

# **MY TRANSLATIONS**

**(from *The Mystic's Vision* by Swami Abhayananda.  
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## I. SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD

*Vedanta*, which means ‘the end of the Vedas’, refers to the ancient Hindu scriptures called the *Upanishads*. The Upanishads were written by numerous anonymous authors at various times, from around 800 B.C.E. to well into the Current Era. One of the most highly respected and honored of these is the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, guessed to have been written around 400 B.C.E.:

### Svetasvatara Upanishad Verse Translation by Swami Abhayananda

#### Part One:

1. Hari Om. Seekers of Brahman enquire:  
‘What is the Cause of the universe? Is it Brahman?  
Why are we born? What upholds our lives?  
And where do we go after life on earth?  
O knower of Brahman, what compels us to exist  
In this world of joys and sorrows?’
2. ‘Is it Time, or Nature, or Fate, or merely Chance?  
Is it the Elements? Or perhaps the Soul itself is the Cause.  
All these others exist only for the sake of the Soul;  
But, since the Soul is under the sway of joys and sorrows,  
It cannot, therefore, be the ultimate Cause.’
3. Then, through deep meditation, these seekers realized  
That the power of God is the ultimate Cause.<sup>1</sup>  
Though hidden by, and existing within, His own effects,  
It is the Lord alone, who rules all those other sources—  
Such as Time and the individual Soul.
4. They saw the Wheel of existence,<sup>2</sup> which has a single rim  
Covered by a three-layered tire.<sup>3</sup>  
This Wheel has sixteen parts,<sup>4</sup> fifty spokes,<sup>5</sup>  
Twenty spoke-connectors,<sup>6</sup> and six eight-part divisions.<sup>7</sup>  
It binds with a single rope,<sup>8</sup> that goes in three directions,<sup>9</sup>  
And whose illusion arises from two causes.<sup>10</sup>

5. Or [the world-illusion may be likened to] a River with five currents, <sup>11</sup>  
 Made turbulent and meandering by the five elements, <sup>12</sup>  
 And lashed into waves by the five organs of action. <sup>13</sup>  
 This River has its origin in the mind,  
 Which produces the five kinds of perceptions. <sup>14</sup>  
 It has five whirlpools; <sup>15</sup> its rapids are the five miseries. <sup>16</sup>  
 It has fifty branches, <sup>17</sup> and five dangerous obstructions. <sup>18</sup>
6. Within this Wheel, in which all of us live and seek rest,  
 The swan-like soul wanders restlessly;  
 It thinks it's separate and far from God,  
 But by His Grace, it awakes to its identity with Him.
7. I sing of Brahman—the subject, the object, the Lord of all.  
 He's the immutable Foundation of all that exists;  
 Those souls who realize Him as their very own Self  
 Are freed forever from the need for rebirth.
8. The Lord is the Support of both aspects of Reality:  
 He is the Imperishable and the perishable, the Cause and the effect.  
 He takes the form of the limited soul, appearing to be bound;  
 But, in fact, He is forever free.
9. The Lord appears as Creator, and also as the limited soul.  
 He is also the Energy which creates the appearance of the world.  
 Yet He remains unlimited and unaffected by these appearances;  
 When one knows that Brahman, then that soul becomes free.
10. The forms of the world fade like clouds in the sky;  
 But the Lord remains ever-One and unchanged.  
 He is the Ruler of all worlds and all souls;  
 Through meditation on Him, and communion with Him,  
 He becomes known as the Self, and from illusion one is freed.
11. When the Lord is known, then a man's soul is free;  
 He'll never need to know sorrow or birth again.  
 Through devotional love, he'll rise to the highest state,  
 And rest forever in the bliss of God.

12. These three: the soul, the world, and the Lord of all,  
Are nothing else but the one Brahman.  
It's Brahman alone who exists as everyone and everything;  
Beyond Brahman, the Self, there is nothing to know.
13. Though it can't be seen, fire is latent in the wood;  
It's born as a flame when the wood is rubbed.  
Like the fire, the Atman, the Self, is concealed within man;  
By the power of meditation on OM, it becomes revealed.
14. Man, in this analogy, is like a piece of wood;  
And meditation on OM is the means to kindle the flame.  
By joining to man the heat of meditation,  
The truth of the Self, like a flame, is born.
15. Just as oil is in seeds, and butter is in milk,  
As water is in river-beds, and fire is in wood,  
So is the one Self concealed in all selves;  
To those who seek it earnestly, it becomes revealed.
16. That Self is in everything, just as butter's in milk;  
Through self-enquiry and *tapasya*, it becomes revealed to man.  
That Self is the Brahman of whom I sing!  
That Self is the Brahman of whom I sing!

**Part Two:**

1. May the light of the shining Sun  
Join our minds and our hearts to God.  
May He also support our lives  
By filling our bodies with Light from above.
2. With His blessings, and by His Light  
We'll join our hearts and our minds to God;  
We'll surely reach to the highest state  
By earnest effort and faithful meditation.
3. May the Sun grant this boon to me:  
Let my mind and my senses be fixed on God.  
Direct them inward, and thereby reveal,  
By means of inner knowledge, that radiant One.

