

Mandukya Upanishad

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(Continued from the previous issue)

THE ‘MANIFESTATION OF DEEP SLEEP, dream and waking is analogous to the throwing up of the rope by the juggler’.¹¹ A juggler who appears to have climbed up the rope; really he is just there, but he seems to have climbed up the rope. ‘As he, the juggler, remains on the ground unseen (by the on-lookers) having veiled himself, as it were, by his illusion, so also is the truth with the Highest Reality known as *Turiya*. Therefore those noble souls seeking *Mokṣa* [or liberation] evince interest in the contemplation of this (the *Turiya*) but not in the creation which is futile’ (ibid.).

What is the use of thinking of the creation? Let us think of the magician, not the magic. That is more important. *Svapnamayasarupa*—alike in dream and illusion. It shows that all these false notions regarding manifestation ‘belong only to those who imagine the process of creation or manifestation’ (ibid.). Now take one sentence in Einstein: In the new physics there are the particles and there is the field. Both cannot be true for the field alone is true. This is the last sentence: The field alone is true. These are only temporary manifestations of that field. *Srishti* and *svapna-maya*—two types of creation.

‘*Ichchhamatram prabhoh srishtiriti srishtau vinishchitah, kalatprasutim bhutanam man-yante kalachintakah.*’ Various states of creation are mentioned here. ‘Those who affirm (the existence of the created objects) attribute this manifestation to the mere will of god’ (41). God said that there will be light and there was light.

That is it. ‘While those who look upon time as real, declare time to be the manifestor of all beings’ (ibid.). In all cosmic evolution and astronomy time is real. Things go on manifesting in a particular order. ‘His will in reality cannot but achieve its purpose. Such objects as pot ... are but the (manifestation of the) will (of the potter). They can never be anything external or unrelated to such will. Some say manifestation proceeds from time’ (ibid.).

Then: ‘*Bhogartham srishtirityanye kridartham-iti chapare, devasyaisha svabhavo’yamaptakamasya ka spriha.*’ Vedantic answer is given in the second line. ‘Others think that the manifestation is for the purpose of enjoyment (of God) while still others attribute it to mere diversion (on the part of God)’ (42). A play. But Vedanta says: ‘It is the very nature of the Effulgent Being (Atman) (for), what other desire is possible for Him whose desire is always in the state of fulfilment?’ (ibid.). It is ever fulfilled, what external desire can it have? That is how Vedanta answers. Enjoyment of god; a diversion of God. God diverts himself like play. ‘These two theories are refuted (by the author) by the single assertion that it is the very nature of the Effulgent (Brahman)’ (ibid.). Brahman becomes the world. ‘Taking this standpoint ... all the theories (of creation) herein (stated) are refuted, for the reason indicated by: “What could be the desire for manifestation on the part of Brahman whose desires are ever in the state of fulfilment?”’ (ibid.).

‘For the rope ... to appear as snake, no other

reason can be assigned than *Avidyā* [ignorance]' (ibid.). A rope appearing as a snake; there is no reason, your blindness that is all. In all systems including astronomy, that Big Bang, the fire ball, in one millionth of a second, the universe banged and then started and expanded and is expanding. The first few seconds were very momentous in the theory of creation, according to astronomy, but what made it expand, what made it have a big bang nobody can say. It just happened, you can say, that is all. But in the case of pure consciousness it is its own nature—consciousness sometimes close, sometimes open, sometimes contracted, sometimes expanded. That is all.

Now Shankara's introduction to the Upanishad—the fourth quarter we are going to discuss now, in order, this is done in the words of the text. Not conscious of the internal objects—that is how the text will begin. The *Turiya* 'does not admit of the description or indication by means of words, for all uses (affirmative or negative) of language fail to express it. Therefore *Turiya* is sought to be indicated by the negation of all attributes' (44). Not this, not this, not this, that is the language. Then it becomes a nothingness. 'No, because it is impossible for imagination to exist without a substratum. The illusion of silver, a snake, a man, or a mirage ... cannot be conceived as existing without the corresponding substratum of the mother-of-pearl, rope, stump or desert' (ibid.).

