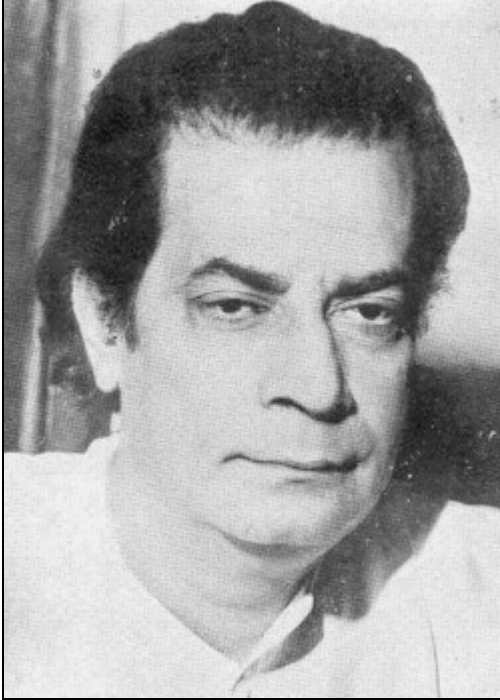


## Chapter 3

## The Vedic Life

In this hall of audience, where Dada meets his brethren, they are all pleasantly surprised at his genial versatility. He keeps an open mind on all subjects of human interest. He listens to all topics and responds to all queries with the same sweet eagerness.

His own teachings, however, are not elaborate. He chooses to concentrate on a few cardinal values. They are: *God is one; religion is one; mankind is one; language is one.*



Dadaji

Dadaji says: *God, in philosophical term, is all-inclusiveness or fullness (purna); in mathematical symbol, God is zero (sunnya).* Both are mystic readings. But issues that emerge from this simple premise are manifold and have profound implications. Dadaji says: *If God is everything and nothing at the same time, the worship of Him must be such as may have appeal to everyone and hurt no one. As such, remembrance (jap) and penance (tap) are not likely to help one reach His presence. The right road to meet Him is to know individual self as manifestation of the universal Self. To run away from the world is not the way to win union with God. To get unmindful of the work that has fallen to one's lot is false indifference. To do one's allotted work with unconcern about gain is the art of gaining God's grace. To work without attachment is the true kind of detachment. With such a turn of mind, to work is to pray, as duty then becomes devotion, work becomes worship.*

The injunction of the Gita rings clear: *nityam kuru karma tvam – daily do your work. Non-attachment, Dada warns, must not be any encouragement to escapism. Accept fate, without*

*fear of it. Have tolerance for the trials of life and carry on with cheerful patience. His idea is: Destiny (Prarabdha) is just what cannot be resisted; but you can lessen a little or somewhat shorten its duration, if you bear it with cool judgment and quiet resignation. There is no dribbling to avoid what has been ordained. What is providence is your own making, the result of your deed. It is a cycle of action and reaction.*

To abide by fate, one may argue, is to accept the position that a person is unfree. To say so is to admit that human being is subject to the effects of deeds in their last life (Nyayasutra, IV, 1, 19). If so, it renders hollow the high sermon of the Vedanta (IV, 1, 3) that one's soul is no other than God. Dadaji's simple answer is: *If you heartily believe in the triumphant nature of the soul as indivisible from God, you may then very well believe that the effect – be it pain or pleasure – cannot touch and tarnish you; and with that belief in the supremacy of the over-soul you should be able to treat fate with sublime serenity.*

The grand doctrine of Ekamevadvitiyam – God as one without a second – has now been, Dadaji fears, a mere phrase, a comfortable theory. In practice, sectarian worship prevails, and wrangling in the name of God has been a show of piety. Unseemly conflicts on the plea of faith have been in vogue all over the world. Though religious wars of old have been replaced by political wars, smaller but mortal feuds over faith go on everywhere.

Cleavage over religion is a great woe. *Wrangling over religion takes away peace of mind which, Dada says, is the initial value of religion.* The test of true religious life is, in the words of the Gita, cheerfulness of spirit (II, 65) and glow of inner light (V, 24). And why should you quarrel when God is as much yours as mind, when God is flawlessly equal (V, 19) and absolutely homogeneous in relation to all? God is equally present in all beings (IX, 29). There should, then,

be no bad blood for the sake of good God. One may worship the God of one's own ideal and follow its prescriptions without any friction with another. Let one go by one's own mental constitution and habitual affiliation, which will decide one's choice and course of worship. When all religions flow from God (Vedanta II, i, 37) one is sure to earn God's blessing and gain blissful life, only if one has real faith in his chosen symbol of God (Vedanta IV, I, 4-5). One can appreciate intellectual dispute, but acrimony over religion is unwholesome and unworthy.

With the change of times, along with other things, logic of religion also changes. The Gita (VII, 10) has a beautiful simile: God is the seed of all religions. It means: seeds grow into trees and trees in turn offer seeds which again are born into ever new trees. But then, the changing religions should not be viewed as alien to one another. *Unity in diversity*, Dada often emphasizes, *is the law of creation*. For, a religion is not an outer form, even while every faith finds a form of its own. The underlying unity is derived from the fact that religion originates from – as Svetasvatara Upanisad says – “the inner soul of everything.”

