

Kena Upanishad

With explanation on
Shankaracharya's commentary

K. Aravinda Rao



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ADVAITA ACADEMY

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Dedicated to

Pujya Swamiji

Sri Tattvavidananda Saraswati

With grateful regards

Publisher's Note

Advaita Academy has been set up in the year 2009 to preserve and promote the wisdom of Advaita Vedanta with the following goals.

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Over the last three years, we have made progress in developing our website into a premier platform for content relating to Vedanta, with a collection of more than 1,500 videos. Our live-streaming initiative of classes by various teachers across the world has received tremendous support from spiritual seekers.

Through this book on Kenopanishad by Sri K. Aravinda Raoji, we are now making foray into publication. It is indeed an honour for us that the first book to be published is by Sri K. Aravinda Rao, a Fellow Board Member and ardent supporter of all our initiatives. We are grateful to him for giving us this opportunity. We are confident that his analysis and explanation on Shankaracharya's commentary would be of immense help to spiritual seekers.

Hari Kiran Vadlamani
Founder Advaita Academy

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Introduction

Kena Upanishad is among the ten principal Upanishads. It is one of the Upanishads under the *Sāmaveda*. With only thirty-five *mantra*-s it is tiny in size but very profound in its teaching.

All major Upanishads broadly discuss four aspects – *jīva* (the being), *jagat* (the universe), Brahman (the Supreme Reality) and *sāadhanā* (the means to attain Brahman). Kena, however, focuses merely on 1) the nature of Brahman, 2) to what extent the body mind complex is equipped to know it and 3) how to know Brahman. The human mind is highly limited, but with all its limitations, it is the only instrument that we have in order to contemplate on Brahman.

This Upanishad is in four parts. The first part poses the fundamental question that man has been asking since long. Are the senses and mind the final authority on knowing things or is there anything else which is behind them, enabling them to function? There is a more basic principle which is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind and which enlivens all. This is called Brahman, but that Brahman cannot be known as an object of cognition. Whatever is objectified is, by definition, is inferior to the mind. The Upanishad makes radical statement that whatever the human mind has conceived in the form of god, in whatever religion it may be, is only a conception of mind and hence cannot be the absolute reality. It is also ironical to note that though Brahman cannot be objectified, it can still be experienced. This is the assertion of all Upanishads. This is validated by the experience of the seers.

Part two attempts to explain the unexplainable through certain paradoxical statements characteristic of the Upanishads. Brahman is not known to the person who claims or thinks that he knows It. It is known to the person who thinks that he does not know It. Brahman is said to be known to a person who can notice it as the very self of every cognition and the very light which illumines every cognition. Such a person distances himself from every cognitive experience and becomes a witness for all such cognitions which come and go. He realizes his Self as the consciousness principle which is not distinct from the Brahman consciousness. In other words he has identified himself with Brahman. He has got over his limited perception of self and expanded his self to the level of Brahman. Such a person is said to be immortal, because consciousness is eternal. The Upanishad says that the mind is the very instrument to realize Brahman.

The first two parts are meant for a sharp student. Of course, we have to keep in mind that it is not intellectual sharpness alone that makes a person eligible for pursuit of the knowledge of Brahman. The student or the seeker should have gone through the process of self-discipline through the well known methods of karma-yoga, *upāsana*, practice of yoga and so on. These are not specifically mentioned in the Upanishad, but these are essential prerequisites for deliberation on Brahman.

Parts three and four address those who are not capable of such fine discriminative ability. The Upanishad comes down to their level and suggests the path of *upāsana*, worship of a transactional level deity. This is otherwise called *saguṇa upāsana*, worship of a god with functions. We come across two words in Vedanta - *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* levels of Brahman. What is conceived as god – the omniscient, the omnipotent, judicious god who punishes the evil and protects the good – is *saguṇa*, the god with

some attributes. We have fashioned this god according to our own social needs, our own prejudices and our own understanding of ethics. The *nirguṇa* Brahman, on the other hand, refers to the pure existence-consciousness-infinitude which does not have any functions such as the cosmic super-cop that a *saguṇa* god has.

Hence, the last two parts suggest the *saguṇa* path of worship as a stepping stone, or as a ladder to move on to the higher level of attributeless Brahman. This portion of the Upanishad tells an allegorical story.

It seems that once gods had a victory over the demons but they thought that the victory was due to their might and not because of the power of Brahman behind them. It means that they had forgotten Brahman. The Supreme Reality, out of compassion for them, manifested through its power of *māyā* in order to demonstrate to them that their power was a manifestation of Brahman Itself. Gods such as Agni, Vayu, and Indra become powerless in front of the manifestation. At this juncture, *māyā* appears in the form of a goddess and explains to Indra about the nature of Brahman. Indra, thus becomes the first among gods to receive the knowledge of Brahman through the goddess Uma.

The battle between gods and demons is the battle between good and evil in every person's mind. Thus, the moral of the above story is that one cannot find reality unless one has dissolved his ego, the notion of self. Even the gods failed in knowing Brahman because of their notion of ego. The Supreme Reality had to teach them a lesson out of compassion. The final mantras of the Upanishad prescribe *upāsana* of a *saguṇa* deity in order to gradually achieve self-restraint and thus become eligible for the ultimate enlightenment.

Sri Shankaracharya has written two commentaries – *pada-bhāṣya* and *vākya-bhāṣya* – on this Upanishad. The former is said to be a lucid interpretation of the text and the latter is said to be a detailed discussion of the non-dual doctrine. Not much difference, however, is found in the two commentaries, except for some additional discussion at places. This text is an explanation of the *pada-bhāṣya*.

Translations, sometimes, can be as abstruse as the text and hence I have chosen to explain the Shankara Bhashyam (SB) instead of translating it. The whole text has not been given but only the lead words of the Bhashyam have been mentioned by the notation SB and explanation given to the whole passage following that line. One who wishes to skip Sanskrit may do so, and a serious reader who would like to study the whole commentary would be easily able to compare the text with the leading lines given in the present book.

This book emerged as a byproduct of my teaching the same in the website www.youtube.com/user/KarnamAravindaRao. I put it simultaneously on paper and hence the book. I am indebted to the notes on the text by Swami Akhandananda Saraswati and talks in Telugu by Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati and Sri Yellamraju Srinivasa Rao on the text for my understanding of certain passages. I am also grateful to Sri Puppala of Brahma Vidya Kuteer and to Prof. Raghurama Raju of Hyderabad Central University for scrutinizing the book and for valuable suggestions. This book would not have seen the light but for the able assistance of Sri Krishna Mohan with his computer skills both in English and in Sanskrit.

प्रथमः खण्डः
Part - I

Peace Invocation

(Shanti Mantra):-

ॐ आप्यायन्तु ममाङ्गानि वाक्प्राणश्चक्षुः श्रोत्रमथो बलमिन्द्रियाणि
च सर्वाणि । सर्वं ब्रह्मौपनिषदं माहं ब्रह्म निराकुर्यां मा मा ब्रह्म
निराकारोदनिराकरणमस्त्वनिराकरणं मेऽस्तु तदात्मनि निरते य
उपनिषत्सु धर्मास्ते मयि सन्तु ते मयि सन्तु ।

ॐ शान्तिः! शान्तिः!! शान्तिः!!!

*Om āpyāyantu mamāṅgāni vākprāṇaścakṣuḥ śrotramatho
balamindriyāṇi ca sarvāṇi. sarvaṃ brahmaupaniṣadam
māhaṃ brahma nirākuryāṃ mā mā brahma nirākāroda-
nirākaraṇamastvanirākaraṇaṃ mestu tadātmani nirate ya
upaniṣatsu dharmāste mayi santu te mayi santu .*

Om śāntiḥ! śāntiḥ!! śāntiḥ!!!

ममाङ्गानि *mamāṅgāni* – my limbs; वाक्प्राणश्चक्षुः *vākprāṇaś-
cakṣuḥ* - the sense of speech, vital force, sense of sight; श्रोत्रम्
अथो *śrotram atho* – the sense of hearing and; बलम् इन्द्रियाणि च
सर्वाणि *balam indriyāṇi ca sarvāṇi* – ability to retain knowledge
and also all the sense organs; आप्यायन्तु *āpyāyantu* – achieve
their fullness; सर्वं *sarvaṃ* - all this (the world we see); ब्रह्म
औपनिषदं *Brahma upaniṣadam* - the Brahman revealed in the
Upanishads; अहं *ahaṃ* - I; मा ब्रह्म निराकुर्यां *mā brahma nirākuryāṃ*
- may I not neglect Brahman; मा मा ब्रह्म निराकारोत् *mā mā brahma
nirākārot* – may Brahman not reject me; अनिराकरणमस्तु *anirā-
karaṇamastu* – let there be no rejection; अनिराकरणं मेऽस्तु *anirā-
karaṇaṃ me.stu* – let there be no rejection for me; तदात्मनि निरते
tadātmani nirate – in me who I am dedicated to know atman; य
उपनिषत्सु धर्माः *ya upaniṣatsu dharmāḥ* - those virtues postulated
in the Upanishads; ते मयि सन्तु *te mayi santu* ते मयि सन्तु *te mayi*

santu – may those (virtues) dwell in me, may those (virtues) dwell in me; ॐ शान्तिः, शान्तिः, शान्तिः – *Om śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ* - Om, may the three-fold obstacles subside and peace prevail.

May all my limbs (organs) – speech (five organs of action), the vital airs (five vital airs in the body), eye, ear (five sense organs) – achieve their fullness, along with the mental strength to restrain them. All that is seen is Brahman. May I not neglect Brahman. May not Brahman reject me. May I have non-rejection, may I have non-rejection. May all the virtues postulated in the Upanishads dwell in me, dwell in me, who am dedicated to know Atman. May the three fold obstacles – relating to self, relating to elements and relating to gods - subside and may peace prevail.

This is the mantra which is the peace invocation in Samaveda. It is common for all the Upanishads associated with Samaveda.

* * *

Introductory Commentary by Sri Shankaracharya

1.0. a. SB: केनेषितम् इत्याद्या उपनिषत् परब्रह्मविषया...

In this introduction Sri Shankaracharya gives an overview of the philosophical debate of his day regarding the comparative merits of ritualistic actions versus pursuit of the knowledge of Brahman. Sri Shankaracharya was answering to the criticism of several of his contemporary dialecticians. At first sight we may think that this discussion is not relevant for us now, but if we see carefully, we notice that this tendency to pursue rituals at the expense of knowledge was strong in his time. It is in human nature and it is seen at all times.

It is not in human nature to stay quiet, not doing any activity. The human society as a whole needs some directions about what activities people can do or have to do and what they should not do. These are do-s and don't-s, which are defined in most cultures by several sages and philosophers. The Vedas have recognized the need to suggest certain activities which contribute to collective good and have prescribed them. The Sanskrit word of action is karma, which has entered the English lexicon too. The word karma sometimes means the result or fruit of action also. This has to be understood from the context.

Some *karma*-s are to be done compulsorily (like daily prayers, honoring guests and elders, giving food to animals, studying one's prescribed branch of Veda etc,) and some are suggested as optional, for a person desiring material progress or some good after-life. There can only be two desires – well-being in this world and well-being in the world hereafter. SB is

giving a brief overview of all such activity and also tells of the limitations of such human endeavor.

Shankaracharya starts his commentary by declaring the objective of the Upanishad. The objective is to explain the nature of Brahman.

This Upanishad forms the ninth chapter of the of the Talavakara branch of Sama Veda. The initial portions of the Vedas deal with several karma-s (rituals), including *yajñā*-s, which are to be performed by all house-holders. The earlier portions also dealt with the meditation on Hiranyagarbha (the cosmic intellect) and meditations on Sama and Gayatri. All this, SB says is *kāryam*, something which has been performed or achieved by human effort and hence it is non-eternal and ephemeral. It is a general rule that anything that is achieved by karma is non-eternal in nature. For instance, a person gets wealth but it is spent away; a person attains heaven, but the duration of stay in heaven is in proportion to the merit of the good deeds done in this world.

Karma without desire and karma motivated by desire

1.0. b. SB: सर्वमेतद् यथोक्तं कर्म च ज्ञानं च सम्यगनुष्ठितं...

Here the word karma refers to the desire-driven (*kāmya*) actions mentioned in the Vedas. A person may perform *yajñā* for material prosperity in this world or for achieving a heavenly world. (The word karma does not refer to the day to day actions like going to an office, taking a pay cheque etc, which are actions relating to livelihood. It refers to different types of rituals like *yajñā*-s which are mentioned in the scriptures). The word *jñānam* in the SB does not refer to the knowledge of Brahman (as it usually does) but to *upāsanā*, meditations on a deity.

Karma-s are intended for the individual well being and social well being. These give result in two forms – seen and unseen. The first type is where the performer of rituals attains the desired fruit while being alive – like attaining prosperity,

begetting a child, getting sumptuous yield of crops and so on. The unseen form is in the form of a positive merit called *punya*, which is said to take the performer to heavenly worlds. It is the universal law of cause and effect in which a good action leads to a good result and bad action to a bad result.

Worship of *prāṇa*, otherwise known as Hiranyagarbha, refers to meditation, (*upāsana*). This is of the nature of contemplation on a god for getting some boons. All religions visualize a god with functions like punishing the evil, rewarding the good, granting desired boons and so on. These are called functions and the deity is called god with attributes or functions. Vedanta calls it *saguna*, functional god. Vedanta seeks to go beyond this functional, personal god to know the absolute truth. This is the subject matter of the Upanishads, which, being the end portions of the Vedas, are called Vedanta.

The result of all the above said rituals is attainment of desires in this world, or achieving heavenly worlds. This is not a permanent attainment. It is time bound, being proportionate to the quantum of effort in the ritual. Liberation, the result of knowledge of the self, is said to be the ultimate goal for the humans.

In the case of one who performs *karma* sincerely without desiring the fruit, all the above said rituals and worships result in purity of mind. In case of one who is in ignorance and is seeking the fruit of action, these rituals mentioned in scriptures and ethical texts will work out to achieving the south-ward journey and return to the world.

Upanishads talk of two ways of performing karma (actions) – desiring the fruit of such action and not desiring the fruit of the action. In the latter, a person merely performs them as a duty ordained by dharma (for the collective good). When karma is performed in this manner the result of such action does not accrue to a person. However, karma-s of previous births will be waiting in balance to give their result. The only way to get rid of

the past *karma*-s and thus get out of the cycle of birth and death is by attaining knowledge of the self.

In the case of a person who performs *karma* desiring the fruit of action, the doer has to enjoy the fruit of actions and hence has to take birth again and again to exhaust the *karma-phala* (the fruit of actions). This is called the south-ward journey. He cannot escape the wheel of birth and death. This wheel, or cycle, is called *saṃsāra*, which means perennial rotation.

The one who performs *karma* without seeking the fruit (called *niṣkāma karma*) will not be affected by the fruit of *karma*. Instead, such action purifies his mind. It is only the purified mind that is eligible and capable of attaining the knowledge of Brahman.

On the other hand, there would be downfall for the one performing deeds disapproved by scriptures and for pursuing base natural pleasures. 'They (the licentious persons) will not attain either of these paths, but will end up being unworthy beings repeatedly returning to worldly life, taking birth and dying'. This is the third path as the scripture says (Ch.U.5-10-8). It is also supported by another mantra – 'three types of beings have abandoned the path of virtuousness' (Ait.Aran.2-1-1-4).

Scriptures have prohibited certain actions harmful for society. Those who indulge in such actions are destined to attain lowly and odious births, such as animals, plants and so on. 'Three types of beings' refer to those born of womb, those born of egg and those born from the soil, says Anandagiri, who has commented on the SB.

Only a pure mind is eligible to know Brahman

1.0. c. SB: विशुद्धसत्त्वस्य तु निष्कामस्य एव बाह्याद् अनित्यात्...

The desire to know the indwelling Brahman arises only in him whose mind is pure, is devoid of desires – for all external, ephemeral things which are in the nature of ends and means

– whose passions have ceased (*virakta*) because of a unique *saṃskāra* awakened by actions done either in this life or in previous lives.

Here, the expression ‘means and ends’ refers to different types of karma-s and the results attained by them. Human actions produce certain impressions on the mind which influence the future conduct of a person. Such impressions are called *saṃskāra*-s. Good actions produce good impressions and bad actions produce bad impressions. Such latent impressions can manifest in the next birth also, and can produce dispassion.

1.0. d. SB: तदेतद् वस्तु प्रश्न-प्रतिवचनलक्षणया श्रुत्या प्रदर्शयति...

This observation that the desire to know Brahman arises only in a pure mind is being presented by the Upanishad in the form of questions and answers between the student and the teacher – starting with words ‘*keneṣitam*’ – ‘by whom desired?’ The question is about the senses and the mind. Senses are always outward bound, they observe external objects and provide such information to the mind and it is the mind which processes such information. All great achievement in human knowledge is due to this.

But the Upanishads try to question the validity of these instruments called senses and the mind and try to see what is behind them and what is impelling them. The human being has to know this through the mind only, as the human mind is the only instrument both for looking out or for looking inwards.

Kathopaniṣad observes this correctly – ‘the self-evident Brahman has handicapped the sense organs by making them outward looking. Hence, (the being) sees only outside and not the indwelling atman. An exceptional hero, desirous of eternity, turns his senses inwards and sees his self’ (Katha.Up. 2-1-1) and so on.

1.0. e. SB: परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणो निर्वेदमायात्...

'A *brāhmaṇa* (a seeker of Brahman) should get dejected after assessing the (ephemeral nature of) *loka*-s attained by karma (rituals). He has to realize that the atman which is not produced by karma cannot be attained by karma. In order to realize it, the seeker, with sacrificial faggots in his hand, should approach a guru who is learned in scriptures and dwelling in Brahman awareness (Mun. Up 1-2-12)'. Here, two prerequisites are mentioned for a teacher. He should be well read in scriptures so that he can logically answer all the queries of the student. Secondly he should be a person who has realized Brahman. One who has merely read scriptures cannot enlighten the student and guide him in his spiritual progress.

1.0. f. SB: एवं हि विरक्तस्य प्रत्यगात्मविषयं विज्ञानं श्रोतुं मन्तुं...

It is only when a person becomes dispassionate in this manner, that he will attain the ability to understand, meditate and experience the knowledge of the inner self – not otherwise. With this awareness of the indwelling self as Supreme Brahman, ignorance which is the seed of *saṃsāra* (transmigrating existence) perishes without trace. Ignorance is the cause for desire, action and pursuit of action. This is what prompts or goads a person to action.

For a person who realizes atman, all worldly actions cease and a person goes beyond the dualities like misery and delusion. This is supported by the mantra – 'where is delusion, where is misery, for the one who sees oneness?' (Isa. Up. 7). It is also supported by more scriptural lines such as – 'the knower of self overcomes grief' (Ch.Up. 7-1-3); 'all the knots in the mind get resolved, all the doubts get destroyed and all karma (the fruit of action) vanishes when once the *parāvara* (the causal Brahman and the creator Brahma) is known' (Mun.Up.2-2-8).

Knowledge of Brahman cannot go with desire-driven action and worship

1.0. g. SB: कर्म सहितादपि ज्ञानात् एतत् सिध्यति इति चेत्?

Counterpoint: May it be contended that this state (realization) is attained by a combination of karma and *upāsanā* (meditation on a deity)?

This is an objection raised by the rival dialectician who prefers ritualism. He never wants to leave karma-s. SB, however, refutes this suggestion.

1.0. h. SB: न, वाजसनेयके तस्य अन्यकारणत्ववचनात्...

Answer: It is not so. Vajasaneyaka (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad) clarifies that such combination of karma and *upāsanā* would be the cause for a different result. Commencing with the line – ‘may I have a wife’, the above Upanishad goes on to say – ‘this world is achieved by progeny, the world of forefathers by karma (rituals) and the world of gods by *upāsanā* (Br.U.1-5-16). Thus it shows that the combination of karma and *upāsanā* would be the cause for achieving three *loka*-s. These, however, are different from the attainment of atman and hence far inferior.

1.0. i. SB: तत्रैव च पारिव्राज्यविधाने हेतुः उक्तः...

And also, in the same Upanishad, the reason for taking up renunciation is told thus – ‘what have we to do with progeny, we for whom this atman is our *loka* (goal)’ (Br.U.4-4-22).

The reason mentioned implies this: ‘what have we to do with progeny or karma or combination of karma and *upāsanā*, which are the means to achieve the world of humans, world of forefathers, and the world of gods, all of which are non-atman. We do not wish to have the three-fold worlds – ephemeral and achievable by karma – we for whom the natural, unborn, undiminishing, eternal, fearless state – not gaining or losing a wee bit by any actions – is desirable.