Turiya is described in verse seven of the Upanishad. In the eleventh note earlier, it is written: 'Negating ... the student, at first, by the process of negation separates Brahman from the superimposition and then realises that what has been negated as superimposition is, in fact, the very nature of Brahman' (47). When you separate the universe and Brahman is separate—*neti neti*, then look at universe, it is all Brahman only. What you negated you assert once again; it is all

Brahman. 'This is the highest Advaitic realisation' (ibid.). Everything is Brahman.

Now this negative description of *Turiya* is given: '*Na antahprajnam na bahishprajnam nobhayatahprajnam na prajnanaghanam na prajnam naprajnam. Adrishtam avyavaharyam agrahyam alakshanam achintyam avyapadeshyam ekatmapratyayasaram prapanchopashamam shantam shivamadvaitam chaturtham manyante sa atma sa vijneyah.*' That is the Atman that is to be realised. The last two words, '*sa atma*', that is the atman '*sa vijneyah*', that is to be realised.

'*Turiya* is not that which is conscious of the internal (subjective) world' (ibid.). Meaning thereby, it is not *Taijasa*, the self in the dream who is consciously internal. So we negate: is it *Turiya*? No. Then the conscious external world that is *Vaishvanara*; is it the one? No. That which is conscious of the external objective world—no it says. 'Nor that which is conscious of both, nor that which is a mass all sentiency, nor that which is simple consciousness, nor that which is insentient' (47–8). All negated. '(It is) unseen (by any sense organ), [*adrishtam*] not related to anything' (48). Because there is no second thing to relate, *avyavaharyam*. All relation is between two things, if there is only one thing there is no relation. Incomprehensible by the mind, it says. *Agrahyam*—cannot be grasped by the mind. Uninferable—where there is no indicative characteristic based on which you can make an inference. Unthinkable—beyond the realm of thought, *Avyapadeshyam*, indescribable. *Vyapadesha* is giving a name and describing; it is not possible. And then: *Ekatmapratyayasaram*—that is the most important word there—of the nature of consciousness constituting the one Self alone.

Prapanchopashamam, the negation of all phenomena. *Prapancha* means this world, this changing world is called *prapancha*. The entire molecular structures of the universe—negate

them and then you get a quantum field energy. Once you see the energy, the quantum field, none of these exist for you. *Shivam shantam*, all peace, the Atman is described as all peace. *Shantam*: all the tensions of the world merge and dissolve in the Atman. It is like when the waves disappear in the ocean—that state is called *shantam*. All the waves have gone—calm, silent, *shantam*. *Shivam*, all bliss, all auspicious. *Shivam* means that which is blissful or auspicious. *Advaitam*, non-duality. You don't say one. You merely say non-duality. Purest logic is the language of non-duality. Don't say oneness. oneness implies duality. You only deny duality. That is a very, very subtle logical position, non-dual. 'This is what is known as the fourth (*Turiya*). This is the *Ātman* and it has to be realised' (ibid.).

Behind these waves of individual consciousness, there is one eternal infinite pure consciousness that is our nature. Another Upanishad says: '*Tat tvam asi*', you are that. Don't identify with the *Vishva*, don't identify with *Taijasa* or *Prajna*. You are that, you are that. The infinite Atman. This is a very interesting discussion. These are denials. All these are denied. '(*Turiya*) is "unseen", and because it is unseen therefore it is "incomprehensible". *Turiya* cannot be apprehended by the organs of action. *Alakṣaṇam* means 'uninferable' because there is no *Liṅga* (common characteristic) for its inference' (51). In all logical inference a common characteristic here and there is related and you make an inference. For instance: All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal—the famous illustration in all books of logic. A common characteristic is taken and then universalised. Here there is no characteristic at all by which you could infer.

Hence it is unthinkable, indescribable; thought and speech cannot touch it. Unthinkable, because it is beyond the mind. Indescribable, beyond speech. Even the word Atman does

not comprehend it. Shankara says that the word 'Atman' and the concept of Atman do not touch the Atman. He has such wonderful thinking. It is 'essentially of the nature of consciousness consisting of Self. [Of the one Self.] *Turiya* should be known by spotting that consciousness that never changes in the three states' (ibid.). That is the *Turiya*. The Atman manifests clearly in all the three states as the 'I', 'I' background of everything; the infinite Atman that manifests in all the three states.