Inasmuch as a religion has its source in the inner being, it is bound to be indefinable. True religion or spiritual experience is too fine for analysis. As Katha Upanisad (VI, 12) says: “he inner being is not expressible by words, nor visible by eyes, nor conceivable by mind.” Even then a vision of the holy life is quite possible when we have acquired the knowledge of the fundamentals. As the Sruti informs: Eka jnanena sarvam vijnatam bhavati - by the knowledge of One all else becomes known.

This is the gist of Dada's message: *God is one, mankind is one*. God is the source of birth – janmadyasya yatah – and this is the conclusion of the Vedanta that has been stated right at its beginning (I, i, 2). Differences are only matters of appellations and appearances. (See Cowell, *Sarvadarsan Samgraha*). The whole thesis is obvious, not at all farfetched. As Max Muller observes: “The true Self according to the Vedanta is all the time free from all conditions, free from names and forms”. (*Indian Philosophy*, p. 207). Behind the veil of names and forms shines the soul – call it over-soul or super-soul”

“When a man feels the rhythmic throb of the soul-life of the whole world in his own soul, then he is free.” - Tagore, *Sadhana*.

As people have grown in numbers and spread out on many lands of different climate and habits of living, languages have grown many as they have been used by people of various regions. It is said: “Bible is the word of God.” As God is one and the common source, language used by all is likely to be alike. And, without any such inference, when word was not yet vocal and people used to give out their mind by a sign of hands or eyes or of the head, all would mean or understand in the same way. When words replaced signs these universal mute notes have not altogether come into disuse. Professor Northcote Parkinson (*The Fur-lined Moustrap*) in most brilliant thesis, transformed the familiar phrase “from hand to mouth” to indicate the transit of utterance from signals to words, from gesture to language.

When expressions ceased to be inarticulate, spoken words took on different turns and mould according to forms of languages. It may be interesting to note that Yaska, the oldest author of Vedic philology (*Nighantu and Nirukta*) says: “Words are used to designate objects with regard to everyday affairs in the world, on account of their comprehensiveness and minuteness.” Yaska's commentator, Durga observes: “The movements of hands and the winking of eyes, etc., are also comprehensive; they will express the meaning and in this manner we will be saved the trouble of studying grammar and the bulky Vedic literature.” Yaska's preference for word to gesture, “on account of the economy of effort,” approaches a Parkinsonian twist.

However, language as an art of expressing thought had its course of evolution. Muir (*Sanskrit Text Book*, vol II, p. 275) says: “It is true that more may be said in favor of the hypothesis that Zend is derived from Sanskrit.” Max Muller observes: “I shall be able to prove that the Greek is derived from the Sanskrit.” (*Science of Language*, p. 185). Earlier, in the same book (p 3 & p. 29) he expresses: “We cannot tell as yet what language is.” He traces its evolution: “Not as a production of nature, but simply as a work of human art.” The point here is not which language is the oldest. Our concern here is that human oneness is reflected in the growth of human language. And what little has been noted herein very well endorses Dadaji's creed: *Language is One*. By virtue of the common human art.

Anyway, Dada's fundamental tenet is human harmony. Here he takes up from where Sri Chaitanya left, who had discovered Brindaban, the seat of Krishna Lila. It was not a mere

topographical discovery. It was a spiritual recovery. Brindaban is a composition of two words: Brinda (chorus) and Ban (prayer). Sri Chaitanya initiated communal worship of Lord Krishna in company with cowherd boys and girls. Dada now resets the old human harmony to the new tunes. Brindabanlila, in its idyllic temper, is in a way a distant echo of the solemn Vedic congregational worship (Rg. X, 191): May we go together, speak together, and all be of one mind.

Religion today has lost its ancient direction and the ideal of human union has been wiped away. Religion that sprang from elevated emotion has been continually contaminated by crude customs, paving the path to ruin. Yet, today, religious bigotry and biliousness is not the only menace, the only curse. Whatever rejects fellowship, glorifies conflicts, throws away the union of humanity, puts out the holy light and darkens the soul, is a grim threat to humanity. It spreads out a horrid shadow across the splendor of love, brings about a painful perversion of the divinity of the inner being. What follows, then is pernicious distortion of the image of God that is humanity.

Thus our precious modern times are under woeful stress and storm. All our philosophy and science are of no avail. So, religion is not the only villain of the piece; science is in its company. Indeed, all that is high has been laid low. Politics that initiated the pursuit of happiness, economics that evolved the law of equality, industry that shaped the production of goods for good life, in short, all the instruments for the joy of living, all the ennobling animal life – has been damaged, deranged and defiled. A progressive decay and devastation of all cherished values goes on irresistibly. An endless engineering is at work on polluting the roots of humanity. This maddening melody of destruction is due to directing progress towards merely physical prosperity at the cost of spiritual poverty. And the mingled cries of all the tragic developments have called for a timely reincarnation of the redeemer. I feel he is Dada; and you as well may feel so, I hope.