It being eternal, the atman is not attainable by means other than eradication of false knowledge (*avidyā*). Hence, renunciation of all desires, preceded by realization of the unity of indwelling self and the Brahman, is what has to be done.

1.0. j. SB: कर्मसहभावित्वविरोधात् च प्रत्यगात्मब्रह्मविज्ञानस्य...

It is also because this (knowledge of the unity of atman and Brahman) cannot coexist with karma. There cannot be coexistence of karma – that which is of the nature of acceptance of dualities such as *kāraṇa* (the relation between the subject and verb in a sentence mentioning action) and the fruit of action – with the knowledge of the unity of the indwelling self with Brahman. This knowledge of unity of atman and Brahman arises from cessation of knowledge of all types of duality.

Perception of duality is at the root of karma. I have a desire and hence I pursue some karma to fulfill the desire. For that I need some means. The result depends on the nature of action. All this happens when I function with a notion of duality, that I am the doer, that I am getting a result and so on. The knowledge of Brahman does not have any such duality in it. It is not dependent on human action; it is a thing which is to be objectively known as it is (*vastu tantra*), without any element of subjectivity of the perceiver.

Here SB uses the expression – *apurūṣatantratvāt*. There are two words – *vastu-tantra* and *puruṣa-tantra* – which we notice in Vedānta. All karma-s are *puruṣa-tantra*, which means that the doer has the freedom to do, freedom not to do and freedom to do in whatever manner he wants. I may choose whatever ritual I want, or may not choose at all. It is totally dependent on me. On the other hand, if I have to describe an object in front of me, I have to define its characteristics correctly. I have no option to describe it in whatever manner I want. This is dependent on the object itself – what Vedānta calls *vastu tantra*. The Brahman has to be known as it is and there is no option to understand it in a different manner.

1.0. k. SB: तस्माद् दृष्टादृष्टेभ्यो बाह्यसाधनसाध्येभ्यो विरक्तस्य...

Hence, with the words '*kenesitam*', the scripture is presenting the intense desire of the seeker whose passions have ceased from all the external, material means and ends – for seen (prosperity etc,) or unseen (heaven etc,) goals.

For easy comprehension, the narration is in the form of a dialogue between a master and a disciple, because of the subtle nature of the subject. It is also shown that this goal is not attainable by sheer logic.

1.0. I. SB: नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया (काउ।1-3-9) इति...

The scripture too says – 'this understanding cannot be attained by logic' (Katha.U.1-2-9). Also, on the authority of the scripture and *smṛti* (secondary texts) such as – 'one with a proper teacher can attain it' (Ch.U.6-14-2); 'this knowledge attains fruition only when received from a teacher' (Ch.U.4-9-3); 'may you know that by surrendering to a teacher' (Bh.G 4-34) – a seeker has to approach a teacher as prescribed – a teacher who is established in Brahman awareness.

Here it is visualized that a seeker, finding no other refuge apart from the knowledge of the indwelling self, desiring the fearless, eternal, auspicious, unchanging state, requested the teacher –

* * *

What Impels the Mind and Senses?

Mantra 1

ॐ केनेषितं पतति प्रेषितं मनः । केन प्राणः प्रथमः प्रैति युक्तः ।
केनेषितां वाचमिमां वदन्ति चक्षुः श्रोत्रं क उ देवो युनक्ति ॥ 1 ॥

*keneṣitaṃ patati preṣitaṃ manaḥ .
kena prāṇaḥ prathamaḥ praiti yuktaḥ .*

*keneṣitāṃ vācamimāṃ vadanti cakṣuḥ
śrotraṃ ka u devo yunakti ..*

केन *Kena* – by whom; इषितम् *iṣitam* – desired; (and also) प्रेषितं *preṣitaṃ* – directed; मनः *manaḥ* – the mind; पतति *patati* – jumps for its objects? केन *Kena* – by whom; युक्तः *yuktaḥ* – engaged; प्रथमः प्राणः *prathamaḥ prāṇaḥ* - the life force, which is the first one; प्रैति *praiti* – proceeds (towards objects)? केन इषितम् *Kena iṣitam* – desired by whom; वदन्ति *vadanti* – people speak; इमां वाचम् *imāṃ vācam* – this speech (refers to all organs of action)? क उ देवः *ka u devaḥ* - which divine entity; युनक्ति *yunakti* – engages, directs; चक्षुः श्रोत्रं *cakṣuḥ śrotraṃ* - the eye and the ear (refer to all sense organs)?

1. By whom desired and directed, does the mind spring into action (on its objects)? By whom desired and engaged, does the life force, which is the first-born, proceed (towards objects)? By whom desired, do people utter this speech? Which divine entity directs the eye and the ear?

Here we are visualizing a dialogue between the teacher and the student. The questions in the above mantra are presumed to be by an eligible student to a teacher who has realized Brahman. The mind is as though jumping on to the sense objects, as we see from the word *patati*, falls. It falls on

to objects, the text says. The mind is desired and directed by someone, the text says.

1.1. SB: केन इषितं केन कर्त्रा इषितम् इष्टम् अभिप्रेतं सद् मनः...

The mind as though falls or pounces on its objects, the Upanishad says. The student wonders as to whether there is someone else directing the mind. The student is mature enough to know that the mind itself is not the knower but there is some other force behind it. Hence he asks the question about the motivating force behind the mind and the senses.

In this line the Sanskrit root '*ish*' should be taken to mean 'wish', as the two other meanings (of the root) – 'repetition of action' and 'movement' are inappropriate here. The expression '*iṣitam*' (instead of '*iṣtam*') is a Vedic expression (some expressions in Veda do not follow the grammar of the later period). The same '*iṣitam*' with a prefix '*pra*' becomes '*preṣitam*' in the sense of 'directing'.

If it is merely told 'directed', it would give rise to expectancy about the sender and the objective (of such mission) – 'sent by whom' and 'what type of sending'. When it is qualified by another word 'wished' (desired), this expectancy about both is avoided. The decided meaning would be – 'directed by whose mere wish'. The overall meaning would be that whoever is the director has merely wished it to be so and not specifically directed for a specific purpose.

1.2. SB: यद्यपि एषः अर्थः अभिप्रेतः स्यात् केनेषितम् इत्येतावतैव...

SB further discusses the grammatical construction. A doubt can be raised that if this were to be the intended meaning, it would have been enough to say, 'willed by whom'. There is no need to say 'directed by whom'. It would also be proper to note that additional words add additional meaning – 'willed, whether by action or by words, and directed by whom' – and it would be proper to accept such a special meaning.

SB explains that it is not so, as we may note from the context of the question. It is known from the context that a person whose passions for this ephemeral body-mind assemblage – a product of karma – have ceased, a person who desires to know the immutable, eternal entity, is asking the question. If it were not so, it is common knowledge that the body-mind assemblage is the director by means of will, words and action, and hence the question would be redundant.

The overall meaning is that the questions are asked by someone who is eligible. A person is said to attain eligibility if he has attained the discipline which is compulsorily required before embarking on the knowledge of Brahman.

The word 'directed' is appropriate because the question is by one who is in doubt – 'is this act of direction of mind and other organs to be attributed to the well known body-mind assemblage or to the mere wish of something independent and different from the assemblage'? Hence, both the adjectives 'by who willed' and 'by who directed' are employed in order to demonstrate this meaning.

Mind is not an independent entity

1.3. SB: ननु स्वतन्त्रं मनः स्वविषये स्वयं पततीति प्रसिद्धम्...

The materialist raises a doubt. Well, it is well known that the mind is independent (agent of action) and goes over to its objects on its own. How then, do the above questions arise?

SB replies. If the mind were to be independent with regard to pursuit or non-pursuit of action, then there would be no hankering after undesirable objects. A person seeks undesirable things knowingly. The mind hankers after most perilous deeds, even while being advised against (by others). Hence the question – 'by who desired' – is appropriate.

The Vedantic view is that the mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*) merely reflects the Brahman Consciousness and thus is able to perceive objects.

1.4. SB: केन प्राणः युक्तः नियुक्तः प्रेरितः सन् प्रैति गच्छति...

The second question is about the *prāṇa*, the vital force. The vital force is called *prathama*, the first one, because it is more primary than the sense organs in the formation of the body. It is said to be present even prior to the sense organs. The Upanishads have certain episodes in which the supremacy of the vital force over the sense organs is shown. Hence, the words 'first one' become an adjective to the life force.

1.5. SB: केन इषितां वाचम् इमां शब्दलक्षणां...

The third question about the speech, which is the organ of action. Mention of one organ suggests and includes other organs of action too. Similarly the reference to the sense of seeing and the sense of hearing covers all the five sense organs.

* * *

Brahman Consciousness is the Impelling Entity

Mantra 2

2.0. SB: एवं पृष्टवते योग्याय आह गुरुः...

To such eligible and questioning student the teacher told – ‘listen about what you are asking – as to who is the god, the director, who sends the mind and other organs towards their objects and what is the nature of direction.

श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद्वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य प्राणः ।
चक्षुषश्चक्षुरतिमुच्य धीराः प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकाद् अमृता भवन्ति ॥ 2 ॥

*śrotrasya śrotram manaso mano yadvāco
ha vācam sa u prāṇasya prāṇaḥ .*

*cakṣuṣaścakṣuratimucya dhīrāḥ
pretyāsmāllokād amṛtā bhavanti ..*

यत् *yat* – because (the atman is said to be); श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं *śrotrasya śrotram* - the ear of the ear; मनसः मनः *manasaḥ manaḥ* - the mind of the mind; वाचो ह वाचम् *vāco ha vācam* – indeed, the speech of the speech; स उ *sa u* – the same one; प्राणस्य प्राणः *prāṇasya prāṇaḥ* - the life of the life force; चक्षुषः चक्षुः *cakṣuṣaḥ cakṣuḥ* - the eye of the eye; (hence) धीराः *dhīrāḥ* - the wise persons; अतिमुच्य *atimucya* – having discarded the notion that they (the organs) belong to the self; प्रेत्य *pretya* – having departed; अस्मात् लोकात् *asmāt lokāt* – from this world; अमृता भवन्ति *amṛtā bhavanti* – become immortal.

2. This atman (Brahman) is said to be the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the life of the

life force and the eye of the eye. Hence, the discriminating persons, having discarded the notion of self in the above, become immortal after leaving this world.

Sense organs too get active by Brahman Consciousness

2.1. SB: श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं शृणोति अनेन इति श्रोत्रम्, शब्दस्य श्रवणं प्रति...

The faculty of listening is otherwise called the sense of hearing. The organ of hearing is the ear. Here, in reply to the questions posed in the first mantra, SB says that what has been asked by the student is indeed the ear of the ear. SB uses the word *śabdābhivyañjakam*, which means 'that which manifests the sound'. Here the word 'manifest' has to be read in the active voice. The sense of hearing is merely that which manifests or reveals the sound. It implies that it is something like reflector which needs some light on it, or it is like a gadget which needs electricity to make it function.

2.2. SB: असौ एवं विशिष्टः श्रोत्रादीनि नियुङ्क्ते इति...

One may question as to why the scripture is not giving a direct answer to the question. The reply given is at variance with the question. The scripture ought to have said 'this is the guiding force behind the ear', instead of saying the 'ear of the ear'. The text says – that divine being about whom you asked 'who directs the eye and ear' is the ear of that ear.

2.3. SB: नैष दोषः, तस्य अन्यथा विशेषानवगमात्...

Answer: Nothing wrong in it. No other description/adjective is available to denote it (the director). If we were to notice a director – like a carpenter – having his own activities (role) distinct from the activities of ear etc, in such a case, the reply would be said to be at variance with the question. But here we see no such director who can be distinguished like a harvester holding a sickle and harvesting the crop. No such thing is seen directing the ears and other senses.

2.4. SB: श्रोत्रादीनाम् एव तु संहतानां व्यापारेण आलोचन-सङ्कल्प...

The living beings are endowed with a body-mind complex. This is an assemblage of various organs. Because of the activities – such as thinking, desiring, deciding – of the assemblage of the ears etc, and as indicated by the fructification of such activities, we infer that there is a director – unconnected with the assemblage of ears etc. It is because of such director that all the activity of ears etc., is directed. We see a similar director behind every work like a house or any such assemblage.

Here, SB refers to the common rule (which is mentioned in the *sāṅkhya-kārikā* of Iswara Krishna) that any assemblage is for the purposes of something apart from it. The presence of a maker or director has to be accepted. Hence the reply – the ear of the ear and so on – is surely appropriate.

2.5. SB: कः पुनः अत्र पदार्थः श्रोत्रस्य श्रोतम् इत्यादेः...

A doubt arises. What then, is the meaning of ‘the ear of the ear’ and other statements? There cannot be need of one ear for another ear, just as one light does not need another light to illumine it.

Answer: What is said is not wrong. The meaning is thus: the ear is seen capable of leading to its object (sound). But that ability to reveal its object is possible only in the presence of consciousness – which is the light of the self (*ātma-jyoti*), eternal, distinct from the assemblage and indwelling all – but not in the absence of it. Hence it is appropriate to say – ‘the ear of the ear’.

The ear, eye and other sense organs are merely instruments which reflect the consciousness. The mind is also similar. Vedanta does not agree with the logician’s view that consciousness is produced in the mind. Consciousness is eternal, it is never produced. It is the illuminer of the mind and of the senses. The mind and the senses are like gadgets which function only when electricity passes through them. We may not

physically see the electricity, but we notice its presence when the gadgets function. Similarly the presence of consciousness is noticed by the sense organs which go about doing their function of revealing the sense objects.

2.6. SB: तथा च श्रुत्यन्तराणि 'आत्मनैवायं ज्योतिषास्ते'...

In Vedanta, *jyoti* , light, does not mean physical light but represents consciousness. The consciousness in all sentient things is no more than a reflection of the Brahman consciousness in several delimiting adjuncts like the body mind complex. Illustrating this, SB quotes from the Brihadaranyaka and the Katha Upanishads. The Brihadaranyaka says 'It (Brahman) exists by the light of its own self' (Br.U.4:3:6). The Katha Upanishad says, 'all this shines (is known) because of Its light' (Kath.U.2:2:15, Sve.U.6:14, Mun.U.2:2:10). Another text says 'the splendor by which the sun shines brilliantly' (Tai. Br.3:12:9:7). All these lines affirm that it is the Brahman which is the source of manifestation of consciousness in all.

The Gita too says – 'just as the brilliance of the sun brightens up the whole world' (Bh.G.15:12), and 'likewise the indwelling consciousness (*kṣetri*) brightens up the *kṣetram*, field' (BG.13:33).

Kathopanishad says too – 'the eternal among the eternal ones, the conscious one among the conscious ones' (2:2:13).

2.7. SB: श्रोत्राद्येव सर्वस्य आत्मभूतं चेतनमिति प्रसिद्धम्, तद् इह...

It is the common misconception that the ears (and the aggregate) are the intelligent instruments of the self. Such misconception is being refuted here.

The scripture is proposing that there is an entity which is knowable to the wise, that which indwells all, immutable, unborn, unchanging, deathless, fearless – that is the ear of the ear – that is the cause for the functioning of the senses. Hence the reply that it is the ear of the ear is very appropriate.

2.8. SB: तथा मनसः अन्तःकरणस्य, मनः । न हि अन्तःकरणम् अन्तरेण...

The above argument about the consciousness indwelling all is being extended to other sense organs and also to the mind. Hence it is said 'the mind of the mind'. It is because, the mind, without getting illumined by the light of consciousness, would not be capable of its functions such as volition, decision and such. Hence it is said to be the mind of the mind.

Here the intellect (*buddhi*) and the indeterminate state of mind (*manas*) are jointly referred to as 'mind'.

Vedantic texts examine the functioning of mind at four levels. Initially, the mind merely sees an object but does not decide as to what it is. Such stage is called *manas*. When it decides about it, and has opinion about it, it is called *buddhi*, the intellect. When the person knows 'I have seen this', it is called the ego stage (*ahankāra*). When the same thing is recalled at a later time it is called memory, (*cittam*). In the above explanation, the text is referring to the mind in general, not making any differentiation as above.

2.9. SB: यद् वाचो ह वाचम्; यच्छब्दो यस्मादर्थे श्रोत्रादिभिः सर्वैः सम्बध्यते

In the expression – 'because it is the speech of speech' – the word 'yad' should be taken to mean 'because' and it has connection with ear and all the rest – 'because it is the ear of the ear, because it is the mind of the mind' and so on.

In *vāco ha vācam*, the word '*vācam*' has to be taken in the nominative case (though it is found in the objective case. In all other places it is used in nominative case) because of the use 'the life force of the life force'.

2.10. SB: वाचो ह वाचम् इत्येतदनुरोधेन प्राणस्य प्राणमिति...

Doubt: Why cannot the latter taken to be in the objective case (the word 'life force' in the objective case)?

Reply: No, because it is proper to see the predominance in usage. Instead of *vācam* (objective case), it should be taken as 'vāk' (nominative case); following the example of two words ('that' and 'life force') in –'that indeed is the life force of the life force'. In this way, the interpretation would be proper, following the predominance in usage. Moreover, it is proper to denote the object in question by nominative case only.

What is termed as the 'life force' 'of the life force' is (merely) the *prāṇa-vṛtti*, the function called *prāṇa*— because the breathing ability of *prāṇa* is only due to that. The impelling force behind this function is what is in question.

Atman is the over-lord of the prāṇa

2.11. SB: न हि आत्मना अनधिष्ठितस्य प्राणनम् उपपद्यते...

Life (breathing) is not possible in an assemblage which is not over-lorded (*adhiṣṭhita*) by the consciousness of the atman – as also the scriptures say: 'who would even live and who would breathe, if this bliss in the intellect-space were not there' (Tai.U.2:7:1), 'it takes the *prāṇa* upwards, and sends the *apāna* downwards' (Kath.U.2:2:3) and such. Here too it will be told, 'know that as Brahman, by which the *prāṇa* is directed' (Kena.U.1:8).

Brahman is the *adhiṣṭhānam*, that which lords over (*adhi* = above, *sthā* = to be). The line from the Taittiriya Upanishad is in a similar context. It is about the over-lording presence of Brahman, which is apart from the assemblage but directing it. This line is referring to the bliss in the 'intellect-space'. Intellect is figuratively called 'cave' in which the consciousness of Brahman is reflected. It is called cave because it is the innermost self. The body with flesh and blood can be taken as the outer shell. A slightly deeper level is the respiratory level (*prāṇa*). Still inside is the mind, the cognitive ability. Inside still is the *buddhi*, the intellect. Hence it is compared to a cave.

Sage Vidyanaraya notes in Panchadasi – ‘within the physical sheath is the vital sheath. Within it is the mental sheath and still within is the intellect, the doer. Yet inside is the enjoyer sheath. This succession of sheaths leading to the enjoyer is thus a cave (Panchadasi 3-2)’. This signifies the all-pervading nature of Brahman.

Counterpoint: It would have been proper to refer to the sense of smell when other sense organs like sense of hearing are mentioned.

Answer: You are right; but the scripture presumes that by mentioning the *prāṇa*, the sense of smell is as good as mentioned. The purpose of the whole discussion here is to tell that the entity – impelled by which the activity of all these organs is taking place – is Brahman.

Likewise, (Brahman is) the eye of the eye. The ability of the eye to know the light is, in fact, of such eye which is presided over by the consciousness of the atman. Hence, it is the eye of the eye.

Meaning of immortality

2.12. SB: प्रष्टुः पृष्टस्य अर्थस्य ज्ञातुम् इष्टत्वात् श्रोत्रादेः...

SB says – “As the questioner would desire to know the answer for his question, and also because the result of knowing is shown as ‘they become immortal’, we have to construe the meaning of the mantra by *adhyāhāra* – borrowing a word (‘knowing’) which is not there in the text – thus saying – ‘by knowing’ the Brahman which is of the nature of ear of the ear and so on. It is well known that immortality is only by knowledge. The context too means that one gets liberated by knowing”.

Because of this identification (*ātmabhāva*) with senses a person moves with that delimited self, identifies himself with that, takes birth and dies with the same. By knowing Brahman which is of the nature of ear of the ear and by gradually withdrawing

from the activities of the senses some rare, brave person rises to immortality.

The word '*atimucya*' recurs in Vedantic literature. It means rejection of identification with the body mind complex. Those who thus reject identification are indeed brave persons because without such steadfastness of mind it is not possible to reject identification.

