

## The Kena Upanishad and Savitri (Lecture 2)

### Day 2 (morning session)

Kena Upanishad, Second Part

1. If thou thinkest that thou knowest It well, little indeed dost thou know the form of the Brahman. That of It which is thou, that of It which is in the gods, this thou hast to think out. I think It known.
2. I think not that I know It well and yet I know that It is not unknown to me. He of us who knows It, knows That; he knows that It is not unknown to him.
3. He by whom It is not thought out, has the thought of It; he by whom It is thought out, knows It not. It is unknown to the discernment of those who discern of It, by those who seek not to discern of It, It is discerned.
4. When It is known by perception that reflects It, then one has the thought of It, for one finds immortality; by the self one finds the force to attain and by the knowledge one finds immortality.

Last time I started with an introduction to this week of teachings which are coming from the Kena Upanishad and *Savitri*. There is an oral teaching that has been transmitted from the Upanishads throughout the ages, through mantric verse, that culminates in *Savitri*. It is always the same teaching. So, the introduction that I gave will be repeated in different forms along the way, and it will be the same teaching as in the Upanishad and *Savitri*. What I pointed out was that it begins, and it began for Sri Aurobindo, with a hearing. And that hearing brings with it a seeing. And that hearing and seeing bring a remembrance. These faculties are known as *sruti*, *drishti* and *smriti* which are of a quality that is not rational, it's not of the rational mind. What they bring for us to hear and see and remember is not accessible to our rational minds. Therefore, there is a methodology, a technique, for transmitting them that is called *mantra*. Mantra is the transmission of the *sruti*, *drishti* and *smriti*. And when Sri Aurobindo heard, saw and remembered that, it became the only thing that he had to do! Because it is not possible anymore in Sanskrit. Sanskrit is dead, in the sense that we cannot recover that level of seeing and hearing through Sanskrit anymore. Only the most highly gifted, clairvoyant yogis can hear that truth in Sanskrit. Plenty of people are referring to Sanskrit, but they generally do it rationally.

The mission for Sri Aurobindo was to transmit that knowing and its particular objects through a language that is revelatory. And so he used English for that purpose. In his commentary you will read him saying that this kind of transmission has not been done to that extent since the Upanishads. Especially, in our age, after 400 years of print based rational development, we do not even know what this means; this kind of seeing, hearing and remembering of the truths of being. It is not something that our culture has access to. Moreover, the difficulty is that this evolutionary yoga of Sri Aurobindo intends for us not to just see and hear and remember the truth but to transform our rational minds into the supermind through the ray that this mantra brings in. We feel the Ray, we call the Ray the divine, or the Mother's vibration. But that in itself is only the very minimal beginning of what is conceived in this teaching. That comes in response to the mantric force. That presence, that Ray. And one has then the opportunity to decide whether to allow that to replace the mental and vital habits that we have and are, or not.

There is an aspect of this teaching that we hear, which we understand, it makes sense to us, and then one minute later we forget about it completely, because we enjoy the common knowing that we know,

saying it to others, relying on it to get through life day by day, our mental representation of what we knew yesterday. And we hang on to it. So, everything that passes between us in the kitchen and the living room is our narrative, and it is human, useful, nice, good. Why do we not want to just enjoy that forever? That is what we know, what we are, what we can do. So, that is enough, right? Why would anyone want to change that?

There is a question that was asked last night: What have we to do? Well, this is a question that we can keep in our minds during the week, and we have the opportunity to put it into practice. Let us try to remember what we hear, and visualize it, and minimize the personal narrative. This does not mean necessarily not speaking or sharing the narrative, but what it means is a distance in the consciousness from that narrative that allows us to see beyond it something else, which is what we are going to be hearing about. To make a deliberate effort to see beyond the narrative. One important step is to minimize the narrative. I opened a book on yoga by a Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Tenzin Wangyal, and on the first page it said: if you really want to tune in to the pranic medium, you have to let go of your story, because it is what we always put in front. We do not even select what part of the narrative, it just comes. It is the modus vivendi of the 21st century human being. This yoga teaching, like the Upanishad, is asking us to do something else in order to open a passage for a further evolution of the human being beyond itself, which is an intellectual idea that we all understand perfectly. But that is not it. The Upanishad upon which Sri Aurobindo has based his teaching, says: "That which thinks not by the mind, that by which the mind is thought, know that to be the Brahman and not this which men follow after here." This last phrase ends a whole series of slokas regarding the eye's seeing. What we follow after here is what the eye sees, but that which sees the eye's seeing, that principle of sight, we never think about. All we think about is whether it looks good, whether it is pretty, or strange or familiar. Our mind is constantly indulging itself in the objects of perception, and we do not think about how there is perception and sight in the first place. They give us information about our world, but how is that possible? How is it that we have a consciousness of things, that is realized through our mental perceptions? Through or by what is the hearing heard? This Sri Aurobindo decides is really the fundamental question, What is consciousness? This question so far has not been answered by science, which is currently very preoccupied with it.