These brief notes only reveal the broad agreement of the Dada movement with the ancient foundations. A better understanding of what these were may here require a general review of the Vedic life. An attempt at this is a delicate job for one of my little ability, and may as such be looked upon with a kindly indulgence.

Round about two thousand years before Christ, a people were out in quest of a new homeland, large and liberal. They came across the Hindu Kush hills and halted, first, on the bank of Kubha (Kabul). By and by, in succeeding waves of migration, they entered India and built their habitations on the banks of the five streams of the Indus. Maybe, Vedic hymns were beginning to be done at home already on the eve of the first exodus. Maybe the earliest colonizers came singing a few homemade strains on their march route. That was likely to inject enthusiasm on the move.

The immigrants were grateful that Nature was gracious, that hardship of livelihood was over. In profound faith they asked: Grant us great riches, fair in form, of all good things, wealth which light labor may attain – RV. I, 48, 13. Gratified with earthy prosperity, the Aryan settlers earned leisure to yearn after the higher values of the mind. – Gods, may we with our ears listen to what is good, and with our eyes see what is good, ye Holy Ones. – RV. I, 89, 8.

Fortune smiled on these ancient colonizers. A land of beauty and bounty lay before them. Plenty, power, pleasure: all was at hand. Their thankful hearts streamed out in rosy ecstasy, as they put forth prayer to Usas (Dawn): So grant thou us dwellings wide and free from foes, O Goddess, give us food with kin. – RV I, 48, 15. To soma (celestial nectar) votaries asked for the boon so that they might be presently placed: Wherein the light of heaven is set, and everlasting luster shines. Where lucid worlds are full of light, where food and full delight are found. Where Happiness and transports, where joy and felicities combine, and longing wishes are fulfilled. – RV. IX, 113, 7-11.

The first settlement in the interior tracts across the Indus was around the holy land named Brahnavarta, bounded by Saraswati and Drsadvati, whose musical streams mingled with Vedic hymns. In that remote age Saraswati was a broad and copiously flowing river. It was from its mellifluous notes that Goddess of Speech was named Saraswati.

As the population increased there was periodical move farther east. And now arose problems of conquest which led to development of kingship and the crafts of war. Also the art of hymn making took finer turns and firmer roots. The centre of the advanced learning was not Brahmarsidesa – the land between Ganga and Ymuna. It was here that the three principal Vedas - Trayi: Rg, Sam and Yaju – were completed.

The Aryan polity, in this spate of expansion, grew more conquest minded. A warlike ring formed around Kuru-Pancala, somewhere within the modern Delhi-Lucknow zone. It was her that was waged the first all-Aryan war. King Sudasa led the conquering army. He and his opponents had secured allies from the native, called Dasa or Dasyus. This first big battle among the Aryans themselves was fought probably because all Arayan emigrants did not belong to the same clan or stock. It was, however, the one language, Sanskrit, that gave them all a common name or bond.

Enmity was for a while with dasyu or dasa, originally meaning "a native" inasmuch as they were opposed to their expulsion and subjugation. The new arrivals started rivalry. The fair-skinned, Sanskrit-speaking conquerors with prominent nose complained that the native were black-skinned, their flat noses were odd-looking while their language to them was an unintelligible jargon. But time came and when intermarriage as well as interchange of gods became a practice. An agreeable move of reconciliation steadily began. Feuds were tiring and sex-needs were tempting.

So the newcomers looked out for understanding with the natives. The term dada or dasyu was derived from desa, i.e. the country of their origin. There were systematic attempts at converting durhids (foes) into surhids (friends). Yearning for peace prevailed on the whole. Vishnu, in leading the Aryan migrators on the line of march, came singing a song, the burden of which was: "Who shall fight against us, them only we shall slay." (Yajurveda, I, 25) Not very long afterwards, peace became a felt necessity. In sonorous music the song of universal peace was chanted:

Aum, peace be in the heavenly regions, peace in the middle spaces, peace on earth, peace in the waters, peace in the plants, peace in the woods; the gods all have peace, God of gods have peace, all creatures have peace; peace, living peace, reign all around. This all-embracing peace comes within me. – Yajurveda, XXXVI, 17

This superb cadence calls to mind the Prophet's message: "Let there be no violence in religion." (Sale, *Al Qur'an*, p. 503)

Our modern world with its pride in advancement has been torn with far devastating wars and atrocities. Its horror and hideousness is incomparable. The poet in great pain appealed:

In this galloping competition of hurtfulness, on the slope of a bottomless pit, no nation dares to stop or slow down. Today, more than ever before in history, the aid of spiritual power is needed. The God of humanity has arrived at the gates of the ruined temples of the tribe. Though he has not yet found his alter, I ask the men of simple faith, wherever they may be, to believe that it is far better to be wise and worshipful than to be clever and supercilious. – Tagore, *Religion of Man*

However, good sense dawned on the scene of strife in ancient India, and people chose to be wise and worshipful. The message of the Veda went ringing to all without distinction of caste and creed and communities:

Yathemam vaca kalyanim avadani janebhyoh brahma rajanyabhyam surdraya ca aryaya ca svayacarnaya – Yajurveda, XXVI, 2. (The Vedic message of goodwill I proclaim to all men, and you also proclaim it to Brahamana and Kshatriya, Sudra and Vaisya, relations and non-relations.)