4. Surely it would be of benefit to everyone  
To make such a prayer to the lordly Sun;  
For he is the witness of everyone;  
He grants his gifts to deserving men.
5. O senses—and O gods who rule each one!  
I offer this prayer to the Lord, our Source:  
Let me be one with Thyself, O God;  
May my song be heard by Thy own dear sons!
6. Let me be surrendered to the fire within;  
Let me make offerings to the prana in me.  
May I drink of the nectar of inner Bliss;  
Let this be my ritual worship of Thee.
7. O man, serve God by the light of the Sun;  
Serve Him who engendered this whole universe.  
In deep meditation, become one with Him;  
Then you'll no longer feel bound by the fruits of your works.
8. A wise man should sit with his body erect;  
With his head, neck and shoulders aligned.  
He should turn both his mind and his senses within;  
Then, by God's trusty boat, he'll cross over this world.
9. A yogi should see that his prana's controlled;  
His breath should flow softly and evenly.  
It is then that the mind may be held and made calm,  
Just as a wild horse may be controlled by its reins.
10. A yogi should sit in a place that's confined,  
Where no sounds and no sights tend to distract the mind.  
It should be a place free of wind, and of smoke,  
A place that is level, comfortable and pure.
11. When yoga is practiced, the light of the mind  
May take the form of the Sun, or of fire;  
One may also see images of snow-flakes within,  
Or fire-flies, or lightning, a gem, or the moon.

12. The fire of this yoga consumes everything,  
And purifies each of the elements within:  
Fire, water, earth, air, and the ether as well;  
Then a yogi becomes free from birth, illness, and death.
13. The signs of perfection in yoga, it's said,  
Are lightness of body and bodily health,  
A complexion that's clear, and a voice that is sweet,  
A naturally sweet fragrance, and freedom from desire.
14. Just as gold, which is contained in the ore,  
Becomes manifest when all dross is burned away,  
A yogi, in whom God is revealed,  
Knows that he's one with the Self, and sorrows no more.
15. When a yogi beholds the true nature of God,  
He discovers the Light of his own inner Self.  
He is one with the unborn, unchangeable Lord;  
And he too is free from all limiting bonds.
16. When that Lord, who pervades all the worlds everywhere,  
Gave birth to the first motion, He manifested Himself as creation.  
It's Him alone who is born in this world;  
He lives within all beings; it's only Him everywhere.
17. To that effulgent Lord who's in fire and in the great oceans,  
Who lives as this world, who's in plants and in trees—  
To that Lord let us sing! Give all glory to Him!  
To that Lord let us sing! Give all glory to Him!

### **Part Three:**

1. He is the One who rules all of us;  
His omniscient Power rules all of the worlds.  
Though He is continually creating and dissolving,  
He remains unaffected, ever-One and unchanged.  
Those sages who know Him have passed beyond death.
2. Those who have known Him say that  
Even though He manifests all the worlds by His Power,

He always remains One and unchanged.  
 He lives as the one Self within everyone;  
 He's the Creator and Protector to whom all beings return.

3. He has eyes everywhere and mouths everywhere;  
 Everywhere are His arms and His feet.  
 The wings of all birds, and all men's arms are His own;  
 Both the heavens and the earth belong to Him.
4. May Shiva, the omniscient Lord of the world—  
 The Creator of gods and Bestower of powers,  
 The One who supports all this vast universe—  
 Endow me with a mind whose vision is clear!
5. O Shiva! Thou indwelling, joy-giving Lord!  
 Be gracious and look upon us with Thy love.  
 Grant us Thy glance and Thy favor, O Lord.  
 Dispel all our evil! Dispel all our fear!
6. O Shiva! Thou indwelling, joy-giving Lord!  
 Do not let loose Thy pain-bearing arrows!  
 Thou art our Protector; protect us, O Lord.  
 Do not give injury to man or the world!
7. He is greater than the world; He's beyond what's perceived.  
 Though He lives within man, He has no limits or bounds.  
 When a man realizes that Lord who pervades everything,  
 He knows, in that moment, his own deathless Self.
8. I know that one Self who shines like the Sun  
 Through all the deep folds of the darkness within.  
 This knowledge gives freedom from death and from fear;  
 It's the sole means to the attainment of life's highest goal.
9. The whole universe is filled with the Self;  
 There is nothing other or greater than Him.  
 There is nothing smaller or larger than Him;  
 He stands all alone, like a glorious tree.
10. Though He lives within the world, He stands far beyond it;

He has no form; nor has He any blemish or pain.  
 Those who have known Him have passed beyond death;  
 But, until a man knows Him, he suffers in pain.

11. All faces are His; all men's heads are His own.  
 All necks are His necks; He's in everyone's heart.  
 He pervades everything; He's known as 'the Lord'.  
 He's the compassionate Master who's found everywhere.
12. He is the great Self, the Purusha;  
 He's the Lord who creates, preserves, then destroys what He's made.  
 From within men, He inspires them to be good and pure;  
 He's the one Ruler, the immortal Light within all.
13. The Purusha, who's no bigger than a thumb, is the Self;  
 He has made His abode in the hearts of all beings.  
 The mind, which reflects knowledge, can know Him within;  
 And those who have known Him have passed beyond death.
14. With thousands of heads, eyes and feet,  
 The Purusha is greater than the world and all space;  
 He contains all that is or was, and all that shall be.  
 He's the undying Lord of all creatures that live.
15. He has hands everywhere, and feet everywhere;  
 Everywhere are His heads and His eyes.  
 His faces are everywhere, and He has ears everywhere;  
 Everything that exists is contained within Him.
16. Though He, Himself, has no senses, all senses are His;  
 He tastes all the pleasures of life through their use.  
 He's the Lord and Ruler of all that exists;  
 To all beings that live, He's the only Refuge.
17. The Self is the Swan who rules the whole universe  
 And everything in it that's moving or still;  
 But when He resides as the Spirit in man,  
 He flies through the senses to sense-objects outside.
18. Without hands, He holds, and without feet, He runs;

He sees without eyes, and He hears without ears.  
 He knows everything through men's minds, but no one knows Him;  
 He's called 'the Origin', 'the One', 'the Highest', 'the All'.