Another word which recurs in the commentaries is '*pretya*' which means, 'having withdrawn from this world'. One has to die in order to have eternal life, says the Upanishad. Die from this world to become eternal. We are in a 'death in life' situation as T.S.Eliot would say. Hence the Upanishad asks us to free ourselves and realize our eternal nature. Realizing the eternal nature of atman is to overcome death. Attachment with the world is characterized by the notion of 'I' and 'mine' in sons, friends, wife and relatives. The word '*pretya*' implies that the brave, discriminating seekers, having given up the notion of self in the above things and having realized the atman, become immortal.

2.13. SB: न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः (कैवल्य 1-2)

Students familiar with ashrams and gurus may recall that this mantra is recited to welcome the teachers who are in the *samnyāsa āśrama*. The mantra extols the greatness of the knowledge of Brahman and the people who have renounced the world for such knowledge.

SB quotes the line which means – 'not by karma, not by sons, not by money, but it is by renunciation that one attained immortality' (Kai.U.1:2). Another well-known line is from the Katha Upanishad – 'the self-evident Brahman has handicapped the sense organs by making them outward looking. Hence, (the being) sees only outside and not the indwelling atman. An

exceptional hero, desirous of eternity turns his senses inwards and sees his self' (Katha.Up. 2-1-1); 'when all the desires dwelling in the mind are given up, such person attains Brahman' (Katha.U.2:3:14).

Alternatively, SB says, renunciation of desires is already conveyed by the word '*atimucya*', and hence the word '*pretya*' can mean 'having departed from this body' – 'having died'. 2

* * *

Consciousness cannot be Objectified

Mantra 3

This mantra declares that Brahman is not in the realm of the five senses and the mind. When the mind perceives an external object it is said to reach out to that object through what is called a *vṛtti*. The mind is pervaded by Brahman Consciousness and the external object too is pervaded by It. When we say that the mind reaches out to the object it is said to take the shape of that object. This modification of mind is called *vṛtti*. This *vṛtti* is also enabled by the same Brahman Consciousness.

This *vṛtti*, which enables the mind to objectify all sense objects in the world cannot objectify the very consciousness which is behind it. Brahman is not an object to be comprehended by *vṛtti*.

3.0. SB: यस्मात् श्रोत्रादेरपि श्रोत्राद्यात्मभूतं ब्रह्म अतः –

Because Brahman is the very self of the ear and other senses –

न तत्र चक्षुर्गच्छति न वाग्गच्छति नो मनो न विद्मो न विजानीमो
यथैतदनुशिष्यात् अन्यदेव तद्विदिताद् अथो अविदितादधि । इति
शुश्रुम पूर्वेषां ये नस्तद्वाचचक्षिरे ॥ 3 ॥

*na tatra cakṣurgacchati na vāggacchati no mano
na vidmo na vijānīmo yathaitadanuśiṣyāt anyadeva
tadviditād atho aviditādadhi . iti śuśruma pūrveṣāṃ ye
nastadvyācacakṣire .*

चक्षुः *cakṣuḥ* - the eye; न गच्छति *na gacchati* – does not reach; तत्र *tatra* – there (with regard to Brahman); वाक् *vāk* – the

speech; न गच्छति *na gacchati* – does not reach (that Brahman); न मनः *na manaḥ* - not even the mind; न विद्मः *na vidmaḥ* - we do not know; न विजानीमः *na vijānīmaḥ* - we do not how to teach; यथा *yathā* – as to how; एतद् अनुशिष्यात् *etad adanuśiṣyāt* – one can teach this; तत् *tat* – that (Brahman); अन्यत् एव विदिताद् *anyat eva viditād* – other than what is known; अथ *atha* – and also; अविदिताद् अधि *aviditād adhi* – beyond what is unknown; इति श्रुमुम *iti śuśruma* – thus we have heard; पूर्वेषां *pūrveṣāṃ* - (the words) of past masters; ये *ye* – those who; नः *naḥ* - to us; तद् व्याचक्षिरे *tad vyācakashire* – told about It (Brahman).

3. The eye (denotes all sense organs) cannot reach it (Brahman), speech (denotes all motor organs) cannot reach it and the mind cannot reach it. We do not know, we are not aware, as to how one can teach it to the student. It is distinct from what is known and what is not known. Thus we hear from the past masters who had explained it to us.

3.1. SB: न तत्र तस्मिन् ब्रह्मणि चक्षुः गच्छति, स्वात्मनि...

The eye does not reach the Brahman, because, there cannot be any movement within one's self, says SB. Brahman means the infinite consciousness in which we, at the level of religious belief, visualize different heavenly worlds like Vishnu *loka*, Shiva *loka* and such. An ordinary devotee or the person engaged in rituals may attain these *loka*-s but the person who realizes Brahman is in that state of infinite consciousness. All the worlds which we visualize are practically within It. Hence there is no *attaining* any new world.

Likewise, the speech cannot reach It. Speech is said to reach out to an object (*abhidheya*) only when a word that is uttered signifies the object. Brahman is described in terms of what it is not. It is described as 'not this, not this'.

Brahman is the very self, both of the word and of the sense organ which employs the word (mouth). Hence it cannot

comprehend Brahman, just as fire – though burns and illumines all other objects, cannot illumine or burn itself.

3.2. SB: नो मनः मनश्च अन्यस्य सङ्कल्पयितृ अध्यवसायितृ च सद्...

Similarly the very self of the mind is also Brahman. Hence the mind – being the organ which thinks and determines another object – cannot think or determine about itself.

Any knowledge of objects is by the senses and the mind. Because Brahman is not in their purview, it is not possible to designate specifically as to what Brahman is. 'We do not know as to how to tell this Brahman to students', says the Upanishad.

That which is in the purview of the senses can be taught to others by virtue of characteristics like its class (category), property, action and attributes. To elaborate, every object can be classified such as human, animal, insect etc. Its property can also be described as black, white, sweet and so on. The activity of such objects can also be described and their relationship with other objects can also be described.

Brahman is not one with any of these characteristics like class and hence it is difficult to teach and convince the students. It implies that great effort has to be made in order to teach and to comprehend Brahman.

Scriptures adopt different strategies to tell about this incomprehensible Brahman. For instance they adopt the strategy of *adhyāropa* and *apavāda*. It means that the scriptures attribute the activity of creation, sustenance and dissolution in Brahman in order to indicate that there is something called Brahman. This attribution is called *adhyāropa*. Later the same scriptures retract from such attribution, negate all such activity in Brahman and say that Brahman has no doership in It. This negation is called *apavāda*.

Brahman can be known by the word of the scripture

3.3. SB: 'न विद्मो न विजानीमो यथैतदनुशिष्यात्' इति अत्यन्तम् एव...

A contingency such as – 'we do not know how one can teach this with authority' – has arisen. This is totally nullifying the very process of instruction, and hence the scripture is giving a remedy. It is true that Brahman cannot be conveyed by the means of valid knowledge such as perception; but It can be conveyed by the authority of the scriptural word. With this in view, the scripture goes on to say the following.

3.4. SB: अन्यदेव तद्विदितादथो अविदितादधि इति । अन्यदेव...

This is a significant assertion of the Upanishad. Brahman is distinct from what is known (manifest) and what is not known (unmanifest).

The word '*viditam*' means whatever that is known by the senses and the mind. The whole universe comes under this category. Whatever the human being visualizes or conceptualizes too comes under this category. All conceptions of god by the religions come under 'known'.

The word '*aviditam*', 'unknown' is the opposite of this. It means something which is not knowable by the mind.

Brahman which is here described as the ear of the ear – and so for all senses – and also as not the object of cognition by them, is distinct from the known. An object which is covered by the verb '*vid*' (to know) will be surely knowable somewhere, to some extent, to someone.

All that is manifest is thus known, and Brahman is distinct from that.

Brahman – None other than the self

3.5. SB: अविदितम् अज्ञातं तर्हि इति प्राप्ते आह...

SB now explains as to what is '*aviditam*'. It refers to what Vedanta calls *avyākṛta*, the unmanifest. This is the source for

all manifest world. It is otherwise called *māya*. If it is said that Brahman is distinct from the manifest, it may mean that It is the unmanifest. The scripture refutes that and says that It is above (adhi) the unmanifest too. It means that the Brahman transcends the unmanifest.

In other words, the scripture is saying that the Brahman is not known to the senses and the mind but at the same time it is not unknowable. It is also saying that Brahman is distinct from the unmanifest also. It is not an object for knowledge but yet it exists. If we exclude what is known and what is unknown, that which is left out is the self, the observer, the knower. The scripture is implying that the seeker who is the knower of the manifest and unmanifest is Brahman.

Vedanta here relies on the experience of the seers who have earlier experienced Brahman. Experience cannot be rejected. It is the norm in Vedanta that scripture, logic and experience (*śrīti*, *yukti* and *anubhava*) are all accepted for the purpose of understanding Brahman.

3.6. SB: यद् विदितं तद् अल्पं, मर्त्यं दुःखात्मकं च इति हेयम्...

Whatever is 'known' is delimited, mortal, sorrowful and hence *heyam*, something to be rejected. Hence, when it is said that Brahman is distinct from the 'known', its *ahayatvam*, non-rejectability, is told. It means that Its existence cannot be denied.

The whole universe, as we noted, is something which is 'known' by the senses. It is different from the perceiver. All the things have the three-fold limitation – time, space and object (*deśa-kāla-vastu pariccheda*). They die in time, they are limited to a place, and have limited identity. A person is also the same. This impermanence and inadequacy is the cause of sorrow.

One can reject something which is different from one's self. A seeker, in the Vedantic enquiry, starts realizing that the body is not the real self, that the vital force is not the real self, that the mind, which is insentient, is not his real self, and so on. All these

are, in a way, rejected by him. Atman is something which is non-rejectable, because it is the very self. Atman is consciousness, and just as pot-space is not different from space, it is not different from the Supreme Consciousness. Hence it is infinite. Hence the scripture too says that atman is all-pervading. That which is all pervading cannot remove or discard anything from it.

Here SB uses a word '*anupādeyatvam*'. *Upādeyatvam* of an object means that it is something external to a person and that it can be acquired externally. *Anupādeyatvam* is the opposite of this, implying that atman is not external to oneself.

Hence SB says that when it (atman) is said to be above the 'unknown', its *anupādeyatvam*, non-externality, is told. Non-externality here means that Atman is not a thing to be attained from outside. An object becomes an *upādeyam*, something to be acquired, only when is external to a person. When there is nothing external, there is nothing to be acquired. There is no *upādeyam* and hence *anupādeyatvam*, non-externality. It is your own self.

3.7. SB: कार्यार्थं हि कारणम् अन्यद् अन्येन...

If one has a specific purpose, one borrows something (which one does not have already) from someone else. Here – because the atman is non-rejectable and non-external – in the case of a knower, there is no acceptance of an object (cause) for any purpose.

3.8. SB: एवं विदिताविदिताभ्याम् अन्यद् इति हेयोपादेय...

Thus, by excluding anything to be rejected or added, because of the postulation that it (Brahman) is distinct from the 'known' and the 'unknown', it implies that It is something not different from atman, the self, and thus the quest of the student for Brahman is fulfilled.

It is not something which can be rejected, not something which can be seen as external to oneself. Similarly, it is not something which has to be got from outside, as there is nothing outside it.

3.9. SB: न हि अन्यस्य आत्मनो विदिताविदिताभ्याम् अन्यत्वं...

SB makes the point specifically. For an object which is different from one's self, it is impossible to be distinct from 'known' and 'unknown'. Hence, the sentence (of Upanishad) means that atman is Brahman. In other words, it is only the self which is distinct from the known and the unknown. SB quotes from other scriptures in support of this.

‘अयमात्मा ब्रह्म’ (Mand.Up.2)

‘This Atman is Brahman’.

‘य आत्मापहतपाप्मा’ (Ch.U.8-7-1)

‘That atman which is devoid of *pāpam*’. *Pāpam* is the result of unrighteous conduct. Atman is said to be untouched by the result of either the righteous or unrighteous deeds.

‘यत् साक्षात् अपरोक्षाद् ब्रह्म’ (Br.U.3-4-1)

‘That Brahman which is immediate and direct’

‘य आत्मा सर्वान्तरः’ (Br.U.3-4-1)

‘That Atman which is the indweller of all’.

All these lines show that the self of the seeker is the Brahman.

3.10. SB: एवं सर्वात्मनः सर्वविशेषरहितस्य चिन्मात्र...

The text starting with words ‘*iti śuśruma*’ tells that the purport of the sentence relating to attainment of knowledge of the unity of atman and Brahman – of the One (Brahman) which is the indweller of all beings, of the One which is devoid of all attributes and which is the light of pure consciousness – has to be understood through a good teacher-student lineage.

3.11. SB: ब्रह्म च एवम् आचार्योपदेशपरंपरया...

Brahman has to be known only from a teacher-student tradition but not by logic, lecturing, intellect, eclectic study, penance, *yajña* and such other means. All these are means for the purification of mind, but do not constitute deliberation on Brahman. 'Thus we have heard the words of the teachers of past – those who had explained to us, in other words, taught clearly'.

* * *

What You Worship is not the Absolute

Mantra 4

4.0.a. SB: अन्यदेव तद्विदिताद् अथो अविदितादधि इत्यनेन वाक्येन आत्मा...

We are accustomed to duality. Hence when the Upanishad says that the self is Brahman, we are unwilling to accept. The SB discusses such a situation.

“When, by the sentence ‘it is distinct from the known and distinct from the unknown’ it has been postulated that atman is the Brahman, a doubt has arisen in the mind of the listener – how can this atman be Brahman? Atman is the one who is enjoined to perform certain karma and *upāsana* and a transmigrating person. By performing karma or *upāsana* he would like to attain some divine being like Brahma (creator) or heaven”.

4.0.b. SB: तत् तस्मात् अन्य उपास्यो विष्णुरीश्वर इन्द्रः...

‘Hence, that Brahman has to be some other – one who is worshiped, such as Vishnu, Iswara, Indra or Prana, but not the self, as it would contradict the experience of all’.

We are comfortable with the dualist mode of worship, seeking boons and seeking forgiveness for all our acts of indiscretion.

4.0.c. SB: यथा अन्ये तार्किकाः ईश्वरादन्य आत्मा इत्याचक्षते...

‘Just as the logicians say that Iswara is other than the self, others too – those following the path of karma – say that ‘worship this’, ‘worship this’ and worship someone other than the self’.

Logicians are dualists, whose arguments were later adopted and developed by several *acharyas*. The reference about worship is to the followers of the *mimamsa* school who are diehard advocates of karma-s, and heavenly worlds. The earlier portions of the Vedas prescribe a variety of rituals for a variety of desires.

‘Hence it is proper that what is known and worshiped ought to be Brahman and the worshiper is distinct from him’.

‘Noticing such doubt from the looks of the disciple, or by his query, the teacher tells – may you not have such doubt’

यद्वाचानभ्युदितं येन वागभ्युद्यते ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ 4 ॥

yadvācānabhyuditaṃ yena vāgabhyudyate.
tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupāsate.

यत् *yat* – that which (Brahman); वाचा *vācā* – by the speech; न अभ्युदितम् *na abhyuditaṃ* – not expressed; येन *yena* – by which, वाक् *vāk* – the speech, अभ्युद्यते *abhyudyate* – gets expressed;

तद् एव *tad eva* = that only; ब्रह्म *Brahma* – the Brahman; त्वं विद्धि *tvam viddhi* – may you know; न इदम् *na idam* – not this; यद् इदम् *yad idam* – this which; उपासते *upāsate* – (people) worship.

4. May you know that alone as Brahman which is not manifested by speech but by which the speech gets manifested. Brahman is not this which people worship.

4.1. SB: यत् चैतन्यमात्रसत्ताकम्, वाचा वागिति जिह्वामूलादि...

Yat, refers to Brahman, which is *caitanya-mātra-sattākam*, that which is of the nature of mere consciousness-existence. Existence and consciousness are inseparable in Brahman. It is this Brahman which impels the sense organs and the organs of action. Here, *vāk*, the organ of speech, is being discussed.

‘*Vāk* is the instrument (*indriya*), engaged or attached with eight parts of the vocal system – such as the pharynx – inspired

by the (presiding deity) Agni and which is the articulator of sounds’.

Anandagiri notes the eight parts in the vocal system of a person – chest, throat, head, root of the tongue (pharynx), teeth, nose, the lips and the palate.

4.2. SB: वर्णाश्च अर्थसङ्केतपरिच्छिन्ना एतावन्त एवं...

‘And the letters are those which are defined by notation of meaning, this many to be uttered in this sequence and so on. The sound which expresses all these letters is called ‘word’ and ‘speech’.

4.3. SB: अकारो वै सर्वा वाक् सैषा स्पर्शान्तःस्थ...

As the scripture says, ‘the sound ‘a’ encompasses the whole speech. This very same becomes many, taking different shapes, by getting expressed as the consonants, semi-vowels and aspirates’ (Ait.Aran. 2-3-6-18).

The most primary sound which emerges when a human being opens his mouth and allows his vocal chords to vibrate is ‘a’. All other sounds are by changing the position of the lips and other organs of the vocal system. Hence the sound ‘a’ is called *sarvā vāk*, encompassing the whole range of sounds.

‘*Sparśa*’ means touch or contact. Consonants are called ‘*sparśa-s*’, those which are delivered when the tongue comes into contact with different parts of the palate and mouth. Thus, the sound ‘a’, when interfered by the tongue which touches the mouth, forms the consonants. Other sounds are also similarly formed.

‘Brahman is that which is not expressed by speech – speech which has modifications such as *mitam*, *amitam*, *swara*, truth and falsehood; which is limited in scope as a word, and affected by the qualities of the organ of the speech’.

The Rigveda has metrical hymns which are fixed in size. Hence Rigveda is called *mitam*. Yajurveda has the hymns from Rigveda and several prose passages. Hence it is known as *amitam*. Sama Veda is sung in the forests and hence known as *swara*. All these are but assemblage of letters and words.

4.4. SB: येन ब्रह्मणा विवक्षिते अर्थे सकरणा वाग् अभ्युद्यते...

That which is described as 'the speech of the speech' is the light of Brahman, the light of consciousness.

The sense of speech is limited where as the consciousness known as Brahman is unlimited. The limited sense organ cannot illumine the infinite consciousness. On the other hand it is itself illumined by that consciousness. Hence Brahman is said to be the 'speech of the speech'. Consciousness is called *vāk* when it is behind the sense of speech; it is called eye when it is behind the sense of seeing and so in the case of other organs too, says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

'The *vāk* which is present in all beings (*puruṣa*-s) is present in the letters (*ghoṣa*-s) and the wise one would know that' says SB. It is the consciousness which is expressed as *vāk śakti*, inextricably linked with sounds, symbolized by letters in an alphabet in a language. The Sanskrit poet Kalidasa wrote in a similar context about the consciousness and its expressive power through words –

*vāgarthāviva samṛktau vāgarthapratipattaye.
jagataḥ pitarau vande pārvatīparameśvarau ...*

(*Raghuvamsa 1-1*)

The poet salutes Shiva and his consort Parvati who are regarded as the parents of the whole universe. Shiva represents consciousness and Parvati represents the *śakti*, the creative power of Isvara. This power is through speech in the present context. Shiva denotes *artha*, meaning of a word and Parvati denotes the *vāk*, the speech and they are an inseparable pair, says the poet.

Vāk is not merely the tongue but the consciousness behind it. Even if the tongue were to be cut off the *vāk* exists in the mind. It exists in the dream too (enabling a person to speak in a dream to another dream friend) but it withdraws in *susṭipti*, deep sleep.

The sense of speech is manifest in the sounds we utter and the seeker has to meditate on the impelling agency behind it.

The eternal atman is never devoid of the sense of speech at any time, says the Br.U.(4-3-26).

4.5. SB: तदेव आत्मस्वरूपं ब्रह्म निरतिशयं भूमाख्यं...

The Acharya continues. “May you realize that your own self as Brahman, – that which is unsurpassable, which is also known as *bhūmā*, for the reason that it is *br̥hat*, all encompassing. All those tentative (empirical) statements such as –the speech of speech, the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, agent of an action (*kartā*), enjoyer (of its fruit), knower, controller, governor, that which enjoys by knowledge of objects and so on – are all due to different *upādhi*-s such as speech. All these are current in the Brahman which is beyond all such empirical statements (*asam̐vyavahāra*), devoid of any distinguishing feature, supreme and equal to all (*sāmya*, like the sun equally shining on all). By discarding all such delimiting factors, may you realize yourself as the unqualified Brahman – this is what is meant by the word ‘*eva*’, alone”.