But who can hold the reins of war? However, one political improvement was at work. Both Aryans and non-Aryans from now, took sides, and as such Aryan camps on both sides could count on non-Aryan allies. (RV. X, 154, 3; cf. *Medhatithi's Commentary on Manu*; VII, 59)

The two main settlements together had been named Saptasindhu, watered by seven rivers: Kubha on the west and Saraswati in the east, with five Indus Rivers in between. Expansion continued. The next sweep of settlement extended to what was then called Madhyadesa, in between Drsadvati and Yamuna, and it lay on the north of the Vindhya hills. A farther spread out area lay between Saraju and Gandak rivers, and this division was named Kosala and Vedeha. It was in the reign of king Janaka that the great sage Yajñvalkyā held conversations that are reported in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad.

The whole area was now renamed Bharata. This name still holds good (in a way, for it is only spoken aside), while mainly and for all practical purposes the name that is current is India. It seems that we do not have a national name for our country. Hindustan has been cancelled and Bharata is old fashioned.

As the gospel of the Veda gained influence, professional expertise grew up. To teach the Veda was looked upon as a need for the maintenance of society and continuance of culture. Textbooks on Vedic rites, appended to the Vedas, called Brahmanas, were designed to give directives of sacrifices by which believers were assured life in heaven after death, in addition to felicities desired in this mortal life.

In addition to rules and procedures, stories were created to illustrate the lessons and the value of performances as well as to moralize on the services of the priests. These stories in the Brahmanas were used as models for the later popular Puranas, eighteen in number, following the two great epics: the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. The latter epic was begun later but completed earlier, while the *Mahabharata*, regarded as the fifth Veda, continued to be written over a much longer period. This is the view held by Winternitz.

In between the Vedic Brahmanas and the Epics the metaphysical musings of the Upanisad kept humming in ample rhythm and sonorous vibrations. A most noticeable social feature of the age of the Upanisad is that both Brahmins and Kshatriyas figured as seers of the Supreme. Casts were yet nebulous. A Kshatriya, as king, as also the marital representative of the community, was the patron of the society. As such he held a position not at all inferior to Brahmins.

In the course of time, Brahmins claimed superiority over Kshatriyas and built up a vast legend to prove their supremacy. The central story was the one that related how Brahmin sage Vasistha overpowered the Kshatriya sage Viswamitra. But in the Veda the Brahmin hero Vasistha had a comparatively minor role, while Viswamitra ranked as the maker of the most celebrated hymn, the one that was regarded as the core and kernel of Brahminic worship, the Savriti mantra sung in Gayatri meter. More, Viswamitra's son, Madhuchhanda was the maker of the hymn to god Agni, with which the Rigveda opens. Indeed, he founded the school of new hymn makers.

The Ramayana mentions both Viswamitra and Visistha, but does not spin any legend of rivalry between the two. Viswamitra had the honor of preparing the charu (celestial paste) to be eaten by the queens of Dasaratha, who had arranged sacrificial ceremony for the birth of son. And then, it was Viswamitra who lead Rama to the task of bending the big bow of Siva as the credential to marry Sita. It was in the *Mahabharata* that the legend of dispute between Vasistha and Viswamitra was mentioned. Obviously this part of the *Mahabharata* was an interpolation of the later times when Brahminic authority was in full swing. The same legend was also related in a Brahmana, which is a later annotation of the Veda; this too belonged to a later period. In the Upanisad there is no quarrel between Brahmin and Kshatriya.

A new vision of spiritual life was opened as the Veda was complete, and the sages swung over to a more finely sensitive and indefinable idealism. Epochal change in values had set it. Handsome gifts from gods were not more satisfying. The old live gods retired, more or less, in favor of the one abstract God, various named: Ultimate Reality, Infinite Self, Super Atman, and generally mentioned as Brahman.

It was here in the Upanisad that the term Brahma began to be used for God. In the Veda, as far as nearly the end of it, Brahma meant Veda. Brahma meaning god is found only at the very extreme end of the Veda, which meaning was adopted in the Upanisad. Brahma in the sense of the Veda has been mentioned occasionally in later literature, for example, in the Gita. The original meaning has been distinctly noted by Sayana in a commentary on Atharvaveda (XI, iii, 26): brahma vedah tadvaditum silam esam iti brahmavadinah: they are Brahmins whose profession is to give instruction on Brahma i.e. Veda.

