

RUPEE SERIES



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BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

UPANISHADS

C. Rajagopalachari

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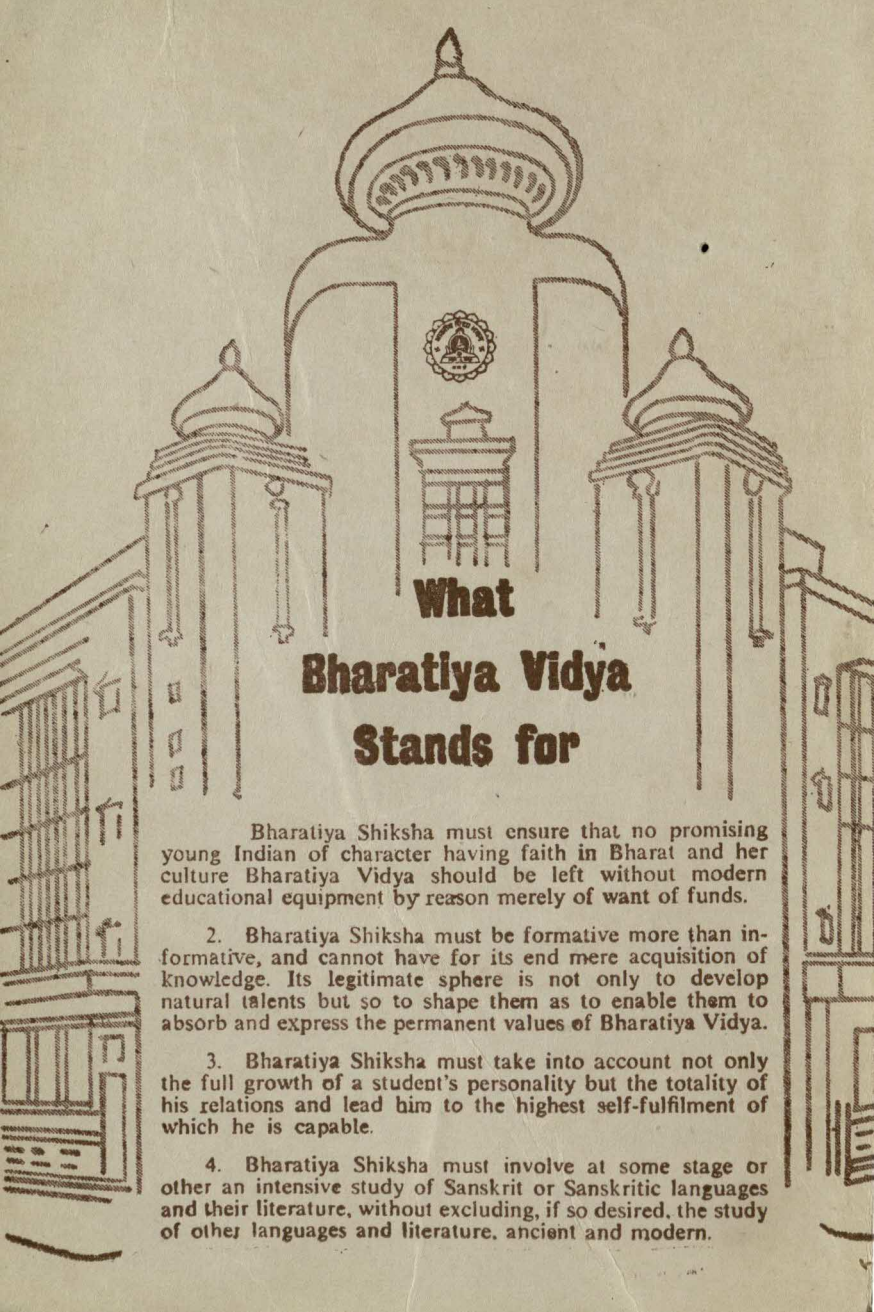
K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR



BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY

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**What
Bharatiya Vidya
Stands for**

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

• 6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.





आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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1

UPANISHADS

By

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

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UPANISHADS

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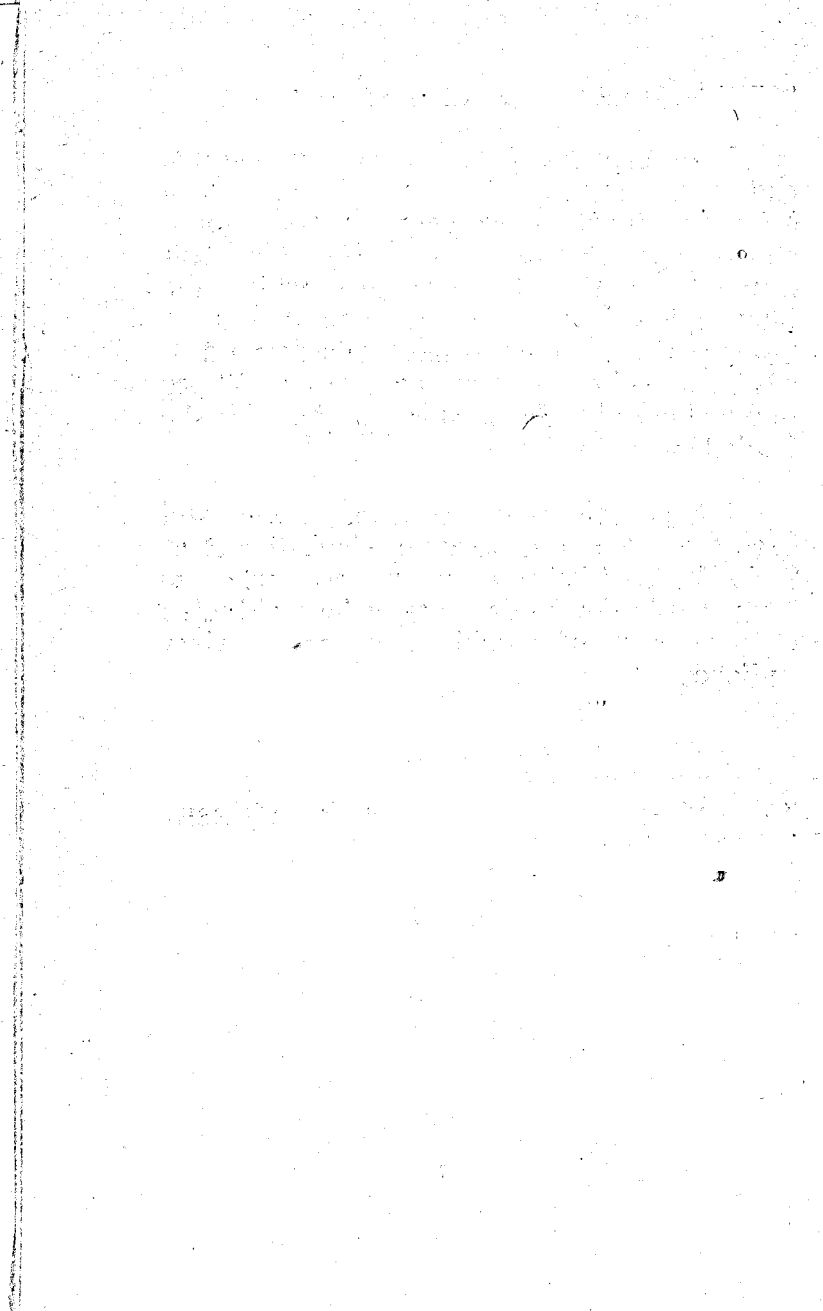
C. RAJAGOPALACHARI



1963

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHOWPATTY : BOMBAY



INTRODUCTION

IN the *Upanishads*, we have a scripture which, among all the holy scriptures of the world displays the most scientific spirit in connection with spiritual enquiry. The sages, whose thoughts and teachings we read in the *Upanishads*, seem to be as much inspired by constructive doubt as the most modern men of science. Their questions and answers indicate that they lived in an age when, alongside of conformism and the rigid maintenance of old practices, men thirsted for Truth and the atmosphere was charged with the boldest free-thought: *Satyamevajayate nanrtam satyenapantha vitato devayanah.*

The conformism that prevails in our own midst today, in spite of so much science and free-thought, does not confuse us. We are familiar with it and we find no difficulty in appraising and evaluating in their true measure both the conflicting elements, orthodox practice as well as the prevailing scepticism. But the conformism of some thousands of years ago is a very different thing. We understand it much less, if at all, and it, therefore, blurs the picture. We may fail for this reason rightly to appreciate the spirit of enquiry which

dominated the mind and lives of the sages whose teachings are recorded in the *Upanishads*, and which is reflected in every line of this great scripture of India.