The word *upādhi* needs explanation. If we visualize space, we realize that it is a homogeneous entity without any parts in it. However, if you we take an empty jar, the jar is said to contain space. It can be called jar-space. We can similarly notice a room-space, a building-space and also the large space itself. Though space itself cannot be contained in small places like jar, it is appearing as though it is limited in a small place. All these small places are delimiting the space. Such delimiting factors are called *upādhi*-s.

Another example can be the Sun, shining uniformly and getting reflected in thousands of water bodies. In all these water bodies the reflection of sun is affected by the nature of the water body. The sun being the same, the reflections are many and are of different nature. This multitude of reflecting surfaces are the *upādhi-s* for the sun.

Brahman is devoid of any such *upādhi-s*, delimiting factors. But yet so many statements are made, such as speech of speech, the mind of the mind, the doer of karma, the enjoyer of the fruit of karma, the ruler, the controller and so on – all at empirical level – about that Brahman. All these are by virtue of the *upādhi-s*, which are illumined by the same consciousness. The instruction by word '*tad* eva' – '(that) alone' by the text is to reject all such delimiting factors and to know one's self as Brahman.

4.6. SB: नेदं ब्रह्म यदिदम् इत्युपाधिभेदविशिष्टम् अनात्मा ईश्वरादि...

This which people worship is not Brahman. People worship a thing which is distinguished by divergent *upādhi-s*. It is non-atman such as Iswara, but not Brahman.

This is a revolutionary statement. Upanishads unwittingly encounter the contemporary question of religious rivalry. All religions propose a god, which is essentially a projection of mind of the thinkers who have created the religion. Whatever is a projection of mind comes under the category of '*idam*', which means an object which is conceived. The human mind may think of god or heaven or hell in a highly impressive manner but all that is only an objectification. Whatever is known to the mind is subordinate to the mind. The present mantra says that all these visualizations are unreal. They may have some practical value of instilling good ethics and a sense of discipline among the followers but that is all about it. It is not the absolute reality.

Vedanta is structured on philosophical enquiry and not on religious beliefs. It cannot endorse a particular proposition put forth by the religion.

Further, as Swami Tattvavidananda mentions in one of his talks, Vedanta travels a long way along with the atheist with his opinions. The atheist also says that what is worshipped is not the ultimate. Vedanta too is saying the same – that what you worship as god is not the ultimate.

What is the difference then? The atheist stops after rejecting what is worshipped, but Vedanta moves ahead to find out the reality beyond what we worship. Another great principle is enunciated indirectly by Vedanta here. *It is that human mind can conceive of any god-form and worship and get the desired results.* This, of course, is made clear by Krishna in the Gita.

One should not misunderstand that the Upanishad is denouncing the god postulated by religion. Any religion is meant to purify the mind and make a person eligible for self enquiry. The Upanishad is asking the seeker to go beyond religion and to go beyond their structure of god, heaven and hell. This applies to all religions and all types of worship – whether it is a god with form or a god without form (as in the case of Semitic religions).

We may also note here that Vedanta has not objected to divergent forms of worship of deities, because they are all essential for answering the prayers of humans. This is the reason why we have several deities in Hinduism and also the reason why we respect all other religions. Here, one may refer to a tiny Upanishad known as Bhavanopanishad to know the philosophy of visualizing a delimited Brahman for the purpose of worship.

The crux of the above discussion is that whatever is '*idam*' is a thing mentally objectified and hence delimited. This cannot be atman and hence Shankaracharya calls it *anātmā*, the non-self. He also adds that Iswara too, which is the consciousness delimited by *māyā*, is *anātmā* and hence not Brahman. *Māyā* is the *upādhi* for Iswara.

4.7. SB: तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि इत्युक्ते अपि नेदं ब्रह्म...

The SB continues. “Though it has been told, ‘may you know that alone to be Brahman’, the fact that the non-self is not Brahman is being reiterated by words ‘not this’. It is either to serve as a restrictive injunction or to serve as an exclusive injunction to exclude the idea of Brahman in non-self”.

The statement –‘may you know that alone to be Brahman’ – is itself enough to convey that non-self is not Brahman. However, the scripture is repeating it for the sake of emphasis, saying ‘this is not Brahman’. The word ‘*niyama*’ is a term from Mimamsa discipline, which restricts the possibility of one alternative when two options or alternatives are present. The word *parisaṅkhyā* is also a term from the same discipline, which specifically precludes one of the two options. (4)

Mantra 5

यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनो मतम् ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ 5 ॥

yanmanasā na manute yenaāhurmano matam.
tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupāsate ..

यत् *yat* – that which; न मनुते *na manute* – one cannot know (objectify); मनसा *manasā* – by the mind; येन आहुः *yena āhuḥ* - (but) by which people say; मनः मतम् *manaḥ matam* – the mind is known;

तद् एव *tad eva* = that only; ब्रह्म *Brahma* – the Brahman; त्वं विद्धि *tvam viddhi* – may you know; न इदम् *na idam* – not this; यद् इदम् *yad idam* – this which; उपासते *upāsate* – (people) worship.

5. May you know that alone as Brahman which one cannot objectify by the mind but by which, people say, the mind itself is known. Brahman is not this which people worship.

5.1. SB: यन्मनसा न मनुते; मन इत्यन्तःकरणं बुद्धिमनसोः एकत्वेन...

The four-fold division of what we generally call 'mind' was discussed above. Here the SB says that by the word '*manas*', the four-fold inner organ including intellect has to be taken. The mind contemplates and hence it is called so etymologically. It encompasses all thoughts, concepts and moods. As the scripture says – 'desire, deliberation, doubt, (*śraddhā*) trust, lack of trust, resolve, lack of resolve, modesty, analytical ability, fear and all such are mind only' (Br.U.1-5-3). All these thought processes in the mind are called *ṽṛtti*-s, different modifications of the mind.

This whole apparatus cannot express the Brahman, because the very apparatus is illumined (enabled) by the light of consciousness (*caitanya-jyoti*).

5.2. SB: सर्वविषयं प्रति प्रत्यगेव इति स्वात्मनि न प्रवर्तते अन्तःकरणम्...

Atman is the very inner-self of the mind. Hence the mind cannot conceive of it. It is the consciousness of Brahman which pervades and illumines it. The pervading principle is known as *vyāpaka*, and the pervaded is called *vyāpya*. Here, it is the mind along with its modifications that is the pervaded. Contemplate on that pervading principle, says the Upanishad. What you worship now as 'this' is not the Ultimate. 5.

Mantra 6

यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति येन चक्षूषि पश्यति ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ 6 ॥

yaccakṣuṣā na paśyati yena cakṣūṃṣi paśyati .
tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupāsate .

यत् *yat* – that which; न पश्यति *na paśyati* – one does not see; चक्षुषा *cakṣuṣā* – by the eye; येन *yena* – (but) by which; चक्षूषि पश्यति *cakṣūṃṣi paśyati* – knows the eyes;

तद् एव *tad eva* = that only; ब्रह्म *Brahma* – the Brahman; त्वं विद्धि *tvam viddhi* – may you know; न इदम् *na idam* – not this; यद् इदम् *yad idam* – this which; उपासते *upāsate* – (people) worship.

6. May you know that alone as Brahman which one cannot see by the eye but by which the eyes themselves are known. Brahman is not this which people worship.

6.1. SB: यत् चक्षुषा न पश्यति न विषयीकरोति...

One cannot know or objectify the Brahman by the sense of sight; one cannot make it a part of the modifications of the intellect (what we earlier noted as *vṛtti*). But on the other hand, the sense of sight, and all the modifications of mind connected to that are illumined by Brahman. They are pervaded (*vyāpta*) by the light of consciousness.

Mantra 7

यच्छ्रोत्रेण न शृणोति येन श्रोत्रमिदं श्रुतम् ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ 7 ॥

yacchrotreṇa na śṛṇoti yena śrotramidaṃ śrutam .
tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedaṃ yadidamupāsate .

यत् *yat* – that which; न शृणोति *na śṛṇoti* – one does not (cannot) hear; श्रोत्रेण *śrotreṇa* – by the sense of hearing; येन *yena* – by which; श्रोत्रम् इदं *śrotram idam* - this sense of hearing; श्रुतम् *śrutam* – is heard;

तद् एव *tad eva* = that only; ब्रह्म *Brahma* – the Brahman; त्वं विद्धि *tvam viddhi* – may you know; न इदम् *na idam* – not this; यद् इदम् *yad idam* – this which; उपासते *upāsate* – (people) worship.

7. May you know that alone as Brahman which one cannot know by the sense of hearing but by which the sense of hearing itself is heard (illumined). Brahman is not this which people worship.

7.1. SB: यत् श्रोत्रेण न शृणोति...

One cannot know Brahman by the sense of hearing, the one over-lorded by the divine manifestation called 'dik', direction. (In the Vedic system, each of the sense organ and each of the organ of action is over-lorded by some divine force or manifestation. Here, SB refers to the god of directions). This sense of hearing is derived from the *sāttvika* aspect of the space. (Each sense organ is said to have evolved as a *pariṇāma*, modification, of one of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and space. The mind, which is a combination of all the five senses, is the product of the collective *sāttvika* aspect of the five elements). Such sense generates a *vritti*, a modification of the mind and objectifies what it hears. However, this sense cannot objectify Brahman.

Mantra 8

यत्प्राणेन न प्राणिति येन प्राणः प्रणीयते ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ 8 ॥

yatprāṇena na prāṇiti yena prāṇaḥ praṇīyate .
tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupāsate .

यत् *yat* – that by which; न प्राणिति *na prāṇiti* – one does not know by *prāṇa*, the sense of smell; प्राणेन *prāṇena* – by the sense of smell; येन *yena* – (but) by which; प्राणः प्रणीयते *prāṇaḥ praṇīyate* – the sense of smell is enabled;

तद् एव *tad eva* = that only; ब्रह्म *Brahma* – the Brahman; त्वं विद्धि *tvam viddhi* – may you know; न इदम् *na idam* – not this; यद् इदम् *yad idam* – this which; उपासते *upāsate* – (people) worship.

8. May you know that alone as Brahman which one does not know by the sense of smell but by which the sense of smell itself is enabled. Brahman is not this which people worship.

8.1. SB: यत् प्राणेन घ्राणेन पार्थिवेन नासिकापुटान्तरवस्थितेन...

Here, SB uses the word *prāṇa* to mean the sense of smell. In the other commentary called the *vākya bhāṣyam*, SB calls it the life force, which enables all activity in the body.

In the present commentary it is referring to the sense of smell, which is a modification of the earth (*pārthiva*). It dwells in the nostrils and coordinates the modification of mind whenever it smells an object. But one cannot objectify Brahman by this sense of smell too. On the other hand, this sense is enabled by the light of consciousness, as described in the above sections. May you meditate on this light as Brahman, says the Upanishad.

इति प्रथमः खण्डः

Thus ends the first part

द्वितीयः खण्डः
Part - II

On Claiming to Know Brahman

1.0. a. SB: एवं हेयोपादेय विपरीतः त्वम् आत्मा ब्रह्मेति...

Atman is equated with Brahman here and it is described as *heyopādeya-viparīta*, which means that it is infinite in nature like Brahman. *Heya* means something to be rejected and *upādeya* is something which has to be added. Atman here is called *heyopādeya viparīta*, a thing different from the above, a thing to which nothing need be added and from which nothing can be taken out. When you are infinite, there is nothing to be added to that infinity and nothing can be taken out of infinity. Something which is different from you can be given up and something which is separate from you can be added to you. This is not so in the present case. You are also *satyam*, the eternal existence and whatever we may conceive as inside and outside infinity will be that existence only.

Having heard so from the teacher, there is the danger that the student could feel over confident and could claim to know Brahman well. The student may be objectifying Brahman, visualizing it as any other object. This is not a correct understanding of Brahman.

1.0. b. SB: ननु इष्टैव सुवेदाहम् इति निश्चिता प्रतिपत्तिः...

Should we not be happy if the student has known Brahman well? Surely, we should be, but not when he knows it an object. Anything which can be known as an object can be said to be clearly known. Fire, which can burn things, can do so in case of all inflammable objects. It cannot burn itself.

All the texts of Vedanta assert that Brahman is the very self of what we consider as the knower. If the intellect is said to be the knower, Brahman is the very self of that knowing intellect.

Even in the present text it is said in the mantras – it is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind and so on. It is also specifically mentioned that Brahman cannot be expressed by words. The venerable tradition of teaching has also been told in the words – ‘It is other than what is told and other than the unknown’. The text is also going to say that Brahman is not known to those who claim to know and it is known to those who do not claim to know.

All this discussion is to tell that in Vedanta we do not merely talk about knowing Brahman but talk about becoming Brahman. You are the very self of knowledge, existence and infinitude, says Vedanta. You cannot objectify yourself. You can only claim to know an object in front. You are then the knower and the object is called knowable. In the knowledge of Brahman there is no knower-knowable relationship. If someone says ‘I know Brahman’, he is claiming to be the knower and he is making Brahman an object for knowing. This is not correct in the case of Brahman.

1.0. c. SB: न हि वेदिता वेदितुः वेदितुं शक्यः अग्निः दग्धुरिव दग्धुमग्नेः...

Just as the fire cannot burn itself, the knower cannot know himself. There cannot be a knower for Brahman because if someone says that he knows Brahman he is making Brahman a finite thing. If he considers himself apart from Brahman, he is making himself a non-entity because nothing can exist outside Brahman. The Br.U.(3-8-11) refutes the possibility of any other knower than Brahman and asserts that there is no knower apart from the Brahman.

Hence the apprehension of the teacher about the student’s understanding is appropriate. To say ‘I know Brahman well’ is merely a specious understanding.

Mantra 1:

यदि मन्यसे सुवेदेति दहरमेवापि नूनम् त्वं वेत्थ
ब्रह्मणो रूपं यदस्य त्वं यदस्य देवेष्वथ नु मीमांस्यमेव ते मन्ये विदितम् ॥ 1 ॥

yadi manyase suvedeti daharamevāpi nūnam tvam vettha brahmaṇo rūpaṃ yadasya tvam yadasya deveṣvatha nu mīmāṃsyameva te manye viditam .

यदि मन्यसे *yadi manyase* – if you think; सुवेद इति *suveda iti* – ‘I know it quite well’; दहरम् एव अपि *daharam eva api* – very little indeed; नूनम् *nūnam* – surely; त्वं वेत्थ *tvam vettha* – you know; ब्रह्मणो रूपम् *brahmaṇo rūpaṃ* – the nature of Brahman; यदस्य त्वं *yadasya tvam* – of that (Brahman) which is your self; यदस्य देवेषु *yadasya deveṣu* – of that (Brahman) which is at the divine level; अथ नु *atha nu* – that being so; ते विदितम् *te viditam* – what is known to you; मीमांस्यमेव *mīmāṃsyameva* – requires further analysis; मन्ये *manye* – I think.

1. If you think – ‘I know It (Brahman) quite well’, very little indeed do you know the nature of Brahman which is in your self and which is at the divine level. That being so, I think, what is known to you needs further analysis by you.

1.1. SB: यदि कदाचिद् मन्यसे सुवेदेति सुष्ठु वेदाहं ब्रह्मेति...

Brahman may be inscrutable, the SB says, but someone with a pure mind and clear thinking can realize It. Others cannot. Hence is the doubtful attitude of the teacher towards the student claiming to know Brahman.

1.2. SB: दृष्टं च ‘य एषो अक्षिणि पुरुषो दृश्यत एष आत्मेति...

Here SB is referring to a well-known passage from the Chandogya Upanishad (8-7-4). Indra, the king of gods and Virocana, the king of demons are sons of the same father Prajapati, from two wives. They learn that the knowledge of Brahman would make them immortal and hence they approach their father and request him to teach that knowledge. Prajapati asks them to undergo *brahmacarya*, self-purifying discipline, and then come to him. They do so and to them Prajapati says in a cryptic way – ‘the *puruṣa* who is seen in the eye is the self, it is the immortal, fearless Brahman’. Understanding of any teaching

depends on our own ability and preparedness. Knowledge of Brahman needs a pure mind but the lord of demons was not prepared so. Hence he misunderstood the teaching of his father because of his own sensual nature and tendencies built up by such nature. He understood the body-mind-complex as Brahman and was happy with that.

Indra, being a more dedicated student, deliberated on what his father said. He could not decode the cryptic teaching. Again he went to his father and sought guidance. He spent some more time in tapas as advised by his father and with several examples about the waking, the dream and the deep sleep states, progressively learnt about the consciousness underlying them all and existing beyond.

Even in ordinary cases, though students learn from the same teacher, someone may understand correctly, someone may not understand and someone else may understand in a totally contrary way. What then, can we say about the difficult nature of the knowledge of Brahman?

1.3. SB: अत्र हि विप्रतिपन्नाः सदसद्वादिनः तार्किकाः सर्वे...

Different schools of Indian philosophy have given different causes for the universe. This subject is called the theory of causation. The most ancient question for mankind is who caused this universe. Philosophers analyzed the cause-effect relationship and gave different hypotheses. Some held that the universe is not newly produced, but it has always been there in its cause. This is called *satkāryavāda*, the argument of the Sankhya school. Others held that the universe is newly produced from the cause. This is the argument of the logicians, the materialists and also the argument of one branch of Buddhists.

Vedanta holds that the universe is an appearance in Brahman, or in other words, it is a manifestation of *māyā*. Creation is attributed to Brahman only figuratively. This attribution is retracted (*apavāda* as we saw above) to show that nothing exists apart from Brahman.

SB here is referring to such dialecticians who claim to know the truth about Brahman. Such claims cannot be correct because Brahman cannot be visualized or objectified by the human mind. Hence the teacher is cautioning the student that if he were to make a claim, it would be an incorrect claim. What can be known by the mind will be an object of the mind, which Brahman cannot be. Hence he says that the student knows merely a paltry version of Brahman.

Several apparent forms of God – due to divergent upādhi-s

1.4. SB: किम् अनेकानि ब्रह्मणो रूपाणि महान्त्यर्भकाणि च...

When the teacher says that the student has only visualized a delimited version of Brahman, it would imply that there can be several such forms. Hence the question whether there are so many forms – mighty and trivial – of Brahman.

Yes, we have to admit so, says SB, noticing what is happening in the world. We give different names and forms to what we visualize as god and create several gods. Hundreds of religions in the world have their own versions of god and all these are hit by the same limitation that they are all human conceptions, and get negated by the line – ‘not this which people worship (1-4)’.

The real nature of Brahman is as described in the Kathopanishad – ‘It is soundless, touchless, formless, undiminishing, tasteless, smell-less, beginning-less, endless, beyond the Hiranyagarbha, and Supreme’ (Kath.U.1-3-15). In other words, it is beyond the five senses and the five elements too. It is beyond the cause of the five elements, the Hiranyagarbha. It is thus beyond any description based on any characteristic.

All such names and forms are negated in Brahman.

1.5. SB: ननु येनैव धर्मेण यद् रूप्यते तदेव तस्य स्वरूपमिति...

A subtle counterpoint is raised here by the rival theorist who objects to the idea that Brahman does not have any

characteristic. He points out how Brahman is often described as consciousness. Several scriptural lines associate Brahman with consciousness. It is agreed that consciousness is not the dharma, property, of any of the five elements or any of their derivatives (including the body-mind complex) we see. But the scriptures say that Brahman is consciousness. Hence the questioner suggests – the attribute by which a thing is identified can be taken as its characteristic, and by that logic consciousness can be taken as the characteristic of Brahman.

There are several scriptural lines saying that Brahman is of the nature of consciousness. The SB cites such lines from different Upanishads.

1.6. SB: सत्यमेवम्, तथापि तदन्तःकरणदेहेन्द्रियोपाधिद्वारेणैव...

It is true that consciousness is described as the *svarūpa*, the very self, of Brahman. When we say that Brahman has no *rūpam*, characteristic, we mean that Brahman cannot be directly seen but It is indicated through *upādhi*-s (like body, senses and the mind) only. We know Brahman because of Its manifestation in these delimiting adjuncts. In fact, consciousness follows us through all stages of life, starting from childhood till old age and in all physical conditions, but does not undergo any change. It is expressed in all the mental modifications (*vṛtti*) like sounds, but it is not those modifications.

Here Anandagiri, the commentator on SB gives further clarification. A question may arise, he says, that an *upādhi* is always connected with the *upahita*, an object on which it imparts its properties. How can Brahman, which is (*asaṅga*), unattached with anything, can have body-mind complex as the *upādhi*? He answers by giving the example of sun reflecting in water. The sun has no physical relationship with the water, but appears to get disturbed when the water surface is disturbed, or appears as divided when the water bodies are many.

