. So the Upaniṣads give us their gospel of hope for man through their grand theme: Man

shall have wealth; man shall have power; man shall have all this; but he shall not get lost in any one of these. These are the means, not the end; he shall break through the crust of experience, and realize the Ātman, his divine Self, which is Sat-Cit-Ānanda, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Thus do the Upaniṣads show us the way to creative living and life fulfilment.

Creative living is a beautiful term, but what is 'creative'? Merely doing the same things over and over again does not indicate creativity. The body, the senses, the nervous system, their recurring excitements and titillations, do not make for creative living. Some time or other we have to break through the prison wall of body and mind. Then we reach true creativity, and it is this type of creativity that the Upaniṣads represent. That is why the Upaniṣads are inspiring to the modern man and woman.

Those who are modern fall into two categories. First, there are those who are modern simply because they use modern amenities. That is the ordinary meaning of the word 'modern'. But there is another meaning, a more profound meaning, to this word. In this second meaning the modern man is he who is nourished on the spirit of science, who is alert of mind and on the track of truth, who has the capacity to question, 'to seek, ask, and knock' as Jesus expresses it. That man is modern who is inquisitive, who has a passion for truth and the power of rational investigation, who never takes things for granted but always strives to get at the heart of things; his heart constantly asks, 'What next? What next?' Such a modern mind is the mind that is closest to the spirit of the Upaniṣads. For in the Upaniṣads too there is this atmosphere of alertness, this mood of constant seeking, a deep passion for truth, a constant desire to forge ahead and not take things for granted in a complacent spirit. It is here that you find the close kinship between the Upaniṣads and the modern spirit.

So we find today that scientific thinkers, those who continually seek for deeper vistas of truth, those who strive to take life to higher levels of expression, when they become acquainted with the literature of the Upaniṣads, they become charmed, fascinated. Swami Vivekananda (A.D. 1863-1902), referring to the Upaniṣads, said (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 110):

'If there is one word in the English language to express the effect which the literature of India produces upon mankind, it is this one word *fascination*.'

The reason for that fascination is precisely that they draw the mind up to something higher, purer, loftier. The Upaniṣads send out a clarion call to lead us ever upward and onward. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (III. 14) we read: *Uttiṣṭhata! Jāgrata! Prāpya varān nibodhata!* 'Arise! Awake! And enlighten yourself by approaching the great ones!'

### *The Moving Power of the Spirit*

This is the clarion call which the modern man needs to carry him forward out of the present stagnation. This fact of stagnation is a recurring phenomenon in world history. Civilizations sometimes get stuck up in the mud of finite values, and become stagnant; and history tells us that there is only one way by which to overcome the deadlock. No political methods, nor social, economic, or financial manipulations can help to redeem man from such crises; these can be temporary palliatives at best; but they cannot raise a culture or a civilization from its stagnation and impart to it creative dynamism. The malady is a spiritual malady; its remedy also lies in the spiritual sphere. There is only one method of effecting a remedy, and that is to bring the power of the indwelling spirit to bear upon the psycho-physical organism, as also upon the psycho-social organism, the machine of our collective life.

This is what India did again and again. Repeatedly in Indian history we get evidence of the expressions of this power of the spirit to move a static world and make it dynamic. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (IV. 8), for example, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *Dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge*—'I come age after age to establish righteousness in the world.' When life becomes static, and moves in the narrowest circle possible, then God, the indwelling Spirit in man and nature, comes once again and imparts a new dynamism to the social process which then develops a new assimilative power and manifests fresh energy of movement.