If we learn to make due allowance for the time-interval, and have enlightenment and elasticity of mind enough to be able to use and profit by a holy book with invaluable hoary associations, without having to get the text actually expurgated and revised in order to exclude the irrelevancies and the mere background of a by-gone age, we cannot have a better book of religion for modern times than the *Upanishads*. The spacious imagination, the majestic sweep of thought and the almost reckless spirit of exploration with which, urged by the compelling thirst for Truth, the *Upanishad* teachers and pupils dig into the Open Secret of the Universe, make this most ancient among the world's holy books still the most modern and most satisfying.

It is probable that the *Upanishads* were originally composed somewhat as notes of lectures, intended to assist the pupil's memory in subsequent reflection. They were not composed as text-books of philosophy to serve by themselves, as books are now written. Notes in our days would be short indicative phrases written to dictation or taken down by the students themselves. But, in the old days, they took the shape of verses to be memorized, as writing played a

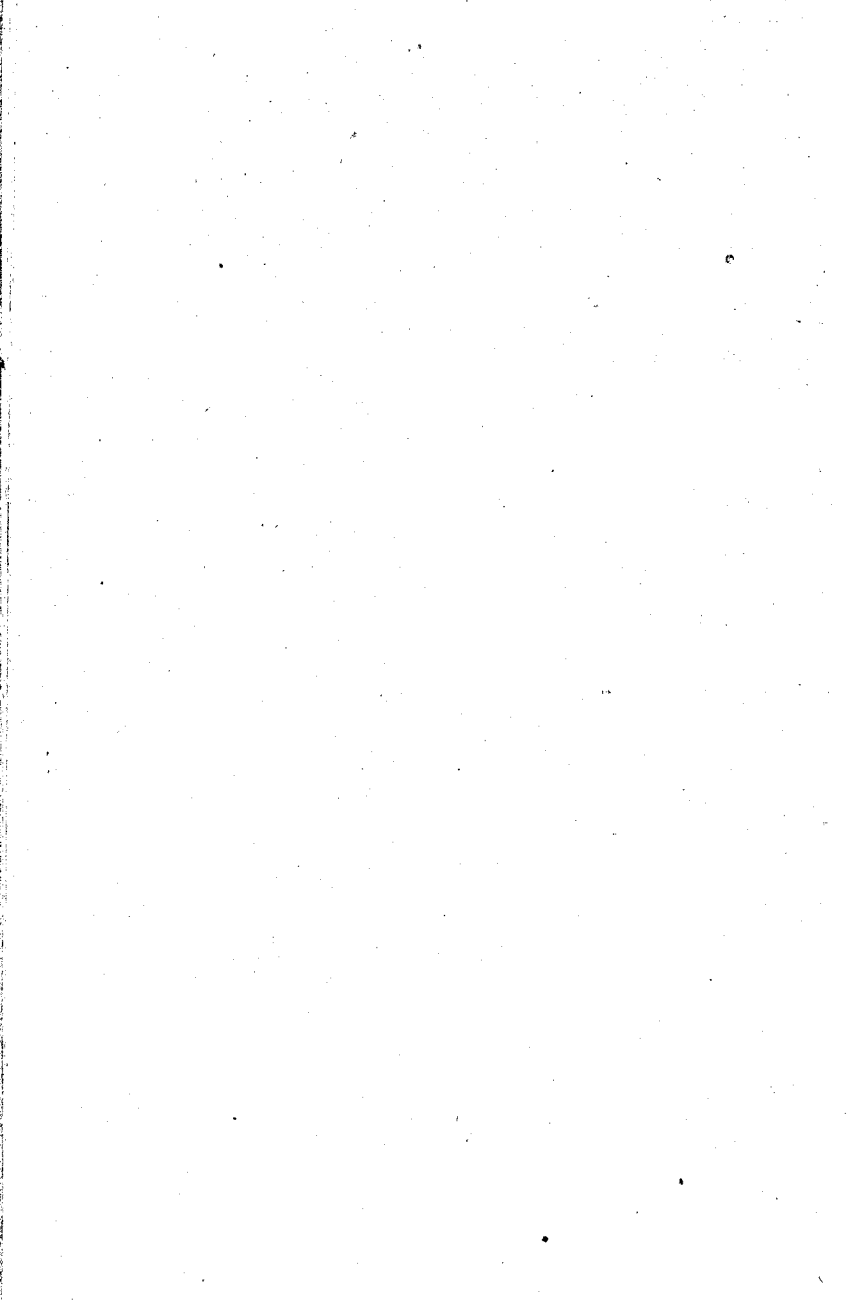
lesser part in learning than it does now. Placed before us today in the shape of printed matter, with title-page, contents and index all complete, the *Upanishads* perplex us in many places with their seeming simplicity of language, covering thoughts that are far from clear. Isolated from teacher and without personal expansion and explanation, these compositions confuse us with antithesis and epigram and the use of the same word in varying senses, a style which we should have particularly avoided when discussing difficult problems. All this is, however, understandable if we remember that they were not books to displace teacher but were notes to standardize teaching and to help memory.