The seers of the Upanisad do not hold uniform or similar ideas in all respects, and they revel in amazing freedom of thought, having right to hold independent inquiries. Whatever that may be the Upanisad remains the most glorious heritage of Hindu spiritual thought. There are many volumes, while only thirteen of them are considered classical, as these only have been particularly commented upon by Samkara, who appeared in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD.

The Upanisad did not commend neglect of the material world but it resolutely denied the value of attachment to it. This life and the other life were to be in perfect accord, and yet it warned

against relying on earthly opulence and felicity as any aim of happiness. The abiding truth is straightaway told in profound simplicity:

“Maitreyi”, said Yajnavalkya, “lo, verily, I am about to go forth from this state. Behold: let me make a final settlement for you and that Katyayani.”

Then said Maitreyi, “If now, sire, the whole earth filled with wealth was mind, would I be immortal thereby?”

“No,” said Yajnavalkya.

As the life of the rich, even so would your life be. Of immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth.”

Then said Maitreyi, “What would I do with that through which I may not be immortal? What you know, sire, that indeed, tell me.”

Then Yajnavalkya, “Ah, lo, dear as you are to us, dear is what you say: Come, sit down, I shall explain to you. But while I am expounding, do you seek to ponder thereon.”

The sage gave a long lesson and concluded:

“This great Being, infinite, limitless, is just a mass of knowledge. After dissolution into the elements, i.e. death, there is no consciousness.”

Then spoke Maitreyi, “Herein, indeed, you have bewildered me, sir.”

Then spoke Yajnavalkya, “Lo, verily, I speak not bewilderment (moha). Sufficient, lo, verily is this for understanding.”

Then he explained the inherent contradiction in the task of understanding: “Then whereby and whom would one understand? Whereby one would understand him by whom one understands this all? Lo, whereby would one understand the understander?” (Bhadaranyaka Upanisad, II, iv, 1-14)

Is the quest to be given up? Despair is not the ring of the Upanisad. The sage only said that the vision of the One cannot be gained by intellect; it is obtainable by perception. It is knowable, after all:

By knowing Him as Lord (Isa), men become immortal. I know this mighty Person of the color of the sun, beyond darkness. Only by knowing Him does one pass over death. There is no other path for going there: God who is without beginning and without end, in the midst of confusion. The Creator of all, of manifold form, the One embracer of the universe – by knowing Him one is released from all fetters.

– Svetasvatara Upanisad, III, 8 & V, 13

The Vedic vision of one God for the whole universe is a bit different from that of the Old Testament: “The God of the ancient Israel is the God of the land of Israel.”

At the earliest dawn of mental awakening, when individuals took up thinking, their first thoughts turned on themselves. What is this life that beats within? How has it come about? Has it just happened? Or, has some power – unknown – taken a fancy to bring forth life? But then why the drama of life is to have a tragic end in death? Or is death only a change, no end? Is soul as unreal as body or is it linked with the reality of God? And if there be a God has He created simply out of fun? Or, has He a plan about it? Finally, what is that Creator to me? Amused by life while afraid of death, individuals have been moving in twilight between doubt and beyond doubt. A sense of assurance about the cosmic power and their relation to it they so much want and do not have enough of it. As John Dewey writes, “Insecurity generates the quest for certainty.” (*The Quest for Certainty*)

It is this primary question that the Upanisad offers to answer. This is what the sage Aruni tells his son Svetaketu:

As the bees, my dear, prepare honey by collecting the essences of different flowers and reducing the essence to a unity, as they are not able to discriminate ‘I am the essence of this tree’, ‘I am the essence of that tree’ – even so, indeed, my dear, all creatures here, though they reach Being, know not ‘We have reached Being’. That which is the finest essence – this whole world has that as its self. That is the Reality. That is Atman. That art thou (tat tvam asi), Svetaketu.

– Chandogya Upanisad, VI, ix, 1-4.

The view that a person and God are one, that self and the super-self are indivisible, is held by the Upanisad, which is supported in the Samkara commentary of the Vedanta. But Ramanuju, the other commentator, opposes the Samkara point. Max Muller (*Indian Philosophy*) also supports division: "The human spirit is distinct from the Divine spirit."

However, philosopher F. H. Bradley holds: "There is a notion that sameness implies the denial of difference, while difference is, of course, a palpable fact. But really, sameness, while in one respect is exclusive of difference, in another respect most essentially implies it. And these two 'respects' are indivisible, even in idea. There would be no meaning in sameness, unless it were the identity of differences, the unity of elements which it holds together but must not confound. And, in the same way, difference, while it denies, presupposes identity." *Appearance and Reality*, p. 308

Our ancient flights of abstract thinking were a matter neither of a decade nor even a century. These heights were pursued, scaled and maintained at various noble levels for more than ten centuries till the notes were taken up in the Vedanta, which partly synthesized the confusing and confounding messages of the inspired seers who took up the challenge to define the undefinable. And the beauty is that their communion with the divine has touched the mind of the most modern enquirers and drawn their admiration and regard. The musings of the Upanisad and also a good many hymns of the Veda are a bold attempt to say, in Max Muller's phrase, "the first word spoken by an Aryan." There is wonder, there is meditation, there is mystery, and there is the majestic faith in humanity as the fact behind God's creation.