The Shruti also says the *Turiya* should be known by spotting that consciousness that never changes in the three states: waking, dream, sleep, and whose nature is that of a unitary self, non-dual self. 'The phrase may signify that the knowledge of the one *Ātman* alone is the means for realising *Turiya*, and therefore *Turiya* is the essence of this consciousness or Self or *Ātman*. The *Śruti* also says, "It should be meditated upon as *Ātman*"' (ibid.). *Atmetyevopasita*, that means your own Self, not something objective. Don't meditate upon the ultimate reality as a table or a chair or even as the sun, the moon, and stars. Your own Self is what the word 'Atman' denotes here.

'Several attributes, such as the "conscious of the subjective" ... associated with the manifestation [of *Vishva* and *Taijasa*] in each of the states have been negated' (ibid.). None of this can apply to *Turiya*.

By describing *Turiya* as 'the cessation of illusion', the attributes which characterise the three states ... are negated. Hence it is 'ever Peaceful' ... without any manifestation of change—and 'all bliss'. As it is non-dual ... devoid of illusory ideas of distinction, therefore it is called '*Turiya*', the 'Fourth', because it is totally distinct (in character) from the three quarters which are mere appearances. 'This, indeed, is the *Ātman* and it should be known', is intended to show that the meaning of the Vedic statement, 'That thou art' points to the relationless *Ātman* (51–2).

Atman has not a second thing to be related to; it itself is everything. ‘Like the rope (in the illustration) different from the snake’ (52). They are not two things there; only rope. But I see a snake. There is no relation there. You don’t relate the snake to the rope because snake is only in your mind, not the object. ‘That *Ātman* which has been described in such *Śruti* passages as, “unseen, but the seer”, “the consciousness of the seer is never absent” ... should be known. (The incomprehensible) *Turiya* “should be known”, and this is said so only from the standpoint of the previously unknown condition’ (ibid.). Because we don’t know it now; because it is always known. Only thing is you and I, we do not know now. You are busy with the waking and dream states. ‘*Duality* cannot exist when the Highest Truth is known’ (ibid.). It is not a separate thing called *Turiya*. There is no duality, but in relation to the original state, we call it the fourth. Actually, it is just one, non-dual, the highest bliss.

Then Gaudapada says: ‘*Nivritteh sarva-duhkhanam ishanah prabhuravyayah, advaitah sarvabhavanam devasturyo vibhuh smritah.*’ In it, indicated as the changeless and the Supreme Lord, there is a cessation of all miseries [all sorrow]. It is the one without the second among all entities. It is known as the *Turiya* (Fourth), effulgent and all-pervading’ (57).

In all the three states these distinctions and relations come; not the fourth one.

The three states are said to be in the *Ātman* because we, as *Turiya*, cognize them. Therefore all misery as well as its cause associated with the three states, are imagined by us to subsist in *Turiya*. It is because we do not realise this that we identify ourselves with the states and that we suffer from various kinds of miseries. But a complete cessation of miseries ensues if we realize *Ātman* as *Turiya* and thus witness the appearance and disappearance of ideas, viz., the states without identifying ourselves with [each one of] them (58).

We can pass through all this just like in a film you see, you don’t identify yourself with it, you enjoy it, that’s all.

Then: ‘*Karyakaranabaddhau tau ishyete vishvataijasau, prajnah karanabaddhastu dvau tau turye na siddhyatah.*’ ‘*Viśva* and *Taijasa* are conditioned by cause and effect’ (ibid.). All cause and effect determinism obtain only in waking and dream. ‘But *Prājña* is conditioned by cause alone’ (ibid.). There is no effect, only cause in the *Prajna* state. ‘These two (cause and effect) do not exist in *Turiya*’ (ibid.). It is beyond cause and effect.