Apart from the difficulty arising out of the form, and the difference of purpose of the composition from that of modern books, the distance that divides us from the day when these thoughts were propounded makes the greatest difficulty. The reflections were necessarily hung on to the life, beliefs and manners of those ancient times. To understand the meaning and the point of what was said by men of a long past age, we have to get back to the circumstances of that age, a task of great difficulty even for the most imaginative among us. Beliefs and practices that are to us obviously childish formed the large and main background of life in those days, and the reflections of the best and wisest men of those days,

which necessarily referred to and were set on the background of their own daily life, have to be interpreted by us, eliminating that background. What was very real and serious to them is to us childish, untenable and of no consequence, so that even the reflections thereon become un-understandable. The process of seeing a picture apart from the background is not easy. We are apt to lose ourselves in the reactions produced in our modern minds by the beliefs and practices referred to, and fail to grasp the essential amidst the distractions of the incidental.

In studying the *Upanishads*, we come against repeated references to ceremonials, sacrifices and the worship of gods and discussions as to their efficacy, which confuse the deeper and predominant enquiry. The position becomes to the Hindu readers worse still on account of the formal persistence in Hinduism even now of the shell of those beliefs and practices. To interpret and evaluate the substance of the *Upanishads*, we need a powerful imagination and an intellectual elasticity that can jump over the tremendous space that divides the beliefs, aspirations and psychologies of modern life from those of a long-past age. A study of the full text of the longer *Upanishads* would be the best means of comprehending the mind of the fathers of Hinduism. But at the same time, the difficulties pointed out above reach the greatest dimensions in these

longer *Upanishads*. In making the selections for the following chapters, an attempt has been made to reduce these difficulties to the minimum without prejudice to the main purpose of presenting an adequate idea of the *Upanishad*-content.



KATHOPANISHAD

EVERY Hindu knows the great Kurukshetra scene, which forms the prologue of the *Bhagavad-Gita*—the warrior, stricken by remorse and doubt, throwing himself at the mercy of his divine Charioteer for guidance. The *Katha Upanishad* has an equally sublime introductory scene, forming a noble background for the great teaching imparted in the *Upanishad* itself.

Vajasravasa performed an elaborate sacrifice, which terminated with a parting of all his possessions as gifts to the guests assembled. Vajasravasa's son, Nachiketas, watched the proceedings and, as he saw the gifts being given, he was filled with the thought of the vanity of it all.

"Of what use is it," he said to himself "giving these toothless old cattle and cows past the age of bearing? Should not my father, if he is minded to give what is dear to him, give *me* away?" So he went to his father and said: "Father! To whom are you going to give me?" His father did not pay heed to the question, but went on with the routine of the great sacrifice. Nachiketas repeated the question again and again till Vajasravasa, losing patience, exclaimed with-

ISAVASYOPANISHAD

THE *Bhagavad-Gita* presents a synthesis of the highest spiritual effort of the individual with the most practical social co-operation. We should carry on the activities of life, but we should do so remembering that all that we do belongs to God. Work done in this spirit will not cling to us in rebirth. This teaching that is expanded in the *Bhagavad-Gita* is found tersely enunciated in the *Isavasyopanishad* in the first two verses.

ॐ ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥
कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः ।
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोःस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥

Everything in the universe abides in the Supreme being. Realize this well, and, realizing it, cast off the desires that rise in the heart, for example, the thought of possessing what is enjoyed by another. Joy comes only by the giving up of desires and attachments. You may live the longest life, doing work in a detached spirit and dedicating everything to

KENOPANISHAD

WHAT is the Supreme Spirit? By what relation to our experience shall we understand it? This is the subject of enquiry in this *Upanishad*. As the *Isavasyopanishad* is known by its first word, so also is this *Upanishad* named after its first word *Kena*, "By whom?"