At frequent intervals the seers of the Veda and the Upanisad rose to great altitudes. Visions of the Spirit, mystic in its quality, cannot be clear-cut. It cannot be as exact as logic and science. This is agreed in Western metaphysics. As John Wilde says: There exists an infinite, perfect, first cause of all being – God."

These soaring hymns to the Spirit, however inexact, touch the area of the unknowable. As such they are marvels of speculation, especially when it is remembered that they were composed round about four thousand years before our modern experiments:

These Brahmanaspati (Lord of prayer) produced with blast and smelting, like a smith, Existence in an earlier age of gods, from non-existence sprang. Existence in the earliest age of gods, from non-existence sprang. Thereafter were the regions born. This sprang from the productive power – RV. X, 72 (Griffith)

Modern ideas do not altogether reject these deep speculations. It is agreed, "Every existence is an event." (Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, p. 71) A nearly similar view is held by Bergson, "The essence of reality is becoming, that is, a continual and active process, a creative evolution."

The Veda muses on Creation, with no final belief to teach. It is only a profound inquiry:

Nonbeing then existed not nor being: There was no air, nor sky that is beyond it. What was concealed? Wherein? In whose protection? And was there deep unfathomable water? Death then existed not, nor life immortal; of neither night nor day was any token. By its inherent force the one breathed windless; No other thing than that beyond existed. Who knows for certain? Who shall here declare it? Whence was it born, and whence came this creation? The gods were born after this world's creation: Then who can know from whence it has arisen? None knoweth whence creation has arisen: And whether he as or has not produced it: He who surveys it in the highest heaven, He only knows or haply he may know not. – RV. X, 129 (Macdonnell)

Definite knowledge is not the sensible demand. The power of knowing is in the search. Nor is a peaceful belief a supreme want. Often belief may be a fair risk. On meager evidence one may believe only to come to grief. But that is a matter of worldly wisdom. A higher wisdom is that you have a freedom to believe, and then you do not abuse the freedom. Reason is a high quality, but not the highest. Intellect is bound to break down at some point of exertion:

A really naked spirit cannot assume that the world is thoroughly intelligible. There may be surds (voiceless sound in speech) there may be hard facts; there may be dark abysses before which intelligence must be silent, for fear of going mad. And in the second place, even if to the intellect all things should prove perspicuous, the intellect is not the whole human nature, not even the whole of pure spirit in the individual. – Santayana, *Ultimate Reason*

Maybe belief in God is not scientific, but if your heart rings true you do not lose a value of life. Anyway, there is no proof that God does not exist. On the other hand, a visible or verifiable fact does not take us very far:

Whether a God exists, or whether no God exists, in yon blue heaven above us bent, we form at any rate an ethical republic here below. And the first reflection which this leads to is that ethics have as genuine and real a foothold in a universe where the highest consciousness is human, as in a universe there is a God as well.

– William James, *The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life*

So, speculations of poetic and philosophical frenzy are good for all times. The Upanisad moved father up and held firmly that God is to be seen and communion with Him is permissible. Our early seers did not toy with the idea of God. They were terribly earnest. And in passionate earnestness a sage prays: With a golden vessel the Real's face is covered over. That do thou, O Pusan, uncover for one whose law is the Real to see. – Isa Upanisad, XV

Western thought does not at all cancel all that cannot be known or told. Philosophers there got tired of doubt. Disbelief may be honest; it may as well be a pose. Likewise, belief may be honest, even if it be incredible. Anyway, exaggerated faith in facts to be proved has been a modern misfortune. A sensible view of faith is not ruled out:

If now I turn my face in the other direction and consider the prospect open to animal faith, I see that all this insecurity and inadequacy of alleged knowledge are almost irrelevant to the natural effort of the mind to describe natural things. The discouragement we may feel in science does not come from failure; it comes from a false conception of what would be success. Our worst difficulties arise from the assumption that knowledge of existences ought to be literal, whereas knowledge of existences has no need, no propensity, and no fitness to be literal. It is symbolic initially, when a sound, a smell, an indescribable feeling are signals to the animal of his dangers or chances; and it fulfils its function perfectly – I mean its moral function of enlightening us about our natural good – it remains symbolic to the end. Can anything be more evident than that religion, language, patriotism, love, science itself speak in symbols? – Santayana, *Skepticism and Animal Faith*

The meaning and manner of creation troubled the first tinkers right from the day they learnt the art of using their brain. Put in between world and God, man wanted to learn the meaning of life and solve the riddle of creation. In search of the answers to the temporal pleasures of the world the early man was led to religion. Thus the Vedic sacrifices to gods came about to ensure a passage to the heavens and escape the agonies, afflictions and ambiguities of earthly life.

