

SWĀMI SIDDHEŚWARĀNANDA

‘SEEING BRAHMAN WITH OPEN EYES’

Introduction to the
French translation of
MĀNDŪKYA UPANIṢAD
with Gauḍapāda Kārikā

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Publisher's Note

This article by Swāmi Siddheśwarānanda of the Rama-krishna Order, which lucidly discusses important points pertaining to a proper understanding of the Vedānta is published within the frame of our endeavour to collect and put together material pertaining to the beginning of Vedānta Work in Europe during the 1930s..

A brief biographical sketch of the Swāmi is on the back of this pamphlet.

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Foreword

In the Sri Ramakrishna Tradition there are two currents of thought regarding the realizations of the Master. The one that is popular is that indicated in *Śrī Rāmakrishna Līlā Prasāṅga*. Swami Saradananda, in his classical treatment of the life and experiences of Sri Ramakrishna, seems to hold the view that in the Master's realization there is a gradual development, culminating in his advaitic realization. There is another tradition inspired by Swami Ramakrishnananda where the notion of an evolution is replaced by the faith that in his experience of Mother at the age of nineteen, at that historic moment when he thought of putting an end to his life, was not the starting point of higher and higher experiences, *but the fund and center of all experience*. All that he realized afterwards, he recognized as his Mother. This tradition whose principal spokesman is Swami Ramakrishnananda is not written as a philosophical document. We have heard this from those who received this approach, as oral transmissions, particularly from Prof. P.N. Srinivasachari who directed the philosophical studies of the writer of the following article when he was a novice at the Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, from 1920 to 1924.

In mentioning this approach of Swami Ramakrishnananda the author is not giving a hidden hint that as in the Buddhistic tradition, in the Sri Ramakrishna tradition also there are signs of differences of opinion and the formation of schools of thought that spell disaster to a spiritual movement. The very nature of the Ramakrishna tradition is to permit different schools of thought and not to condemn all other opinions except one's own based on particular fanatical *Siddhanta*. It is SAMANAVAYA—synthesis that Sri Ramakrishna preached and his devotees will not monopolize truth and deny access to others who differ from them.

There is a written tradition in Buddhism. Every later teaching was closely examined in the light of the written words to prevent heresy. There is equally an unwritten tradition in Buddhism. It is on the basis of the unwritten tradition that the

Mahayana school took its birth, which later on got codified into the scriptures of that school of thought.

The purpose of this article is not to oppose two direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna — Swami Ramakrishnananda and Swami Saradananda. It is only to show that the position held by the author of the article has support from the way Swami Ramakrishnananda looked at Sri Ramakrishna's experience — meaning that there is *no evolution in his spiritual experience*. He, the Master, had the whole of Truth at that historic moment when he had the revelation of Divine Mother, already referred to. The writer of the article has identified the *Vijñāna*-realization of Sri Ramakrishna with the *Turiya* of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. If there is a written document in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by 'M' mentioning the acquisition of *Vijñāna* at a given moment after his *Nirvikalpa* experience, many years after the first experience of Mother, there is ample evidence in the way he explained his vision of Mother to note that what he had, as the revelation of Mother first 'burst' on him, was no other than *Turiya* or '**seeing Brahman with open eyes**'.

SIDDHEŚWARĀNANDA

‘SEEING BRAHMAN WITH OPEN EYES’

The full text of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* with the *Kārikā* of Śrī Gauḍapāda and the commentary by Śaṅkara, is now published for the first time in Europe by the Centre Vdantique Ramakrishna. It is hoped that the words that follow, written to complement the Preface by Sri V. Subrahmanya Iyer and the masterly Introduction by Swami Nikhilananda, will be of use to the western reader.

The average student will be puzzled to read a statement like the one presented in the 3rd chapter, 45th verse of the *Kārikā*, which says that:

*“the mind should not be allowed to enjoy the bliss that arises out of the condition of **samādhi**.”*

This quotation will be equally perplexing to the reader who, well acquainted with the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, has therefore every reason to consider it as a depreciation of the *yoga* position where the attainment of *samadhi* is considered as equivalent to the highest realization. Sri Ramakrishna considered *samadhi* consciousness as the highest expression of spiritual experience and, moreover, the present book is published by a Centre affiliated to the Ramakrishna Order. A word of caution is required to curb the iconoclastic enthusiasm of all those who interpret this verse as a devaluation of *samadhi* experience.

We have to remember that the realization of *samadhi* has two aspects—one that is inferior and the other superior. This is clearly brought out in the relation between Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji repeatedly begged Sri Ramakrishna to give him the experience of *samadhi*, which at that time he believed to be the state of remaining oblivious of the world, free from that consciousness that binds man to the subject-object relationship, a state of total absorption in a unitary consciousness that is non-dual. The physical eyes of the *yogi* remain closed and in the inner vision of the opened third eye (the term ‘third eye’ is used in a symbolical sense), consciousness remains contentless. This is equated with the realization of *Brahman* in the popular mind, where the world-consciousness is eliminated as unreal.

Sri Ramakrishna scolded Swamiji for having nourished this notion of *samadhi*. “*You are narrow-minded to restrict **samadhi** in that way*”, said Ramakrishna, and added, “*Can you not see Brahman with your eyes opened?*” (‘seeing Brahman’ is used in the figurative sense of seeing through the third eye). *This way of seeing Brahman* ‘with opened eyes’ is TURIYA-vision, realization of the timeless Reality, the subject of this *Upanishad*. The *Mandukya Upanishad Karika* calls this also a *yoga*—the *asparsha yoga*. (The word *yoga* signifies ‘union’). *Asparsha* is ‘non-contact’. Contact is union; thus two words that oppose each other are used to signify the highest, supreme doctrine and the experience that is expressed therein. All contact means establishing relations. The supreme doctrine is non-causal and as such no contacts or relations can be imagined in it.

When Sri Ramakrishna spoke of ‘*seeing Brahman with eyes opened*’, the state he referred to was also *samadhi*. This *samadhi* is the *Brahmisthiti*, the state of being established in *Brahman*, the *Brahmanirvana*, the state of *nirvana* identified with realization of *Brahman*, referred to in the 72nd verse of the 2nd chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It is the state of *yoga* that Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to practice on the battle-field. The *yoga* of the battle-field is not the closed-eye-meditation that is described in the 5th and 6th chapters of the *Gita*.