Neither by the senses nor by human reasoning can we hope to comprehend the nature of *Brahman*. This is so because the subject, the object and the means are all identical. It is *Brahman* by which the understanding itself functions.

यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनो मतम् ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥
यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति येन चक्षूंषि पश्यति ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥
यच्छ्रोत्रेण न शृणोति येन श्रोत्रमिदं श्रुतम् ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥
यत्प्राणेन न प्राणिति येन प्राणः प्रणीयते ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥

SVETASVATAROPANISHAD

THE doctrine of the *Vedanta* is summarized in the following *mantras*:

संयुक्तमेतत्क्षरमक्षरं च
व्यक्ताव्यक्तं भरते विश्वमीशः ।
अनीशश्चात्मा बध्यते भोक्तृभावा-
ज्ज्ञात्वा देवं मुच्यते सर्वपाशैः ॥

The Lord upholds the Universe, which is a union of the manifest and the unmanifest, the imperishable and the perishable. Functioning as Enjoyer through the senses, the Soul in man loses the consciousness of lordship and is enchained. When he realizes lordship, he is freed from every tie. Let man realize the Divinity of his soul. Thereby does he obtain Release.

I-8

क्षरं प्रधानममृताक्षरं हरः
क्षरात्मानावीशते देव एकः ।
तस्याभिध्यानाद्योजनात्तत्त्वभावाद्
भूयश्चान्ते विश्वमायानिवृत्तिः ॥

TAITTIRIYOPANISHAD

WE have in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, (First *Valli*, eleventh *Anuvaka*) a valedictory exhortation which reveals to us something of the system of education that produced the cultured among the ancient inhabitants of this sacred land.

वेदमनूच्याचार्योऽन्तेवासिनमनुशास्ति । सत्यं वद ।
धर्मं चर । स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः । आचार्याय प्रियं धनमाहृत्य
प्रजातन्तुं मा व्यवच्छेत्सीः । सत्यान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । धर्मान्न
प्रमदितव्यं । कुशलान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । भूत्यै न प्रमदितव्यम् ।
स्वाध्यायप्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् ॥ १ ॥

After having taught the *Vedas*, the teacher instructs the pupil thus: Speak what is true. Do your duties. Continue, without neglect, the daily study of the *Veda*. Now that you have come to the end of your stay with your teacher, marry and bring forth progeny. Do not swerve from Truth and *Dharma*, and do something useful in the social economy. Achieve greatness, and do not fail to refresh your memory in respect of what you have learnt.

CHHANDOGYOPANISHAD

THE sixth chapter of the *Chhandogya Upanishad* begins with the old old riddle: Was there a first cause? Shall we, seeing that the search for causes leads us backwards along an interminable chain, give up the theory of causation and say that the world came out of nothing? This cannot be, says the *Rishi*. Out of nothing, nothing could come. Non-Being cannot produce Being. Much less could the phenomenon of consciousness come out of nothing. We must hold that there was a first Cause: *Sat*: i.e., Being with consciousness.

Sat willed that it may expand and multiply. So it produced light, *Tejas*. The Spirit in *Tejas* willed to multiply and produced water. The Spirit in Water willed to become manifold, and it produced all the living things of the world.

Lest the reader imagine that the march of modern science has made this explanation out of date, it may be recalled that neither Chemistry nor Biology nor any other physical science *explains* anything. Plato depicted mankind as chained in a cave in such a way that they can look only on the wall which forms the back of the cave; they cannot see the busy life outside but only the

MUNDAKOPANISHAD

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवा भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ॥
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टवांसस्तनूभिर्व्यशेमहि देवहितं यदायुः । स्वस्ति न
इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः । स्वस्ति नस्ताक्षर्यो
अरिष्टनेमिः स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः
शान्तिः ॥

May our ears hear what is good, may our eyes see what is good. May we, what time we live, be blessed with healthy limbs and body, that we may glorify the Lord. May all the gods bless us. May our minds be at peace.

This *Upanishad* consists of Angiras's instruction to his disciple, Shaunaka.

