

SELF  
AND IT'S  
SHEATHS

Annie Besant

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# SELF AND ITS SHEATHS

BY  
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Preface

The Self And Its Sheaths

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which you may afterwards yourselves work, and so out of the materials make up for yourself a completer and fuller realisation.

Now, for a moment I must ask you to think of the animal world; because in the animal world we get, not the manomayakosha, but some of the elements that enter into it, that which is really only the germ of the higher; that in which and by means of which, the higher will later be developed. And just as I asked you yesterday to realise the internal changes of the atoms, by which the atoms become differentiated from within, and built through the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, gain a peculiar additional capability and increasing complexity which enable them to form more elaborate combinations, so in dealing with these sheaths, which are connected in the lower part with the animal kingdom, I must ask you to realise the changes that occur in connection with what we know as feeling in animals. That which only exists in the germ, not in the vegetable but in the animal kingdom, is developed, and becomes what we know as the human power of sensation, the higher feelings of pleasure and of pain. Not that man is evolved from the animal as such - that is the western blunder - but that the materials which go to build the manomayakosha in man have been evolved in the animal kingdom, and these materials carry on the results of their evolution, and are therefore available for the building of man. You notice the point of difference: it is not that man is directly evolved from the brute, as Darwin teaches; it is that the materials which have been elaborated in the animal kingdom are then used for the building of Man. Quite a different thing from the purely physical succession, and introducing a different idea; this may show you what underlies and forms the strength of the Darwinian theory, for it is the truth that gives it the strength, although there is also the blunder which comes from studying from without instead of from within, by looking at everything from the standpoint of the external pole of Matter instead of from the internal pole of Spirit.

Now let me, having guarded myself for the sake of clearness of conception, see what we have in the animal kingdom of this power of sensating pleasures and pains. We notice in animals what we have spoken of as desire: that is an outward-going attraction towards objects that are external, so that when contact is experienced what is called pleasure is felt. We notice also that this outward-going energy comes into

contact sometimes with objects which do not by contact give pleasure but pain, and we then notice that repulsion is the result. Attraction by contact, which inwardly is translated into pleasure. Repulsion from contact, which inwardly is translated into pain. Not that pleasure and pain are in the external object, but that contact between the outer and inner is either a contact of harmony and, therefore, is pleasure to the feeler, or is a contact of discord and by the feeler is translated as pain. That is really the essence which underlies these words. Vibrations meet each other; some are harmonious -pleasure; some are discordant -pain.

But pleasure and pain cannot exist either in one set of vibrations alone or in the other. They exist in the contact between the two. Leave those vibrations outside and they are harmonious in themselves; there is neither pleasure nor pain, but there is motion. Take the inner; there also there are vibrations; but these are not pleasurable nor painful. They are in, and in connection only with, the knower. But when the two come into contact, and come against each other, they are either harmonious or discordant; then by contact arises pleasure or pain, which is harmony or discord at the point of contact of the vibrations. That, if you think it out, will enable you to realise how it is possible to overcome pleasure or pain, and how the vibrations from outside may continue and may be realised in thought - after experience has been gained - while by the severing of absolute contact it will no longer be the discord or harmony which we know as pleasure or pain reflected on the inner sheath.

Now in the animal there is this to notice ere we leave it. That pleasure and pain in animals are very brief. There may be a feeling of pain arising from a discordant contact, say a blow, but it is brief. An animal, say with a broken leg from a fall will, when the agony of the contact is over, turn and eat food. It will eat and enjoy - provided it has not come much into contact with man. That is a strange point to keep in your minds and which needs to be explained. The wild animal, evolved along the line of nature un-interfered with by the consciousness of man, does not suffer in the same sense as the domesticated animal suffers. Its pleasure and pain are very brief, its pleasure and pain have not the same element of continuity. The wild animal, which falling has injured itself, is even found eating calmly with a broken limb. It is a strange fact to notice, and a fact which throws much light on the evolution of the inner consciousness. But that is not all; the animal does go one step further,

but very, very, very slowly. Realise that it takes the step, because otherwise you will be forgetting that in Atma is every possibility. Although It be involved in all these lower stages, It is there enfolding all possibilities, It is there enfolding all potentialities; and in the lower animals we find the germ, as it were, which when we come to deal with the further elaboration of these materials in the human being, we find developed into the possibility of thought. And what is the essence? It is a connection between the outer object and the inner sensation, and the recognition of this connection, the recognition that the two things are joined together, that when one occurs the other will follow - this is the beginning of thought, making the link between the outer object and the inner sensation. Very, very, very slowly is that made, and very imperfectly in the lower animals. Let me give you one instance to show exactly what this means, an experiment. There was a fish, a pike, kept in a large, glass case of water. In the West they are very fond of keeping animals to look at, and there are aquariums in which water-creatures are preserved, so that they may be studied and kept under view. In one of these there was a fish, a pike, and between the place where the pike was and the next box of water there was the glass wall, of course invisible. This fish naturally going onwards as animals will and pursuing fish in the adjoining compartment constantly struck its nose against the glass which it could not see. Over and over and over again that went on. Week after week, month after month; no connection recognised between the blow and anything external, no link of thought, until at last the repetition of this vibration, coming from without and felt as shock, formed a dull link between that particular spot and the impossibility of going forward, and the fish turned before it touched the glass. Then the glass was taken away; but to the pike the impossibility of going forward remained, and it invariably turned when it reached that place where the glass had been, having slowly made the connection between external object and internal sensation, which is the germ of thought. This connection between the external object and the internal sensation persisted after the object was removed, because the thought-power was germinal, because the thought-power was not elaborated; so when the external object was removed the connection ideally remained, and the creature turned when nothing stopped it, merely because there was in the pike the beginning of thought without the power of being able to carry it further and adapt it to the varying conditions. Now supposing that you realise that, you will

understand what is meant by instinct. It means the tendency to repeat continually that which has been felt. To repeat it unconsciously, as we say, that is without previous volition and distinct recognition. The instinct of animals is in that stage, corresponding to the automatic action of the lower sheaths of which I spoke. Presently we shall find we have: automatic action, then instinct, then we shall find memory, unconscious almost or partial, then gradually active, then complete. For this is all part of the great law of Rhythm which works in every region of the universe. Now I can leave my animal. I was obliged to make this digression; it was necessary in order that you might realise the complicated nature of what we mean by the manomayakosha. I was obliged to show you how in the animal kingdom the response to pleasure and pain has been evolved. In order that man might be builded it was necessary that the materials of the sheath should be ready to be co-ordinated together.