In verse 12 of the 6th chapter (see footnote 2) this meditation is advised for the purification of the self. The means are not to be confused with the end, which is *jñāna*. The *yoga* of the battle-field is far from sitting with closed eyes “*in a pure place, established on a fixed seat, neither very much raised, nor very low, made of a cloth, black antelope skin and Kusha-grass, one over the other*” [BG 6.11]. The *yoga* of the battle-field is seeing with the ‘*jñāna-chakshu*’, the eye of wisdom, and this *yoga* is also described as ‘*samatva*’ —‘*seeing equality everywhere*’. It is not by reducing everything to the same mode that the scriptures speak of the vision of the sage who looks “*equally on a brahmana adorned with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, and a dog and an outcaste*” [BG 5.18]. It is by seeing those modes themselves as *Brahman*; (the word ‘seeing’ is used in a metaphorical sense to signify the operation of

Buddhi – the vision through *Buddhi-yoga* of the *Gita*). [For a closer study of the different transformations of modes, the reader is requested to get thoroughly acquainted with the commentaries of Sankara in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, generally called the *Ghata-Bhashya*, pages 15 to 26 in the Mayavati edition.] Real metaphysics, untainted by theological and mythological considerations, is concerned with the explanation of Totality, *sarvam*. It is only when the lower conciliatory principle works that all modes are reduced to one single mode, that of the consciousness that remains contentless in *yoga-samadhi*. We can call that state of contentless consciousness of *yoga-samadhi* also a mode, although the word has no meaning here for, in the state of *yoga-samadhi*, there is no subject-object relationship and consequently no 'NAMA-RUPA'. The *yogi*, when he comes back from the experience of *yoga-samadhi*, says that he has enjoyed the bliss of unitary consciousness; he describes it by the negative way – “all that we see now did not exist then” – the ‘all’ that is meant here is name and form (*nama-rupa*); thus by a figure of speech, the absence of name and form takes the dignity of a ‘mode’ by its negative reference; for there is an ‘after’ and a ‘before’ for this mode, although the content of this experience – a hiatus bound within an ‘after’ and a ‘before’ – has virtually no form, no mode. The very fact that it is encrusted within an ‘after’ and a ‘before’ conditions that experience, and makes it fit into a temporal perspective. In the *yoga* of seeing with the third eye of *jñana*, what is meant is an understanding of, or the meaning of the modes themselves and not their negation. The reader is referred to the very illuminating notes that Swami Nikhilananda has given regarding this point (Notes 6 and 7, page 21, *Mandukya Upanishad*, Mysore edition 1936).

The vision of *samatva* identified in the *Gita* as *yoga* is the metaphysical centre where the higher conciliatory principle works. The word *samadhi* itself signifies the equal vision. The ‘*dhi*’ signifies intelligence and *sama* is equality; it is the state where the *Buddhi* does not accept any hierarchy in its vision. Sri Ramakrishna has a particular vedantic term to signify this vision. It is VIJÑANA. The Divine Mother revealed to him this state of VIJÑANA from the very beginning of his spiritual career. When everything, the *sarva*, the totality, was known as

MOTHER, there could be no place for a *yoga* of ‘contact’. Contact is possible only when there is duality. In the vision of MOTHER there is no duality. *It is SHE that sees*. In the words of Meister Eckhart, “*to see God is to see how God sees*”. The vision of MOTHER as MAHASAKTI is equally *advaita* realization according to the SAKTA school of *advaita*, for *it is the vision of Mother*. Sri Ramakrishna’s *advaita* realization in its *sakta* form of comprehending the totality as MOTHER was an immediate act when the MOTHER revealed Herself to him. In biblical language, “*He must increase but I must decrease*” (John 3:30-31) and when the ‘I’ has become completely eliminated, what remains is only HE. In the same way, in Ramakrishna’s experience, MOTHER took full possession of him and only SHE remained—and the MOTHER is equally the non-dual *advaita* Truth. But the *advaitic* realization achieved under the guidance of Tota Puri gave Sri Ramakrishna his first experience of *yoga-samadhi*, (which will be discussed more fully later on) and as a result of this direct knowledge he was able to condemn Swamiji’s pursuit of the same state, which he considered inferior to that of ‘*seeing God with opened eyes*’. When Swamiji nevertheless doggedly continued to press Sri Ramakrishna to grant him *yoga-samadhi*, the latter exclaimed, “*O ye of little mind!*”

Although Sri Ramakrishna gave a minor importance to *yoga-samadhi*, the reader should not make the mistake of thinking that in the scheme of our spiritual evolution there is no place for *yoga-samadhi*. On the contrary it has a very great importance for *sadhakas* of average intelligence and therefore the majority of spiritual aspirants. The higher intelligence required to grasp the *vijñana* position is possessed by *very few*. It is of this limited class that the *Gita* speaks in the chapter 7, verse 3: “*Among thousands of men scarcely one striveth for perfection; of the successful strivers, scarcely one knoweth Me in Essence.*” *Vedanta* gives a high place for *adhikara*—the nature and capacity of the *sadhaka*. In the scheme of purification of intelligence, the *atma-suddhi* spoken of in the *Gita* chapter 6, verse 12, there is the injunction to pass through *yoga-samadhi* for the purpose of the destruction of *samskaras* [innate impregnations]. For *yoga-samadhi* is the furnace in

which all *samskaras* are burned to ashes. And so long as there are *samskaras*, *jñana* as well as *vijñana* is impossible.