19. That one conscious Self, the smallest of the small  
 And the largest of the large, is in everyone's heart;  
 The wise, by the Grace of God, become free  
 When they see in themselves that majestic Self  
 Who's beyond all desires.
20. I know the Immortal! The Origin! The Lord!  
 The Self of all beings who pervades everything!  
 All those who have known Him agree:  
 He's beginningless, endless, and eternally free.

#### **Part Four:**

1. Though producing the whole universe, He remains unaffected;  
 He never changes, but remains as He was.  
 Without ever revealing His purposes,  
 He creates all these worlds, and then withdraws them again.  
 May that effulgent Self enlighten our minds!
2. He is fire, He is the Sun; He is wind, He is the moon!  
 He is the stars, the mountains, the rivers and seas!
3. Thou art woman and man! Thou art the old and the young!  
 It is Thou alone, Lord, who hast taken all these forms!
4. Thou art the blue bee; Thou art the green parrot.  
 Thou art the dark clouds, the four seasons, the seas;  
 Thou art the birthless and limitless God  
 Who hast given birth to all worlds and all souls.
5. Unborn Nature, <sup>19</sup> with her *gunas*, gives birth to all forms;  
 Countless unborn souls seek pleasure in Nature's array.  
 But the unborn Self, who creates both Nature and souls,  
 Lives apart from Its creations, in eternal Freedom and Bliss.

6. The Self and the soul are like two birds, though one;  
They have the same name, and they're in the same tree.  
But, while the soul tastes and enjoys the sweet fruits,  
The other eats not; He's the Witness, the Self.
7. The soul, through enjoyment, forgets it's the Self;  
And, feeling bewildered and helpless, it moans.  
But, when it beholds that it is the glorious Lord all adore,  
It forgets all its previously felt grief.
8. Of what use then are the Vedas to one who has seen  
That Brahman in whom the Vedas and all gods are contained?  
He knows the eternal Essence of which all souls are made!  
And by knowing that, he possesses a happiness that is lasting and true.
9. All the scriptures, all worship and sacrifices,  
All *tapasya* performed in the future or past,  
And also the Vedas, are born of Brahman's Power;<sup>20</sup>  
It's His net that entangles, and He<sup>21</sup> who's ensnared.
10. The world and all souls take on form by His Power;  
He, the great Lord, is governing everything.  
The whole universe, and all objects within it,  
Are only constituents of His manifest Being.
11. By knowing that One who exists as the world—  
That One in whom everyone is born, to whom everyone returns—  
By knowing that Lord—the Bestower of Grace,  
The adorable God—one attains supreme peace.
12. May Shiva, the Creator of the gods and their powers,  
The omniscient Support of the world,  
He who gives birth to all space and all time,  
Endow us with wisdom and clarity of mind!
13. To that Lord, who is King of all gods and all worlds,  
The Ruler of all creatures on two legs or four,  
That blissful and effulgent Lord whom we love,  
Let us give all our worship and serve only Him.

14. He is the Creator of all forms—all's contained within Him;  
Universal chaos surrounds Him, yet He's ever-unmoved.  
He's the undivided One who pervades everything;  
By knowing that One, man attains the supreme peace.
15. He is the Possessor and King of the whole universe,  
Concealing Himself in the hearts of all beings.  
From there, He inspires all the sages and gods;  
By knowing that Lord, man himself becomes free.
16. As cream is in milk, that one Self is in all;  
Subtle and hidden, He pervades everything.  
One who knows that radiant God who is Bliss  
Becomes released from all the bonds of this world.
17. He is the Self-revealed Creator and Pervader of all;  
He dwells as the Self in the hearts of all beings.  
He's revealed by discrimination, renunciation, and knowledge;  
Those who know Him are freed from the bondage of death.
18. When His Light dispels the darkness of man's ignorance,  
Both existence and non-existence vanish; day and night disappear.  
Brahman, and Brahman alone, is all that exists;  
From His light comes the Sun and the wisdom of man.
19. The mind cannot grasp Him, either with form or without;  
We call Him 'Great Glory', but there's no image of Him.  
He can be seen, not with the eyes, but with consciousness, within;  
Those who have seen Him are eternally free.
20. O unmanifest Lord, grant refuge to me!  
O Rudra, Protector, keep watch over me!  
Do not, in Thy anger, destroy us or our dwellings;  
Spare us and our children, we beg Thee, O God!

### **Part Five:**

1. That infinite Brahman, who is eternally One,  
Contains both ignorance and knowledge within Him.  
Through one, man seeks the world; with the other, he seeks God.

But He who contains them both is neither the one, nor the other.

2. He's beyond both knowledge and ignorance.  
He's the Governor and Dispenser of our every thought.  
He controls all beings as their single Source.  
He knew the end of creation at the moment of its birth.
3. He manifested this universe as a spider manifests its web,  
And, in time, He'll withdraw it into Himself again.  
He created all these forms; He pervades all bodies and senses.  
He's the One in all, the great Lord of all beings.
4. As the Sun's radiance illumines the East and the West,  
The North and the South, above and below,  
So does the Lord, the adorable One,  
Illumine and control all that He's made.
5. He is the Cause and Controller of the ways of all things.  
He ripens and brings to fruition all things on the earth.
6. To those who seek Him in scriptures, He is hidden.  
But He's revealed to those sages who become one with Him.
7. Every soul is impelled to act by the power of Nature.  
It sows actions and reaps the fruits of those actions.  
Continually assuming new forms and new qualities,  
The soul continues to wander over the paths of life.
8. The soul is small, but it shines like the Sun.  
It possesses a will and the sense of 'I'.  
Because of its identification with the intellect,  
That perfect Self appears separate, weak, and of little worth.
9. The wandering soul may be compared  
To a hair, divided a hundred times,  
Then again divided by a hundred more.  
And yet that soul has no finite bounds.
10. It is not female, nor is it male.  
Nor is it something in between.