And next we shall also perceive that there is a limit to the upward working of Atma from the lowest stage of the physical, that there is a point where no further progress is possible unless there is the co-operation of another factor evolved in a past universe, in a past Manvantara. All evolution is not only, a becoming for the present, but also the preparation for a future Manvantara. All evolution, as we shall see in a moment, is carried on by co-operation. From the results of the past there is going to be a further process of becoming, which in its turn will help in the next universe that is evolved. For thus we shall begin to realise what we are doing and what we evolve, how we are being helped by the evolution of the past and how we shall help in the evolution of the future. And by 'past' I mean a past universe, and by 'future' I mean a future universe, separated from this by pralaya, separated from us by a long period of repose, but linked to us by that unbroken law of karma which is of the Essence of the Supreme and is, like It, without beginning and without end. Co-operation, I say, is wanted. And how? Now there is going to be evolved what we call mind -the power of thought. It must be evolved by the cooperation of the minds that have been evolved and perfected in a previous universe. Take the *Aitereyopanishat* again: you will remember there is something more than the entering in of the devas. Paramatma said: "How shall I enter in?" There is to be something more than these sheaths which are made as it were along the primary line of evolution. Now we must seek the minds that have been already evolved,

the Sons of Mind we call them. We have now to come to the building of man, the making possible of a new humanity.

And now I must turn for a moment to my western science and give you a microscope to help in the understanding of this next stage. Suppose you take a germ developed in, we will say, a plant - it does not matter a bit whether we take a plant, an animal or man, for the purpose of my argument - a germ-cell in a plant, say a flower; pulling the flower to pieces, throw aside the calyx and the petals, which are simply protective; throw aside the male organs, for we do not need them yet; and going into the very centre, the very middle of the flower, we find there a sheath, and when we open this sheath, little bodies like seeds. When we open these little bodies, we then want to help our eyes with some magnifying power, that we may see further and thus examine these bodies, or ovules. I find a cell within the ovule, a cell that is called the germinal cell. And going further still within that even I find the nucleus, as it is called; and then still further the nucleolus. Is it not strange that in modern science we are doing exactly the same as Uddalaka did when he taught his son and made him take a seed and open case after case to find the germ of the future tree within the seed; Uddalaka did it just for the same purpose that I am turning to this morning, that we may understand the power of Brahman the invisible, and that within the seed there lay enfolded the future material tree. But I am doing this by way of science, so we are quite respectable. Within my tiny germ what do I find? Possibility. But one side of possibility only and not the whole. For if that germ be left to itself nothing more will happen. Everything has been done that can be done by the female side to make the germ ready for future growth and the development of a new individual. But the individual is not there: only the preparation. The female side of Nature can do nothing but prepare the receptacle, wherein shall be assembled together everything that is necessary for the nourishing of the future individual, but something more is wanted ere further evolution can take place. Within that germ there are possibilities, but there is as yet no individual. For the making of that new individual there needs the junction of two forces and not the growth of one alone. And although the germ be there, and the tracing of the future, there is no possibility of growth unless from outside some new force shall arise. How does it come? It comes from that which I threw aside in my first dissection of the flower; from those male organs

which for the moment I did not require. And from these there comes the force enwrapped in the form which is the other side of the dual evolution with which we are now familiar - the invigorating, the vitalising, the fertilising energy, which by itself can do nothing, which by itself is sterile, as that other also is barren; but which coming to the other, meeting the other, will give rise to a new individual. That is the point that I want you to grasp. For mind you, there is one Law and one Life everywhere, and that which in material nature you can see with your eyes, you can see with your mind in the higher regions of the universe. For Brahman is one and His works everywhere show the same nature, and the sameness is felt through the difference of the materials. The principle of evolution is the same everywhere, for Brahman alone is the energising force, and His nature is the Law by which everything is evolved. When this union has taken place, then only growth begins; when this union has occurred, then only a new individual is slowly and gradually formed. *The beginning of the individual* is at the point of junction; although the essence be eternal, the junction is a point in time; where the junction occurs, there is the beginning of the individual as individual, although the essence of which he is formed is eternal, undying, and knows neither ending nor beginning.

Now we have the materials to enable us to understand the coming of the Sons of Mind, evolved in a past manvantara by the processes that we are undergoing in the present. And the coming of these Sons of Mind to the helping, as it were, of the lower nature is exactly parallel to the coming from the stamen of the invigorating energy which shall vitalise the germ within the seed and give birth to the new individual. And so in those wonderful stanzas that come to us from the far side of the Himalayas, in those ancient, most ancient, stanzas, it is written:

FROM THEIR OWN RUPA THEY FILLED THE KAMA.<sup>21</sup>

From Their own Rupa They filled the receptacle which had been slowly prepared for the filling:

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<sup>21</sup> *The Secret Doctrine*, vol, ii, p. 20.