Another illustration of the power of the spirit to make the world dynamic may be seen in the example and words of Buddha (563-483 B.C.), who appeared about a thousand years after Śrī Kṛṣṇa. At Sarnath, in his first discourse after his enlightenment, Buddha spoke of his mission as the 'setting in motion of the wheel of *dharma*'. The very title of the discourse is significant: *Dharmacakrapravartana Sūtra*—Discourse on the setting in motion

of the wheel of *dharma*. *Dharma* is conceived as a wheel, and human life, collective as well as individual, is conceived as a cart on wheels. A wheel gets stuck in a muddy road and will not move until a strong shoulder comes and pushes it. So a society or an individual may get stuck in the little things and trivial enjoyments of the body and the senses. History tells us that the Roman society decayed and fell for just this reason, and we find similar periods in our own history also. Lost in enjoyment and pleasure, and losing sight of the higher values of life, society stagnates and dies. So Buddha, in his discourse at Sarnath, said: 'Come, let us put our shoulders to the wheel, and make it move.' The very concept of the wheel implies something in motion. Buddha said: 'I have come to set the wheel of *dharma* in motion.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: 'I have come to set in motion the power of *dharma*.' And it is just this that has happened again and again in Indian history. What did Sri Ramakrishna do in our time? Apparently he did nothing; he lived a quiet life, outside the political and social movements of his time. But the energies that he created and released from his inner life powerfully influenced men and movements around him, and bid fair, at the not too distant future, to transform the modern world itself. He lived the life of the spirit in all its intensity and extensity, and showed the authenticity of man's spiritual life. He demonstrated the true purpose and function of religion, and the harmony between the different religions, and showed that there is no need to quarrel and fight in the name of religion. Quarrelling and fighting make of religion a sham. But religion is not a sham. It invites man to the highest adventure in life, the realization of his true freedom, which is the freedom of the spirit.

Physically and socially, man is not free; he is conditioned by external and internal factors. Freedom is in our spiritual nature. That is our true nature, immortal and divine, and we must realize it in life. This alone is true progress, development; this alone is true religion. This great idea Sri Ramakrishna lived, and, in so living, imparted such a power to it that, when other people received this idea, they received that power as well. They became convinced of the authenticity of this idea because Sri Ramakrishna had actually lived it.

This is the way by which a static society becomes dynamic and is made to move again. As blood flows through a healthy body, so through the body politic must flow the blood of spiritual



life. A great teacher comes, and with him comes great power, a new influx of energy. We start moving once again, and the stagnation begins to vanish. Once more man begins to seek the higher values of life. In the wake of the great teacher come creative individuals who ask deep questions, and strive to discover the answers for themselves: What is the true nature of man? How can man realize it? What is his destiny and how can he achieve it? Is spirituality the prerogative of only a few, select, gifted individuals? Or is it the prerogative of everyone?

The Upaniṣads boldly proclaim that spirituality is the prerogative of every individual. This Ātman, the divine, the immortal, is the Self of every man and woman and child. It is the true nature of man. It is also the true nature of all animals, but animals cannot realize it. It is only man with his unique psycho-physical system, aided by the psycho-social environment created by himself in the course of his evolution, that has the capacity to realize this truth. *Man is specially fitted for this great adventure.* He has certain advantages, and when he starts using these advantages he is able to rise to the highest level of spiritual life. The Upaniṣads tell us that wealth and power are not the highest glory of man. The Upaniṣads do not condemn man's pursuit of worldly wealth and power; they never condemn any values pursued by man. Only they say, 'There is something better and higher than these'. The Upaniṣads ever urge us to go on to the realization of this something better within us. Sri Ramakrishna, in one of his parables, tells the story of a woodcutter who, going into the forest to cut wood, was told by a holy man to go forward. Following this advice, in due course the woodcutter came across, first, a sandalwood forest, then, a silver mine, then, a gold mine, and, going deeper still into the forest, he found at last a diamond mine, and became exceedingly rich. Telling this story, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Therefore I say that, in whatever stage of life you may be, you will realize better and purer things if only you go deeper and deeper into yourself'.

### *The Need for Broad-based Education*

If Indian culture is strong today, even in this highly advanced age of science and technology, it is because India has not forgotten this teaching. The way forward for India today is the assimilation into her own ancient culture of the best that is in modern western culture. But India can do this only if she is conscious of her own

heritage, if she has become inspired and strengthened by that heritage. The source of this heritage, so far as literature goes, is the Upaniṣads, and a study of the Upaniṣads is one of the most rewarding studies for man today, in both East and West.