How to experience Brahman? Anandagiri concludes with the expression *viśhayānuparakta citsphuraṇaṃ brahmānubhavaḥ*

– which means that the experience of Brahman is to remain as pure consciousness with total absence of mind-modifications relating to objects. It is mere awareness unconnected with any object.

Scriptural statements such as – ‘consciousness, bliss is Brahman’ – and such others are verbal *ālambana-s*, aide memoires, for understanding Brahman. These are *vṛtti-s*. It is only when the *vṛtti-s* cease that a person remains as pure consciousness, and that is Brahman. Thus the textual line – ‘It is known to the unknown and unknown to the known’ stands established.

1.7. SB: यदस्य ब्रह्मणोरूपमिति पूर्वेण सम्बन्धः...

The expression ‘*yadasya*’ connects to ‘*brahmaṇo-rūpam*’. It means, ‘whatever form you have visualized for Brahman’. The Upanishad refers to the two levels of *upāsana* which the human mind can conceive of. One is at the level of the human body itself. Several *upāsana-s* are in Upanishads wherein the seeker worships Brahman in some *upādhi* – such as the right eye, the space in the intellect (*daharākāśa*) – in the human body itself. These are delimited conceptions, says the text here. On the other hand, whatever form you are visualizing at the divine level (*adhidaiva*) is also delimited, because Brahman is beyond the divine level which the human mind can think of. Upanishad calls it *daharam*, petty, (*dabhram*, in some texts, which means the same). They are called petty because they are delimited by *upādhi-s*. It implies that it is not easy to realize Brahman which is devoid of any delimiting adjuncts, tranquil (devoid of the dualities which affect all beings), infinite, non-dual entity which is otherwise called *bhūmā*.

1.8. SB: यत एवम् अथ नु तस्मात् मन्ये अद्यापि...

As it appears that your understanding is shaky, what you know should be subject to further inquiry (*mimamsya*), I guess.

Having thus been told by the guru, the student sat in solitude, deliberated on Brahman with a tranquil mind, ruminated on the scriptural statements which were explained by his guru, got validated them by logic and having assimilated and having brought it all into personal experience, he re-approached the guru and said – ‘I guess, I have realized Brahman’.

* * *

I Know Not and I Know Too

2.0. SB: कथमिति, शृणु...

You may hear as to how is it internalized –

Mantra 2:

नाहं मन्ये सुवेदेति नो न वेदेति वेद च ।
यो नस्तद्वेद तद्वेद नो न वेदेति वेद च ॥2॥

nāhaṃ manye suvedeti no na vedeti veda ca .
yo nastadveda tadveda no na vedeti veda ca ..

अहं न मन्ये *ahaṃ na manye* – I do not think (hold); सुवेद इति *suveda iti* – that I know (It) well; न *na* - not; न वेद इति *na veda iti* – that I do not know; वेद च *veda ca* – I know too; यः नः *yaḥ naḥ* - he among us; तद् वेद *tad veda* – who knows (as I know); तद् वेद *tad veda* – knows It well; न *na* – not; न वेद इति *na veda iti* – that he doesnot know; वेद च *veda ca* – he knows too.

2. I do not think that I know Brahman as an object of my knowledge. Not that I do not know it too. I do know (do not know too). He among us who knows what I say knows Brahman. It is not that he does not know. He knows it (and also does not know).

2.1. SB: न अहं मन्ये सुवेदेति, नैवाहं मन्ये सुवेद ब्रह्मेति...

Vedic mantras sometimes talk in paradoxical sentences. This is one such. The student here says – ‘I know and also do not know’. The teacher had said earlier that if someone says that he knows Brahman well, he merely knows a lower form of Brahman and not Its real nature. He had said that if the student knows Brahman at the level of self (*adhyātma*) or

among gods (at the *adhidaiva* level), both are the lower forms only. It is because whatever is objectified by the mind cannot be Brahman. Having deliberated on this, the student has now come with an understanding that he cannot say that It is well known nor can he say that It is not known at all. He cannot keep quiet too. He is in a strange situation.

2.2. SB: ननु विप्रतिषिद्धं नाहं मन्ये सुवेदेति, नो न वेदेति...

SB says: When a person says that he knows an object he himself cannot say that he does not know it correctly. It is a self contradiction unless it is a case of doubtful knowledge or wrong knowledge. Nor it can be mandated that Brahman is an object which has to be known as a doubtful entity or that it has to be wrongly known.

The student, though tested by the teacher in the above manner, is unshaken in his understanding. He has understood the implication of Brahman being other than what was described as known (*viditam*) and unknown (*aviditam*). All that is known is a *prameya*, an object and unknown is something which is the unmanifest, the cause of the known. Atman is beyond the cause-effect cycle. But it is a thing which is knowable as the scripture repeatedly says. If atman is not an object and yet knowable it means that it is none other than the knower himself. The student has also realized that atman can be known through the *upādhi*-s.

Here SB uses three expressions – *saṃpradāya* (tradition), *upapattī* (logic) and *anubhava* (experience). This is the common approach of Vedanta in understanding Brahman. What is told in the scripture is validated by logic and is brought into one's personal experience.

With this firm realization, the student declares – 'whoever among us understands what I say, knows Brahman'.

2.3. SB: किं पुनः तद्वचनम् इत्यतआह नो न वेदेति वेद च इति...

What is it that he realized? He said, as the mantra says – ‘not that I do not know, but I know It too’. He has realized the Brahman which is beyond the known and unknown, and by logical validation and experience, he came back to the teacher. He told the above words to indicate that he grasped the purport of his teacher’s warning and also to exclude the impression that it is not an improper understanding of a dull student. The words *anumāna* and *anubhava* in SB refer to *mananam* and *nididhyāsanam*. *Mananam* is the process of contemplating on the logicity of the scriptural statement and to establish the meaning firmly in the mind without leaving any doubt. *Nididhyāsanam* is the process of internalizing and bringing such understanding to personal experience. These two, when they fructify, are called the right understanding. Hence SB says that the assertiveness of the student is justified.

* * *

Knower Does not Know

Mantra 3

3.0. SB: शिष्याचार्यसंवादात् प्रतिनिवृत्त्य स्वेन रूपेण श्रुतिः...

Departing from the words of the student, the scripture, in its own words, summarizes the aforesaid discussion. The words are paradoxical:

यस्यामतं तस्य मतं मतं यस्य न वेद सः ।
अविज्ञातं विज्ञानतां विज्ञातमविज्ञानताम् ॥3॥

*yasyāmatam tasya matam matam yasya na veda saḥ .
avijñātam vijñātām vijñātamavijñātām .*

यस्य अमतम् *yasya amatam* – the one who realizes that Brahman cannot be known as an object; तस्य मतं *tasya matam* - it is deemed that he knows Brahman well; मतं यस्य *matam yasya* – the person who presumes that he knows It (knows it as an object); न वेद सः *na veda saḥ* - he knows not; विज्ञानतां *vijñātām* - for the person who thinks he knows; अविज्ञातं *avijñātam* - it is not known; विज्ञातम् *vijñātam* – it is known; अविज्ञानताम् *avijñātām* – to the one who does not know it as an object.

3. Brahman is known to the person who holds that It is not known. It is not known to the person who has merely conceptualized it by mind. It is unknown to those who know and known to those who do not know.

3.1. SB: यस्य ब्रह्मविदः अमतम् अविज्ञातम् अविदितं ब्रह्मेति...

The word *matam* is from the Sanskrit root 'man' (मन्) which means 'to think', 'to visualize' or 'to conceptualize'. *Matam* (मतम्)

is something which has been conceptualized at an intellectual level, something which is known as an object of knowledge. SB says that the realized person who says that it is *amatam*, not 'known' (who knows that it cannot be known by the body-mind complex), knows Brahman. His understanding is the right understanding. On the other hand, the unrealized person who says that he knows Brahman has merely conceptualized it by the mind, made it an object of the mind, and hence his understanding is wrong.

The second line restates the same in different words – 'अविज्ञातं विजानतां'.

3.2. SB: विद्वद्विदुषोः यथोक्तौ पक्षौ अवधारयति...

The two points of view of the realized and unrealized persons are further affirmed by the scripture in the words *avijñātām vijānatām*. SB says that those who know it well think that it is not known to them. Those who do not know it think that they do know it.

Anandagiri explains the paradoxical words in slightly different terms. The person who knows (*vijānatām*) the nacre (*śukti*), (the reality) does not know (*avijānatām*) the silver (the world) which is superimposed. Silver is *avijñātām*, unknown, to him. We know well that the superimposed silver (the world) is known (*vijñātām*) to the ignorant (*avijānatām*) only. Thus, for the realized person, the superimposed world is unknown, as he sees Brahman everywhere.

Those who say that they do know Brahman are those who try to see atman in the sense organs, the mind and the intellect. They do not know the difference between consciousness and *upādhi*. They are in a delusion that they know Brahman through the delimiting factors like intellect.

We can understand *upādhi*-s by taking the example of electricity. All the gadgets like bulb, fan etc., are indicating

the presence of electricity. They are the *upādhi*, the delimiting adjuncts. Fan manifests electricity but by itself cannot be called electricity. Similarly the sense organs and the mind indicate the presence of consciousness, but they are not consciousness by themselves.

* * *

Brahman – Revealed in All Cognitions

Mantra 4

This is one of the most important mantra-s in the Upanishad.

4.0. SB: अविज्ञातं विजानताम् इत्यवधृतम् । यदि ब्रह्म...

In the previous mantra, it was well settled that atman is not known to the person who tends to objectify it. If Brahman were to be something which is totally unknown, then there would be no difference between an ignoramus and the wise person. How then can that Brahman be known or experienced?

When we use the word 'experience', we are also inferring an experiencer. I see a flower and experience it. I say that I have experienced it. This formula does not apply in the case of Brahman. In the case of knowledge of Brahman there is no such experiencer. We use the word experience in a different sense, that is, in the sense of *being in that state of Brahman*. It is possible to realize Brahman as your own self. That is being told in the next mantra.

प्रतिबोधविदितं मतममृतत्वं हि विन्दते ।
आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यं विद्यया विन्दतेऽमृतम् ॥4॥

pratibodhaviditaṃ matamamṛtatvaṃ hi vindate .
ātmanā vindate vīryaṃ vidyayā vindatemṛtam ..

मतम् *matam* – it is (said to be) well known; प्रति-बोध-विदितं *prati-bodha-viditaṃ* - when it is realized (as the very self) in every cognition; हि *hi* – because; अमृतत्वं *amṛtatvaṃ* - immortality; विन्दते *vindate* – attains; आत्मना *ātmanā* – by the (knowledge

of) self; विन्दते *vindate* – attains; वीर्यम् *vīryam* - strength; विद्यया *vidyayā* – by the knowledge (of the self); विन्दते *vindate* – attains; अमृतम् *amṛtam* – immortality.

4. Brahman is said to be correctly known when it is known as the very self of every mental cognition. Because, (by such understanding), one attains immortality. Strength is attained through one's own self and immortality is attained (realized) only through knowledge of Brahman.

4.1. SB: प्रतिबोधविदितं बोधं बोधं प्रतिविदितम्...

A very detailed of discussion is seen on the first line of this mantra. The word *prati-bodha-viditam* is a compound word in Sanskrit and it can be interpreted diversely. *Prati* means 'every'; *bodha* means 'cognition' and *viditam* means 'known'. The three words have to be connected to give a coherent meaning. SB explains it as 'that which is known as the very self of every cognition'. Cognition relates to an object or an idea or a feeling. I see a pen in front of me and it is cognition. I recall something from the past and it is cognition. I also cognize my feelings of love, anger and so on, which are also cognitions. When I have these cognitions, I normally notice nothing else but them. The Upanishad, however, says that behind every cognition there is the presence of consciousness which is illuminating it and that I have to notice that consciousness. It is only when I am always aware of that consciousness; I can be called a person who knows the self.

In other words all cognitions become objects for consciousness. The mind and the organs are merely instruments which reflect consciousness, चैतन्य अभिव्यञ्जक as the text *Vedanta Paribhasha* says. It means that they are mere indicators of the presence of consciousness.

4.2. SB: सर्वप्रत्ययदर्शी चिच्छक्तिस्वरूपमात्रः...

SB says Atman is सर्वप्रत्ययदर्शी, that which illumines or enables all cognitions. The word *darśī* literally means one who

sees, but there is no act of seeing in Brahman. Hence it has to be understood as the illuminer of all cognitions. Though it is pure consciousness it appears as though mixed up with different cognitions. These cognitions are not the nature of atman but are only the indicators. SB says there is no other way to attain the knowledge of atman except through the cognitions.

In order to understand this, we may take the example of clear, still water which cannot normally be seen unless there is a movement in it. Someone drops a stone into it and we observe the ripples caused in it. The pattern of the ripples indicates the fact that something has been dropped into the water. If the water is pure and cannot be seen, the pattern of the waves indicates the presence of water. Similarly the cognitions which appear in the mind indicate the presence of something which is the source of such cognition.

Cognitions of objects can be understood as names and forms. If these names and forms are ignored, what remains is pure consciousness, as Sri Vidyanaraya says in *Panchadasi*.

**‘यस्मिन् यस्मिन् अस्ति लोके बोधस्तत्तदुपेक्षणे ।
यद् बोध मात्रं तद् ब्रह्म’.....(Panchadasi 3-21).**

When the names and forms are ignored in whatever cognition that takes place, what remains is pure awareness only.

Thus the expression प्रतिबोधविदितम् means this. When you have the knowledge of a pot, you are not only having (or rather rejecting) the pot-knowledge but also the knowledge of Brahman. You have to only dismiss the name and form of the pot and observe mere consciousness.

4.3. SB: अतः प्रत्ययप्रत्यगात्मतया विदितं ब्रह्म यदा...

It means that Brahman is the inner self and illuminer of every cognition. When this is understood, it is called the correct understanding of Brahman. Such a student understands

Brahman as something devoid of any change (increase or decrease), which is the nature of witness to everything, eternal and unconditioned. It is something like space which cannot be conditioned or defined. There is no change in the nature of space whether it is delimited by a pot or a cave. Just as the space cannot be broken into parts, the consciousness too is part-less, and unchanging.

The SB quotes a line from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, which says that atman is the seer of all seeing, the hearer of hearing and the knower of all knowing.

4.4. SB: यदा पुनः बोधक्रियाकर्तेति बोधक्रियालक्षणेन...

Another school interprets the compound word *prati-bodha-viditam* in a different way. If we see an action but do not see the actor, we can visualize or know the presence of an actor. This analogy can be extended for cognition too. In this interpretation, the compound word is interpreted to mean that '*the self is known as the doer in the act of cognition*'. It is through this act that the doer is known. It is like we know the presence of wind when the branches of trees swing.

SB refutes this, saying that atman, in such case would become a mere substance having the capacity to cognize. It would not be consciousness itself. Cognitions would be arising and dying. When cognitions arise atman is distinguished or known by that and when cognitions are not there, it would be a mere substance unnoticed. In such a case atman would also be a changing entity, a delimited object (*sāvayava*), impermanent and interacting with other substances. All these are defects cannot be avoided if this interpretation were to be accepted.

4.5. SB: यदपि काणादानाम् आत्ममनःसंयोगजो बोध...

SB also refutes the arguments of the logicians. Kanada (*kāṇāda*) was the exponent of the Vaiseshika system of philosophy. This school is very close to another school called Nyaya school, propounded by Gautama. According to

these schools, consciousness (knowledge) is not eternal but something which is a product of the combination of atman and the mind. They hold that atman comes into (*saṃyoga*) contact with the mind, the mind comes into contact with an object and thus the cognition of that object takes place. Such cognition exists in atman in a relationship known as inherence by the logicians. When a book is placed on the table, they are said to be having relationship called contact (*saṃyoga*). If I see the redness of a flower, the relationship between redness and the flower is known as inherence. Logicians say that knowledge resides in atman in this relationship.

There are defects in this argument too. The first defect would be that atman would be a mere substance and insentient. It contradicts all scriptural statements such as – ‘Brahman is of the nature of knowledge and bliss’ (Br.U. 3-9-28), ‘consciousness is Brahman’ (Ait.U. 5-3).

4.6. SB: आत्मनो निरवयवत्वेन प्रदेशाभावात्...

The second defect is as follows. Atman is *niravayavi*, that which does not have any parts in it. An example of *niravayavi* is the space, which cannot be slashed into parts. No differentiation can be made between a pot space, a room space or a cave space. If such atman, which is *niravayavi*, were to get into contact with the mind (which is having parts in it and which belongs to a totally different class), such contact will have to enable the mind to cognize all things all the time and not forget anything. There will be no rhyme or reason for memory, because memory will always be there. It will be there even at the time of cognizing a new object. This will lead to a chaotic state. But we do not really see such a situation.

4.7. SB: संसर्गधर्मित्वं च आत्मनः...

The third defect is like this. Atman will be categorized as an object which is of interacting nature. This too contradicts the statements from scripture and *smṛti* such as – ‘the unattached

self does not engage with anything' (Br.U. 3-9-26), 'unattached but supporting all' (Gita 13-14).

4.8. SB: न्यायश्च – गुणवद् गुणवता संसृज्यते...

The fourth defect is at the logical level. Logically speaking, an object which has some characteristics can contact or interact with another object of similar nature. Atman has no characteristics and hence cannot have contact with an object of a dissimilar nature.

Hence, the idea that Brahman is of the nature of un-decaying consciousness will stand established only when it is the witness of all cognitions.

We may note that the acharya has refuted the logicians on the strength of scripture, logic and also experience.

4.9. SB: यत्पुनः स्वसंवेद्यता प्रतिबोधविदितमित्यस्य...

SB is now talking about the scriptural sentences which say 'he sees atman in the atman' (Br.U.) and 'you know yourself through yourself' (Gita 10-15). Here the texts say that one sees the self with the help of the self. They are referring to the stage of *sāadhanā* where a seeker tries to understand Brahman through the process of *śravaṇam*, *mananam* and *nididhyāsanam*. Realization is possible only through the intellect. Hence it is also said that one can attain Brahman through the intellect only. The Gita too says some seekers realize atman through the mind by the process of deliberation on Brahman (Gita 13-24). We have to understand it this way. During *sāadhanā*, practice, an artificial distinction is made in the atman by referring to the intellect also as atman. In the process of deliberation on atman, the *brahmākāra-vṛtti*, (a thought process in the mind that one is Brahman himself) arises and stabilizes in the mind, because of constant deliberation on the scriptural sentences such as 'that you are', 'I am Brahman' and so on. As the seeker progresses in his understanding, this thought frame (*vṛtti*) too drops off and the seeker remains in his own nature as pure consciousness.

4.10. SB: न तु निरुपाधिकस्य आत्मनः एकत्वे स्वसंवेद्यता...

SB cautions that in reality, there is no knowing of the self by the self in Brahman which is unconditioned consciousness, which is one in nature. To make an artificial distinction within the atman is only to facilitate the seeker. A practice in the duality mode leads to realization of the non-dual self. In truth, there is no such distinction. Just as a light does not require another light to illumine it, consciousness does not require another consciousness to know it.

4.11. SB: बौद्धपक्षे स्वसंवेद्यतायां तु क्षणभङ्गुत्वं...

SB is now referring to the argument of the *vijñānavāda* school of Buddhism. The Buddhists also use the word *svasaṃvedyatā*, knowing oneself by oneself. The Buddhists say that knowledge is born in the mind and that it is momentary. If I look at an object, my knowledge of it is momentary. In the next moment there is another cognition (knowledge) of the same object. Thus there is a continuous stream of momentary cognitions. The cognitions arise and die. Vedanta does not accept this but says that consciousness is eternal, that it is not born and that it never dies. There is no time of origin of consciousness because in order to note that point another conscious entity would be needed. The concept of time itself is within consciousness. The SB cites sentences from different scriptures – ‘the act of knowing is never lost for the knower, because it never ceases to exist’ (Br.U. 4-3-30), ‘the eternal, the lord, the omnipresent’ (Mun.U. 1-1-6), ‘that great atman, is unborn, undecaying and immortal’ (Br.U. 4-4-25) and such others. These words of scriptures would be negated if the Buddhist theory were to be accepted.