Sri Aurobindo gathered two important things from this Upanishadic hearing. One is the idea of the kind of knowledge which opens to a universe that we are normally not familiar with, but which we belong to, beyond the barrier of the rational mind. And then, this also solves the problem of evolution. His whole philosophy of spiritual evolution comes from this idea of seeing consciousness-force as what is evolving through all these forms and structures of evolution. Consciousness is not a product of mind, or sensations; they are its products, its instruments. Then, what is it?

The Upanishad asks, "By whom or what is the mind missioned and sent on its errand so that it falls on its object like an arrow shot by a skillful archer to its predetermined mark?" This is our life. It's what we are doing all the time. Our mind tells us everything and we act accordingly. But by whom or what is this mind able to do that, which is such a familiar activity for us? What is it within or without us that sends forth the mind on its errand? What is the principle of mind, its purpose? Why does it exist in this form? What guides it to its object? Is the object just to put more petrol in the car so that we can shop for food to eat, etc. Is that the business of the mind? Or does it have some other purpose, and this is just its current temporal manifestation? Is its ultimate purpose to create all the necessary military power to have enough petrol to satisfy our needs? Is that the purpose of the mind? Or is that a temporary stage of evolution? And is there some other possibility for the mind than those practical destructive purposes?

We can also see the question of petrol differently, more universally: it is moving people around from where they are to where they need to be. It is survival, mobility, development of human being into a more sophisticated, productive, expressive entity. There are people here this week from all over the world. Fuel is very beneficial. We can see through that the principle of universal power at the service of consciousness, working through fuel-driven, jet and mechanical means to bring people to a point which they had an intuition would be valuable. And this enhances the quality of life. So this Mahakali principle is driving the jet engine and all of those cars on the freeway, to enable there to be a product of consciousness that is progressive, able to resonate aesthetically and spiritually with the higher purposes of life. She is there. Many of these activities that she enables produce well-being. Mahalakshmi, the provider, riding the material vehicle to bring the food to the market. We start then to look through the forms of things to the universal principle. And then it is much nicer. There are so many things in the world that have an aspect that is destructive and that have an aspect that is productive. If we do not look only at the particular, we begin to shift our view from the rational to the higher mind, from the particular to the universal, and if we do as the Upanishad is going to recommend, we move our consciousness through the form to the principle, and then from the principle to the source of the principle! If we begin to feel and see and resonate with Mahakali herself in the universal processes of power that are necessary for every single form to be what it is, then we begin to resonate with a higher Consciousness. In this teaching the principle of consciousness-force is moving in that direction, it begins where it has to begin, with the form, and ends at the source.

“The eternal question has been put which turns man’s eyes away from the visible and the outward to that which is utterly within, away from the little known that he has become to the vast unknown he is behind these surfaces and must yet grow into and be because that is his Reality and out of all masquerade of phenomenon and becoming the Real Being must eventually deliver itself. The human soul once seized by this compelling direction can no longer be satisfied with looking forth at mortalities and seemings through those doors of the mind and sense which the Self-existent has made to open outward upon a world of forms; it is driven to gaze inward into a new world of realities.” (p.23)

Well, is it really driven to do that or is that just a kind of idealistic postulate? Let us not take it for granted. And this is why: “Here in the world that we know we possess something which however imperfect and insecure, we yet value.” We value all those little mortalities and seemings, and they are the substance of our narrative, that is who we are, we think.

For (we) aim at and to some extent procure enlarged being, increasing knowledge, more and more joy and satisfaction and these things are so precious to (us) that for what (we) can get of them (we are) ready to pay the price of continual suffering from the shock of their opposites. If then (we have) to abandon what we here pursue and clasp, there must be a far more powerful attraction drawing us to the Beyond, a secret offer of something so great as to be a full reward for all possible renunciation that can be demanded of (us) here. This is offered, (says Sri Aurobindo) —not an enlarged becoming, but infinite being; not always relative piecings of knowledge mistaken in their hour for the whole of knowledge, but the possession of our essential consciousness and the flood of its luminous realities; not partial satisfactions, but *the* delight. In a word, Immortality. (p.23)

That Delight (always and in everything) is virtually unknown to us. But there is the possibility that through the *sruti*, *drishti*, *smriti*, that we will recall it, and then be attracted to it so one pointedly that we will begin to allow all those vital mental powers to be transformed by that delight itself. It is a possibility. It is the teaching of the yoga of transformation.

I want to mention an important feature here. Sri Aurobindo points out that the Kena Upanishad's teaching emphasizes three levels of reality known as "*adhibhuta*, *adhidaiva*, and *adhiatma*...". The first is the world of matter, sensation and form, and energy: the mind, the senses, the drives, the world that we know through perception and analysis of its fruits, that world of facts and processes that are known through the senses. This is called *adhibhuta*, the plane or principle of perceptual existence. Then, there is the *adhidaiva* plane, the plane of universal energies that are expressed through all of the forms of the *adhibhuta* plane. *Adhidaiva* pertains to the gods. In this material there move non-material powers manifesting through the mind force and life force that work upon matter and these are called gods or devas; and that plane of universal forces that work through matter, life and mind is called *adhidaiva*, the plane of the gods. Then, above the non-material powers, greater than them but containing them is the Self, or Spirit, Atman. This is the plane of *adhiatma*. Anything which has to do with that higher existence is called the spiritual. (Maybe you thought that spiritual meant using the right lotion and eating the right food from the whole foods store. But that's the *adhibhuta*.)