As far as India is concerned, this study will bring to her children an acquaintance with those basic values which have shaped their history and which are sustaining them even today. We, perhaps, are inclined to take those values for granted, just like the air we breathe. But culture is not like that. It requires education; it requires assimilation. It is this education in and assimilation of their own cultural values that will give to Indian men and women of this age the power to handle the forces of the modern world, to tame and harness them in the service of human happiness and welfare within India and outside. And so the need for every educated citizen of this country is to understand and assimilate the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*; not merely to study them as literature, or even as philosophy, but to enter into their spirit and to breathe in unison with their breath.

When we become strong in our own inheritance, we shall feel the strength to take in also the legacy which the West, from the time of the Greeks to the modern age, has left for us. For today, legacies are not parochial. Today, every cultural legacy is a human legacy for the whole world. The world has become so small that all provincial barriers are anachronisms today. Every achievement in any part of the world becomes a legacy for the whole world. So the whole human heritage has to become the subject of education for every individual today. A boy or girl going to school and college in India today studies the western heritage through science, sociology, and various other subjects; thus our boys and girls become the recipients of the best thought of the western world. In the same way, the education of the western boy or girl must be broadened to include the rich cultural heritage of India. It is broad-based education of this kind that will solve the problems of the modern world. Provincialism, which has done so much harm to the world in the past, will thus be completely eliminated, and the world turned in the direction of global unity.

As far as India is concerned, we have been fortunate to have had thinkers, and some of the greatest of them appeared in this modern age, who have placed before us this broad objective. From Raja Rammohun Roy (A.D. 1774-1833) to Swami Vivekananda,

each one of these modern thinkers has been proud of India's heritage and yet has told us, in all humility, to sit at the feet of other nations of the modern world and learn the legacy which is theirs to give.

These great leaders of modern India will not permit us to be parochial. They did not ask us to be proud only of our own heritage; they asked us to open our minds to receive the best that the world has to give. They also told us that *the capacity to assimilate modern western culture is directly proportionate to our prior assimilation of our own culture*. Without a proper understanding of our own culture, we shall never be able to enter the soul of another culture, nor profit from it. This is, unfortunately, what we see happening today. Our capacity to assimilate the best of western culture is very little, because most of us, through our faulty education, did not get the opportunity to understand our own culture, to be acquainted with the great thoughts behind our own culture. Our education is largely cut off from the currents of our own cultural inheritance. The nation is trying to remedy this; but it is a fact that an educated citizen of India today is mostly ignorant of the fundamentals of his own culture, of his own traditions. I found this to be true of large numbers of Indian students I came across in foreign countries, and I have heard from several western friends, and I have also read in newspaper articles written by western well-wishers of India, that Indian students and Indian diplomatic personnel in countries abroad are most inadequately equipped in their knowledge of India and her culture. In the absence of the strength which comes from an assimilation of one's cultural inheritance, when we try to take in western culture, what is taken in proves to be only the cheaper side of that culture, and not the strength that is behind that culture. *That strength we can touch only on the basis of our own strength.*

This defect in our education must be remedied. As far as our schools and colleges are concerned, it will take some time for us to remedy it. But the general citizen can remedy this defect for himself by opening his mind and heart to the rich legacy which is his in his own literary and artistic inheritance. If the Upaniṣads had not been written, if the sages had simply thought these thoughts and passed away, it is probable that the atmosphere of India would still have contained those thoughts, but most of us would not have been able to come into touch with them. A gifted

soul like Sri Ramakrishna is able to open his mind to the wonderful vibrations of thought which the seers have left behind, but ordinary people cannot do that. Fortunately for us, and for all humanity, the mighty thoughts of these sages were written down, enabling you and me to receive this communication from them. The inheritance of culture comes through communication, through the language of symbols, literary and artistic. Man can communicate his experience to coming generations, and this is how he acquires culture, the cumulative effect of inherited tradition. Through communication and transmission, a culture goes on growing and developing, getting richer and richer in the process. Today we have the opportunity to live in the atmosphere in which the sages lived by studying the great literature which they have left as a legacy to us. Reading the Upaniṣads today, we also may have an experience of 'sitting close to those teachers', which is the literal meaning of the term *upaniṣad*.