4.12. SB: यत्पुनः प्रतिबोधशब्देन निर्निमित्तो बोधः प्रतिबोधः...

Here we see a totally different interpretation of the word *pratibodha*. It means waking up, as though from sleep. A

person who is sleeping is woken up by another one. It is said to be *pratibodha*. Here this waking up is from the darkness of ignorance running through several births and deaths. In some cases like the sage Shuka and sage Vamadeva, this waking up can happen effortlessly because of the practice done in the earlier lives. This is called *nirnimitta* in the SB. In another case, a person is woken up by the teacher from his ignorance. The SB also refers to knowledge occurring in a flash - *sakṛd vijñānam*.

4.13. SB: निर्निमित्तः सनिमित्तः सकृद्वा...

SB does not dismiss this view but clarifies that whatever may be the type of waking up – whether it is an effortless waking up or a sudden flash – the process is merely by knowing the atman as the self of every cognition. It is merely by knowing so, a person attains deathlessness.

4.14. SB: अमृतत्वम् अमरणभावं स्वात्मन्यवस्थानं मोक्षं...

We read stories about the nectar, the divine drink which is taken by the gods, which makes them immortal. The real meaning of it is that the gods become immortal by realizing the self and not by drinking a potion. SB here says that the seeker has attained deathlessness; and this is due to the proper understanding of cognitions. It is like saying that the proof of the pudding is in the eating of it. The fact that the seeker has attained deathlessness shows that the right way of understanding cognitions is to know Brahman in all cognitions. Whenever there is a cognition, it is not the cognition of the object but it is the cognition of the underlying Brahman which is responsible for that. Such ability leads to deathlessness.

SB uses the word *svātmani-avasthānam*, which means to abide in one's own self. It implies that one who has not realized the self does not abide in one's self. Where else does he abide in? He abides in the body-mind-complex or in an ego created by the society. It is like Rousseau saying that a man is born free but everywhere he is bound in chains. As soon as a person is born,

he becomes a Brahmin, a Hindu, a Christian, an Indian and so on. He also has a social identity depending on the job he does. He is a doctor, an engineer or someone of such description. The Upanishad says that a person's real self is not this. The real self is of the nature of pure consciousness. One who abides in this notion abides in one's self. This is also called *mokṣa*, liberation. It is liberation from all other defining and delimiting identities. It is not destruction of the self, but expansion of the self to become Brahman, by destroying the delimiting identities.

4.15. SB: न हि आत्मनो अनात्मत्वम् अमृतत्वं भवति...

Perceiving the atman as non-atman cannot be called deathlessness. The question is as to what is non-atman (*anātmā*). Vedanta says that what all the human being achieves in this world or in the form of heavenly worlds is *anātmā*. All human achievement is related to this world. This is covered by what we call *kāma* and *artha*. Similarly the performance of righteous deeds, called dharma, also leads to heaven. This too is impermanent. One has to come back to earth after the expiry of the stock of good deeds. Hence this too is *anātmā*. SB says that such a situation is not deathlessness. You may be a highly virtuous person, but you are still in the cycle of birth and death.

SB here says that deathlessness is the very self of atman and hence it is not caused or created by anything but it is only realized by right understanding. Mortality or death is to see consciousness as *anātmā* because of the influence of the primordial ignorance, coming through a series of births.

4.16. SB: कथं पुनः यथोक्त्या आत्मविद्यया अमृतत्वं विन्दते...

How then does a person attain deathlessness by the above said knowledge of self? This is being explained.

Hitherto, SB has explained the first line of the mantra. Now we are entering the second line. The second line says that one attains strength, *vīryam*, because of the knowledge of self. This strength leads to immortality.

Remaining as one's own self is to realize one's nature as existence and consciousness (*sat* and *chit*) leaving aside the names and forms of the objects of cognition. Strength means the ability to abide with this notion and not to waver from this. SB says that the strength derived by any other means cannot answer death. Other means include charitable activities, performance of rituals, chanting of mantras, meditation, yoga and so on. All these are ephemeral in nature. The strength derived from the knowledge of self is not such.

4.17. SB: आत्मविद्याकृतं तु वीर्यम् आत्मनैव विन्दते...

As we have seen in above paragraph, the knowledge of the self has to be known through the self only. We have seen how a tentative, artificial distinction is made in atman by tentatively calling intellect as atman. This was the stage of practice in a duality mode. In this process one attains the *amṛtam*, which enlightens a person about his real nature which is deathless. The strength needed for this realization is also commended in the Mundaka Upanishad – 'this self is not attainable by a person of weak mind' (Mun.U. 3-2-4).

* * *

Realization – Here and Now

Mantra 5

5.0. कष्टा खलु सुरनरतिर्यक्प्रेतादिषु...

SB is sympathizing with the human predicament of getting into various wombs – such as divine, human, demonic or ghostly – which are merely filled with a host of miseries. The miseries are in the shape of birth, growing up, old-age, disease and death. All this is due to the ignorance about one's own self.

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः ।

भूतेषु भूतेषु विचित्य धीराः प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकाद् अमृता भवन्ति ॥ 5 ॥

iha cedavedīdatha satyamasti na cedihāvedīnmahatī vinaṣṭiḥ .

bhūteṣu bhūteṣu vicitya dhīrāḥ pretyāsmāllokād amṛtā bhavanti..

इह *iha* – in this human life; अवेदीत् चेत् *avedīt cet* – if it (atman) is known; अथ सत्यमस्ति *atha satyam-asti* – there is fulfillment for human life; इह *iha* – in this human life; न अवेदीत् चेत् *na vedīt cet* – if it (atman) is not known; महती विनष्टिः *mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ* - it is a mighty loss; भूतेषु भूतेषु *bhūteṣu bhūteṣu* – in all beings, sentient and insentient; विचित्य *vicitya* – having found (realized oneness of atman); धीराः *dhīrāḥ* - the wise persons; प्रेत्य अस्मात् लोकात् *pretya asmāt lokāt* – having departed from this world; भवन्ति *bhavanti* – they do become; अमृताः *amṛtāḥ* - immortal.

5. If a person has realized (atman) in this life, that is fulfillment (of his life). If a person has not realized in this life, it is a mighty loss. Having realized atman in all beings the wise persons become immortal after having departed from this world.

Human life is karma bhūmi – the plane of action

5.1. SB: इह एव चेद् मनुष्यो अधिकृतः समर्थः सन्...

The scripture says that a person can make or mar his life in this human life only. This is the only place to perform good, bad, noble or ignoble deeds. By performing good deeds one may achieve heavenly worlds. On the contrary, he may be designated to the nether-worlds if he does bad deeds. However if he acquires the four-fold *sādhanā*-s mentioned in Vedanta and also does the three-fold activity of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, he would be ready to realize his self. This would free him from the cycle of transmigration. This is the fulfillment of human life.

Here SB gives different meanings for the *satyam*. It says that the word can refer to something that is eternal, or meaningfulness in life, or goodness, or absoluteness.

A point of interest here is that the human life is called *karma bhūmi* in Vedanta. Mythology and literature tells us that India (Bharata Varsha) is called *karma bhūmi*, in which all our prayers and rituals would yield result. Some even go to the extent of saying that the rituals are not effective outside India. This is a mere misconception. Mythology has merely extolled the greatness of the land but it does not mean that prayers and rituals are limited to the boundaries of India. We are aware that the physical boundaries have changed a lot in the last one thousand years due to various conquests. A student of Vedanta has to be clear in his mind that the human life is the plane of action but not heaven and hell, which are the planes in which one has to reap the fruit of action.

5.2. SB: न चेत् इह अवेदीत् इति...

The scripture warns that if one has not realized the self in this human life, it is a mighty loss. He is bound to continue in the cycle of transmigration, characterized by birth, old-age, death and so on. He would not break away from that.

5.3. SB: तस्मादेवं गुणदौषौ विजानन्तो ब्राह्मणाः भूतेषु भूतेषु....

Hence the wise persons who know the merits and demerits, those who can distinguish between what is eternal and what is ephemeral, would realize Brahman in the whole universe. In all things, sentient and insentient, they see Brahman. This is the meaning of *prati-bodha-viditam*, knowing Brahman as the underlying principle in every cognition, which was seen in the earlier mantra. Hence SB calls them *dhīrāḥ*. The word actually means – those who see their mental modifications (*vṛtti*) not as modifications but as the indicators of the underlying Brahman (धियम् = बुद्धि वृत्तिं, राति = गृह्णाति इति धीरः).

Such persons will have no idea of 'I' and 'mine', or rather, they have transcended such idea. They have got over ignorance. They see the non-dual consciousness everywhere and remain in such state of non-dual self. For them the death of the body mind complex is not death. SB says that they become Brahman Itself.

इति द्वितीयःखण्डः

Thus ends the second part

तृतीयः खण्डः
Part - III

Vainglorious Gods

1.0.a. SB: 'अविज्ञातं विजानतां विज्ञातमविजानताम्' इत्यादिश्रवणात्...

In part two of the Upanishad we saw that Brahman is known to him who does not see it as an object of cognition. It is not known to one who says that he knows it. Brahman cannot be objectified or conceptualized by the mind. Whatever is conceptualized by the mind falls under the category '*idam*', 'this'. When such a statement is made, the skeptic or the dull-witted person may think that if at all something exists, it will be known by the different *pramāṇa*-s that the science of logic has provided. Logic talks of different *pramāṇa*-s, various valid means of knowledge such as perception, inference and comparison. Hence a logician would think that if it is not known by any *pramāṇa*, it does not exist at all. Whatever does not exist is unknown. It is like the horn of a hare, available only in words but not in reality. Let there be no such delusion, says SB and tells a story to convey that idea.

The first two parts spoke at the Absolute level, the *pāramārthika* level, as Vedānta calls it. They told about the nature of Supreme Reality and the way to attain it. But this teaching is for an *uttamādhikārī*, a top-level student, who has attained the requisite discipline of mind and who has done deliberation on Brahman. However, the Upanishad finds that all are not of the same class. People have to start from the ordinary mode of worship in a duality mode and gradually come to the higher level. The duality mode is called *vyāvahārika* level in Vedānta. Thus the Upanishad is coming down to a lower level for the sake of the ordinary person.

We see that the Upanishad which had earlier said - *nedam yad idam upāsate* (1-5) and disapproved the idea of objectifying Brahman, is now suggesting the very same. Vedas have the strategy of conveying a concept directly and also through an allegorical tale. In fact the emergence of *purāṇa*-s is due to this. Sage Vyāsā, in the very beginning of Mahabharata had laid down the formula – इतिहासपुराणाभ्यां वेदं समुपबृंहयेत् – that the philosophical concepts have to be conveyed to common people through allegorical tales. The present tale is an illustration of this.

Gods and demons are not some celestial figures up above the sky, waging war with each other with some divine weapons; they are the good and evil in the human mind. Shankaracharya explicitly tells this in the SB on Chandogya and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishads. *devāḥ śāstrodbhāsītā indriya vṛttayaḥ..... asurāḥ tadviparītāḥ*, he says. Gods are our own thought processed illumined by the study of scriptures, and the demons are opposite of this. The fight between them is our own internal conflict between good and bad, *ādhyātmika saṅgrāmaḥ*, as SB says.

Thus, the story is meant to prescribe certain provisos like restraint of mind, restraint of senses, subduing the ego etc. Even the gods fail to attain the knowledge of Brahman because of their ego.

1.0.b. SB: तदेव हि ब्रह्म सर्वप्रकारेण प्रशास्तु देवानामपि...

Sri Shankaracharya, in his *vākya bhāṣyam* has discussed more elaborately in this context, refuting the agnostics and atheists. However, it is briefly mentioned by him that the foregoing passages would show that Brahman is indeed the ruler of the universe, the god of gods who favors the gods and achieves victory for them over the demons.

The use of word Brahma

In Sanskrit literature and mythology the word 'Brahma' refers to what we call Brahman in Vedanta. Another word 'Brahmā' refers to the creator Brahma, the god with four heads, consort of goddess Saraswati. In Vedas and also in Mahabharata we find that only one word 'Brahma' is used to denote both the Supreme Brahman and also the creator 'Brahmā'. It appears that in the Vedic times the distinction was not yet made. Hence we have to take the meaning depending on the context.

In the present context, the word Brahma refers to the creator, otherwise known as Iswara, the Lord of the created universe. Vedanta visualizes four levels of understanding Brahman – Brahman, Iswara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat – as we see in the Mandukya Upanishad. The Supreme Brahman, being attribute-less, cannot be the one favoring gods and disfavoring the demons. The tussle between the good and evil forces is only at the transactional level, at the level of Iswara. Vedanta defines Iswara as māyāvachchinnam caitanyam. Māyā is the creative power which manifests in Brahman. This is not devoid of consciousness. The consciousness associated with this maya is called Iswara. The cosmic subtle mind is known as Hiranyagarbha and the manifestation of gross cosmos is known as Virat. We need not get into details of these here.

1.0.c. SB: अथवा ब्रह्मविद्यायाः स्तुतये । कथम्? ब्रह्मविज्ञानात्...

The narrative may be to extol or eulogize the knowledge of Brahman. Why? It is only by this knowledge that gods like Agni attained eminence. Indra was the pre-eminent among them and excelled them all.

1.0. d. SB: अथवा दुर्विज्ञेयं ब्रह्म इत्येतत्...

Another reason for the story is to say that the knowledge of Brahman is very difficult to attain. Even the gods failed there

initially and attained with great effort. It may be a matter of consolation and encouragement for mortals like us to pursue this knowledge.

1.0. e. SB: वक्ष्यमाणोपनिषद् विधिपरं वा सर्वं ब्रह्मविद्या...

Another reason for the allegorical tale could be to illustrate that all human ego and sense of achievement are merely *mithyā*, unreal. *Mithyā* does not mean absolutely unreal but that it is unreal in relation to reality of Brahman. Even the self-congratulatory position of the gods comes under this false sense of ego.

Mantra 1

ब्रह्म ह देवेभ्यो विजिग्ये तस्य ह ब्रह्मणो विजये देवा अमहीयन्त ।
त ऐक्षन्तास्माकमेवायं विजयोऽस्माकमेवायं महिमेति ॥ 1 ॥

brahma ha devebhyo vijigye tasya ha brahmaṇo vijaye devā amahīyanta .

ta aikṣantāsmākamevāyaṃ vijayo'smākamevāyaṃ mahimeti ..

ब्रह्म ह *brahma ha* – It is well known that Brahma; विजिग्ये *vijigye* – achieved victory; देवेभ्यो *devebhyo* – for the gods. तस्य ह *tasya ha* – of that (victory) it is also known that; ब्रह्मणो विजये *brahmaṇo vijaye* – in the victory of that Brahma; देवाः *devāḥ* – the gods; अमहीयन्त *amahīyanta* – felt mighty; ते ऐक्षन्त *te aikṣanta* – they viewed (like this); अस्माकम् एव अयं विजयः *asmākam eva ayaṃ vijayaḥ* – this victory is indeed ours; अस्माकम् एव अयं महिमा इति *asmākam eva ayaṃ mahimā iti* – this greatness is really ours.

1. The episode is well known that Brahma achieved victory for gods. The gods felt mighty in the victory of Brahma. They viewed it (looked at it) so – it is indeed our victory, this greatness is indeed ours.

1.1SB: ब्रह्म यथोक्तलक्षणं परं ह किल देवेभ्यो अर्थाय...

Brahma, as described above (the creator Iswara, in the present context, and not Supreme Brahman), brought victory for the gods, as the story goes. Iswara ensured that the demons, the violators of the universal norms and harmony, were beaten back and the righteous forces were given victory. The gods, such as Agni and others gloated in that victory.

They did not know that the victory was due to the lord who illumines the inner-self (pratyag-ātmā). That all-knowing lord is the dispenser of the fruit of action for all beings, the sustainer of the universe and what all happens is a divine dispensation. The gods failed to know this. Even the righteous persons tend to forget the inner self at times.

1.2. SB: ते देवाः ऐक्षन्त ईक्षितवन्तः...

The gods viewed their victory as their own, achieved by their own delimited selves such as Agni, Indra and others. They gloated – ‘it is our victory, it is our greatness. We are enjoying the fruit of our victory’. They did not realize the inner self which is the illuminer of all.

* * *

Strange Manifestation

Mantra 2

तद्धैषां विजज्ञौ तेभ्यो ह प्रादुर्बभूव तन्न व्यजानत किमिदं यक्षमिति ॥ 2 ॥

taddhaisāṃ vijajñau tebhyo ha prādurbabhūva tanna vyajānata kimidaṃ yakṣamiti

तत् *tat* – that (Brahman); विजज्ञौ ह *vijajñau ha* – it is well known that It came to know; एषाम् *eṣām* – (the arrogance) of these (gods); तेभ्यः *tebhyaḥ* – for them (in front of them); प्रादुर्बभूव *prādurbabhūva* – manifested, appeared; तत् *tat* – that Brahman; न व्यजानत *na vyajānata* – (the gods) did not know; किम् इदम् *kim idam* – what this; यक्षम् इति *yakṣam iti* – awe inspiring Being was.

2. That Brahman perceived the egotism of the gods. It appeared in front of them. They did not know what that being was.

2.1. SB: एवं मिथ्याभिमानेक्षणवतां तद् ह किल एषां...

The all knowing Iswara noticed the gods gloating with false pride which was the result of false understanding. Iswara, being the impelling force behind all sensory cognitions of all beings, knew the false pride of the gods. Out of compassion for them lest they should suffer ignominy like the demons, he appeared in front of them in an inexplicable form. That form, manifested by his power of yoga was bewildering and spell-binding. The gods could not comprehend what that great, venerable form was. 2.

* * *

Test for Gods

Mantra 3

तेऽग्निमब्रुवन् जातवेद एतद्विजानीहि किमिदं यक्षमिति तथेति ॥ 3 ॥

te'gnimabr̥van jātaveda etadvijānīhi kimidaṃ yakṣamiti tatheti

अग्निम् *agnim* – to agni; ते अब्रुवन् *te abr̥van* – they told; जातवेद *jātaveda* – oh knowledgeable one; एतद् विजानीहि *etad vijānīhi* – (go and) know what this is; किम् इदं यक्षम् इति *kim idaṃ yakṣam iti* – what this awe inspiring being is; तथा इति *tathā iti* – (Agni said) yes (I will do so).

3. The gods told Agni – oh knowledgeable one! Find out what this Yaksha is. He said, 'yes I will do so'.

3.1. SB: ते तदजानन्तः देवाः सान्तर्भयाः तद् विजिज्ञासवः अग्निम्...

The gods, with fear in their hearts, persuaded Agni to go and find out what that awe inspiring being was. Agni is said to be the *purohita*, the chief priest if we can say so, among gods. All oblations offered during the yajña-s by the humans are carried by Agni to be delivered to different deities. He is also called Jataveda, which means a person from whom all the knowledge flows. Hence SB calls him *sarvajñakalpa*, equal to omniscient Iswara. The gods hence encouraged him saying – 'you are the most brilliant among us, go and find out what this being is'. 3

Mantra 4

तदभ्यद्रवत् तमभ्यवदत् कोऽसीति अग्निर्वा अहमस्मीत्यब्रवीत्
जातवेदा वा अहमस्मीति ॥ 4॥

*tadabhyadravat tamabhyavadat ko'sīti agnirvā
ahamasmītyabravīt jātavedā vā ahamasmīti*

तद् अभ्यद्रवत् *tad abhyadravat* – (Agni) rushed towards It; तम् अभ्यवदत् *tam abhyavadat* – the Being asked him; कोऽसि इति *ko'si iti* – who are you?; अग्निः वा अहम् अस्मि *agniḥ vā aham asmi* – I am the well known Agni; जातवेदा वा अहम् अस्मि इति *jātavedā vā aham asmi iti* – I am otherwise known as Jataveda, the wise one.

4. Agni rushed towards It. It asked him – ‘who are you?’ He said – ‘I am the well known Agni, otherwise known as Jataveda, the wise one’.

4.1. SB: तथा अस्तु इति तद् यक्षम् अभि अद्रवत् तत्प्रति गतवानग्निः ।
तं च गतवन्तं...

Agni said – ‘may it be so’. He rushed towards the great being. He was keen to address but he became too scared and speechless in front of that being. That being itself asked Agni – ‘who are you?’ Having thus been questioned Agni said flattering himself – ‘I am the renowned Angi, also known as Jataveda’. 4

Mantra 5

तस्मिन्स्त्वयि किं वीर्यमिति अपीदं सर्वं दहेयं यदिदं पृथिव्यामिति ॥ 5 ॥

*tasminstvayi kiṃ vīryamiti apīdaṃ sarvaṃ daheyam yad-
idaṃ pṛthivyāmiti ..*

तस्मिन् त्वयि *tasmin tvayi* – in such (well known person like) you; किं वीर्यम् इति *kiṃ vīryam iti* – what is the power (in you); दहेयं *daheyam* - I can burn; इदं सर्वम् अपि *idaṃ sarvam api* – all this; पृथिव्याम् इति *pṛthivyām iti* – all that is present on earth.