Now, is that plane of gods and principles the cause? Is that the ultimate reality to be known or not? Is there something beyond even the universal principles and powers? This is the question that the Upanishad asks. In this mythological formation, he says, "The Upanishad is not concerned with the elemental, the *adhibhuta*, but with the relations between the subtle existence, *adhidaiva*, and the spiritual, *adhiatma*. The mind, the life, the speech, the senses are governed by the cosmic powers; the gods. The principle of sight, for example, governs the formation of the eye. These principles are known as gods, and they have names like Vayu: the life force, the wind behind desire, and behind processing energy and thriving and blossoming, there is Vayu, the principle of life. In this mythological formulation, Agni, the fire, the electrical and mechanical and combustible forms of energy, Agni, is the basis of everything physical. This energy tries to answer the question. Is it ultimately a physical energy that causes everything? Vayu tries to answer the question, whether the life force is the cause of everything. The gods in us are asking the essential questions of existence, and this is a kind of transition from the mythological to the psychological: the drive in us to answer these questions comes first from the life force until we find that it can't answer the question of its own existence, then mind, in the form of Indra, tries to answer the question, and all of these gods come up with a negative answer. They are very powerful universal principles of consciousness who ultimately must look beyond themselves to their own source. So, then, in Yoga, the translation of all this into Yoga, goes like this.

The way forward to the source is to use our mind rightly.  
We have to know the form of the Brahman, the Master-Consciousness ...through  
and yet beyond the universe in which we live. But first we must  
put aside what is mere form and phenomenon in the universe;  
for that has nothing to do with the form of the Brahman, ...  
Our first step therefore must be to get behind the  
forms of Matter, the forms of Life, the forms of Mind and go  
back to that which is essential, most real, nearest to actual entity.  
And when we have gone on thus eliminating, thus analysing all  
forms into the fundamental entities of the cosmos, we shall find  
that these fundamental entities are really only two, Self  
and the gods. (p.75)

...if we recognise that our mental perceptions are simply so many

clues by which we can rise beyond mental perception and if we use these fundamental idea-symbols and the arrangement of them which our uttermost thought makes in order to go beyond the symbol to that reality,

so that we are perceiving the universal forces themselves in things

then we have rightly used the mind and the higher discernment for their supreme purpose. (p.77)

The purpose of the higher discernment, the *vivek buddhi*, is exactly this: to look through the forms, the idea-symbols – Vayu, Agni, Mahalakshmi, Mahakali – to the gods themselves. Now let us listen to the canto that enables us to see the gods in forms.

(Excerpt from *Savitri*, Book 2, Canto 11)

In front of the ascending epiphany  
World-Time's enjoyers, favourites of World-Bliss,  
The Masters of things actual, lords of the hours,  
Playmates of youthful Nature and child God,  
Creators of Matter by hid stress of Mind  
Whose subtle thoughts support unconscious Life  
And guide the fantasy of brute events,  
Stood there, a race of young keen-visioned gods,  
King-children born on Wisdom's early plane,  
Taught in her school world-making's mystic play.  
Archmasons of the eternal Thaumaturge,  
Moulders and measurers of fragmented Space,  
They have made their plan of the concealed and known  
A dwelling-house for the invisible king.  
Obeying the Eternal's deep command  
They have built in the material front of things  
This wide world-kindergarten of young souls  
Where the infant spirit learns through mind and sense  
To read the letters of the cosmic script  
And study the body of the cosmic self  
And search for the secret meaning of the whole.  
To all that Spirit conceives they give a mould;  
Persuading Nature into visible moods  
They lend a finite shape to infinite things.  
Each power that leaps from the Unmanifest  
Leaving the largeness of the Eternal's peace  
They seized and held by their precisian eye  
And made a figurante in the cosmic dance.  
Its free caprice they bound by rhythmic laws  
And compelled to accept its posture and its line  
In the wizardry of an ordered universe.  
The All-containing was contained in form,  
Oneness was carved into units measurable,  
The limitless built into a cosmic sum:  
Unending Space was beaten into a curve,  
Indivisible Time into small minutes cut,

The infinitesimal massed to keep secure  
The mystery of the Formless cast into form.  
Invincibly their craft devised for use  
The magic of sequent number and sign's spell,  
Design's miraculous potency was caught  
Laden with beauty and significance  
And by the determining mandate of their gaze  
Figure and quality equating joined  
In an inextricable identity. (p. 266-267)

(audio recording of reading from *Savitri* currently not available)