## SOME PROJECTED A SPARK.<sup>22</sup>

That spark is as it were the plasm of mind; coming from those in whom mind had been evolved in a previous manvantara, and filling with its energising and vitalising force what I will call the female germ in the receptacle of which we have been speaking, it gives the possibility of a new individual, a Self-consciousness, an Ego, an Ego to be slowly evolved, but none the less taking its start from the union which now is accomplished. For the spark projected from the Flame of Mind is to fire the material upon which it has fallen, and from that a new Flame will arise, identical in its essence with that which generated it, but separated in its individuality for purposes of manifestation. And this is why it is said that you may light a thousand candles from a single flame, and the flame is never diminished, although a thousand flames are visible where only one was visible before.

Now we shall be able to understand, I hope, our manomayakosha. For what now will occur? You have now the beginning of the sheath which is able not only to receive contact from without, but, by this impulse which has been thrown into it by the generating Mind, will become able to complete the power of connecting the outer object and the internal sensation, of which we saw the unfolding possibility in the animal but which is the characteristic of the mind in man. And this recognition of the connection, this understanding and taking into consciousness in an ideal form of the constant link between the external object and the inner feeling is the beginning of the working of mind in man, and is the peculiar function of the sheath with which we are concerned. For by feeling - the power, that is, of answering to the impressions from without - it gains those contacts through the outer sheaths which are necessary in order that Self-consciousness may be made gradually possible and then, having translated the outer contact into sensation - that is the first stage - it transforms the sensation into the idea; that is, it changes it by a process of elaboration; it changes the contact which gave rise to the sensation into an ideal form, which it then preserves as material. These

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

ideal forms are what we call percepts, technically, or the thoughts that are to be the material on which the knower is to work, elaborating them into concepts, and building up gradually the individual that is self-conscious and is to be ultimately all-knowing. The manomayakosha, then, collects all these sensations and turns them into percepts, that is, the connection between the outer object and the internal sensation; and then elaborates the percepts into concepts, that is, changes the recognition of the connection into the ideal form which is capable of preservation and is the material for all possibility of future thought. And this is in truth the process of thinking. The internal image, as it is technically called, is the ideal form of the sensation which has been rendered possible by the contact that I have explained; and the work of the manomayakosha is to do this elaboration. It is just like the crucible of the chemist into which he throws different materials and a new combination comes out - not new in its essential elements, but new in its combined existence. He puts them in, but working on each other they bring about a combination which is the outcome of the interaction between them, not of the separate action of each. You must realise that just as there is a difference between the threads of cotton separate and the cloth into which those threads of cotton are woven, so there is a difference between the separated sensations and the elaborated ideas woven out of them by the mind, or, if we take our chemical illustration, which are gradually elaborated in the crucible by the interaction of the forces of attraction and repulsion. When that is accomplished the beginning of self-consciousness is present.

Consciousness is everywhere; how shall we distinguish it? It is so hard, because we only know self-consciousness, and are not sufficiently advanced to take from each sheath its own material in the state of elaboration brought about by the sheath, and study the result. But dimly, I think, I can put it to you. Consciousness may be taken as the response of a gradually separating centre to that which is around it - the mere response; self-consciousness is when in addition to the response there is the recognition of the 'I' that responds. Not the response only, but the knowledge of the response; not the response only, but the recognition of the response. For the 'I' is builded by the memory that links all these percepts and concepts together, and so really gives that continuing con-

sciousness which makes the recognition of an 'I' as apart from that which is 'not-I'.

Now let me take still a step further. It is said in the *Mundakopanishat*:

The organ of thinking of every creature is pervaded by the senses.<sup>23</sup>

This emphasises the double action of the manomayakosha. It is in truth the organ of thinking, but is also pervaded by the senses; that is, you have this double action going on in it always, the receipt from without and the elaboration from within. And that is why this sheath is so difficult to understand; that is why so much depends on the understanding; that is why you cannot master it until you begin to understand. And that is why knowledge is necessary if the SELF would become free and know Itself as Itself alone. For here is the element of confusion, here the element of contact, here the function from without and from within, and hence the strongly illusory 'I' that I shall want to deal with more fully when we come tomorrow to speak of the use and control of this sheath. For the moment I must leave it with that great statement of the *Mundakopanishat*:

The organ of thinking is pervaded by the senses; that organ purified, Atma manifests Itself.

We shall see why that is when we deal with the purified organ and the changes that result.

Now at death there is a separation in this sheath; all the lower deva element passes from it; all the deva element, which joins man to the world of devas becomes separated from the next sheath, and from the manomayakosha. For here is the rending that is caused by death, and this part waits, as the devas wait in devaloka, to bring the SELF back to earth and bind it to the necessity of rebirth. There lie the chains, there lie

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<sup>23</sup> iii, 9.

the bonds, there the links of desire which keep the SELF imprisoned and tie it to the wheel of births and of deaths. When death occurs every particle is set free, but the links remain to bind It, until by Its own deliberate action they are cut.