The Christian idea of salvation underwent certain variations from Catholic to Protestant outlooks. These varied from performance of the sacraments, the mediation of the clergy, austerity and finally to grace of God. Max Weber (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 154) notes the changes from the asceticism “of fleeing from the world into solitude” to belief in “inner worldly asceticism,” having “slammed the door of the monastery behind it.”

Then there was a higher revelation that warned man of the short-lived joys of heaven and the consequent return to earth. The yearning grew for a joy that knows no end. The Upanisad brought the message of union of man and God, of realizing the finite self in the infinite Self. Buddha taught the negative way to obtaining release from the wheel of rebirth.

With the Upanisad, gods take leave in favor of God. Composed some three thousand years ago, its message of bliss that is serene and unruffled continues to echo in the mind of modern humanity. It is the finale of the Veda. The distinction between the two is clear:

There are two knowledges to be known – as indeed the knowers of Brahman are wont to say: a higher (para) and also a lower (apara). Of these, the lower is the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samveda and Atharvaveda. Now, the higher is that whereby that Imperishable is apprehended – Mundaka Upanisad

But a harmony of view was aimed at: All gods are manifestations of the one. “He is Brahman; he is Indra; he is Prajapata; he is all these gods.” – Aitareya Upanisad III.46. This echoes the Veda: “Ekam sat (The One is true.)” – RV, I, 164. The vision of the One has been the main theme, which the sages do not demur to repeat:

That which is invisible, ungraspable, without family, without caste – without sight or hearing is It, without hand or foot, Eternal, all-pervading, omnipresent, exceedingly subtle; That is the Imperishable, which the wise perceive as the source of beings.

Heavenly, formless is the Person. He is without and within, unborn, breathless, mindless, pure, and higher than the high: Imperishable. – Manduka Upanisad

The revelation is by no means vague. One can perceive the invisible. Eye is not the only instrument of seeing. Besides, inquiry by means of reason is at times short-sighted. A fact may be such, even when the power of reason fails to prove. The duel between science and religion must somewhere and sometime hold truce:

We should wait; but we should not wait passively or in despair. The clash is a sign that there are wider truths and finer perspectives within which a reconciliation of a deeper religion and a more subtle science will be found. On the one side there is the law of gravitation, and on the other the contemplation of the beauty of holiness.

– A.N. Whitehead, *Religion*

The Ultimate can only be seen with the mystic mind and communicated in indefinite terms. Yet it may be by no means unclear. Indeed, it is clear just as much as definition of doubts can be. The thoughts of the Upanisad are far from systematic products. But they possess an enchantment for the soul. Modern philosophies, even sciences at their supreme heights, leave quite a lot that is undefined or indefinable.

He by whom It is conceived of, knows It not,  
It is not understood by those who,  
Say they understood It.  
It is understood by those who,  
Say they understand It not.

--- Kena Upanisad, II, 3

What that is, know as  
Being and Non-Being,  
All the object of desire,  
Higher than understanding.

--- Mundaka Upanisad, I, ii, 1

Indeed, understanding has its limits. Negative characteristics must not mislead us into thinking that Brahman is a nonentity. Wise people even with clear conception fail to fully express, for such is the nature of spiritual truth:

One may think of it as the mother  
Of all things under heaven.  
Its true name we do not know;  
Tao is the by-name we give it.

--- Tao Te Ching, XXV.

Modern philosophies, even most sciences, at their supreme heights, leave quite a lot undefined:

The fact is, any branch of knowledge, whether it be study of rocks and minerals, or the study of cosmic rays, strikes mysticism as soon as it reaches any depth. Witness Dr. Alex Carrel and A.S. Eddington. The nineteenth century shallow rationalism naively believed that the question "What is a blade of grass?" could be answered adequately by considering the blade of grass as a purely mechanical phenomenon. The contemporary scientific attitude is that it cannot. Since Walt Whitman asked that question with his profound mysticism no one has been able to answer it and no scientist will presume to answer it today... It is my conviction that the progress of contemporary sciences is forcing modern thought to develop it in the direction of depth, and of a new synthesis of the mechanical and the spiritual, of matter and spirit.

--- Lin Yutang, *The Wisdom of China*

That will be something of newer application and finer phase of co-existence. And facts are fast revealing that co-existence is not just a poetical fiction. By the way, Whitman's grass reminds of Tagore's couplet:

I have thanked the trees that have made my life fruitful,  
but have failed to remember the grass that has ever kept it green.  
--- *Fireflies*

In furnishing the earth, in providing for its evolution, in giving a pervasive compactness to dust, in fitting out the ground work for the growth of vegetable life, grass has done the hearty job of laying out the verdure velvet to receive the Creator on the earth's courtyard.

The Upanisad represented a period when Aryan life in India was redolent with youthfulness and fulfillment of life. The entire environment was drizzled by ceaseless spray of happiness. The Vedic hymn put the feeling to a lovely tune:

May the wind blow for sweetness of existence,  
may rivers flow with honey-wine, may plants yield delight of being,  
may our nights and dawns our colonies and colonnaded forests  
glow with ample liveliness.