The soul becomes identified with  
Whatever body it dwells within.

11. Desiring fruits, the embodied soul  
Attains its goals, and then becomes attached.  
Experiencing pain, it learns, and in this way, grows,  
As a body grows by taking food and drink.
12. The embodied soul, by virtue of its various actions,  
Adopts new forms, either subtle or gross.  
And, according to the knowledge and desires it possesses,  
It assumes a new body to enjoy the world.
13. But once it knows the infinite Lord—  
The Creator and Pervader of all life's forms,  
That One who remains unmoved, while all is in motion—  
That soul is released from all its bonds.
14. Those souls who know that effulgent Lord—  
The One realized by the pure of heart,  
The Creator, Destroyer, and Cause of all—  
Those souls are freed from embodied life.

### **Part Six:**

1. Some people believe that the world is caused  
And controlled by natural laws or by the passage of time.  
Such deluded persons are truly foolish.  
The universe moves by the will of God.
2. The one Consciousness that pervades this universe  
Is the Author and Witness of the laws and of time.  
The elements obey the omniscient Lord.  
Ponder this, O learned and knowledgeable men!
3. A yogi who works, but renounces the fruits of his work,  
Who practices discipline, and serves his Teacher,  
Attains, by virtue of the habits he acquires,  
The soul's Liberation, the highest goal.

4. One who performs all his actions in service of God,  
Who releases all claim to the fruits of his work,  
Comes to know his Self as the one Self of all,  
And is finally freed from all actions in time.  
By transcending all delusion, he's released from past actions.  
Though the already-ripened fruits of past actions must be received.  
But when, in time, even these are exhausted,  
The yogi becomes free; he attains the Divine.
5. The Lord is the sole Originator, the Source, in which all is united.  
That One remains undivided, beyond countless eons of time.  
Liberation is attained when a man knows that Lord,  
The Father of all, who abides in the heart.
6. All this universe sprouts from Him.  
He is the Root of the entire vast tree of creation.  
Living within all, He's the Bestower of all good things.  
Liberation is attained when a man knows that Lord.
7. We know the supreme Self, the Lord of all lords—  
The God of all gods, the King of all kings,  
The Imperishable behind the perishable world which He made—  
The Self-revealing, adorable, Lord of the world.
8. He has no body or organs or limbs; He's not like anything else that exists.  
Scriptures cannot describe Him and speak only of His Power.<sup>22</sup>  
He's able to do anything that He wills.  
His Power is boundless, and He knows everything.
9. He is ruled by no other; there's no Lord over Him.  
He has left not the slightest trace by which He can be found.  
He, Himself, is the Cause and the Lord of all lords.  
He was fathered by none and is governed by none.
10. May that Lord, like a spider concealed in its own web,  
Whose threads form the fabric of this world—  
May that Lord who is hidden by His own veiling Power,<sup>23</sup>  
Unite us in Brahman, release us in Him!

11. The non-dual resplendent Lord resides  
As the Self in all creatures and all things.  
He impels all to action and witnesses all.  
While pervading everything, He remains ever free.
12. He controls everyone as their innermost Self.  
He's the one Seed from whom innumerable sprouts have arisen.  
Only those who see Him within themselves  
Obtain the gift of eternal Bliss.
13. He is the Eternal within the temporal, the Infinite within form.  
He's the One within many, who grants all desires.  
Only those who see Him within themselves  
Obtain the gift of eternal Peace.
14. In Him, there's no Sun, no moon, and no stars.  
Within Him there is no lightning or fire.  
Because of Him, the Sun, the moon, and the stars all shine.  
Their light comes from Him; He's the Source of every light.
15. There is nothing in this universe but the Self, the 'I AM.'  
Like a flame, He lives in the hearts of all beings.  
The only way to pass beyond death is to know Him.  
There's no other means, and there's no other End.
16. He is the only support of the soul and the world.  
He is the sole Cause of both bondage and liberation.  
He is the Creator, the Knower, the Self of all things.  
All good comes from Him. He's the omniscient Lord.
17. He is the Controller of everything in this world.  
Bondage and Liberation are given by Him.  
He, the deathless Protector of everyone,  
Is the Ruler of all. To whom else might you turn?
18. As one who seeks Liberation, I take refuge in Him,  
The Revealer of the Self, the Giver of all knowledge,  
The Creator of Brahma, who, at the beginning of time,  
Gave expression to true Knowledge,<sup>24</sup> and shared it with men.

19. When a man shall be able to roll up the sky like a rug,  
Then suffering will end without knowledge of the Lord.
20. He is One, without actions or parts,  
Remaining serene, like a fire whose fuel is exhausted.  
He is ever-blameless and unattached to the world;  
For men, He is the supreme bridge to Immortality.
21. Svetasvatara, by the grace of the Lord,  
And by his *tapasya*, has realized God.  
He's therefore proclaiming this knowledge to men,  
This knowledge that's cherished by sages and saints.
22. The knowledge of God, the one supreme Truth,  
Has been proclaimed in every age, and in every *yuga*.  
It should only be given to the pure of heart.  
It may certainly be given to a disciple or a son.
23. When given to one who is wise,  
And who has love for God and for his teacher,  
These truths will surely give Light to his soul.  
They'll surely give Light to his soul.