But I must take the other sheath, which is very easy to understand and grasp; the real subtle difficulties lie in the understanding of the one that we now for the moment leave. I take the discriminating sheath, that which is called the *vignanamayakosha* - the particle *vi* implying the discriminating, separating and arranging of things - the *vignanamayakosha* which is to be the sheath of the SELF by which the lower sheaths are to be mastered. Into that sheath experiences are reflected from the *manomayakosha* as ideal concepts; into it is reflected everything which in the *manomayakosha* is collected. The one is the collector and elaborator, the other is going to arrange and to discriminate, to have the whole of this elaborated collection as material to work on, the whole of this as material by which it is going to gain higher consciousness and a more perfect cognition of the individual SELF. For what is the process of Atma in this sheath? It works on the internal images, it works on those ideal and elaborated forms reflected into it from the other sheaths; it works on them and elaborates them further, and it has its special work, what we call abstract reasoning of the loftiest kind; no longer sensations, no longer perceptions, no longer the making of ideas, or the elaboration of ideas, but the discriminating between them, then the arranging of them, and then the reasoning from them. So that the special work in this sheath is the work of abstract reasoning, dealing with pure ideas, separated from the concrete presentations, the realm of truth, no longer so illusory as the other. For here we have the abstract and not the concrete, the pure internal working no longer confused by the senses, nor in any way interfered with by the outer world; there is pure intelligence, clear vision, intelligence unmoved by the senses, intelligence tranquil, strong, serene. That sheath must be realised, that sheath must be understood, for there lies the creative power of meditation, there lie all the energies that grow out of one-pointed contemplation. There is the creative sheath of man, as in the Kosmos Divine Ideation is the creative sheath whence all comes forth; for just as in the first lecture I reminded you that in the divine form of Shri Krshna as shown to Arjuna, the divine eye when given to Arjuna saw

all forms of living things which in the Universe could exist, so in this sheath of man, in ideal reality, there exist all forms that can come forth, to which objective reality may be given by this creative power. That is the force of Atma in the sheath with which I am dealing, for the outgoing energy of Atma in this vignanamayakosha is the force which dominates and moulds everything that is external to it, from which the creative energy of Atma can work through the lower sheaths when they are purified.

We can now take another problem, so easy once we have reached this point that one wonders why it was so confusing and difficult before we reached it. That with which we have to deal are Will and Desire. What is Desire? desire is the outgoing energy of Atma, working in the manomayakosha, and attracted by external objects. That is, desire is outward-going energy attracted from without, and its direction governed from without. What is will? Will is the outgoing energy of Atma working in his vignanamayakosha, and dealing no longer with choice directed from without but with choice initiated from within, moulded on the internal images by a process of discriminative reflection. So that the outgoing energy is guided from within in its direction, whereas in desire it is attracted from without. The direction in one case comes from the external object, in the other from the inner Life that chooses and wills. Hence what you call strong and weak will in men. What is weak will in man? A man with a weak will is the man that is always drawn by desire towards external objects that attract him and goes after them. He is weak in will. Why? Because he does not rule himself, choosing his road by the power of memory, reason, judgment, and discrimination, and everything that should make him steady in the midst of a moving universe. He is drawn out by the external object and goes out after everything that attracts him by a desire for contact, and he goes as circumstances attract him. If he be surrounded by temptations, if he sees something pleasant, he desires to obtain it; if he sees beauty he desires to enjoy it; so he is at the mercy of external circumstances, and we say that the man is weak and we never know what he is going to do. But the strong-willed man is the man who having gathered together all these experiences and having translated them into ideal forms, compares them and arranges them, and discriminating between them and understanding the connection between pleasure and pain, and understanding the sequence which

sometimes makes a momentary pleasure the womb of a future pain, he, knowing all this and remembering, chooses from the inner standpoint; and the outer circumstances may be exactly what they like, the inner man stands unmoved and chooses as he knows.

Here I find I must leave the subject for this morning. In truth these two sheaths are completed, as far as in so brief a space I may complete them. And I need only in closing say this morning that this inner man passes from birth to birth, carries on his memory life after life. These ideal forms persist in the sheath; these ideal forms brought out of one life are carried on into another, and so are continually growing, until the highly evolved Ego begins to be master of the lower sheaths, and the creative force that resides within comes forth, and he is no longer guided from without. For the process of evolution leads to the controlling of the lower by the higher, the less differentiated by the more highly evolved. So that in this sheath sovereignty shall at last be centred, and all shall be obedient to the impulse of the One within; coming back to birth, it picks up the lower deva-elements it left for a while, and it has to bring them back time after time until they are absolutely subject to its will. It contains all the essence of all experiences. It contains the very inner quality of everything through which it has passed on earth.

Now you will see why it is written that as the wind passes through a garden of flowers and does not pick the flowers but takes the fragrance from them and goes on fragrance-laden, so also Atma passing over the garden of experience gathers, not the facts, sensations and phenomena, but as it were the fragrance, the ideal form of each, and goes on with all this aroma of experience fragrance-laden into the bosom of its God.

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## THE OBJECT OF THE SHEATHS

We have studied during the last three mornings the question of Atma manifesting through certain sheaths, and we have dwelt at some length and with some care on the two outer sheaths whose special work is that of collection; then with the two inner sheaths whose special work is that of elaborating that which has been collected from without and transmitting the results, and that of assimilating that which has been collected and transmitted. Today we have to deal with the last of the sheaths, and then I purpose to sketch for you, very imperfectly, the method of the working and the use of the sheaths, so that we may thus complete our subject and have it - however rough and poor in its outline, yet that outline complete - and then by further study for ourselves and above all by further meditation we may succeed in filling in the details that are lacking and come to a real understanding of the whole. Now the great difficulty that lies before us this morning in trying to gain any idea at all of the nature of the anandamayakosha is that a state of consciousness which has not been experienced by a person is a state which that person is unable to conceive or to understand. There are many states of consciousness in the Universe as various as the various kinds of living things - and all is life. Professor Huxley, for instance, dealing with this difficulty, has pointed out, that there is nothing contrary to the analogy of nature in conceiving that there are states of consciousness higher than ours; that as there are many lower than the human, so there may be many states of consciousness that rise above that which we speak of as the human, that there may range above us, stage after stage, grade after grade, consciousness after consciousness, becoming loftier and loftier, greater and greater, wider and wider in limits, consciousness ever expanding, until it is possible to imagine, although not to understand, the consciousness that shall include everything that exists; and then he (Professor Huxley) points out that such a consciousness would be as much higher than ours as the human consciousness would be incomprehensible say to the consciousness of a black-beetle - and we may add, as incomprehensible to us in its workings as ours to the black-beetle. This is a thing necessary to realise; otherwise we limit everything by our own limitations, and fall into the error of