The generic and specific characters of waking and dream and sleep and the *Turiya* are described. This will help us to understand the *Turiya*. ‘*Karya*’ means the effect, ‘*karana*’ is the cause. In Sanskrit, *karya-karana-baddha*, both are one—*karya*, *karana*—unity of cause and effect. *Prajna* is conditioned by cause alone. The cause or the reappearance of the dream and waking is there in *Prajna*. They went into it and came out of it. When causality is removed you get the *Turiya* state. ‘Cause’ meaning thereby the non-apprehension of reality. What do you get in sleep? Non-apprehension of reality in sleep is the condition of *Prajna*. Therefore these two, cause and effect—non-apprehension and misapprehension of reality. In waking and dream there is misapprehension, in sleep there is non-apprehension. These two cease to exist in the *Turiya*; not possible in *Turiya*.

Causal state is called the *bija* or the seed state. Seed and the tree—cause and the effect. There we do not see the truth. Say for example, take a seed, can you see the tree? Can you see the flower? Nothing. That’s called the causal state—non-apprehension. From it follows the result, *phalam*, which is misapprehension of truth. Once you have non-apprehension, you have misapprehension, wrong apprehension. In dream and waking

there are both, non-apprehension and misapprehension, both are there. 'But in deep sleep, there is only non-apprehension. As a matter of fact these two conditions mis-apprehension and non-apprehension, cannot be experienced separately. They have been differently classified only to facilitate understanding' (59).

'*Natmanam na paramshchaiva na satyam napi chanritam, prajnah kinchana samvetti turyam satsarvadriksada.*' '*Prājña* does not know anything of the self or the non-self, nor truth nor untruth' (ibid.). In deep sleep; nobody can commit a crime in deep sleep, or do a virtuous act in deep sleep. Can you give a donation in deep sleep? Can you steal? Nothing can you do. Neither good nor bad you can do in deep sleep. Whereas in dream you can do any of these and in waking, of course we do. All our crimes are in the waking state.

'*Prājña* does not know anything of the self or the non-self, nor truth nor untruth. But *Turiya* is ever existent and ever all-seeing. ... How is that *Prājña* is conditioned by cause? And how is it, again, that the two conditions of non-apprehension and mis-apprehension of Reality do not exist in *Turiya*? It is because *Prājña* does not, like *Viśva* and *Taijasa*, perceive anything of the duality' (ibid.). Only when you see duality all these problems arise. In *Prajna* there is no duality.

External to and other than itself and born of the cause known as *Avidyā*. Therefore it is conditioned by darkness characterised by non-apprehension of Reality which is the cause of mis-apprehension. As *Turiya* exists always, ever all-seeing, on account of the absence of anything other than *Turiya*, it is never associated with the causal condition characterised by non-apprehension of Reality. Consequently mis-apprehension of Reality which is the result of non apprehension is not found in *Turiya*. For, it is not possible to find in the sun, whose nature is to be ever-luminous, anything contrary to light (59–60).

In the earth we can see. That is 'darkness, or any other light different from itself. The *Śruti* also says: "The Knowledge of the seer is never absent." Or the phrase may be explained thus: *Turiya* may be designated as ever all-seeing because it subsists in all' (60). Waking, dream, sleep—everywhere, it is *Turiya*. 'This is also borne out by the following *Śruti* passage, "there is no seer other than this"' (ibid.). Only one seer.

The other day, an ophthalmic conference was going on in Hyderabad. A doctor of ophthalmology came there. To him I said: 'In Shankara's commentary there is one sentence.' He became excited over it. Shankara said: 'Sight is twofold—temporary and eternal.' Temporary sight is what you call the eye. Sometimes you can see, sometimes you don't see, and sometimes you get into trouble with the eye, but the light of the Atman, that sight is always there. So Shankara's one sentence that doctor took it immediately for his purpose. '*Drishtih dvividha, laukiki paramarthiki cha.*' Sight is twofold—one is worldly, which is temporary, the other is *paramarthiki*, universal, eternal, that can never be removed. Even the blind man—his knowledge of the Atman is the same. So these are the two eyes there are for sight and in between there is the third eye, *prajna-chakshu*. That is why in India people put a mark on the forehead at more or less this place. *Prajnachakshu*, the eternal eye of the vision.