Jñana is the intellectual intuition; it is keenness of the *buddhi* that steers us clear of all errors. In *vijñana* the totality of that vision becomes incorporated with life in one simultaneous functioning of the heart and the brain. A philosophy that has no bearing on life would remain a purely intellectual affair. It is this intellectual *jñana* that is condemned in *Gita* chapter 3, verse 33: “*Even the man of wisdom behaves in conformity with his nature; beings follow nature; what can restraint avail?*” For those who are dominated by *raga* and *dvesha* [attraction and repulsion] disciplines have a great value; it is through them that one reaches *yoga-samadhi*, when all *samskaras* are burned away. Disciplines are, indeed necessary for 99% of humanity, and therefore those who give their intellectual consent to the 45th verse of the 3rd chapter of *Gaudapada’s Karika* should remember that disciplines can only be dispensed with in the case of those rare individuals who have the total vision in the realization of VIJÑANA. It is very seldom that *jñana*, intellectual consciousness, will penetrate in a sudden blast, affecting and changing the whole personality and transforming itself into *vijñana*. Those who say that no discipline is necessary have only to make the experiment of attempting to free themselves from all disciplines. That would be impossible, for in the unconscious automatisms of our psychological nature we are dominated by taboos and inhibitions over which we have no conscious control. These taboos and interdictions are equally disciplines that have become second nature. To live liberated from all disciplines we have to get freedom from these psychological automatisms. How many can dominate the subconscious and say, “I have no taboos and inhibitions in me”? What is ordinarily conceived as abandoning all discipline is only for him whose dual vision has been absorbed in the non-dual realization. For that there must be drastic change in the nature of man. *The question is: ‘can man bring about that final change?’*. The answer must be in the negative when we consider the life-achievements of great and awakened souls. This incapacity of man to achieve a decisive transformation through self-effort alone is called in religious language by a pleasant and sweet term: *dependence on Grace*.

We have no excuse for rejecting this term, dependence on GRACE; it explains clearly our inability to find access to the state of illumination. The *dawning* of knowledge can never be explained in a rational way. In fact, it is not got. It is GIVEN. Realization *comes in search of us* and we cannot go in search of realization. By means of the following illustration we shall understand more easily the type of person for whom disciplines are not necessary, and at the same time appreciate not only the extreme rarity of such a case but also the advisability of avoiding exceptions when studying the generality. During the night a man was awakened by the sound of a violin. He thought the player must surely be a professional owing to the masterly execution of one of Bach's most difficult works: *La Chaconne*. Curious, he got up and following the sound of the music, found himself in the maidservant's bedroom. He was astonished to see that she was playing the violin in her sleep! Questioned the next day, the surprised servant said that she had never studied the violin or any other musical instrument. What had happened? The man was himself a very fine violinist; the maidservant's subconscious had become impregnated by the melody which she had heard him play so often, and as a result her whole nervous system yielded spontaneously to these mental impressions. In the same way, there is very occasionally an isolated instance of a person whose personality becomes soaked in Vedantic thoughts and, without undergoing any discipline, the total realization comes bursting upon him.

We should understand that the *Mandukya Karika*, when it negates all disciplines—*sadhana* and the *sadhaka*—in the 32nd verse of the 2nd chapter—does so from the standpoint of the vision of the realized man who sees no duality, no birth, no death, no liberation and none in search after that. There is a great danger of the *Mandukya Karika* being misinterpreted in the West by those who have not the age-long Vedantic disciplinary tradition behind them. Such people will consider the attainment of *jñāna* as a cheap affair, a bare adherence to one notion of life, which is only adhering to another form, of idolatry.

In order that the reader should not get the idea that all forms of disciplines are dispensed with in this treatise, we em-

phasize once more that the search for *yoga-samadhi* has its place in our spiritual scheme. But *vijñāna* is not acquired by means of a search. It has to come to the individual as it came to Sri Ramakrishna. The 45th verse of the *Karika*, chapter 3, which states that “*the mind should not be allowed to enjoy the bliss that arises out of the condition of **samadhi***” is a criticism aimed at this lower form of *samadhi* only, and these pages are written with a hope of precluding any misunderstanding on this point. The real *vijñānin* does not seek anything. He knows that whatever appears to be contradictory in life is merely one of the many aspects of *maya*—and *maya* is *Brahman* Itself. It is the unregenerate mind that reads and interprets this contradiction according to its *samskaras* and gets enmeshed and lost in anguish.

With illumination *this mind itself is known as Brahman and thus all seeking ends in the peace of Atma-jñāna*. This understanding springs from the innermost core of the mind, *buddhi*, (the word ‘mind’ is used in the general sense to indicate the internal organ, the *antah-karana*). Shutting oneself away from the external world —*yushmad-jagat*, the region of the non-I—can be an enjoyable but shortlived pastime. The ‘I’—the *asmad-jagat*—can through the processes of ‘stilling’ be made to remain for a time in a state of quietude. But all these psychological and psychosomatic exercises cannot bring about *jñāna*. *Vedānta* is categoric in its insistence that *jñāna* cannot be ‘produced’. *Jñāna*-state, ***aham Brahmasmi***, “*I am Brahman*”, or in the language of Mahayana Buddhism “*I am of the nature of Buddha*” is innate. Man has never lost that state. The state of quietude mistakenly identified as *Brahman*-consciousness, through the exercise of inferior *yoga* and mentioned under the name of *yoga-samadhi*, does not last long. It is a temporal experience, as we have already noted, for it is bound by an ‘after’ and a ‘before’. A Zen master has humourously expressed this idea of the impossibility of remaining in an eternal state of absorption in *yoga-samadhi*; a person seeking the inferior *samadhi*, he compares to a monkey sleeping in a cage. The outer world is represented by another monkey that comes to disturb the monkey that is asleep. The question is asked: what should the sleeping monkey do when the outer monkey comes to seek an interview?

We have already said that Sri Ramakrishna's realization of the Divine Mother when it burst upon him was an advaitic experience according to the *sakta* school. It is this realization of VIJÑANA which we have equated with *jñana-samadhi*, or 'seeing Brahman with open eyes'. Here there is no entering into *samadhi*, and coming out of it, for once *vijñana* awakens us it ever remains. We have also remarked that this realization came to him at the end of a total defeat when all his human efforts failed to reach Her. Then the ULTIMATE REALITY came in search of him. The pilgrimage in search of reality ends, when our seeking is abandoned, and Reality comes in search of us — which is the action of Grace.