imagining that because we cannot conceive therefore that which to us is inconceivable has no existence in fact. Try to realise, for instance, how incapable we are of understanding a lower state of consciousness. That of a creeper as example, which spreading over a wall sends out tiny tendrils and pushes a tendril into a hole in the wall in order that it may grasp it and find support in the roughness within; and then withdraws the tendril finding the hole unsuitable, and travels over the surface of the wall until it finds another and testing the other finds that perchance suitable to its needs. How can we translate in though the consciousness of, that vegetable creeper? How can we realise in our consciousness - so different - what is the impulse that makes it follow its path, that makes it go into a particular hole, enables it to know that it is unsuitable, and to search for another which is suitable wherein it remains? What dim, vague and strange consciousness is it which thus communicates what is necessary for the growth of the plant, and yet shows us nothing that we realise as consciousness in action, in feeling, in anything that we can identify with our own? And then conceive again for a moment - for I want you to realise this, ere I put what I know will be so difficult even to sense - try and think what it would be if some lower animal, some insect or fish or quadruped, seeing a philosopher sitting in abstract contemplation, trying to deal with some mighty intellectual problem, insensitive to outer impressions, concentrated within the realm of mind, if that lower creature tried to understand the working of the mental consciousness of the philosopher, and to judge whether he was wise in his method, whether he was wasting his time or no. You can realise how foolish would be the attempt; you can realise how incompetent would be the judgment. Try then for a moment to realise that there may be above you more than there is below you, a condition of consciousness as much mightier than that you know in the brain, as yours is mightier than the consciousness of the plant, of the insect, of the fish or of the quadruped; and then, not so much thinking, but, if you will, trying to sense and to feel, follow consciousness inwards and feel that which cannot be translated into words, try and sense a possibility, where Atma, clad but in the anandamayakosha, begins in that last sheath to come face to face with Itself which is Brahman, that sheath making a delicate film of separation which still will preserve the duality necessary for the recognition, and at the same time being so thin, so delicate, and so subtle, that it seems well-nigh as though the knower and the known were one. The one

sheath remains, for without a sheath no manifestation. Without a sheath there would be unity, and then all thought as we know it ceases, our form of consciousness is impossible. Brahman cannot act without the sheath of the universe that He makes for himself. Brahman cannot act in manifestation without the sheath which makes manifestation possible. Having, as it were, centred all life and energy within the last sheath, the sheath of bliss - anandamayakosha - then let us listen for a moment to the sacred words which give some glimpse of the glory, and may lead us into some dim sense of that which lies beyond the veil; it is written:

He, all-wise, all-knowing, glorious in the world, in the divine town of Brahman, placed in the ether, standeth Atma; of the nature of mind, ruler of Prana, of the body, of food. Concentrated in the heart, by the knowledge of THAT, the wise behold the Radiant, whose body is bliss, immortal.<sup>24</sup>

There are moments, supreme and rare moments, that come to the life of the pure and the spiritual, when every sheath is still and harmonious, when the senses are tranquil, quiet, insensitive, when the mind is serene, calm, and unchanging; when fixed in meditation the whole being is steady and nothing that is without may avail to disturb; when love has permeated every fibre; when devotion has illuminated, so that the whole nature is translucent; there is a Silence, and in the silence there is a sudden change; no words may tell it, no syllables may utter it, but the change is there. All limitations have fallen away. Every limit of every kind has vanished; as stars swing in boundless space, the Self is in limitless Life, and knows no limit and realises no bounds: light in wisdom, consciousness of perfect light that knows no shadow, and therefore knows not itself as light; when the thinker has become the knower; when all reason has vanished and wisdom takes its place; who shall say what it is save that it is bliss? Who shall try to utter that which is unutterable in mortal speech - but it is true and it exists. That is the anandamayakosha where the Atma knows Itself; its nature is bliss; all

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<sup>24</sup> *Mundakopanishat*, ii, II, 7.

the spheres have ceased;<sup>25</sup> all else has gone; none but the pure may reach it; none but the devotee may know it; none but the wise may enter into it; for, once again, it is said that:

Steadfastly by truth, by austerity, by perfect wisdom, by Brahmacharya-practice, is this Atma attained. In the midst of the body, clad in light, He whom the sinless and subdued behold is pure.<sup>26</sup>

It is Brahman. It is the Logos of the Soul. It is the Atma conscious of Itself. But on that the fewest words are the best, and though I may not leave the stage unspoken of, I leave it quickly, because to reach it there must be yearning to aspire; because truth, wisdom, devotion and purity are asked for the vision, and this must be won by many a struggle, ere the Pure shall see the Pure. We are told that it is bliss. The end of pain is bliss. Here, there is struggle and agony and friction, but at the end is bliss, and bliss unspeakable. So that in all the trial of life, and in all the anguish and misery that may overwhelm the soul of man, in the struggle that leads it well-nigh to despair, those, who once have known, know for evermore, and in the worst of agony the centre in the heart is calm, for it knows that the end shall be in peace and that harmony shall be the close of strife. Let us, thus realising, come to regions where our foot is surer, regions more fitted for your feet and mine, that still are in the mire of earth and that must learn to tread the path of which the end is bliss unutterable.