'*Dvaitasya agrahanam tulyam ubhayoh prajna turyayoh, bijanidrayutah prajnah sa cha turye na vidyate.*' What a fine analysis and classification! 'The non-cognition of duality is common to both *Prājña* and *Turiya*' (ibid.). In both states you don't cognise duality—both in deep sleep and in *Turiya*. And in the other two states you cognise duality—waking and dream. But '*Prājña* is associated with sleep in the form of cause and this (sleep) does not exist in *Turiya*' (ibid.).

What is sleep? Non-apprehension; that does not exist in the *Turiya*. In sleep you have non-apprehension. Mis-apprehension in these two—waking and dream—non-apprehension there. This non-apprehension does not exist in the *Turiya*. This is the causal state, this is trans-causal.

‘This *śloka* is meant to remove a doubt that has arisen incidentally. The doubt is this: How is it that it is *Prājñā* alone and not *Turiya* that is bound by the condition of cause, since the non-cognition of duality is the common feature of both?’ (61). Why do not you say that *Turiya* also has got non-apprehension? ‘This doubt is thus removed: The meaning of the phrase *Bījanidrāyuta* is: *Nidrā* or sleep is characterised by the absence of the Knowledge of Reality’ (ibid.). In sleep you have the absence of the knowledge of reality—that is the sleep state. ‘This is the cause which gives rise to the cognition of varieties’ (ibid.). Therefore you descend to waking and dream, where varieties exist. ‘*Prājñā* is associated with this sleep which is the cause. It is because *Turiya* is ever all-seeing, therefore the sleep characterised by the absence of the Knowledge of Reality does not exist in *Turiya*’ (ibid.). That is why you say: ‘He is going to sleep as a fool, returns back a fool also.’ No change at all. The same fool who went to sleep and returns. Non-apprehension means that. But in *Turiya* when you go everything is different—pure consciousness. ‘Therefore the bondage in the form of causal condition does not exist in *Turiya*’ (ibid.). That causal relation of non-apprehension gives rise to mis-apprehension, wrong apprehension.

‘The contention that *Turiya* and *Prājñā* are both characterised by the condition of cause on account of the common feature of the non-perception of duality in both the cases, is due to a wrong inference based upon insufficient data. The *Prājñā* is thought to be the causal state

because it is the immediately preceding condition of the manifestations of the waking [and dream state] ... But this does not apply to *Turiya* because it is not the immediately preceding condition of any state. *Turiya* is not a state which is antecedent or subsequent to any other state. It is the substratum of all the states. [Eternal ‘I’ behind all the changing ‘I’s.] *Turiya* is non-dual, changeless and pure consciousness itself. Hence it cannot be said to produce anything. Therefore causal condition cannot obtain in the case of *Turiya*’ (61).

So what you call the causeless, that alone can be the absolute. Whatever is causal is relative. So relativity covers all aspects of cause and effect relation. Go beyond it, it is pure absolute—all one and non-dual. Absolute cannot be two, only one. Shankara asks the question: ‘When is one established in *Turiya*? It is thus replied: During the states of dream and waking when one wrongly cognises Reality like the perception of the snake in the place of the rope, he is said to be experiencing dream. *Nidrā* or sleep, characterised by ignorance of Reality’ (62–3). That is the meaning of the word ‘*nidra*’: ignorance of reality. It is the common feature of the three states—waking, dream, and sleep. In all the three states you don’t cognise reality. That is why it is called *nidra*—all the three. Real waking is only *Turiya*, where you are always aware of the reality, pure consciousness. The other states are all reflections of pure consciousness—the waking and dream.

Now, these ideas are appearing in many books dealing with the nature of reality. Just now I was reading an English journal on the study of reality published by a group in England. There I read a scientist’s lecture and the introduction by the editorial team from London. There it is said: ‘Is the world a reflection of the Atman or is Atman a reflection of the world?’ Till now scientists said

that the Atman is a reflection of the world. Now the truth is otherwise, it is told there. The world is the reflection of the Atman.

‘*Nidrā* or sleep, characterised by the ignorance of Reality, is the common feature of the three states. *Viśva* and *Taijasa*, on account of their having the common feature of *Svapna* (dream) and *Nidrā* (sleep), form a single class’ (62–3). That is, waking and dream form one class. There you cognise duality and there is non-apprehension of reality.