Vedanta makes a categorical distinction between truth and Reality. A truth is only an aspect of the reading of reality, and as all truths are partial, no single truth is total, for different experiences of truth give the notion of different degrees of truth. Swami Vivekananda has compared this notion of different truths to different photographs of the sun. In all the photos it is the sun, but each view is different from the other. This intuition of the Real is present in all experiences, and is metaphysical, not of this world. It is of that higher Unmanifested that the *Gita* speaks of in verse 20, chapter 8. It is the *turiya*-consciousness. Even when one thinks that one has to attain something one is in *That*. The *Jñana*-state has never been nullified. We cannot become conscious of it as we become conscious of an object. We become conscious when we know a thing in the world of subject-object relations, in the way we know things in our temporal existence. I know I have a head when I get a headache. I know I have a heart when something is wrong with it. The metaphysical intuition cannot be known in this way, for it never gets ill! Even when we experience the metaphysical anguish because we have not got IT, we are IT; and this metaphysical anguish, this *avidya* is unreal, for at no *time* we have lost IT. Realization is, in other words, knowledge of TIME, and this *Upanishad* begins with its study. In the *Gita*, Bhagavan Krishna says: "I am TIME". In our anguish of searching for *atman-Brahman*, there is the error of using time to get at TIME, using mind to get at MIND which is a wild-goose chase. Multiplicity is an appearance. The indivisible looks as if it were divided. Take the classical example of *akasa*,

space—and the notion of space that is divided. In a building that has many chambers, we get the impression that each room is separated from the other by the walls, the *akasa* of one room being separated from the *akasa* of another by the wall. We have taken the separation for granted because of the wall, and we speak of the space that is cut up. But what is it that cuts up? The walls, the bricks that make up the wall, are they separated from space? And if they are not, then how can we speak of cutting up space and dividing it? In the same way the metaphysical intuition never gets cut up into parts. The notion that it expressed itself as the state of waking, as the state of dreaming and as the state of deep sleep, is imaginary, in the same way that it is imagined that space is cut up into parts. The key to understand the whole *Upanishad* is in the second *mantra* and the commentaries of Sankara. This contains one of the great *Mahavakya*—‘*ayam atma Brahma*’—“*this atman is Brahman*”, and in the commentaries Sankara gives us through the illustration of the cow and the coin, a key to the understanding of the states of waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. (See page 13, *Mandukya Upanishad*, Mysore edition). Reality, Sankara says, is not like the feet of a cow. It is to be compared to a coin where the quarter merges into the half and the half into the three quarters and that again into the whole. The whole can never be cut up: the number one will ever be present. It can never be eliminated and this figure ‘one’(1) is elusive—this idea of fragmenting the ONE is only a *kalpana*, an imagination. It has no corresponding reality. The quarter that merges into the half; the half that merges into the three quarters and the three quarters that merge into the one, the ONE—the *purna* has never been absent. This is the mathematical significance of the following upanishadic *mantra*:

*OM! Poornamadah poornamidam
poornat poornamudachyate.
Poornasya poornamadaya
poornamevavasishyate
OM! shantih! shantih! shantih!*

OM! That (Brahman) is infinite and this (universe) is infinite. The Infinite proceeds from the Infinite. (Then) taking the infinitude of the infinite (universe), it remains as the infinite (Brahman) alone. OM! Peace!

Peace! Peace! [Brihadaranyaka Up. trans. Swami Madhavananda, Mayavati]

In 1936 we made a special pilgrimage to Tiruvannamalai to consult Sri Ramana Maharshi about the use of the illustrations of the cow and coin given in the commentary of the second *mantra*. In answer to our question he replied that, when an enumeration is done after counting three, there is a ‘four’. To this we raised the objection that there is not only a four but all the numbers that can come after three, and he replied:

“with regard to experience catalogued under different numbers, there can be only three—the state of waking as number one; the state of dream as number two and dreamless sleep as number three and because the mind, working on a causal basis, has made an enumeration, we cannot avoid positing a state that is transcendental, and counting that as number four. All the other infinite series of numbers, each representing the transcendental, can be grouped under number ‘four’, thus avoiding the fatigue of counting an infinite series.”

We found this explanation extremely original. And Maharshi added that when the causal attitude is known through realization (*anubhava*), then the mind will not fly off in search of numbers! It will be concentrated on itself. *That mind itself will be known as Brahman*. This realization, *without seeking a causal explanation*, is the realization of *turiya*, where *turiya* is not only a transcendental state, but it becomes equated with REALITY.

In Reality there is no degree. It cannot be fragmented. The intuition of Reality when it becomes realization, is the experience of *turiya*, the subject matter of this *Upanishad*. If by *turiya* is meant knowledge of TIME itself, and not its apparent division into past, present and future, and the notion of the transcendental, if by *turiya* is meant a vision in which the eye of wisdom—*jñāna-chakshu*—sees, then Ramakrishna had it in the very beginning of his career. What different *gurus* taught him was only the realization of different religious truths, and those *partial truths came to him who already had, in his background, the total vision*. What Tota Puri brought him was *one of those partial truths*. *Yoga-samadhi* is not a religious truth, it is an ex-

tra-religious spiritual experience. That can be called a truth which is the experience of the destruction of the psyche and the burning up of *samskaras*. With reference to Ramakrishna's experience of *yoga-samadhi*, there was no destruction of *samskaras*, for since his youth he had been the possessor of *vijñana-consciousness*, a consciousness where there is no place for *samskaras* of the type associated with that word. What he experienced was only the destruction of his psyche. The form of Mother that he cut to pieces with the sword of discrimination was not the expression of a *samskara* as in the case of an ordinary person. The Mother he subtracted from his consciousness was not equivalent to the elimination of *vijñana*; for that is impossible, for having once got complete knowledge one cannot go back to ignorance. It was only the personal aspect that was eliminated, and this made Ramakrishna understand that even *that reality* minus its personal aspect was equally his Mother. But for the average person there is the destruction of *samskaras* through the experience of *yoga-samadhi*, as taught by Patañjali. With Ramakrishna, when the *vijñana-consciousness* came to him in his nineteenth year, all ways of seeing the universe as manifold came to an end. That is why in the course of very few seconds, through the directions given by Tota Puri, he could enter into *yoga-samadhi* — for in him there were no obstacles such as beset an ordinary traveller in the path, that of *samskaras* created by *sankalpas* and *vikalpas* — the work of the 'film imagitatif'.