Let us now come back to a lowlier study, having caught a glimpse from a mountain top as it were, of a land that lies beyond, into valleys of earth where our lot is cast, and let us realise how that end shall be gained, the path that leads to it and the methods that shall guide us towards it; for while it may be well for a moment to realise the goal, it is still more important to find the road that leads to it and to begin, not in mere hope and yearning, mighty as those are, not only in aspiration and in desire, to achieve it here, in the life that we lead here, in the place in which we learn how we may set our feet on the Path and by knowledge wedded

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<sup>25</sup> *Mandukyopanishat*, 12.

<sup>26</sup> *Mnndakopanishat*, iii, I, 5.

with devotion may find our way at last. So, I come to the working of the sheaths. Before I conclude with their use I want you to see the working, because by the realisation of the way in which they work, we shall solve so many of the problems that puzzle us every day, problems that hinder our growth, problems that are, as it were, like fetters which prevent us from walking freely; which make things so difficult to understand, that we grow discouraged and sometimes fall back into lack of belief, unable to grasp the belief which it is so difficult to understand. The first result of the working of Atma in these many sheaths is the setting up of a number of illusory 'I's', apparently conscious entities, and we find in ourselves when we look inwards, a struggle, a conflict and a war, as though we consisted of many 'I's', instead of one, many Egos instead of one Ego. Self-consciousness must be a unit; none the less we are confused by this apparent multiplicity, and these 'I's' that yet are not the 'I', are a constant source of disturbance, of mental confusion, and of moral mistake. Let us then try and understand what they are, and how they come to be. Let us see how far they are illusory, and what it is that makes them seem real. For mind you, the conflict to us is real enough whether the combatants are illusory or are not.

We understand that Atma is working in all the sheaths. We have conceived, taking sheath by sheath, something of the nature of, and the working in, each; and it is very easy to realise that if we stand outside and look at them from without, we shall not see the one worker but the moving sheath, and that the moving sheath as different from another moving sheath will at once give an apparent individuality, an apparent separation, and therefore place for conflict. If, for instance, looking from without, I see the body which is at work, and then I trace the activity of prana, and then I see the passions carrying a man away, and then see the mind interfering and pulling him back again - studying like that from without I see all these different things warring the one against the other, because I am looking from the side of differentiated objects and not from a centre where the unity of action might be perceived; and just as you may go into a room full of machinery and see many whirling wheels, and see many apparently independent bars swinging from side to side, as the engineer might take you and show you the one point at which all the force was generated and from which the whole was moved and controlled, so by wisdom may we place ourselves in the centre, and see

the one outgoing energy which is differentiated in the sheath and not in Itself, so that the actor is really one, although that in which he is acting gives this apparent diversity. But there is more. That is not a full explanation. Take the body: not only have we learned that the atoms and molecules and the cells of the body have their independent life, and are living as atom, as molecule, as cell, but we have also learned that they are co-ordinated into the food sheath, they act as a *sheath*. That is, they act together under the co-ordinated energy; they act, ruled by the common life, as sheath; and we have further learned that thus acting, there is what we call automatism produced. That is to say, when a sheath has acted along a particular line over and over and over again, that then its inherent energy - which is also of course Atma but Atma *in the sheath* - its inherent energy tends to reproduce, without the direction of the central consciousness, the actions which it has continually practised; so that automatic action is set up in which the central Self-consciousness takes no longer any active part. Two things cause this: first the habit of repetition of that which is caused originally by purposive action. I pointed out to you that when you learned to write, it was by deliberate effort, by well-concentrated endeavour; that a child's hand is trained to write and traces line after line, all the words that it desires to form. The Thinker is working there and moulding the child's hand to its own purpose as an instrument. When it is taught and trained, it can do it over and over and over again without conscious effort; then the sheath takes up the work and repeats the accustomed motions; it is continuing automatically what was a purposive action at the beginning; automatic action repeats that to which the body has been trained, and if you want to change it, you must bring the will to bear on the change; otherwise repetition is the law of the sheath's action, the great law of rhythm, the universal law, everywhere working, of a tendency to repeat: the night and the day; the light and the darkness; the ebb and flow of the ocean; all the revolutions of moon, of sun, of stars - all regularly, rhythmically repeated. That is the law of the Great Breath, and everything is dominated by it, whether it be atom or central sun in space. Therefore it of course rules the sheath of the body, the food sheath; and this tendency to repeat what once has been impressed upon it, is the law of rhythm working in a particular sheath, and repeating without the active consciousness of the Ego, all actions repeatedly imposed upon it previously by that purposive will. So, again you get in the third sheath

inwards what we call 'instinct'. I need not work that out similarly in detail. It is automatic action plus feeling; but it is exactly on the same lines. Acts which have been done over and over and over again are repeated unconsciously as we see. Coming on then still further, you find the beginning of the third 'I', partly conscious of itself, because it remembers partially. That is the brain consciousness which has memory, although a fragmentary one, of the life during which it has been working. You get in every one of us this brain consciousness of the 'I' which is based on a partial memory, that is the memory of the life during which it has been the organ of the Thinker. And then there is the real 'I', whose consciousness is able to stretch back to every life behind it, and that contains as receptacle every experience that in myriads of lives has been gathered. Thus all these 'I's' are there, and only one is the real. 'I', but when a sheath reflects its illusory 'I' on to the real one, then the real 'I' lends its own self-consciousness to the reflection thrown on to it by the sheath, and so you have this apparent reality which is illusory, and is lent by the one consciousness, which transfers to that which it looks on as separate its own individuality, and gives to the reflection within itself the apparent and deceptive reality of life. So might you take an image in a mirror for the real man. If a mirror is so placed that it does not show itself as a mirror, say, at the end of a passage, you may think that the reflections that are there are objects that lie further on, and that you will find as external objects as you advance; thus every sheath reflects on to the consciousness its own image and to this self-consciousness is erroneously attributed by the Ego that receives them all.