5. The Yaksha asked – ‘what is the power in a well known person such as you?’ Agni said – ‘I can burn what all that is on this earth’.

5.1. SB: एवम् उक्तवन्तं ब्रह्म अवोचत् तस्मिन् एवं...

In such a renowned person such as you, what is the might and valor? Agni replied – ‘I can burn and turn it to ashes what

all is there on earth'. The mention of word 'earth' is suggestive of the whole universe. It means that Agni was indicating that he could burn the whole universe. (5)

Mantra 6

तस्मै तृणं निदधावेतद्दहेति । तदुपप्रेयाय सर्वजवेन तन्न शशाक दग्धुं स
तत एव निववृते नैतदशकं विज्ञातुं यदेतद्यक्षमिति ॥ 6 ॥

*tasmai tṛṇaṃ nidadhāvetaddaheti . tadupapreyāya sarva-
javena tanna śasāka dagdhuṃ sa tata eva nivavṛte nait-
adaśakam vijñātum yadetadyakṣamiti*

तस्मै *tasmai* – to that Agni; निदधौ *nidadhau* – kept (in front); तृणं *tṛṇaṃ* - a blade of grass; एतत् दह इति *etat daha iti* – (and said) burn it; तद् उपप्रेयाय *tad upapreyāya* – approached It fast; सर्व-जवेन *sarva-javena* – with all speed; दग्धुं न शशाक *dagdhuṃ na śasāka* – could not burn; तत् *tat* – that (blade of grass); स *sa* – he; तत एव *tata eva* – from there itself; निववृते *nivavṛte* – retreated; (and told) न अशकम् *na aśakam* – I could not; एतत् विज्ञातुं *etat vijñātum* - know what this was; यद् एतद् यक्षम् इति *yad etad yakṣam iti* – what this Yaksha was.

6. (Brahman) placed a blade of grass (in front of him) and said – 'burn this'. He approached it with all his energy but could not burn it. He returned and told gods 'I could not know what this Yaksha is'.

6.1. SB: तस्मै एवम् अभिमानवते ब्रह्म तृणं निदधौ पुराप्नेः...

In front of such vain glorious Agni, Iswara put a blade of grass and said – 'you may burn it and show your might in my presence. If you fail to do so, you have to shed your vain notion of strength'. Agni went towards the grass with great speed and enthusiasm but failed to burn it.

Agni felt crest-fallen, ashamed having failed in his bravado and returned to the gods. 'I could not know what this being is', he reported to the gods. (6)

Mantra 7

अथ वायुमब्रुवन् वायवेतद्विजानीहि किमेतद्यक्षमिति तथेति ॥ 7 ॥

atha vāyumabr̥van vāyavetadvijānīhi kimetadyakṣamiti tatheti

अथ *atha* – thereafter; वायुम् अब्रुवन् *vāyum abr̥van* – (the gods) told Vayu; वायो *vāyo* – oh! Vayu; एतद्विजानीहि *etadvijānīhi* – (go and) know what this is; किम् एतत् यक्षम् इति *kim etad yakṣam iti* – what this Yaksha is; तथा इति *tathā iti* – yes, I will do so.

7. The gods told Vayu – ‘oh! Vayu, go and know what this Yaksha is’. He said – ‘yes, I will do so’

Mantra 8

तदभ्यद्रवत् तमभ्यवदत् कोऽसीति वायुर्वा अहमस्मीत्यब्रवीन्मातरिश्वा
वा अहमस्मीति ॥ 8 ॥

*tadabhyadravat tamabhyavadat ko'sīti vāyurvā
ahamasmit̥yabravīnmātariśvā vā ahamasmīti*

तद् अभ्यद्रवत् *tad abhyadravat* – (Vayu) rushed towards It; तम् अभ्यवदत् *tam abhyavadat* – the Being asked him; कोऽसि इति *ko'si iti* – who are you?; वायुः वा अहमस्मि *vāyuh vā ahamasmi* – I am well known as Vayu; अहमस्मि मातरिश्वा वा *ahamasmi mātariśvā vā* – I am also well known as Mātariśvā.

8. Vayu rushed towards it. The being asked him – ‘who are you’? He replied – I am well known as Vayu, I am also known as Mātariśvā.

Mantra 9

तस्मिन्स्त्वयि किं वीर्यमित्यपीदं सर्वमाददीय यदिदं पृथिव्यामिति ॥ 9 ॥

*tasminstvayi kiṃ vīryamityapīdaṃ sarvamādādīya yadidaṃ
pṛthivyāmīti*

तस्मिन् त्वयि *tasmin tvayi* – in such (well known person like) you; किं वीर्यम् इति *kiṃ vīryam iti* – what is the power (in you); इदं सर्वम् अपि आददीय *idaṃ sarvam api ādadīya* – I can take hold of

all; यद् इदं पृथिव्याम् इति *yad idam pṛthivyām iti* – whatever is there on earth.

9. The Being asked – ‘what is the power in such well known person like you?’ He replied – ‘I can take hold of all that is there on earth’.

Mantra 10

तस्मै तृणं निदधावेतदादत्स्वेति तदुपप्रेयाय सर्वजवेन तन्न शशाकादातुं
स तत एव निववृते नैतदशकं विज्ञातुं यदेतद्यक्षमिति ॥ 10 ॥

tasmai tṛṇaṃ nidadhāvetadādatsveti tadupapreyāya sarvajavena

tanna śaśākādātuṃ sa tata eva nivavṛte naitadaśakaṃ vijñātuṃ yadetadyakṣamiti.

तस्मै *tasmai* – to that Vayu; निदधौ *nidadhau* – kept (in front); तृणं *tṛṇaṃ* - a blade of grass; एतत् आदत्स्व इति *etat ādastva iti* – (and said) take it up; तद् उपप्रेयाय *tad upapreyāya* – approached it fast; सर्व-जवेन *sarva-javena* – with all speed; आदातुं न शशाक *ādātuṃ na śaśāka* – could not lift it up; तत् *tat* – that (blade of grass); स *sa* – he; तत एव *tata eva* – from there itself; निववृते *nivavṛte* – retreated; (and told) न अशकम् *na aśakam* – I could not; एतत् विज्ञातुं *etat vijñātuṃ* - know what this was; यद् एतद् यक्षम् इति *yad etad yakṣam iti* – what this Yaksha was.

10. The Yaksha kept a blade of grass in front of him and said – ‘hold it up’. Vayu approached it with all speed and energy but could not lift it up. He returned and told (gods) – ‘I could not know who this Yaksha is’.

7-10. SB: अथ अनन्तरं वायुम् अबृवन् हे वायो...

There after gods persuaded the strongest one among them, Vayu. They said – ‘Vayu, go and find out what this being is’. Vayu is known for his great strength. He can blow away even mighty trees. He is otherwise called Matarisva, the one who moves in the intermediate space between the earth and the sky.

He boasted – ‘I can grasp anything on earth’. However, his failure and ignominy was similar to that of Agni. (7-10)

Mantra 11

अथेन्द्रमबृवन् मघवन् एतद्विजानीहि किमेतद्यक्षमिति तथेति
तदभ्यद्रवत् तस्मात् तिरोदधे ॥ 11 ॥

athendramabravan maghavan etadvijānīhi kimetadyakṣamiti tatheti tadabhyadravat tasmāt tīrodadhe .

अथ *atha* – thereafter; इन्द्रम् अबृवन् *indram abravan* – the gods told Indra; मघवन् *maghavan* – oh! Indra; किम् एतद् यक्षमिति *kim etad yakṣam iti* – what this Yaksha is; एतद् विजानीहि *etad vijānīhi* – know about this; तथा इति *tathā iti* – so be it; तदभ्यद्रवत् *tadabhyadravat* – he rushed towards it; तस्मात् *tasmāt* – from him; तिरोदधे *tīrodadhe* – (the Yaksha) disappeared.

11. The gods then told Indra – ‘oh! Maghavan, proceed and know what this Yaksha is’. He said – ‘so be it’, and rushed towards it. The Yaksha disappeared from him.

11.1. SB: अथ इन्द्रम् अबृवन् मघवन् एतद् विजानीहि...

The gods then requested their king himself to find out what it was. SB refers to him figuratively as Parameswara, the supreme lord. Indra is also called Maghavan, a person who has performed several *yajña*-s and attained a lot of power. Even as Indra tried to approach, the mighty being disappeared from there. SB explains the reason. Indra was the one with greatest sense of pride. The greater the ego, the farther Iswara moves away from a person. Greater the pride less is the divine grace. Iswara did not even give an interview to Indra to demolish his pride of being the overlord of the gods. (11)

* * *

Appearance of Uma – The Goddess of Knowledge

Mantra 12

स तस्मिन्नेवाकाशे स्त्रियमाजगाम बहुशोभमानामुमां हैमवतीं तां
होवाच किमेतद्यक्षमिति ॥ 12 ॥

*sa tasminnevākāśe striyamājagāma bahuśobhamānā-
mumām haimavatīm tāṃ hovāca kimetadyakṣamīti .*

सः *saḥ* - He (Indra); तस्मिन् एव आकाशे *tasmin eva ākāśe* – in the same space (where Yaksha disappeared); आजगाम *ājagāma* – approached; स्त्रियम् *striyam* – a woman; बहुशोभमानाम् उमां *bahuśobhamānām umām* - (known as) Uma, who shone brilliantly; हैमवतीं *haimavatīm* - also known as Haimavati; तां ह उवाच *tām ha uvāca* – asked her; किमेतद्यक्षमिति *kimetadyakṣamīti* – what this Yaksha is.

12. In the same sky, Indra approached a brilliantly splendid woman, Uma, also known as Haimavati and asked her – what is this Yaksha?

12.1. SB: तद् यक्षं यस्मिन् आकाशे आकाशप्रदेशे आत्मानं...

Indra stood for long, in that very place where the great being manifested and withdrew, and started meditating on the situation. His pride vanished and he became the seeker of truth now. He did not give up the pursuit like Agni and Vayu.

12.2. SB: तस्य इन्द्रस्य यक्षे भक्तिं बुद्ध्वा विद्या उमारूपिणी...

The knowledge of Brahman is symbolized here as goddess Uma. She appears in front of Indra, having realized his sense of

devotion. She was in a great splendorous form. Indeed the most splendorous thing in the universe is knowledge and hence the description that she was splendorous is most appropriate, says SB. Another name for her is Hymavati, which literally means one who is bedecked with gold ornaments. Such simple meaning may not be appropriate and hence SB suggests that Hymavati may refer to the daughter of Himavan, the consort of Shiva. She is always with Iswara, the omniscient, and hence able to know and guide Indra. Hence Indra approached and asked her as to what that mighty being was.

इति तृतीयःखण्डः

Thus ends the third part

चतुर्थः खण्डः
Part - IV

The Teaching of the Goddess

Mantra 1

सा ब्रह्मेति होवाच ब्रह्मणो वा एतद्विजये महीयध्वमिति ततो हैव
विदाञ्चकार ब्रह्मेति ॥ 1 ॥

*sā brahmeti hovāca brahmaṇo vā etadvijaye
mahīyadhvamiti tato haiva vidāñcakāra brahmeti .*

ह *ha* – as it is well known; ब्रह्म इति *Brahma iti* – ‘it is Brahma’; सा उवाच *sā uvāca* – she said; महीयध्वम् *mahīyadhvam* – you are becoming great; ब्रह्मणः वा एतद् विजये *brahmaṇaḥ vā etad vijaye* – in this victory which indeed belongs to Brahma; ततः ह एव *tataḥ ha eva* – from that (teaching of Uma) only; विदाञ्चकार *vidāñcakāra* – (Indra) came to know; ब्रह्म इति *Brahma iti* – that it was Brahma.

1. As the episode is well known, she told Indra – ‘it is Brahma. You are becoming great in the victory which indeed belongs to Brahma’. From such words only, Indra came to know that it was Brahma.

1.1. SB: सा ब्रह्मेति होवाच ह किल ब्रह्मणो वै ईश्वरस्यैव...

‘It was Brahman’, she said. The demons were in fact vanquished by Iswara; you were merely incidental in that cosmic scheme. You are gloating in the victory without knowing about the grace of Iswara. Your sense of pride is in vain, she added. Gods then knew that the mighty being they saw was Brahman. The words ‘*tato haiva*’ mean that it was only from her words that gods came to know, not independently. (1)

SB uses the expression *nimittamātram*, which means that gods were merely incidental in the event of over powering the bad forces in the universe. This is similar to what Krishna says in *Gita* – ‘oh Arjuna, your foes have already been vanquished by me, you be merely incidental in the war’ (*Gita* 11-33).

A subtle point which has to be noted here is that the text is not talking about determinism and freewill. It is not saying that what all we do is pre-determined. The point under discussion is about the Supreme Consciousness which is behind the senses and the mind – *prati-bodha-viditam* (2-4). The intellect is merely a reflecting medium for the consciousness and all sensory perceptions or enabled by consciousness only.

Mantra 2

2.0. SB: यस्माद् अग्निवाय्विन्द्रा एते देवा ब्रह्मणः

The text complements the gods Agni, Vayu and Indra as they were the first among gods to get close to Brahman. Hence the text says:

तस्माद्वा एते देवा अतितरामिवान्यान्देवान् यदग्निर्वायुरिन्द्रस्ते
ह्येनन्नेदिष्ठं पस्पृशुस्ते ह्येनत्प्रथमो विदाञ्चकार ब्रह्मेति ॥ 2 ॥

*tasmādvā ete devā atitarānivānyāndevān
yadagnirvāyurindraste hyenannediṣṭhaṃ paspṛśuste
hyenatprathamō vidāñcakāra brahmeti .*

यद् अग्निः वायुः इन्द्रः ते *yad agniḥ vāyuh indrah te* – because these (gods) Agni, Vayu and Indra; ह एनद् नेदिष्ठं पस्पृशुः *ha enad nediṣṭhaṃ paspṛśuḥ* - went closest and contacted it; ते हि *te hi* – because they; एनत् प्रथमः विदाञ्चकार *enat prathamah vidāñcakāra* – knew this first; ब्रह्म इति *Brahma iti* – as Brahma; तस्माद् वा *tasmād vā* – because of that; एते देवा *ete devā* – these gods; अतितराम् इव *atitarām iva* – excelled; अन्यान् देवान् *anyān devān* – other gods.

2. Because these gods, Agni, Vayu and Indra, went closest to Brahman, contacted It and knew It first as Brahman – hence they excelled all other gods.

2.1. SB: तस्मात् स्वैः गुणैः अतितरामिव शक्तिगुणादिमहाभाग्यैः...

For the above reason, the three gods mentioned above excelled the other gods by their valor, character and such great qualities. They went closest to Brahman and interacted with It. They were the first to know that it was Brahman. (2)

3.0. SB: यस्माद् अग्निवायू अपि इन्द्रवाक्यादेव...

Because the two gods Agni and Vayu came to know about Brahman only by the words of Indra, and because Indra heard it directly from Uma –

Mantra 3

तस्माद्वा इन्द्रोऽतितरामिवान्यान्देवान् स ह्येनन्नेदिष्ठं पस्पर्श स ह्येनत्
प्रथमो विदाञ्चकार ब्रह्मेति ॥ 3 ॥

*tasmādvā indro'ṭitarāmivānyāndevān sa hyenannediṣṭhaṃ
pasparśa sa hyenat prathamo vidāñcakāra brahmeti*

तस्माद् वा *tasmād vā* – because of that; इन्द्रः *indraḥ* - the god Indra; अतितराम् इव *atitarām iva* – surely excelled; अन्यान् देवान् *anyān devān* – other gods; सः *saḥ* - he; नेदिष्ठं पस्पर्श *nediṣṭhaṃ pasparśa* – contacted in nearest range; एनत् *enat* – this one (Yaksha); स हि *sa hi* – only because he; एनत् *enat* – this one (Yaksha); प्रथमो विदाञ्चकार *prathamo vidāñcakāra* – knew for the first time; ब्रह्म इति *Brahma iti* – that it is Brahma.

3. Because of that, Indra surely excelled other gods; because he went closest to Brahman, contacted It and he was the first to know that It was Brahman.

3.1. SB: तस्माद् वै इन्द्रः अतितरामिव अतिशेरत इव अन्यान् देवान्...

Indeed, it is due to the above reason, Indra attained pre-eminence among all other gods. He went closest to Brahman and he was the first to know It. (3)

* * *

Contemplation at Divine Level

Mantra 4

तस्यैष आदेशो यदेतद्विद्युतो व्यद्युतदा ३ इतीन्द्र्यमीमिषदा ३ इत्यधिदैवतम् ॥ 4 ॥

*tasyaiṣa ādeśo yadetadvidyuto vyadyutadā 3
itīnnyamīmiṣadā 3 ityadhidaivatam .*

तस्य *tasya* – of that (Brahman); एष आदेशो *eṣa ādeśo* – the way to teach is by analogy; यद् *yad* – that; एतत् *yetat* – this (Brahman); विद्युतो व्यद्युतद् आ *vidyuto vyadyutad ā* – as though the flash of a lightning; इति *iti* – it is so; इत् *it* – and; न्यमीमिषद् आ *nyamīmiṣad ā* – as though closed its eye; इति अधिदैवतम् *iti adhid-
aivatam* – (it should be so meditated) at the divine level.

4. The way to teach that Brahman is by analogy. It is similar to the flash of a lightning or like the flapping of the eyelid. Such (meditation has to be done) at the divine level.

Realization is like a flash

4.1. SB: तस्य प्रकृतस्य ब्रह्मणः एष आदेश उपमोपदेशः । निरुपमस्य...

Brahman is beyond words. It cannot be described. However, the Upanishad has to teach Brahman. How can that be done? The Upanishad tells about the incomparable Brahman through a comparison. How? It gives the analogy of lightning. The lightning flashes in a fraction of a second and lights up a large area. Likewise the knowledge of a Brahman happens as though in a flash. It is like realizing that the rope is a rope and not the snake. In a flash all other fears and attempts disappear. Freedom and happiness are only through knowledge.

Here SB tries to explain the grammatical construction of the mantra. The words *vidyuto vyadyutadā* would mean that Brahman flashed through lightning. This would not be probable because it would mean that Brahman had to borrow his brilliance from the lightning. Hence, SB reads the words to mean – ‘like the flash of a lightning’. The elongated ā in the word *vyadyutadā* denotes comparison.

SB takes the reference from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad which says that the appearance of Brahman is like the flash of a lightning (Br.U.2-3-6).

SB again says that the above two words can also mean – ‘like the brilliance of the lightning’. The word *vidyutaḥ* should be taken in the possessive case and not in the ablative case.

4.2. SB: अयं च अपरः तस्य आदेशः । कः असौ? न्यमीमिषद् यथा चक्षुः...

Another analogy given by the Upanishad is closing of the eyelid. This too takes place in a fraction of a second. This also refers to the Supreme competence of Iswara in the creation of the universe and also in the manner in which he reveals himself.

Anandagiri, who has commented on the SB has explained the two analogies given in the above mantra. The flash of lightning takes place in a second but it drives the darkness away. Similarly the knowledge of Brahman drives ignorance away and all the cobwebs of the mind get solved. The flash of lightning lightens up the whole world with its unsurpassed brilliance. It indicates how the Supreme Brahman creates the whole universe in a flash. The flapping of a eyelid similarly shows the swiftness of Brahman in creating universe.

This is comparable to the description of Lalita in the Lalita-Sahasranama – *unmeṣanimiṣotpannavipanna- bhuvanāvaliḥ* – that the mere opening of eyes by the goddess is the creation of the universe and the closing of the eye is withdrawal of the universe. This is the process of creation and dissolution of the universe.

Thus we see that the above two analogies are interpreted to mean that the knowledge of Brahman occurs like a flash of lightning. They are also interpreted to indicate the omnipotent nature and swiftness of Iswara in the creation of universe.

When we say that the knowledge occurs like a flash, we have to remember that it can happen only in the person who has already disciplined his mind through the process of karma-yoga or devotion or by the methods of self restraint told in Patanjali's *sutra*-s. It is only a trained and prepared mind that can receive the flash of instruction but not an undisciplined mind. (4)

* * *

Contemplation at the Level of Self

Mantras 5 and 6 relate to meditation of a god with attributes, says Anandagiri, the sub commentator on SB.