### NOTES:

1. 'The power of God', original Sanskrit: *devatma shakti*.
2. (The verses 4 and 5 from the first section appear to be interpolations, perhaps by priestly copiers who wanted to insert their own traditional lists of metaphysical categories as metaphors in this Upanishad. It is easy to see that these two verses are very incongruent with the rest of the Upanishad and are unlikely to be from an enlightened soul such as Svetasvatara; nonetheless, we offer these traditional interpretations): 'The wheel of existence' refers to the spinning universe.
3. 'Three-layered tire' is the three *gunas*: *rajas* (the principle of activity), *tamas* (the principle of restraint), and *sattva* (the principle of wisdom).
4. 'Sixteen parts' is the five elements, five organs of perception, five organs of action, and the mind.
5. 'Fifty spokes' is the five kinds of misperception (ignorance, self-love, attachment, hatred, and clinging to life); twenty-eight disabilities, nine inversions (or opposites) of satisfaction, and eight inversions of perfections (*siddhis*).

6. 'Twenty spoke-connectors' is the ten organs and their corresponding objects.
7. 'Six eight-part divisions' is the eight aspects of *Prakrti*: akasha, air, fire, water, earth, mind, buddhi, and I-consciousness, plus the eight bodily substances (*dhatu*s): skin, cuticle, flesh, blood, fat, bone, marrow, and semen; plus the eight supernatural powers (*siddhis*), the eight attitudes (*bhavas*): righteousness, knowledge, renunciation, majesty, unrighteousness, ignorance, non-renunciation, and poverty; plus the eight gods: Brahman, Prajapati, deities, gandarvas, yakshas, rakshashas, pitris, and fiends; plus the eight virtues: compassion, forgiveness, absence of malice, purity, spontaneity, goodness, liberality, and absence of desires.
8. 'A single rope' is the binding rope of love.
9. 'The three directions' of love are love for (producing) children, love of food, and love of the heavenly worlds.
10. 'Illusion arising from two causes' is the illusion that the body is the Self, which arises from both virtuous action and sinful action.
11. 'River with five currents' is the world-illusion with the five organs of perception: the ears, nose, tongue, skin, and eyes.
12. 'The five elements' are earth, air, water, fire, and ether (*akasha*).
13. 'The five organs of action' are: the hands, feet, tongue, and the organs of procreation and evacuation.
14. 'The five kinds of perceptions' are: taste, hearing, vision, touch, and smell.
15. 'The five whirlpools' are the objects of the five senses.
16. 'The five miseries' are: resting in the womb, being born, growing old, becoming ill, and dying.
17. 'The fifty branches' are unknown. Some say they refer to a category in Sankhya philosophy.
18. 'The five dangerous obstructions' are ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life.
19. 'Unborn Nature' is *Prakrti* in the original Sanskrit.
20. 'Brahman's Power' is originally His *Maya*, the power of world-manifestation.
21. The net of Maya is His Power, and yet 'He', in the form of the jiva, becomes ensnared in the net of Maya.
22. 'Speak only of His Power'; in other words, since the unmanifest Brahman cannot be described in words, scriptures speak mainly of His manifested appearances, produced by His Power of Maya.
23. 'His own veiling Power' refers again to His *Maya*, His manifestory Power.
24. 'Gave expression to true knowledge' refers to His imparting of the Vedas.

## II. THE SECRET OF NATURAL DEVOTION

(Adapted from Jnaneshvar's *Amritanubhav* in  
 Abhayananda's *Jnaneshvar: The Life And Works of  
 The Celebrated 13th Century Indian Mystic-Poet, 1989*)

Jnaneshvar, a casteless orphan, was one of the most brilliant poets, sublime mystics, and fascinating figures in all of Medieval Indian history. At an age when most men have scarcely begun their life's work, Jnaneshvar (Gyan-esh-war), who lived from 1271 to 1296, a mere span of twenty-five years, had ended his; but not before having built an everlasting monument to his memory in the written masterpieces he left behind. In so few years, he had established a legacy that was to revitalize his culture, his language, his religious tradition, and make a place for himself as an enduring presence in the hearts of his countrymen for all time. The following is from Chapter Nine of *Amritanubhav*:

Just as a nose might become a fragrance,  
 Or ears might give out a melody  
 For their own enjoyment,  
 Or the eyes might produce a mirror  
 In order to see themselves;

Or flowers might take the form of a bee,  
 A lovely young girl might become a young man,  
 Or a sleepy man might become  
 A bed on which to lie;

As the blossoms of a mango tree  
 Might become a cuckoo bird,  
 Or one's skin might become  
 Malayan breezes,  
 Or tongues might become flavors;

Or as a slab of gold might become  
 Articles of jewelry  
 For the sake of beauty;  
 Just so, the one pure Consciousness becomes  
 The enjoyer and the object of enjoyment,  
 The seer and the object of vision,

Without disturbing Its unity.

A Shevanti flower bursts forth  
 With a thousand petals.  
 Yet it does not become anything  
 But a Shevanti flower.

Similarly, the auspicious drums  
 Of ever new experiences  
 May be sounding,  
 But in the kingdom of Stillness,  
 Nothing is heard.