Now you will find that a light is thrown on our limitations, our individual karma, by this view. See how the self-conscious Ego must be limited by the working of the sheaths; see how that which in the past it has done, and which comes back to it as the automatic action of the body and the astral, which comes back to it in the manomayakosha, as feelings, as emotions, as instincts, every one which it has gathered in its pilgrimage through many lives; how all these must govern, limit and control it; when it comes into these sheaths for any particular life. You cannot separate one life from another. You cannot deal with human lives as though they were separate individuals, for they are not. The life that you are in now is to the Ego but as a day. Death is as the night which closes it. Birth comes with the dawning, and that is as another day of life. And the

next death is as the night in which you lie down to slumber. Can you separate today from tomorrow? Can you get rid tomorrow of all the obligations that you have entered into today? Will the night get rid of them and set you free from them? or, are you held crippled and controlled by them, and have to work them out bit by bit, piece by piece, not freely, because you have bound yourselves, and because one day is conditioned by the days that have gone before? So with lives. These lives are days, and these deaths are nights, and they are bound one to another, and the Sutratma, the Thread-Soul, passes through them all. Thus you begin to see why you are bound. You begin to realise the reality of the karma that limits you; but in recognising the limitation, forget not the freedom. In recognising the sheath that limits you, forget not the Atma that permeates the sheath, and moulds it in the permeating. *You are Atma, "Thou art That"*. Thou, being Brahman, art never crippled so as to be unable to move. There is the paradox of at once our slavery and our freedom. Bound by the doings of our past, but remaining Brahman in the centre, that knows no limit and that is moved by Its own Nature alone. When then will harmony come out of the conflict? Clearly when they all are subordinated to the One Life, and when everything comes from the vibration from within. There is the end of strife. When the SELF has permeated and dominated everything, and in the higher sheaths has gained Self-consciousness, and gradually Self-consciousness on every plane, then inasmuch as all the vibrations will come from within, and none outside will have power of spreading disturbance, then there will be perfect harmony and co-ordination between sheath and sheath. That is why the true yogi knows no disturbance. That is why the true yogi is ever harmonious and serene. Though the sheaths are there, no outer vibration may avail to make disturbance; though the sheaths are there, they will not answer to anything that comes from without. They know their master. They recognise the hand that holds them. They are like the well-broken horses of a chariot, answering only to the hand of the driver, which no longer is rigid but light and easy as the hand of a child. Then there is perfect harmony and peace and bliss.

We have to study the use of the sheaths, our last point. Why all this conflict and work? Why all these many sheaths, and these, myriads of lives, and these millenniums of years? Why these countless successions of lives and deaths? Why this endless procession, as it were, of the days

and nights of Brahma? Why all these? Let us see if we cannot understand. Let us see now if, with the knowledge that we have been trying to gather together, we cannot understand something of the purpose of the universe, something of the outcome which makes it worth while that a universe should be. We have seen that there is the gathering of knowledge. But to what purpose? for mere gathering is not sufficient. The gathering of knowledge by each sheath is for this purpose: namely, that the knowledge may remain for use, while that which is its material shall be powerless for disturbance. We have seen that the outside universe shows itself to our senses by way of vibration, and that these vibrations shake the sheath. We have seen further that while knowledge is gained by these vibrations in the sheath that thus answers to the vibrations from without, in the progress and the growth of the Ego, the Individual, all this knowledge becomes reflected in an ideal form, and is finally realised by the Ego, not as affecting itself, but as having been gathered for the purpose of use. The whole process of development consists in this; that you learn to touch, that you learn to feel, that you learn to know, and then, gathering that up, you possess the whole of it for utility, while it has lost its power to disturb you and so to fetter you to the acts that you perform. Easily I think, in a few phrases, can I show you the steps of this growth. Cast your mind back to that point of junction that I spoke of yesterday, where the baby Ego, so to speak, was born by the joining of the two lives. That Ego knows nothing of the world into which it has come, literally a baby soul, unconscious of law, ignorant of everything that surrounds it. There is only in it desire, outward-going energy. It goes out, attracted. Sometimes it enjoys. It goes out again. Sometimes it suffers. It shrinks back. On and on it goes like this, through, the whole of the life, aye, through many lives, and after a considerable time, it begins, as I hinted to you yesterday, to make the connecting link between the sensation of pleasure or of pain and the outer object, and that is the first thought; that thought being a perception, *i.e.*, the connection that joins together the object and the sensation, and so makes the material on which reasoning may be possible. Thus gradually going on, the baby Ego begins to gather experience, and learns that there is law. The result of all this feeling of pleasure and pain, and of joining together the pleasures and pains with outer objects, of the reasoning upon them, all this teaches this child-Ego growing out from babyhood to childhood - teaches it that it is in a world