That *Nidrā* (sleep) which is characterised by the predominance of wrong apprehension (of Reality) constitutes the state of inversion which is *Svapna* (dream). But in the third state, *Nidrā* (sleep), alone, characterised by the non-apprehension of Reality is the only inversion. ... This forms the second or the other class implied in the text. ... Therefore when these two classes of the nature of effect and cause, characterised by the misapprehension and non-apprehension respectively (of Reality), disappear by the destruction of the inversion characterised by effect and cause, by the knowledge of the nature of the Highest Reality, then one realises *Turiya* which is the goal. Then one does not find in *Turiya* this condition, the characteristics of which are these two (effect and cause), and one thus becomes firm in the Highest Reality which is *Turiya* (63).

‘*Nidra*’ means sleep. It includes the three states of waking, dream, and sleep. All the three states are characterised by the absence of the knowledge of reality. That is called *nidra*, that is, sleep. A very interesting logic you will find in the next chapter. ‘Whatever is seen is unreal’—that is the sentence. In the beginning, the logic: Whatever is seen is unreal. The seer alone is real. That is going to come there.

Read the book on scientific outlook by Bertrand Russell, a pre-war book—post-war things are revolutionary things. Even pre-war, there was

scientific outlook. There he says that according to today’s science in whatever we see, we see only ourselves. Objects and other things are nothing but oneself. That is the conclusion you come to. He says it in the language of present-day science.¹² Here it is the same. Normally, what do we mean by unreal? What you do not see is unreal and what you see is real. Here, we are going to say that whatever you see is unreal. To be seen is the characteristic of being unreal. You reverse the whole thing. To be seen is the one test of being unreal and waking and dream are seen and so they are unreal. That is the logic. The seer alone is real. If you only come to the seer this logic will apply, otherwise this logic will not apply. Generally, to be seen is to be real. On the contrary, here to be seen is unreal. We are going to study that. Because, there is something else.

I have dealt with it in a different way in the book *Science and Religion*.¹³ We are in search of fundamental particles. We thought molecules were fundamental. Then came the atom. Democritus’s atom is the modern molecule. Then came the atom, then the subatomic particles. So many new particles we have been creating through our accelerators, thinking this is fundamental or this one is fundamental. Now quarks are fundamental. Still, they are searching. It is your technical inability not to be able to break it. You can go on breaking. Any particle can be broken indefinitely unless your technology prevents. That is all. In that book I have said that the search for fundamental reality in these external particles is an impossibility. You can always go on cutting further and further but if at all you want to see fundamental particle, fundamental reality, indivisible, you must go to the Self. That is the indivisible, not the object. The seer, not the seen. There you can see indivisibility. Schrödinger says that consciousness is one and indivisible.¹⁴

You cannot divide consciousness. Satchidananda is an ocean. You may put a stick here and a stick there in the ocean and say, 'Oh yes! I have divided the ocean.' What a foolish thing to say! If you think that you have divided the ocean you will be fooling yourself. The ocean is indivisible. So, if at all there is any undivided reality, indivisible reality—don't seek it in the *drishyam*, the world of objects. Seek it in the world of the *drik*, the seer. There Vedanta discovered the one indivisible reality of the Atman as pure consciousness. That is the challenge thrown to science. Today's technology will not be able to divide these quarks further but probably hundred years later more powerful accelerators can come. You would have broken it still further, still further, still further. A fraction of a second is their life, but still you create. But, later on, the subject changes. We are not searching for particles in that low level; you go deep you see only resonances. A new word enters there, 'resonances', more like a sound. Matter is nothing but a sound. And again you have come to this theory of sound: *Sphotavada*, God as the word. The sound Om and it comes to Om; that is all, the whole thing is Om. So, resonance comes there in physics dealing with fundamental particles, dealing with quarks, and the like.