### *A Message of Fearlessness*

The Upaniṣads stand in a class by themselves. They are immortal literature, and so we call them the Śrutis, the truths realized in transcendental experience beyond the reach of the senses and the sense-bound mind, but realizable by the pure mind. These truths are universal and perennial and will always inspire humanity. Today, the opportunity has come through modern means of communication, modern methods of transmitting ideas, to effect the widest diffusion of this immense fund of inspiration. Before Swami Vivekananda's time, very few people knew about the Vedānta, about the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. He took it upon himself to proclaim these truths from the housetops, both in the East and in the West (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, *ibid.*, p. 238):

'Let me tell you that we want strength, strength, and every time strength. And the Upaniṣads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects, to stand on their own feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upaniṣads.'

Śaṅkarācārya (A.D. 788-820) was the first teacher in historic times to make the Upaniṣads popular in this country. Before that, only a few select people, largely of the monastic community, knew the glory of the Upaniṣads. But Śaṅkarācārya opened up these

treasures to householders and to all citizens. It will do them good, he said. But still the Upaniṣads reached only a small minority. Today, however, thanks largely to the work of Swami Vivekananda, they are the property of one and all. They are there, in almost every Indian language, as also in English and several other foreign languages, for all who care to take them and be nourished by them. Proclaims Vivekananda (*ibid.*, p. 225):

'The truths of the Upaniṣads are before you. Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand.'

The Upaniṣads, however, require close study. A newspaper is also a kind of literature; but it is read in the morning and thrown away in the evening, and thus stands at the lowest level of the literary spectrum. The Upaniṣads are not like that; they stand at the highest end of that spectrum. They must be read again and again; every step in growth of mental maturity and clearness brings us closer and closer to the heart of this great literature. The more we read them, the more we get out of them, because their words come from the depths of the heart. 'Where words come out from the depth of truth', says Tagore in his *Gītāñjali*. The words of the Upaniṣads come out from the depth of truth. The sages experienced Truth; they saw something profound in man and nature, and they tried to capture and communicate this vision in snatches of poetry. The sublime poetry of the Upaniṣads has moved the hearts of thinkers and poets from ancient times to the present. Take this verse from the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (II. ii. 7):

*Yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvavid yasyaiṣa mahimā bhuvi—*

'He, the all-knowing One, the all-seeing One, whose glory is this universe.'

But is His glory confined only to nature outside, nature spread out in space and time? No, says the Upaniṣad; His glory is specially manifest in man himself, in the profound depths of his being:

*Divye brahmapure hyeṣa vyomnyātmā pratiṣṭhitaḥ—*

'This Ātman, the Self of man, is established in the luminous city of Brahman, which is the heart of man.'

His presence is felt through speech and mind and thought:

*Manomayaḥ prāṇasarīraneiā pratiṣṭhito'nne hrdayam sannidhāya—*  
'He manifests as mind and thought; the psychic and vital energy in

the human system functions in and through Him; and, present in the heart, He animates the physical body of man.'

Then the verse concludes with a beautiful, joyous note:

*Tadvijñānena paripaśyanti dhīrā  
ānandarūpam amṛtaṁ yadvibhāti—*

'The wise ones realize Him everywhere, inside as well as outside, Him whose form is bliss and immortality and whose glory overflows as the visible universe.'

The word *dhīra* in the text means 'the wise one' and indicates a combination of intelligence and courage. The Upaniṣads speak of man's greatness in two forms: first, his intelligence by which he understands the facts of the outer and inner worlds; second, his courage, heroism, by which he not merely knows but also achieves truth and excellence. Mere intelligence is not enough; courage is also necessary. Their combination makes for the highest character where the power of knowledge becomes transmuted into the energy of vision.