of law, and that wherever there is pain it has struck itself against the law; teaches it that only by obedience to the law can it avoid pain and find the harmony that is pleasure. Many hundreds of lives are needed to learn this perfectly; many hundreds of lives, as we count lives - to the SELF they are but one. During each of these, lessons are learned. Just as in the present human life we went to school, and just as we passed from class to class as we learned more and more and became worthy to go higher, and from school to college and from college into the outer life of the world, so it is with this Ego, this Individual, that is growing in many lives, passes from one life to another, passes from one stage to another; then gathering knowledge in each life it comes back wiser than it was before, until it gains its manhood and has something of the knowledge of the world in which it is to live and work; and then it gains something more. Using the sheaths in this way, it kills out desire by experience; for, it learns that, although there are many desires that, being in harmony with law, give pleasure, nevertheless, they sometimes turn into wombs of pain, by the great law that is impressed on all that is not Brahman as Reality, the Law of Change, the Law of Weariness. You enjoy a legitimate enjoyment, and you get tired of it. When you have enjoyed it to the full, you are worn out and you get a feeling of disgust and you are weary of it. You eat legitimate food and enjoy, and the appetite is satisfied, and it turns aside from that which attracted it. So with every material satisfaction. You enjoy it, yes; but it cloy. You become satiated and weary. That is the only way of finally getting rid of desire. Desire vanishes when you realise that all desires that are not directed to the Permanent have in them the element of pain. When you find that time after time the joy is followed by weariness, you say: "Of what avail is it to enjoy for a moment and then to be weary? Let me seek joy where joy is permanent, and where, the more I have, the deeper shall be enjoyment and peace and happiness". For there is this difference between material and spiritual bliss; the one cloy and disgusts, while the other increases with every new consumption. With every increase there is still more increase that lies beyond. That is the difference between the life of the divine and the material, between the life of the inner SELF and the life of these outer sheaths. Never shall desire be dead till that lesson is learned, and the SELF turns inwards to Its own centre, which is infinite, in which bliss can never be exhausted nor lost. And so, the use of the sheaths is not only to gather knowledge, and not only to learn the law of pleasure

and pain, but also to get rid of the root of desire, without which there never can be peace and bliss unspeakable.

And then there is the third use which I was going to say is the most important of all. I say it is the most important, because it deals with all men and not with the individual. It deals with humanity and not with the single man. The third use of the sheath is that in the sheath you may feel, and feeling you may learn sympathy, and learning sympathy you may take succour to those who are in pain; for remember, the life of the God is the life of giving. Do you remember what Shri Krishna said? That there was nothing He need do. He acts, not for Himself, but because if He did not, the whole world would stop. There then is a higher teaching still than yet we have reached. The use of the sheaths is that we may learn sympathy by suffering, and knowing what it is to be in anguish may carry help to our fellow, who has not learnt the lesson. We feel in the sheath. How shall we sympathise? Sympathy is only perfect when pain is felt in the sheath, vibrating to every throb of agony from the outside world, but when the SELF knows Itself as separate from the sheath, and realises the pain, feels it *in the sheath*, but is not disturbed in Itself by the vibration that is agonising the sheath in which It is clothed. Try to follow the thought. It is possible to feel pain with the uttermost anguish. It is possible to feel the whole of your outer world throbbing with agony and with anguish that needs your whole will to master it. It is possible that the manomayakosha shall be full of pain and every fibre strained almost to the breaking point, and yet that the Self within, knowing the pain and feeling it by reflection, and entirely conscious of every throb of agony, is yet absolutely still, calm and unshaken. No pain touches It, though the pain is felt in the sheath, and It can act with perfect steadiness, with perfect wisdom, unblinded by the pain and unshaken by the anguish, and therefore absolutely at human service with every expanding energy and with every force that It possesses. There is the triumph.

When man by myriad lives has reached a certain point, when man by myriad lives has reached the entrance of what is technically called the Path, then the Guru comes forward to take that man in hand, to lead him along the Path of discipleship and give him the final lessons in the understanding of the sheaths and of the SELF; and then along that Path, with the Guru, who guides him, he goes for still a few more lives learning these final lessons, and having learned them, and being there within the

sheaths, and yet, in a strange kind of fashion, separated, then there comes at last the point where the Soul, the individualised Self, absolutely free from all desires and yet dwelling within the sheaths, stands where It may go onwards into freedom, or turn backwards to help the world. If it wills, It has a right to go onward, onward into bliss, onward into All-consciousness, onward, having conquered all the regions of the universe, into the One, the Unlimited, the All. Or it may, if It wills, turn back: not again to be in bonds, not again to be fettered, not again that desire shall grip It and tie It to birth and death; but by a voluntary choice, by a self-made decision It says: "I will not have final peace till my brothers share It; I will not have final liberty that is not shared by my brothers, and enjoyment which is not theirs. I will not take Nirvana for myself and leave my brothers in the bonds of birth and death, in their ignorance and in their darkness, in their helplessness and in their folly. If I have won wisdom, I have won it for their enlightening. If I have won strength, I have won it for their service. If I have learned to vibrate in agony for man what avail is it then to throw aside the sheaths and go on where no agony is useful? I will stay where I am and will work for man. Every pain of man shall strike me. Every agony of man shall touch me, and shall wring my heart. Every folly of man shall be my folly by identification with humanity, and every sin and crime of theirs my suffering until the whole of us are free." Such is what we call the Master. Such is the Mahatma of the Hindu, the Asekha of the Buddhist, the Supreme and the liberated SELF that remains voluntarily within the sheaths as long as Its brethren are in bondage, and puts Itself at human service by the supreme act of renunciation, to remain in bondage till the whole are free, and to go into Nirvana when all can go hand in hand with Him.

There is the purpose of the sheaths; there is the sublime triumph; there is the glorious ending. When the manvantara is over, there shall be myriads of individuals as the results of that manvantara, and at their head, these triumphant Ones who have led them onward, have taken them onward into rest, into Nirvana, of which no words may speak, to the Place of Peace and Rest and All-consciousness, that is in store for humanity. And then on the other side Those who have triumphed bring back Their memory, Their individuality, and Their knowledge, to the building of a new universe, to the making of a new race. They are the Sons of Mind that I spoke of yesterday, who came to the help of the

world, so that the baby-Egos might be formed and the new individuals might start. Thus do the Mahatmas of the past manvantara come back, as it were, as Gods for the building of the worlds. That is the possibility for all who choose the whole instead of the individual, who choose love instead of selfishness, and service instead of gain. We must begin it today. We must begin it in our lives, in duty to wife, to child, to nation, to humanity. Never is a great One made save where the smaller duties are first accomplished and that which in the end is a Mahatma, at the beginning was a self-sacrificing Grhastha in the home.

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