All of the senses may rush simultaneously  
 Toward the multitude of sense objects,  
 But—just as, in a mirror,  
 One's vision only meets one's vision—  
 The rushing senses only meet themselves.

One may purchase a necklace,  
 Earrings, or a bracelet.  
 But it is only gold,  
 Whichever one receives.

One may gather a handful of ripples,  
 But it is only water in the hand.

To the hand, camphor is touch,  
 To the eye, it's a white object,  
 To the nose it is fragrance.  
 Nonetheless, it is camphor, and nothing but camphor.

Likewise, the sensible universe  
 Is only the vibration of the Self.

The various senses attempt to catch  
 Their objects in their hands—  
 For example, the ears  
 Try to catch the words.

But as soon as the senses  
 Touch their objects,  
 The objects disappear as objects.  
 There's no object for one to touch.  
 For all is the Self.

The juice of the sugarcane  
 Is part of the sugarcane.  
 The light of the full moon  
 Belongs to the full moon.

The meeting of the senses and their objects  
 Is like moonlight falling on the moon,  
 Or like water sprinkling on the sea.

One who has attained this wisdom  
 May say whatever he likes.  
 The silence of his contemplation  
 Remains undisturbed.

His state of actionlessness  
 Remains unaffected,  
 Even though he performs countless actions.

Stretching out the arms of desire,  
 One's eyesight embraces  
 The objects she sees.  
 But, in fact, nothing at all is gained.

It is like the Sun  
 Stretching out the thousand arms  
 Of his rays in order to grasp darkness.  
 He remains only light, as before.

Just as a person, awakening to  
 Enjoy the activity of a dream,  
 Finds himself suddenly alone.

Even one who has attained wisdom  
 May appear to become the enjoyer

Of the sense objects before him.  
 But we do not know  
 What his enjoyment is like.

If the moon gathers moonlight,  
 What is gathered by whom?  
 It is only a fruitless  
 And meaningless dream.

There is really no action or inaction.  
 Everything that is happening  
 Is the sport of the Self.

The undivided One  
 Enters the courtyard of duality  
 Of His own accord.  
 Unity only becomes strengthened  
 By the expansion of diversity.

Sweeter even than the bliss of liberation  
 Is the enjoyment of sense-objects  
 To one who has attained wisdom.  
 In the house of *bhakti* (devotional love),  
 That lover and his God  
 Experience their sweet union.

Whether he walks in the streets  
 Or remains sitting quietly,  
 He is always in his own home.

He may perform actions,  
 But he has no goal to attain.  
 Do not imagine  
 That, if he did nothing,  
 He would miss his goal.

He does not allow room  
 For either remembering or forgetting.  
 For this reason,  
 His behavior is not like that of others.

His rule of conduct is his own sweet will.  
 His meditation is whatever  
 He happens to be doing.  
 The glory of liberation  
 Serves as an *asana* (seat cushion)  
 To one in such a state.

God Himself is the devotee.  
 The goal is the path.  
 The whole universe is one solitary Being.

It is He who becomes a God,  
 And He who becomes a devotee.  
 In Himself,  
 He enjoys the kingdom of Stillness.

The temple itself is merged  
 In the all-pervasive God.  
 The motion of time  
 And the vastness of space  
 Are no more.

Everything is contained in the Being of God.  
 If a desire  
 For the Master-disciple relationship arises,  
 It is God alone who must supply both out of Himself.

Even the devotional practices,  
 Such as *japa* (repetition of God's name), faith and meditation,  
 Are not different from God.

Therefore, God must worship God  
 With God, in one way or another.

The temple, the idol, and the priests—  
 All are carved out of the same stone mountain.  
 Why, then, should there be devotional worship?  
 [Or why shouldn't there be devotional worship?]

A tree spreads its foliage,  
 And produces flowers and fruits,  
 Even though it has no objective  
 Outside of itself.

What does it matter if a dumb person  
 Observes a vow of silence or not?  
 The wise remain steadfast in their own divinity  
 Whether they worship or not.

Will the flame of a lamp  
 Remain without light  
 If we do not ask her to wear  
 The garment of light?

Is not the moon bathed in light  
 Even though we do not ask her  
 To wear the moonlight?

Fire is naturally hot;  
 Why should we consider heating it?

A wise person is aware  
 That he, himself, is the Lord.  
 Therefore, even when he is not worshiping,  
 He is worshiping.

Now the lamps of action and inaction  
 Have both been snuffed out,  
 And worshiping and not worshiping  
 Are sitting in the same seat,  
 And eating from the same bowl.

In such a state,  
 The sacred scriptures are the same as censure,  
 And censure itself  
 Is the same as a sweet hymn of praise.

Both praise and censure  
 Are, in fact, reduced to silence.

Even though there is speech,  
It is silence.

No matter where he goes,  
That sage is making pilgrimage to God.  
And, if he attains to God,  
That attainment is non-attainment.

How amazing  
That in such a state,  
Moving about on foot  
And remaining seated in one place  
Are the same!

No matter what his eyes fall upon  
At any time,  
He always enjoys the vision of God.

If God Himself appears before him,  
It is as if he has seen nothing.  
For God and His devotee  
Are on the same level.

Of its own nature,  
A ball falls to the ground,  
And bounces up again,  
Enraptured in its own bliss.

If ever we could watch  
The play of a ball,  
We might be able to say something  
About the behavior of the sage.

This spontaneous, natural devotion  
Cannot be touched by the hand of action,  
Nor can knowledge penetrate it.

It goes on without end,  
In communion with itself.  
What bliss can be compared to this?