Ramakrishna's ability to enter so easily into the state of *yoga-samadhi* astonished Tota Puri; for Tota Puri himself had worked more than forty years to get full possession of the state of *yoga-samadhi*. The Absolute of Tota Puri was at that time a non-psychological state, much superior to that state that is mentioned in verse 45, chapter 3 of the *Karikas*; but it was not yet *vijñana* consciousness, for when the 'interviewer' — pain — came, he could not fit that within his scheme of knowledge. He received the final realization of *vijñana* only towards the end of his stay in the temple, and before he left he offered his salutations to Ramakrishna for helping him to get it. It is only by confronting pain, anguish and despair, and not by avoiding them, that *vijñana-yoga* consciousness is awakened. The *asparsha yoga* is the *yoga* that gives final peace-solution for all

problems to which ‘the flesh is heir to’. It is the *sambodhi* of Mahayana Buddhism.

After the experience of *yoga-samadhi*—a truth into which Tota Puri initiated Ramakrishna—the Divine Mother kept him in the state of *bhava-mukha*. Even if there is a chronological sequence between Ramakrishna’s *yoga-samadhi* experience and that of remaining permanently in *bhava-mukha*, we cannot conclude that it was *yoga-samadhi* that gave him the consciousness of *bhava-mukha*. Moreover this state of remaining in *bhava-mukha* is, from the standpoint of manifestation through *sakti*, infinitely greater than that of the *jivanmukta*. Sri Ramana Maharshi was a *jivanmukta*. In every period of her history, India has produced *jivanmuktas*. But the unique experience of Ramakrishna, that of his ability to remain in the *bhava-mukha* state, has no parallel in our history. And that is why Ramakrishna said that “*my experience has gone beyond all Vedas and Vedanta*”. We are merely stating certain facts about some modern representatives of Indian spirituality. It may be asked why, in a classical study, we have also discussed the experiences of contemporary saints. We reply that our presentation of *Vedanta* is cultural and not purely academic, and that it is impossible to subtract from a study of *Vedanta* its alliance with the life-experience of saints. Spirituality in India is a *living force*. The day when the *Upanishads*, the *Gita* and the *Brahma Sutras* are discussed academically, without reference to its realization in the lives of our people, that spirituality will be relegated to the position of a museum curiosity. A study of the *Mandukya Upanishad* and the *Gita* is inseparably associated with their modern repercussions on our contemporary life in India. The term ‘*bhava-mukha*’ is not found in any Vedantic literature. Ramakrishna employed it to express *the unique nature of his experience*. This experience is the vision through which Mother ‘sees’. It is identical to what Meister Eckhart spoke, of “*seeing God as the way that God sees*”, about which we have spoken already. According to Swami Prabhavananda, when speaking of this experience of Ramakrishna, the usual religious way of considering him as the Incarnation of Mother gives place to equating him with Mother. In vedantic language, the same idea is expressed when we say: “*the realizer of Brahman becomes Brahman*”.

Whenever Ramakrishna got a particular experience, the possession of a truth, in contact with a particular *guru*, he made those teachers—who had not the total vision of *vijñāna* get it in contact with him. Their particular truth got enlarged till their truth became the Truth of truths—*satyasya-satyam*—which is identical with the Real. A truth can be contradicted by another, but **the** Truth, which is the Real, is *trikalabadhitam*—non-contradicted by the three modes of time.

When he came to Ramakrishna, Tota Puri had only a limited vision of truth. The fact that he had no *dualistic conception* when he came to initiate Ramakrishna into *yoga-samadhi* is no guarantee that he had the *non-dual vision*, or *vijñāna*. If such were the case, he would not have mocked at Sri Ramakrishna's devotion to the Divine Mother. Tota Puri, lacking that *vijñāna* that Ramakrishna had, derided his devotion and condemned him as an idolater. But the real idolater was Tota Puri himself. Idolatry is nothing but getting entrenched in one system of ideas, of opinions to the exclusion of others. To Tota Puri, *Brahman* was the Reality, and the *jagat* or the world-consciousness, error, *mithya*. For Ramakrishna with his *vijñāna*-consciousness, there was no difference between *Brahman* and *maya*. One of the direct disciples of Ramakrishna, Swami Turiyananda, who was a thorough advaitin, just before he died in 1923 gave an expression to his realization in these words: “*Brahman is true, and the jagat (maya) also is true.*” This is a direct illustration of the *Chhandogya Upanishad mantram*: ‘**sarvam khalu idam Brahma**’,—“*all that exists is Brahman*”. Starting from a negation: ‘**Brahma satyam jagat mithya**’,—“*Brahman is true, jagat is untrue*”, the Scriptures affirm that the totality (which is not a totalisation) is *Brahman*.

From all that we have said above we can now understand that it is not correct to say that Sri Ramakrishna's non-dual experience started from the day he had the *yoga-samadhi* under the guidance of Tota Puri.

The truth of the Vedantic tradition is verified by a triple authority:

1. The declaration of Scriptures.
2. An oral tradition, which conforms to the scriptural teach-

ings and which comes to us through the corridors of time, reaching us in the present day when reason and intuition go hand-in-hand.

3. The conformity of (1) and (2) in the life-experience of Sages and Saints.

Both in the experience of Ramakrishna, and in his declaration to Swamiji to “*see Brahman with open eyes*”, we see the confluence of scriptural authority and oral tradition. It is illegitimate and lacking in critical taste to stigmatize the *Mandukya Karika* as a Buddhist work and, as such, outside the pale of vedantic tradition. Its insistence on *turiya* knowledge explains why it has relegated the *yoga-samadhi* that seeks bliss to a lower place. The *Mandukya Upanishad* deals directly with the *metaphysical position of Vedanta, untainted by any theological considerations*. When the theological causal position is predominant, then the *yoga-samadhi* experience retains its value. From the causal standpoint, *avidya* is an *entity* that has to be destroyed, and the process of destruction is the *yoga-samadhi* way. From the position of *tattva*, Reality, *avidya* has no existence, and therefore it is not an entity. This is the non-causal point of view, and to attain it one must be possessed by the *vijñāna*-consciousness.