Now the next sentence in this connection is a very important and highly quoted verse: '*Anadimayaya supto yada jivah prabudhyate, ajamanidramasvapnamadvaitam budhyate tada.*' 'When the Jiva or the individual soul sleeping ... not knowing the Reality ... under the influence of the beginningless *Māyā*'¹⁵ or ignorance for ages. They have been in this state of ignorance for ages, because reality we don't know. We see the world, we see the objects, we see everything, but reality we do not see. When this jiva wakes up from this sleep of non-apprehension of

reality, then what does it realise? It then realises itself as the non-dual, beginningless, and dreamless reality of the Atman. This Atman is dreamless, wakingless, beginningless reality. That you realise as 'I am that'; 'That is my true nature'. It is a very important verse. *Anadi* maya—maya, which is beginningless. This kind of perception of wrong things in the world, when did it start? You go back in time, go back, go back; you will never find the end at all. Ask the question in your dream. When did this dream begin? Beginningless; a dreamer's dream is beginningless but yet it is not endless. Beginningless but endful. All ignorance is beginningless but endful. Why? When you strike a matchstick in a cave which is dark since the beginning of creation, within one second all darkness vanishes though it is beginningless. So beginningless can be endful. All ignorance of the true nature of the Atman or our own true nature, though beginningless, it ends. When this knowledge comes and the Atman is known, then you realise: 'I have always been this Atman not that today I have become the Atman. I have always been this Atman but ignorance created this condition of illusion and delusion. I mistook myself as this and that.' That is a very important verse. *Prabudhyate*, when you wake up from this sleep of non-apprehension of reality—that is the meaning of sleep, non-apprehension of reality—then you realise *ajam*, the unborn; *anidram*, without any sleep; *asvapnam*, without any dream; *advaitam*, the non-dual self. *Tada budhyate*, he realises this as his true nature. That is the highlight of this series of verses, this particular verse.

Let us now see Shankara's commentary on it. 'One who is called the *Jiva*, the individual soul, [this I so and so, that limited self] (whose characteristic is to be) subject to the law of transmigration, [constantly dying, born, dying, born, that is what a jiva is concerned with] sleeping

under the influence of *Māyā* (ibid.). That is the language. Maya has got two aspects as Sri Ramakrishna has said: one that pulls you down, another that pulls you up. Both are maya. When you sit in meditation, that is maya. When you do murder, that is also maya. All within maya but one is called *vidya*-shakti and the other is called *avidya*-shakti of the same maya.

So, this human system is a playground of the forces of maya. You have the power to alter or develop it by choosing the maya that takes you up. That freedom is yours. That is called ethical sense, moral development, spiritual development—everything, or to be pulled up—you have got the freedom. That is called maya-shakti. Sri Ramakrishna said about *avidya*-maya, *vidya*-maya. If you see corruption in society, a wife can stop a husband being corrupt. But wife can also induce him to be corrupt. So, she becomes an *avidya*-maya influence. He can be the same with respect to her *avidya*-maya influence or *vidya*-maya. So, this is a beautiful, practical idea given by Sri Ramakrishna of the concept of maya—*avidya*-shakti, *vidya*-shakti; *avidya*-maya, *vidya*-maya. And our heart is the playground of both and for us it is to choose. In the *Katha Upanishad* second chapter you read, that one is called pleasure and the other is called welfare. Both these approach every human being. Those who want instant satisfaction they adopt pleasure. Those who want ultimate welfare they adopt ethical life called *shreya*—*preya* and *shreya*. And one is *avidya* and the other is *vidya*. These words come in the opening verse of the second chapter of the *Katha Upanishad*: ‘*Shreyashcha preyashcha manushyametaḥ*.’ *Shreya*

and *preya* come to every human being—please take me, please take me; picturesque description. I will be your companion, please take me. He who is subject to the tyranny of immediate, pleasant experience, he chooses *preya*.

(To be continued)

Notes and References

11. *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad With Gauḍapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1995), 40.
12. The reference is to: ‘The world that we can picture is the world that we see.’ Bertrand Russell, *The Scientific Outlook* (London: Unwin, 1954), 69.
13. See Swami Ranganathananda, *Science and Religion* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013).
14. See ‘Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown.’ Erwin Schrödinger, *What is Life?* (London: Cambridge University), 89.
15. *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad With Gauḍapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary*, 64.

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