This natural devotion is a wonderful secret.  
It is the place in which meditation  
And knowledge become merged.

O blissful and almighty Lord!  
You have made us the sole sovereign  
In the kingdom of perfect bliss.

How wonderful  
That You have awakened the wakeful,  
Laid to rest those who are sleeping,  
And made us to realize  
Our own Self!

We are Yours entirely!  
Out of love,  
You include us as Your own,  
As is befitting Your greatness.

You do not receive anything from anyone,  
Nor do You give anything of Yourself to anyone else.  
We do not know how You enjoy your greatness.

O noble One!  
It is Your pleasure  
To become our nearest and dearest  
By taking away from us  
Our sense of difference from You.

### III. NIRVANASATKAM

The philosophy of Nondualism states that, just as every wave arising in the sea is nothing but ocean, and just as every clod of dirt is nothing but earth, so, in the same way, every object and every conscious soul is nothing else but the one all-pervading universal Consciousness. This philosophy is founded on the experiential realization that occurs when that eternal Self becomes revealed in the depths of one's soul. Otherwise, we remain ignorant of our true nature. The reason for our ignorance is that, at birth, that Consciousness becomes associated with the individual physical body that is born, and from that time forward we tend to identify as a separate individual person. We are limited not only by the illusion of separateness, but we are also limited by the karmic conditions under which we are born, as well as by the characteristics we acquire through our current life-experiences.

These limitations obscure, but cannot alter, the fact that the underlying being and true identity of every one of us is that one universal and indivisible Consciousness who is the Creator and Sustainer of this multi-formed phenomenal universe. It is He who lives as every conscious form, and it is He alone who is the identity of all that exists. And yet, no matter how hard we try to know that eternal Self through the reasoning mind, we cannot know It; the direct awareness of that Self eludes us. We can reduce all existence to two: 'I' and 'Thou'; but the further reduction to one, to the nondual Self, is something only *He* can do. When, however, by the grace of God, these two do in fact become one, contrary to our expectations, it is not 'Thou' who remains standing, but 'I' who inevitably stands alone as the sole Reality. This is why all the sages and seers to whom that eternal Self has revealed Itself have declared that "God and I are one; in truth I am He!"

Here is a song by the eighth century Indian sage, Sri Shankaracharya, called *Nirvanasatkam*, in which he tells of the unitive knowledge that came to him through his realization of the Self. Subsequent to that realization, he no longer identifies with any of the modifications of Consciousness with which we ignorantly tend to identify; rather, he declares over and over that He is the absolute Reality, *Chidananda* (Chit and Ananda; eternal Consciousness and Bliss; he is the one divine Self, traditionally referred to as 'Shiva':

*Nirvanasatkam (On The Eternal Reality)*

**Song by Sri Shankaracharya,  
translated into English by Swami Abhayananda**

1. I am neither mind, nor the reason, nor ego.  
I am not the senses of taste, smell, or vision.  
Not water, nor fire, nor earth, nor the ether,  
I am *Chidananda*.<sup>1</sup> I'm Shiva. I'm Shiva.
2. I am not the *prana*, nor its five kinds of movement,  
Nor seven gross components, nor five subtle bodies.  
I am neither speech nor the organs of action.  
I am Chidananda. I'm Shiva. I'm Shiva.
3. I am not the feeling of pride, nor of envy.  
Neither pleasure, nor duty, nor wealth belong to me.  
I am not attachment, nor greed, nor delusion.  
I am Chidananda. I'm Shiva. I'm Shiva.
4. I'm neither evil nor good; I'm neither pleasure nor pain.  
Nor mantra, nor temple, nor *yajna*, nor Veda.  
I am neither food, nor the one who consumes it.  
I am Chidananda. I'm Shiva. I'm Shiva.
5. I have neither death nor concern, nor vocation,  
Nor mother, nor father; no birth have I taken.  
I'm not Guru, not *shishya*, not friend, nor a brother.  
I am Chidananda. I'm Shiva. I'm Shiva.
6. I'm beyond every form and beyond all conception.  
I am everywhere, but beyond sense-perception.  
I am not detachment, nor am I salvation.  
I am Chidananda. I'm Shiva. I'm Shiva.

**NOTES:**

1. *Chidananda*: Sanskrit word, made up of *Chit* (Consciousness) and *Ananda* (Bliss); synonymous with the eternal Reality.

#### IV. SOME SANSKRIT CHANTS:

##### The Universal Prayer

Durjanah sajjano bhūyāt  
 sajjanah śāntim-āpnuyāt  
 Śānto mucyeta bandhebhya  
 muktaś-cānyān vimocayet

Svasti prajābhyah paripālayantām  
 nyāyyena mārgena mahīm mahīśāh  
 Go-brāhmanebhya śubham-astu nityam  
 lokāh samastāh sukhino bhavantu

Kāle varsatu parjanya  
 prthivī śasya-śalinī  
 Deśo' yam ksobha-rahito  
 brāhmanāh santu nirbhayāh

Sarve bhavantu sukhinah  
 sarve santu nirāmayah  
 Sarve bhadrāni paśyantu  
 ma kaścid-duhkha-bhāg-bhavet

Sarvas-taratu durgāni  
 sarve bhadrāni paśyantu  
 Sarvah kāmān-avāpnotu  
 sarvah sarvatra nandatu

Svasti mātra uta pitre no astu  
 svasti gobhyo jagate purusebhyah  
 Viśvam subhūtam suvidatram no astu  
 jyogeva drśyema sūryam

OM śantih śantih śantih

**English translation of The Universal Prayer:**

May all of the wicked return to good.  
May all who are good obtain true peace.  
May all who are peaceful be freed from their bonds.  
May all who are free set others free.