तस्मै स होवाच । द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये इति स्म
यद्ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति, परा चैवापरा च ॥४॥ तत्रापरा ऋग्वेदो
यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथर्ववेदः शिक्षा कल्पो व्याकरणं निरुक्तं
छन्दो ज्योतिषमिति । अथ परा, यया तदक्षरमधिगम्यते ॥५॥

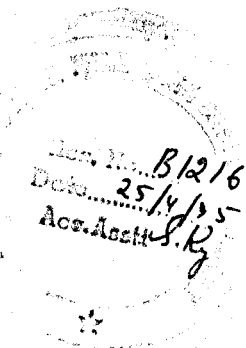
There are two sciences worthy of being learnt, of which the learned treat one as higher, and the other as lower. The Vedas, the Rig Veda, the Yujur Veda, the Sama Veda, the

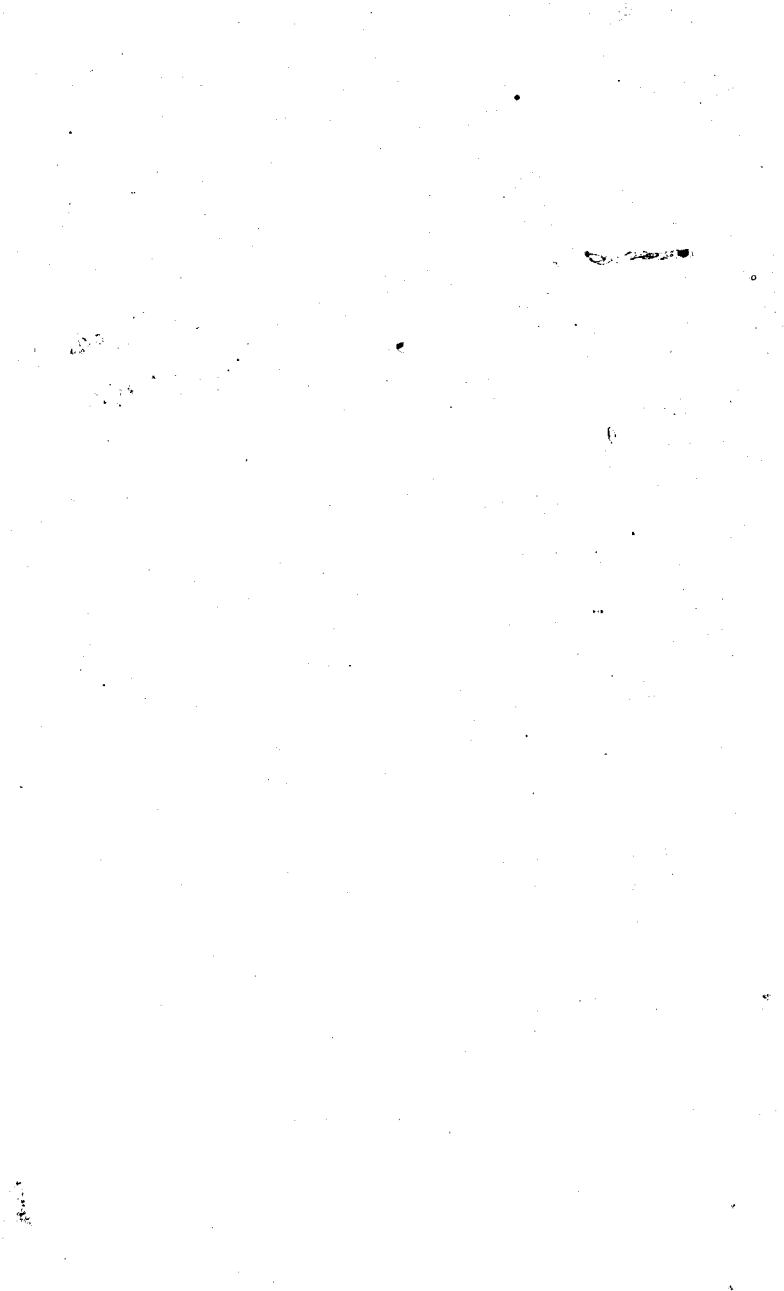
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THE AUTHOR

CHAKRAVARTI RAJAGOPALACHARI, popularly known as "Rajaji" or "C.R.", is a great patriot, astute politician, incisive thinker and one of the greatest of living Indians. As a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, as an ardent freedom-fighter, as Chief Minister of Madras, as Governor of West Bengal, as Home Minister of India and as the first Indian Governor-General of India, he has rendered yeoman service to the country and left an indelible impress on our contemporary life.

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