--- RV., I, 90, 608.

It was the life that wholly agreed with Browning's faith:

Oh, how happy is man's life, the mere living itself;  
How fit to employ all the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy.

And the Upanisad lifted joy to a level of inward life. It transcended material joys of physical living. It raised the mind and the heart and the soul to the realm of supreme goodness. The springs of life lie in bliss:

Verily what that well made is \_\_\_ that verily, is the essence of  
Existence. (raso vai sah) For, truly, on getting the essence,  
One becomes blissful. For who, indeed, could live, who breathe,  
if there were not this bliss in space?  
--- Taittiriya Up., II, 7, 1. (Translation by Radhakrishnan)

Our material world blends with the heavenly order. That is how duality is resolved. The self of human beings and the supremacy of God move in one and the same direction, the direction of the divine in human beings. Sri Aurobindo says: "Life exists in Brahma in order to discover Brahma in itself." (The Life Divine) The discovery is signaled inwardly by the felt power of joy in God, for God is joy \_\_\_ bliss:

The Brahman is bliss. For truly, beings here are born  
from bliss, when born, they live by bliss,  
when departing, they enter bliss.

■ --- Taittiriya Upanisad, III, 6, 1.

This agrees with Bishop Berkeley's thesis: "In Him we live, and have our being." --- *The works of George Berkeley*, Vol I, p. 248.

From "earth life" the transit to divine life lies through the sense of gaining bliss. Life ceases to frown with any look of fear when bliss of the Spirit is sensed in the mind and the soul, though a person in the act of enjoying the bliss has no power of words to express it.

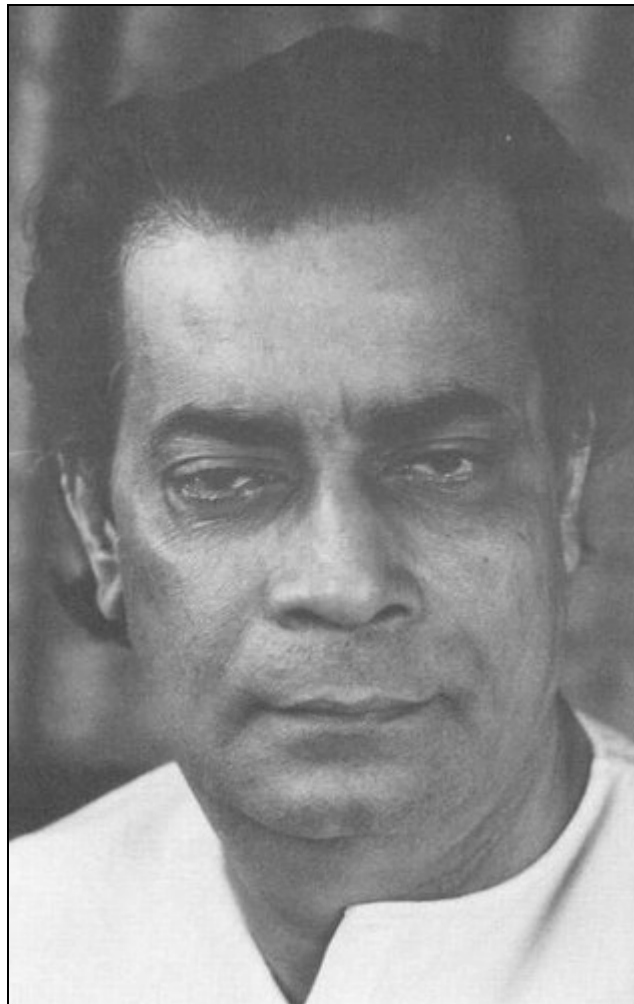
The same note of peaceful courage rings in a saying of Tao:

We have fears because we have a self.  
When we do not regard that self as self,  
What have we to fear? --- Tao Te Ching, XIII

The fear of the world is severe. People take flight from it and counter it by practice of austerities to get qualified for a life in heaven. The paradise that is lost is thus followed by endeavor to regain it. The Upanisad follows a mystic route of awareness of the bliss of God: vijñanam anandam brahma (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad, III, 9, 28)

Attainment of knowledge comes of the Supreme Spirit. When bliss is attained, the vision grows: *neha nanasti kincana* \_\_\_ there is no manyness, no diversity here. A sense of finding the One in all beings, of universal love, then becomes a perceptible fact.

One is free to doubt it. That freedom is a part of knowledge. "Skepticism is the chastity of intellect." So says Santayana. Also Bradley leaves "due space for exercise of doubt and wonder... We justify the natural wonder which delights to stay beyond our daylight world, and to follow paths that lead to half-known half-knowable regions... And to suit the divergent aspects of our inconsistent finite lives, a variety of error in the shape of diverse partial truths is required."



**Dadaji**