The invocation verse of Sankara is very significant. It is first addressed to *Brahman*, and all that is said with reference to *Brahman* is also applied to *turiya*, to which the same invocation is once again addressed, thereby implying that the entity as causal is the same as *turiya*, the timeless Reality, non-causal.

Before he begins his commentaries on the *Mandukya Upanishad* Sankara’s invocation is addressed to *Brahman* conceived as *maya* and having the four states of waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep and *turiya*. The same *Brahman* is then again invoked under the name of *turiya*, which it has become through the operation of *maya*. It is to time itself that this invocation is offered, where there can be no transcending of time, for time is equated with *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality and *Brahman* has neither exterior or interior, *Brahman* has no limitations. The notion of transcendence and immanence does not apply to IT. For any definition is a march towards limita-

tion. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, chapter 11, verse 32, Sri Krishna, identifying the Ultimate Reality, says: “*I am Time*”. In these invocations of Sankara, the non-difference between the causal and the non-causal position is clearly indicated. Here is the scriptural justification of Ramakrishna’s identifying *Brahman* and *maya* from the standpoint of *vijñāna* vision. No higher stroke of Sankara’s genius can be conceived than in these invocation verses. Our Professor who taught us *Vedanta*, late V. Subrahmanya Iyer, told us during the period we studied under him at Mysore between the years 1925 and 1937, that the late Jagad Guru of Sringeri considered that in these invocation verses is resolved the whole antagonism between metaphysics and theology.

We have to note that when the invocation is offered to *Brahman*, there is mention of the four states—waking, dream, dreamless sleep and *turiya*; yet when it is offered to *turiya* the word ‘*Brahman*’ is never used. This means that the term ‘*Brahman*’ is used only when the totality of the states is conceived from the causal background. According to the *Brahma-Sutras* 1.1.2: “(*Brahman is that omniscient, omnipotent cause from which proceed the origin, etc. (i.e. sustenance and dissolution) of this (world).*)”

The CAUSE of the universe referred to by the term *Brahman* can never enter into our personal experience. FAITH in the revelation alone can enable us to affirm anything about IT. The notion of *Brahman* is theological and metaphysical. The notion of TURIYA is philosophical and metaphysical. Having made his salutations to *Brahman*, Sankara salutes TURIYA, where the notion is non-theological and, consequently, non-causal. A reading of the whole *Karika* and its commentaries will bring home to the reader the non-theological and non-causal character of TURIYA. Sankara’s masterly genius lies in not creating a rift between the two notions of *Brahman* and TURIYA, between religion and metaphysics. What is affirmed through revelation is re-affirmed through metaphysical investigation supported by correct reasoning (*yukti*). In the days of Sankara, the Buddhists had succeeded in undermining all faith in revelation. Without referring to it, Gaudapada and Sankara showed the validity of an approach based on no scriptural authority what-

soever. It is on the idea of TURIYA—a study of the TIME as REALITY, that the whole structure of vedantic, non-theological metaphysics was expounded. And through a masterly stroke of genius, the whole of India's cultural and theological background was lined up with a metaphysics that demanded no *a priori* affirmation, a metaphysics that demanded a 'looking into' one's self. Taking an inventory of the totality of experience, it at the same time retained its full allegiance to the authority of Revelation.

Between the causal notion of *Brahman* as the source of everything and the 'timeless' idea of *turiya*—above all causal limitations—there is no difference from the standpoint of *tattva*. In the language of Ramakrishna, *Brahman* and *maya* refer to the same Ultimate Reality. His experience of Mother is *turiya*, it is *jñāna-samadhi* or *vijñāna*, although at that time when he had that first illumination he was perhaps not familiar with the term '*turiya*'. The content of the word is more important than the word, and from the different descriptions he gave of his primary experience we know he had the total vision from the very start. It is an unwillingness to recognize this that caused many queer theories to spring up to the effect that there was an evolution in Ramakrishna's spiritual consciousness and that his *yoga-samadhi* was the final stepping-stone that brought him to the terrace of the building. But, in fact, it was not the *yoga-samadhi* that made him know *maya* as *Brahman*. In *yoga-samadhi*, *maya* or *jagat* is absent. To know *maya* as *Brahman* one has to confront *maya* and it is this confrontation of *maya* that gave him *vijñāna* realization, from the very beginning of his career.

We shall relate now how Tota Puri got the *vijñāna*-vision. During the latter part of his stay at Dakshineswar he suffered agonizing pains due to dysentery. Many times he succeeded in weaning his mind away from the pain and in becoming oblivious to world-consciousness (by repeatedly merging his mind in *yoga-samadhi*). Because this isolation within oneself makes one impervious to pain, it can be called by courtesy 'the experience of bliss'. In the language of Zen, the exigence of the outer monkey seeking an interview with the inner monkey came to such a point that the inner monkey was awakened to the real-

ity of the presence of the interviewer! At the moment when Tota Puri became desperate because he could no longer take his mind away from the pain by entering into *yoga-samadhi* due to the exigence of his 'interviewer', the pain,—at that moment of total frustration, when a 'letting go the hold', or 'hands off' operated, spontaneously from within, irrespective of any discipline—then, at that moment came the total vision, the explosion of Reality, the Divine Mother taking him up in Her arms. The position was reversed. All these years, it was he who was after the bliss of non-dual Reality whose pure existence, as pure consciousness, he had tasted in the *yoga-samadhi* when the world-consciousness was completely negated. In this final experience, his partial truth of the reality of *yoga-samadhi* was absorbed as it were into the *jñāna-samadhi*, the *turiya-vision of 'seeing Brahman with open eyes'*, of realizing the glory of Mother.