Blessings upon all the people on earth.  
May all the world's rulers uphold what is right.  
May only good fortune befall everyone.  
May all the world's creatures obtain happiness.

May the rain fall when the earth is thirsty.  
May all the storehouses be filled with grain.  
May everyone here be free from harm.  
May all who are good be free from fear.

May everyone know a life of joy.  
May everyone live a life of health.  
May everyone see only good in this world.  
May everyone soon be released from pain.

May everyone overcome all their woes.  
May everyone see only good in this world.  
May everyone realize all their desires.  
May everyone everywhere be glad.

May our mother and father be blessed.  
Blessings upon every creature on earth.  
May our works flourish and aid everyone.  
And long may our eyes see the sun.

OM. Peace, peace, peace

## Prayer To Hari

Twameva mātā ca pitā tvameva  
 Tvameva bandhuśca sakhā tvameva  
 Tvameva vidyā dravinam tvameva  
 Tvameva sarvam mama deva deva

Dūra karo dukkha darada saba  
 Dayā karo bhagavān  
 Mana mandira mem ujjvala ho  
 Terā nirmala jnān

Jisa ghara mem ho āratī  
 Charana-kamala chita lāy  
 Tahām hari vasā kare  
 Jyota ananta jagāy

Jahām bhakta kīrtana kare  
 Bahe prema dariyā  
 Tahām harī śravana kare  
 Satya loka se āy

Saba kucha diyā āpa ne  
 Bhemta karūn kyā-nāth  
 [Namaskāra kī bhemta karūn  
 Jodūn maim dono hāth] (Repeat these two lines)

OM pūrnamadah pūrnamidam  
 Pūrnāt pūrnamudacyate  
 Pūrnasya pūrnamādāya  
 Pūrnamevāvaśisyate

OM śantih śantih śantih

### **English translation of the Prayer To Hari:**

Thou art my Mother, my Father Thou art.  
 Thou art my Brother, my Friend Thou art.  
 My wisdom Thou art, all my wealth Thou art.  
 Thou art my all, O God of gods!

Let all our anxious sorrows depart.  
 Mercy we beg, Bhagawan.  
 Enlighten me with Thy wisdom's glow  
 And fill this mind's abode with Light.

Everywhere in homes where Thou art served with love,  
 Everywhere Thy lotus-feet adored:  
 In that place, Hari, Thy radiant glory dwells,  
 Shedding Light everywhere.

Where Thy bhaktas sing their songs to Thee,  
 Where love flows like streams of rain.  
 In that place, Hari, from Thy high abode,  
 Thou dost listen to the strains of love.

Every good thing Thou has given free to me.  
 What, O Lord, may I give unto Thee?  
 Please accept this heart which I offer Thee  
 In these folded hands of mine (Repeat verse)

Thou art ever-perfect and complete;  
 This world, arising from Thy perfection, is also perfect.  
 Yet should this perfect world be withdrawn by Thee,  
 Still, Thy perfection would remain the same.

OM. Peace, peace, peace.

## Song To Shiva

Namo'stvanantāya sahasra-mūrtaye  
 sahasra-pādā'ksi śíroru-bāhave  
 Sahasra-nāmne purusāya śāśvate  
 sahasra-kotī-yuga-dhārine namah

OM viśvataś-caksuruta viśvato-mukho  
 viśvato-bāhur-uta viśvatas-pāt  
 Sambahubhyām dhamati sam-patatrair  
 dyāva-bhūmi janayan deva ekah

Nānā-sugandha-puspāni  
 yathā-kālobbhavāni ca  
 Puspāñjalim mayā dattam  
 grhāna paramesvara

Ityesā vānmayī pūjā  
 sṛīmacchankara-pādayo  
 Ārpitā tena deveśah  
 prīyatām me sadā-śivah

Yad-aksaram padam bhrastam  
 mātrā-hīnam ca yad bhavet  
 Tat-sarvam ksamyatām deva  
 prasīda paremeśvara

OM saha nāvavatu  
 saha nau bhunaktu  
 Saha vīryam karavāvahai  
 tejasvi nāvadhītam-astu

Ma vidvisāvahai  
 OM śāntih śāntih śāntih

**English translation of the Song To Shiva:**

I bow to Thee, O Shiva, of many thousand forms.  
 with thousands of feet, eyes, heads, thighs and arms.  
 With thousands of names, Thou art One forevermore.  
 Through thousands of ages, I bow to Thee, my Lord.

OM. Thy eyes are everywhere, everywhere Thy mouths.  
 Everywhere Thy arms reach out, everywhere Thy feet.  
 Thine the wings of birds, Thine the arms of men.  
 Both heaven and earth belong to Thee, O God.

Many sweet flowers I offer Thee,  
 many-scented and newly-blown.  
 From these two hands this small bouquet  
 please receive, O Lord supreme!

This short song of love I sing  
 at Thy feet, O Shankara;  
 By it, may the Lord of gods,  
 Sadashiva, be pleased with me.

If I've wrongly sung some words,  
 or mispronounced one syllable,  
 All these lapses please forgive,  
 and pardon me, O greatest Lord.

OM. Lord, protect us as one.  
 nourish us, Lord, as one.  
 Let us flourish in Thy strength as one.  
 let our knowledge, O Lord, be changed to light.

Lord, change our hate to love.  
 OM. Peace, peace, peace.

\* \* \*