The capacity to scale the Everest of experience, to scale the highest peak of truth, comes to intelligence only when it blazons forth as courage. He is the *dhīra*, the wise one; he alone is entitled to realize the Ātman. What is the form of that realization? *Pari-paśyanti*, 'he realizes Him everywhere', inside as well as outside, in man as well as in nature. The whole of nature becomes ablaze with divinity to his purified vision. He realizes Him as *ānandarūpam amṛtaṁ yadvibhāti*, 'of the form of bliss and immortality which has overflowed as nature, as the visible universe'. The universe becomes transformed into waves and waves of bliss; into waves of bliss, *ānandalaharī*, and waves of beauty, *saundaryalaharī*, as expressed by Śaṅkarācārya. The Ātman shines in man and nature, in the sun and moon and stars, in every particle of dust. Now here is a vision captured in a snatch of poetry. This is just a sample; there are scores of such in the Upaniṣads.

This beautiful poetry of the Upaniṣads is the vehicle of the most profound thought. That thought cannot be penetrated easily. A superficial reading will not suffice; constant study and constant probing are required. In this study we are not studying a bit of nature outside of ourselves, like physics or chemistry. We are studying nature as expressed in our personality, and searching for the very core of that personality; our study relates to something

very closely connected with ourselves, our development, fulfilment, our total realization. Every sentence in the Upaniṣads has something corresponding to the deep-felt urges in ourselves. Śaṅkarācārya tells us in his *Brahma-Sūtra bhāṣya* that Brahman, the Absolute, which is the theme of the Upaniṣads and the starting point of the *Brahma-Sūtras*, is not an abstract truth remote from us and from our daily lives, but is a given datum of experience as the inner Self of all.

So there is great need for us to study this legacy, to understand it. The whole country will become galvanized with a new energy, a new resolve, a new discipline, even if only a little of the wisdom of the Upaniṣads can come into our lives. We read in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (II. 40): *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*—‘Even a little of this *dharma* will save us from great fear.’ Here is the message of fearlessness, of strength, of growth, development, and realization. Man must rise higher and higher and reach out towards perfection which is the unity of all-encompassing love and knowledge. This is the message, the clarion call, of the Upaniṣads—a call to dynamic action in the pursuit of Truth and total excellence, a call to carry forward evolution to the level of total life fulfilment through spiritual realization. What a hopeful message it is!

### *Universal Man*

The Upaniṣads summon man to a constant struggle to gain the highest, the struggle to achieve the eternal, the permanent, the immortal imbedded in life and experience. Other races and other cultures have spoken of man as a dominator of external nature, as a creator of values in the context of man’s collective life. In Greek thought, for example, we have the concept of the Promethean spirit, the power of the human spirit to overcome external obstacles and establish man’s supremacy over the forces of nature and, if necessary, over the forces of other human beings as well. The great defect in this line of thought, when pursued by itself, is that it does not carry all humanity together. It is based on the concept of man dominating everything external to himself; it does not stress the need to chasten and overcome the ego which results from such domination of his external environment. Man dominating his environment is a valid concept; it is a form of human excellence. The West has carried it to the highest level of expression; and we in India stand in great need of education in this excel-

lence on a nation-wide scale. But this is not the highest that man is capable of; Indian thought will not accord it the highest point in the scale of human excellence. That point involves the transcendence of the ego and the emergence of the universal within man. When man achieves supreme self-transcendence he finds that there is nobody to dominate. He finds that he is one with all, for he has realized the Self in all.

In other words, he discovers himself as the Universal Man, integrated within and without, and himself pulsating in the heart of man and nature. The liberation of this Universal Man out of the common men and women that we are is the aim of the Upaniṣads. It is this that makes the Upaniṣads of such contemporary interest and importance today. Universal Man is the theme of all progressive thinking today, and so the Upaniṣads stand in the forefront of all progressive thought in the modern world. Man, who has been completely submerged in nationalistic, racial, sectarian, or various other forms of limiting *milieus*, needs to be redeemed. Swami Vivekananda shared with modern man the glory of this Vedāntic message and showed what blessings it could confer on modern society. He also taught how to make this philosophy practical in workaday life. So a study of this profound literature, the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, an intelligent study of the philosophy imbedded in it—the Vedānta—in relation to contemporary thought and needs, will prove a rewarding experience for men and women everywhere.