When Ramakrishna practiced different religious truths and having attained them knew them all as Mother, he had no great suffering to go through except that intense anguish of *viraha* (the pain caused by separation from the Beloved and the feeling of dryness that results from it) which he had when he practiced *Madhura-bhava-samadhi*. His greatest suffering was experienced when he realized *yoga-samadhi*. For months and months he had no body-consciousness whatsoever, and we all know the service rendered to him at this time by his nephew, Hriday. Sometimes, in order to bring back to him body-consciousness, he had to be beaten, and then only a few morsels of food could be forced into him. But this total absorption *added nothing to the total vision he already had*—that *everything is Mother*. Yet, through it he knew by a first-hand experience that the *yoga-samadhi* is equally a means of realizing the Supreme Truth. The aspirant following this path (as opposed to the person pursuing other truths which are in accordance with various fixed religious formations) begins with no preconceived religious opinions. He has an '*extra-religious*' outlook and through this portal the Supreme Truth can seize him, raising him from a partial outlook, and giving him the blessedness of the total vision of *jñāna-samadhi*—that which Tota Puri finally had before he left the temple.

Through our modern outlook we have acquired the habit of giving values to experience, and we have a tendency to class the *yoga-samadhi* experience of Ramakrishna as the highest. For him who had the total vision from the very beginning of his career all his different experiences can be compared to different photographs of the sun: one is not superior to the other. For, from each position, the total vision came and seized him as he practiced the different *sadhanas*.

The limited truth of one who lacks the total vision is but a fruitless attempt to reconcile the opposition created by *matas* ('opinions') on the temporal plane. Generally, it is on a *mata* aspect that each religionist insists, giving superiority to *its particular way of truth*. Ramakrishna's experience of reconciling *matas* through the metaphysical synthesis he made, enabled him to avoid resolving all other religions into one, on the formal plane. Fanaticism and dogmatism and the desire to convert are bred when one is ignorant of the higher conciliating Principle.

From the above study we can easily understand that the doctrine taught in the *Upanishad* is in perfect accord with the experience of Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna initiated Swamiji into this doctrine with these words: "*Can you not see Brahman with your eyes open?*" This, in different words, is the message of Krishna to Arjuna: "*O Arjuna become a yogi*" '***tasmad yogi bhavarjuna***'—a *yoga* of the battle-field, and the battle-field before us is the effort to reconcile the multiple contradictions of life—, the *dvandva* or pairs of opposites. No victory or solution is achieved by closing our eyes to the existing battle—the ostrich's policy of hiding his head in the sand. We have to open our eyes.

The greatness of a culture lies in its dynamic aspect: when it becomes a matter for historians to discuss as a thing of the past, that culture is dead. The vital teaching of all the *Upanishads* is in the *Mandukya*. The *Muktika Upanishad* bears witness to this, and Sankara himself confirms it thus:

"If the sole object of existence is the attainment of the highest truth, then the study of the Mandukya Upanishad is sufficient." (*Muktika Upanishad*)

"The Upanishad [Mandukya] with the Karika embodies

in itself the quintessence of the entire philosophy of Vedānta.” (Sankara)

Let us suppose for a moment that history has taken a different turn. What if Sri Ramakrishna had not initiated Swamiji in this vision of ‘seeing Brahman with eyes open’? Surely the whole course of modern Indian history would have been different. If Swamiji had sought the exclusive bliss of *yoga-samadhi* he would not have been, in the words of Ramakrishna, “a banyan tree under whose shade thousands would find peace and shelter.” To find the ideological and metaphysical basis of his enunciation of **seva-dharma**, the doctrine of service as *siva jñane jiver seva* – service not in the sense of a philanthropic act, but in the sense of serving *jiva* (creature) as *SHIVA* (the Absolute) – we have only to look at that historical moment when Sri Ramakrishna asked him to ‘see Brahman with open eyes’. Swamiji later expounded this doctrine of service in his *Karma Yoga* and thus India was given the true interpretation of her forgotten doctrine of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* ideal of spirituality has to be specially emphasized in presenting this *Upanishad* and the *Karika* to western readers. No better illustration of this upanishadic teaching can be presented than the *Gita* ideal of the *Mahatma* – the realized man – of one who sees the **sarvam** – the Totality, as *Vasudeva* (see chapter 7, verse 19). This insistence on knowing *sarvam*, the ALL, as Reality is given in many places in the *Gita*. Other than the most important quotation already mentioned (chapter 7, verse 19) we have only to refer to chapter 11, verse 40: “Then Thou Thyself art ALL.” And again, to the oft quoted verse 14 in chapter 13: “He dwelleth in the world enveloping ALL.” It is the undue emphasize on the acquisition of *yoga-samadhi* that has caused the wrong and widespread impression that Indian spirituality, philosophy and metaphysics are only ways of giving man that total abstraction and escape from the world, and therefore that Indian thought has relegated the world to the position of an illusion unworthy of attention. THIS UPANISHAD IS A CHALLENGE TO THAT MISTAKEN IMPRESSION. In relegating *yoga-samadhi* to a lower order and giving importance to the realization of *turiya* – what is pointed out is not the negation of the time-process but the real-

ization of TIME itself as the highest Reality. This time is neither limited by the temporal process of past, present and future, nor its negation in a timeless experience, which is *yoga-samadhi* but a totality (which is not as I have already said a totalization) of realizing in a metaphysical intuition, the Timeless Reality.

Owing to the difficulty of finding a proper term to express the significance of the word '*turiya*' we shall have to manipulate the English term 'Timeless Reality'. 'Timeless' is not a 'time-less' reality as that word is translated into English. We use it as a term to express the establishment of a synthesis between the opposing terms: 'in time, or of this world' and its negation 'out of time'. 'Out of time' we can translate as timelessness, as in experience of deep sleep (*sushupti*), syncope (*moorchana*) or *samadhi* (the class of yogic experience when all the *chitta-vrittis* – all mental modifications, are silenced). But even here TIME is not absent; TIME is Reality and Reality never ceases to be. *Turiya* is the term that makes a synthesis on the plane of metaphysical intuition – (we use the term 'metaphysical intuition' to make clear the idea that it is not an intellectual conviction which can easily be contradicted). This metaphysical intuition is identical with TIME ITSELF and it cannot be apprehended by the mind, it is apprehended by *buddhi* [*Gita* 6.21]. *Turiya* is that intense awakening to that TOTAL REALITY. In *turiya* the significance of the temporal experience as duration, and of its opposite, non-duration, is apprehended as *vijñana* consciousness.

In the awakening of this *vijñana*-consciousness, all *vasana* and *samskara* [innate impregnations] are burned away. That is to say, all tendencies that make us see the indivisible as if it were divided are wiped away by the intensified operation of *buddhi*, the *satori* awakening. This is the act of getting full possession of one's sattvic nature. "*That by which one indestructible Being is seen in all beings, inseparate in the separated, know thou that knowledge as sattvic [pure].*" [*Gita* 18.20] According to the Indian interpretation, sin is the error of mistakenly appropriating to consciousness, as well as for the field in which that consciousness operates, *divisibility*, when in reality it is non-divisible. When *vijñana* dawns, the seeds of this ig-

norance (which projects the error of seeing multiplicity) are burned. The same thing happens when one gets *yoga-samadhi*, the experience of the ‘non-manifested’. The *yoga-samadhi* that is condemned in this book (verse 45, chapter 3) is the *samadhi* that seeks bliss, on the lower plane, by negating the possibility of pain. On the other hand, the bliss that is spoken of in verse 47 of chapter 3, is the *Absolute Bliss*, the experience of *buddhi* that synthesizes the temporal experience of bliss and pain, the pair of opposites. In this chapter 3 in the concluding verses of the *Karika* Gaudapada refers thus to two varieties of bliss. As an ersatz version of the *turiya*, absolute bliss, there were people—in the period that Gaudapada wrote the *Karika*—who identified spiritual awakening as the acquisition of yogic bliss of the lower order. In this yogic bliss—ignorance, the sin of seeing the indivisible as divisible, is not destroyed, for there has been no proper application of *buddhi* and its power of discrimination. In the *yoga-samadhi* referred to by Patañjali, this destruction of ignorance is very much emphasized. Patañjali gives a great value to discrimination, and says that one who has real discrimination will never be lost by seeking the lower bliss. But the reader should not interpret this verse as a devaluation of the system of Patañjali. It is the *mis-use* of that system that is held in reprobation.

The human problem is that of suffering and ignorance. Shutting our eyes to it is no solution. We have to confront it in the eternal present.

Our teacher, late V. Subrahmanya Iyer inserted as a motto to this book the lines the reader will find quoted from C.R. Haines:

*If thou wouldst master care and pain,
Unfold this book and read and read again
Its blessed leaves, whereby thou soon shalt see
The past, the present, and the days to be
With opened eyes...*

**End of
‘SEEING BRAHMAN WITH OPEN EYES’
by
Swami Siddheswarananda**

* * *

“Do you know what I see right now? I see that it is God Himself who has become all this. It seems to me that man and other living beings are made of leather, and that it is God Himself who, dwelling inside the leather cases, moves the hands, the feet, the heads. I had a similar vision before, when I saw houses, gardens, roads, men, cattle—all made of One Substance, it was as if they were all made of wax.

“I see that it is God Himself who has become the block, the executioner, and the victim for the sacrifice.”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

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Swāmi Siddheśwarānanda

Swāmi Siddheśwarānanda (1897-1957), went to France in 1937, following an earnest request by French admirers of Indian thought, expressed to Swāmi Yatiśwarānanda at the 1936 Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations in Paris.

Born in Trichur (Kerala) in 1897, the Swāmi, while a student in Madras, was initiated by Swāmi Brahmānanda (the great direct disciple of Śrī Ramakrishna) in 1916. His parents, were disciples of Swāmi Śivānanda (the direct disciple of Śrī Ramakrishna). He joined the Ramakrishna Order in 1920 and was ordained into saṁnyāsa by Swāmi Śivānanda in 1924. He served in various centres, first in Madras, then in Mysore (1925) [where he studied Advaita Vedānta under V. Subrahmanya Iyer, at the Mysore Ramakrishna Ashrama Study Circle], again in Madras (1933), and Bangalore (1935).

On arrival in Paris on July 31, 1937, the Swāmi was welcomed in the home of M. & Mme Marcel Sauton, who devoted themselves to his service until his passing away on April 2, 1957. He established the CENTRE D'ÉTUDES VÉDANTIQUES (the later CENTRE VÉDANTIQUE RAMAKRICHNA), and carried on his work even during the dark days of the second World War, when he had to live under forced residence in the South of France. The Swāmi's spiritual charm and scholarship soon caused many French intellectuals to take a deep interest in Vedānta. He regularly spoke at the Sorbonne and, during the war, his lectures at Toulouse and the Montpellier University attracted many people. Not merely intellectuals but persons from all strata of society. In 1945 he resumed his work in the Paris area, the classes at the Institut de Civilisation Indienne and monthly lectures at the Sorbonne etc. etc. In 1948, a devotee purchased and offered to the Swāmi the property at Gretz in the Seine & Marne province, 30 km southeast of Paris, where the CENTRE VÉDANTIQUE RAMAKRICHNA is presently located.

The Swāmi's publications in French include, among others: five volumes of lectures in Paris, at Montpellier and at the University of Toulouse between 1938 and 1943; and the following: 1. *La Méditation selon le Yoga-vidanta* (1942); 2. *Avant-propos du Dṛg-dṛśya-viveka servant d' Introduction à l'étude des ouvrages Védantiques* (1945); 3. *Éssai sur la Métaphysique du Védanta avec une étude sur Śrī Ramaṇa Maharshi* (1948); 4. *Pensée Indienne et Mystique Carmélitaine* (1949-53) and, posthumously, 5. *L' Intuition Métaphysique* [Talks on the *Gītā*] (1976). The Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trichur, has published, in English translation: *Meditation According to Yoga-Vedānta* and *Some Aspects of Vedanta Philosophy*.

Finally, the Swāmi inspired and supervised the translation into French, by Marcel Sauton, of significant Vedāntic works, including the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad & Gauḍapāda Kārikā* (Swāmi Nikhilānanda), *Dṛg-dṛśya-viveka* (Swāmi Nikhilānanda), *Vivekacūdāmaṇi* (Swāmi Madhavānanda), *The Eternal Companion* (Swāmi Prabhavānanda), *The Life of Śarada Devi*, *Spiritual Practice* (Swāmi Aśokānanda), *In The Hours of Meditation* (F.J.Alexander), *Pañcadaśi* and *Uddhava-Gītā*, all of which were translated for the first time into a Continental European language.