Mantra 5

अथाध्यात्मं यदेतद् गच्छतीव च मनोऽनेन चैतदुपस्मरत्यभीक्षणं सङ्कल्पः ॥ 5 ॥

*athādhyātmaṃ yadetad gacchatiiva ca mano'nena
caitadupasmaratyabhikṣṇaṃ saṅkalpaḥ .*

अथ अध्यात्मं *atha adhyātmaṃ* - now at the level of self; यद् एतद् मनः *yadetad manaḥ* - that this mind; गच्छति इव *gacchati iva* – as though attaining (Brahman); अनेन च *anena ca* – and by this (mind) only; उपस्मरति *upasmarati* – meditates proximately; अभीक्षणं सङ्कल्पः *abhikṣṇaṃ saṅkalpaḥ* - continuous (intense) meditation.

5. The Upanishad now gives the analogy at the level of self. The seeker should pursue it as though his mind is attaining the Brahman (as though the mind is objectifying the Brahman). It is by the mind that Brahman is continuously meditated upon and continuously kept as the object of meditation.

5.1. SB: अथ अनन्तरम् अध्यात्मं प्रत्यगात्मविषयः आदेशः उच्यते...

Having told about the analogies at the divine level, the Upanishad gives the analogy at the level of the individual self. The seeker has to pursue Brahman as though his mind is attaining it and getting close to Brahman.

As we noted earlier, we are talking about a seeker who has done sufficient effort in the process of *śravaṇam*, *mananam* and *nididhyāsanam* and who has kept his mind continuously soaked

in the contemplation on Brahman. Only such person can attain Brahman. As the Kathopanishad says – *yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ* (Katha 1-2-23) – the Brahman is attained only by him who seeks it intensely and confidently.

It is only by the mind that a seeker can realize Brahman. He has to meditate as though the mind is visualizing it, reaching it and capturing it. The word *upasmarati* is the same as *upāsanā*. Mind is the *upādhi*, the medium through which Brahman gets manifested, as though it becomes the object of cognition (*viśayīkriyamāṇamiva*). The thoughts and memories (of Brahman) in the mind are the indicators of Brahman.

5.2. SB: विद्युन्निमेषणवद् अधिदैवतं दृत्प्रकाशनधर्मि...

The two analogies given at the divine level are that of lightning and flapping of eyelid. The swiftness of light in both examples signifies the swiftness of realization. It is Brahman's nature to reveal Itself in a flash, as though. The analogy given at the level of self is also similar. Brahman is said to be known in every *pratyaya*, cognition, as and when such cognition takes place in the mind. The manifestation is simultaneous to the cognition. This statement is similar to the earlier statement *prati-bodha-viditam* (2-4) of the Upanishad. Here the seeker is advised to meditate on the nature of cognitions. This is how even a dull witted person will be able to gradually realize Brahman. This is by rejecting the names and forms in all cognitions and seeing the aspects of existence and consciousness in them. Without the help of this *upādhi* called mind and without the help of cognitions it would be difficult to comprehend Brahman. (5)

Mantra 6

तद्ध तद्वनं नाम तद्वनमित्युपासितव्यं स य एतदेवं
वेदाभि हैनं सर्वाणि भूतानि संवाञ्छन्ति ॥ 6 ॥

*taddha tadvanaṃ nāma tadvanamityupāsitavyaṃ sa
ya etadevaṃ
vedābhi hainaṃ sarvāṇi bhūtāni saṃvāñchanti .*

तद् ह *tad ha* – It (the Brahman), we know well; तद्वनं नाम *tadvanam nāma* – has the name *tadvanam*; उपासितव्यं *upāsītavyam* – it has to be meditated upon; तद्वनम् इति *tadvanam iti* – as *tadvanam*; सः यः *saḥ yaḥ* – he who; एतद् एवं वेद *etad evaṃ veda* – knows this (Brahman) in this way; सर्वाणि भूतानि *sarvāṇi bhūtāni* – all the beings; अभि संवाञ्छन्ति *abhi saṃvācchanti* – adore him.

6. It is known that the Brahman is called *tadvanam*. It has to be meditated upon as *tadvanam*. All the beings adore the person who knows Brahman in this manner.

6.1. SB: तद् ब्रह्म ह किल तद्वनं नाम तस्य वनं तद्वनं तस्य प्राणिजातस्य...

A new name which we do not find in any of the one thousand names (*sahasranāma*-s of Vishnu, Shiva or Lalita which are popular) is given by the Upanishad here. The Upanishads have a habit of coining new words. We see Chandogya Upanishad giving a name *tajjalān* and directing the seeker to do *upāsana* on that. Here the meaning of *tadvanam* is *tasya vanam*, which means that the most adorable and lovable aspect of all beings. This is nothing other than the inner self, what Vedanta calls *pratyagātma*. Brahman is the source for the existence and consciousness in all beings and that is called *pratyagātma*. Names and forms may change but the essence of all beings is Brahman. A seeker is advised to meditate on this. The name *tadvanam* is coined basing on the characteristic that it is the most adorable aspect in all beings.

All the names of Brahman, which we find in texts like *sahasranāma*-s, can be understood in a similar manner. They are not specific names given to individuals but names describing a particular aspect or characteristic of Brahman. For instance, Vishnu should be understood as ‘all pervading’, Shiva should be understood as ‘auspicious’ and so on. This is what SB calls *guṇābhīdhāna*, name based on a characteristic.

6.2. SB: अनेन नाम्ना उपासनस्य फलमाह स यः कश्चिद्...

One who does such *upāsanā* gradually loses his individual self into the Supreme self of Iswara and sees all beings as nothing other than Iswara. He extends the same love to all beings which he extends to Iswara. Hence all other beings too, reciprocate that love and behave as they adore him.

The above *upāsanā* is close to the *bhaktiyoga* described in the Gita. Though it is mentioned as *upāsanā*, it is in fact closer to the path of knowledge shown in parts I and II of the Upanishad. (6)

* * *

Concluding Words of the Teacher

Mantra 7

7.0. SB: एवमनुशिष्टः...

Having been instructed by the teacher in the above manner, the student raises this question –

उपनिषदं भो ब्रूहीत्युक्ता त उपनिषद् ब्राह्मीं वाव त उपनिषदमब्रूमेति ॥ 7 ॥

upaniṣadam̐ bho brūhītyuktā ta upaniṣad brāhmīm vāva ta upaniṣadamabrūmeti .

भो *bho* – Oh sir!; उपनिषदं ब्रूहि इति *upaniṣadam̐ brūhi iti* – tell me the Upanishad; उक्ता *uktā* – it was told (already); ब्राह्मीं *brāhmīm* *vāva* – relating to the Brahman only; उपनिषदम् *upaniṣadam* - the Upanishad; अब्रूम इति *abrūma iti* – we have told already.

6. (The student) ‘Oh sir! Tell me the Upanishad’. (The teacher) ‘Upanishad has been told to you. We told you the Upanishad relating to Brahman only’.

7.1. SB: एवमुक्तवति शिष्ये आह आचार्यः उक्ता अभिहिता...

Here the discussion is on whether the knowledge of Brahman should also be associated with any other activity like karma, worship, yoga etc., for its fulfillment or whether the knowledge does not need any such activity. Here the student wants to know whether the knowledge of Brahman is dependent on such means. He, however, does not pose the question in this manner but he merely asks the teacher to tell further about the secret teaching. The word Upanishad also means a ‘secret teaching’ and here SB refers to that meaning.

The teacher clearly says that what all had to be told has been told. He further clarifies that what was told was about Brahman only and not about anything else.

7.2. SB: परमात्मविषयाम् उपनिषदं श्रुतवतः उपनिषदं भो.....

SB tries to explain the intention of the student having heard the teaching of the Upanishad about the Supreme self, why did he again ask the teacher to tell him the secret teaching? If it is about what he has heard already, it would be mere repetition and hence meaningless. SB calls it *piṣṭapeṣaṇam*, making a paste of what is already a paste. If something was left over by the Upanishad, it would not have told the *phala-śruti* (the result of teaching), that the person who knows Brahman would attain immortality after leaving the body (2-5). Hence, the question would not be about something which was left incomplete by the Upanishad, because nothing was left out by the Upanishad. What, then, is the intention of the student?

SB here uses two words *śeṣa* and *sahakāri*. The commentator Anandagiri, who has commented on the SB has given the meanings of these words. The word *śeṣa* refers to an integral part which is needed for achieving the result. The word *sahakāri* refers to a thing, which, though secondary, deserves to be associated. The question is whether karma should be an integral part of knowledge of Brahman. There is the notion of doership in a person doing karma, whereas there is no such notion in a realized person. These two cannot coexist, as we see in several places in Vedānta. Karma cannot even be a *sahakāri*, an activity which deserves to be associated with knowledge of Brahman.

The student's intention seems to be to know for certain whether karma and other activities are needed either as integral parts of knowledge or as associates of knowledge. He wants to know, as in Prasna Upanishad (6-7) where the teacher assertively says – 'there is nothing beyond this'. Here too the teacher has told – 'Upanishad has been told to you'.

7.3. SB: ननु न अवधारणमिदम् यतः अन्यद् वक्तव्यम् आह 'तस्यै तपो...'

Here is an objection by the diehard Mimamsaka who does not want to give up karma under any circumstance. Hence he refers to the following mantra (4-8) in which the Upanishad is going to tell that austerities, self restraint and karma are the supporting structure for knowledge. Hence he says that karma too should be associated with action.

7.4. SB: सत्यम्, वक्तव्यमुच्यते आचार्येण न तु उक्तोपनिषद्...

It is true that the Upanishad is talking about austerity, restraint and karma but not in the sense that they are an integral part of knowledge. Knowledge is an outcome of deliberation on the Upanishadic statements which tell about the unity of self and Brahman. This is achieved by *śravaṇam*, *mananam* and *nididhyāsanam* as we have seen already. These are not part of karma or austerity. Karma and austerity are neither an integral part of knowledge nor do they deserve to be necessarily associated with knowledge. It is true that in the following mantra they have been read along with and on par with the Vedas and the subsidiary branches of Veda but they have to be taken as means for purification of mind and not as directly connected with knowledge.

Vedanta does not dismiss karma and austerity. It does recognize their importance in achieving the purity of mind for the seeker. Without *niṣkāma-karma* and austerities in the initial stage, the seeker cannot attain purity of mind. Vedanta compares it to the cleaning of a glass surface in order to get the reflection of sunlight. Cleaning, no doubt, is required but it is sunlight that is needed for reflection. Knowledge is comparable to sunlight whereas karma and others are like mere cleaning process. They do not directly contribute to knowledge but remotely contribute to knowledge.

7.5. SB: सहपठितानाम् अपि यथायोगं विभज्य विनियोगः स्यात्...

The ritualist may still argue like this. Though austerity and others are read together, they may all not have equal importance or status. They may have different status. Austerity, restraint and karma have to be practiced along with the knowledge of Brahman depending on the context and suitability. In the performance of *yajña*-s or rituals too, a similar practice is seen while invoking different gods after chanting the main mantra. (A very familiar example for Hindus is the Satyanarayana vratam). Different deities are invoked in *yajña*-s for different benefits but the appropriate mantras are chosen while bidding farewell to them. Similarly, a distinction can be made about the nature of the accessories. Hence, though the knowledge of Brahman is the main point here, other aspects like austerity and karma can also be practiced simultaneously. The Vedas and their subsidiaries (Vedanga) do illustrate and elaborate the meanings of mantras and hence are useful to attain the knowledge of Brahman. Thus it is appropriate to view austerity etc., as integral and essential parts of the Brahman.

Knowledge is the notion of unity – karma is the notion of duality

7.6. SB: न अयुक्तेः । न हि अयं विभागो घटनां प्राञ्चति...

SB refutes the above argument of the ritualists. The present discussion does not allow any other associates for the knowledge of Brahman. Knowledge of Brahman is knowledge of unity, where all notions of duality have been discarded. Karma can only be done in a duality mode. There is a subject, an object and predicate in all karma-s. There is a result too. All this is possible in the plane of duality only. When such notion of duality has been discarded, there is no need for any karma or any other associate activity like tapas. Knowledge of Brahman presupposes rejection of all attachment with the worldly objects and concerns only with the inner self. The result of such enquiry is liberation.

7.7. SB: 'मोक्षमिच्छन् सदा कर्म त्यजेदेव'...

SB quotes the authority of another text which asserts that the person who desires liberation has to give up all karma along with its associates. The person who can so relinquish can attain his inner self which is the ultimate to be realized. Hence the analogy with the mantras used in the context of *yajñā* is not applicable here. The Upanishad clearly asserts that the knowledge of Brahman does not require any type of associate activity. (7)

* * *

Self-Discipline – The Pedestal for Knowledge

Mantra 8

तस्यै तपो दमः कर्मेति प्रतिष्ठा वेदाः सर्वाङ्गानि सत्यमायतनम् ॥ 8 ॥

tasyai tapo damaḥ karmaeti pratiṣṭhā vedāḥ sarvāṅgāni satyamāyatanam .

तस्यै *tasyai* – for that knowledge of Brahman; तपो दमः कर्म इति *tapo damaḥ karma iti* – austerity, restraint, rituals and such; वेदाः सर्वाङ्गानि *vedāḥ sarvāṅgāni* – the four Vedas and the six limbs of Vedas; प्रतिष्ठा *pratiṣṭhā* – the pedestal; सत्यम् आयतनम् *satyam āyatanam* – truth is its abode.

7. Austerity, restraint, rituals and such others and also the Vedas and the six limbs of Vedas are the pedestal for the knowledge of Brahman. Truth is its abode.

8.1. SB: यामिमां ब्राह्मीम् उपनिषदं तवाग्रे अब्रूम इति...

The Upanishad is answering the student. There are a few strategies which are needed to attain the ultimate import of the Upanishad which has been explained to you so far. They are austerity and others. An absolute control and steadiness of the body, mind and senses is austerity. Withdrawal from the objects of the world is called *dama*, restraint. Karma refers to activities like *yajña*. It is an established principle in the Vedanta that all these disciplines contribute to the purification of mind, which is needed for dawn of the knowledge of Brahman. It is also well established and seen in several instances – such as the episode of Indra and Virochana – that a seeker whose mind is not

purified will not either understand correctly or will understand in a totally contrary sense even when this knowledge of Brahman is imparted to him.

8.2. SB: तस्माद् इह वा अतीतेषु वा बहुषु जन्मान्तरेषु...

This is a tough requirement. Purity of mind cannot be achieved easily, says SB. One should have done austerities and others over long periods of time in a continuous manner. Not only in this life but in earlier births too. Such an effort will engender knowledge. The scripture says – ‘knowledge is revealed to that refined seeker who follows the path of devotion to Iswara, besides having an equal devotion to his guru’ (Sweta.U. 6-23). This Upanishad emphasizes the need for devotion both for Iswara and also to the guru. The Mahabharata too says – ‘knowledge arises in the mind of a person only when all the bad karmas are nullified’ (MB. Shanti. 204-8). Neutralization of all karma can take place only with long periods of austerity. We have seen that the desire free action (*niṣkāma karma*) can ward off both good and bad results of one’s action. The past karma can be neutralized by various good deeds recommended by the scriptures. It is also the assertion in Vedanta that knowledge eradicates all karma.

8.3. SB: इति शब्दः उपलक्षणत्वप्रदर्शनार्थः । इति एवमादि अन्यदपि...

The word *iti* in the present mantra is used in the sense ‘et cetera’, to suggest some more means. It means that there are some more activities or characteristics which contribute to the purification of mind and prepare the mind to receive the knowledge of Brahman. For instance Gita talks about humility, unpretentious nature and such others (BG. 13-7) as useful discipline for the dawn of knowledge. In his commentary on Gita Sri Shankara explains the word pretentiousness as *dharma-dhvajitvam* – to hold a flag and proclaim that one is highly virtuous, advertising one’s own righteousness.

The above accessories are compared to the feet or the pedestal for the knowledge of Brahman. A strong pedestal is needed for any edifice to stand. Austerity and other characteristics are like the pedestal which gives a strong base to knowledge. The Vedas and their six auxiliaries (*Vedanga-s*) also constitute in the base. It is because they reveal and illustrate karma and knowledge. The six *Vedanga-s* are meant for protection of the Vedas. Hence they are deemed as the feet supporting the edifice called the knowledge of Brahman.

There are six subsidiary and complementary subjects for the Vedas. They are the *Vedanga-s* referred to above. The six subjects are – linguistics, the Vedic grammar, prosody, etymology, astronomy and the mathematical/engineering procedures for construction of the dais for *yajñā-s*. These are compulsorily studied by the Vedic scholars for a comprehensive understanding of Vedas.

8.4. SB: अथवा, प्रतिष्ठाशब्दस्य पादरूपकल्पनार्थत्वात् वेदास्तु इतराणि सर्वाङ्गानि...

Because of the comparison with a pedestal, another way to interpret the line is to consider the Vedas as the head and the Vedangas as the limbs of such body (called the knowledge of Brahman). Here the six limbs of the Vedas (noted above) are also to be considered. The limbs (*aṅga-s*) have to be necessarily considered once the main body (*aṅgi*) is taken, because the limbs depend on the main body.

8.5. SB: सत्यम् आयतनं यत्र तिष्ठत्युपनिषत् तदायतनम्...

The whole teaching is structured on truth. Here the word truth is not used in the absolute sense of referring to Brahman, but used in the colloquial sense. SB elaborates this by saying that it refers to innocence and absence of crookedness in thought, words and action. This is known as purity of the three

limbs, *trikaraṇa-śuddhiḥ*. The knowledge of Brahman dawns only in such pious, innocent minds but not in the crooked minds longing for sensual pleasures. The line from Prasna Upanishad (1-16) asserts this. Hence truth is visualized as the pedestal on which the whole structure of Brahman-knowledge stands. Austerity etc., are mentioned as the feet and truth is mentioned as the abode. This is merely to emphasize that truth stands above all others. It is the highest means.

The SB quotes a verse from Vishnu-smṛiti – ‘if one has to weigh truth on one side and a thousand *aśvamedha yajña-s* on the other side of a balance, the balance would show that truth outweighs the thousand *yajña-s*’. Truthfulness is the highest virtue. (8)

Mantra 9

यो वा एतामेवं वेदापहत्य पाप्मानमनन्ते स्वर्गे लोके ज्येये प्रतितिष्ठति
प्रतितिष्ठति ॥ 9 ॥

*yo vā etāmevaṃ vedāpahatya pāpmānamante svarge
loke jyeye pratitiṣṭhati pratitiṣṭhati .*

यो वा *yo vā* – the one who really; एताम् एवं वेद *etām evaṃ veda* – knows this knowledge (of Brahman) in this manner; अपहत्य पाप्मानम् *apahatya pāpmānam* – having got rid of sins; अनन्ते *anante* – the infinite; स्वर्गे लोके *svarge loke* – heavenly abode; ज्येये *jyeye* – the Supreme one; प्रतितिष्ठति *pratitiṣṭhati* प्रतितिष्ठति *pratitiṣṭhati* – gets established in it – gets established in it.

8. The one who realizes Brahman in the manner told in the Upanishad, having got rid of all the sinful deeds, gets established in the infinite Supreme heavenly abode. Gets established in it.

9. SB: यो वै एतां ब्रह्मविद्याम् केनेषितम् इत्यादिना यथोक्ताम्...

The Upanishad concludes by saying that the one who realizes Brahman in the manner described in the Upanishad will attain the highest goal, liberation. SB uses the word *mahābhāgā* to refer to the knowledge of Brahman. This is a weighty word. The derivation of the word *bhagavan* is –

उत्पत्तिं च विनाशं च भूतानामागतिं गतिम् ।
वेत्ति विद्यामविद्यां च स वाच्यो भगवानिति ॥

The one who knows the creation and dissolution, the emergence of *jīva*-s and their journey and the one who knows *vidyā* and *avidyā* is *Bhagavan* – the verse says. This is what a realized person also is.

Here, the SB is probably reminding that the one who realizes Brahman in the said manner is Brahman, and hence describing the teaching as *mahābhāgā* – *mahā*, mighty and *bhāgā*, relating to *Bhagavān* the Brahman.

This knowledge is also said to be *sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhā*, the base on which all other worldly knowledge depends. Though it was earlier said that such a person would attain immortality (2-4), it is being reiterated by the scripture in different words.

Such a person will get rid of the seed of *samsāra*, the transmigrating existence. The seed is ignorance, which generates desire and desire prompts a person to do karma-s of various types. This would have the effect of throwing the person in the wheel of *samsāra*. The realized person, however, shakes off these actions, good and bad.

What happens to him next? He gets established in the infinite heavenly abode, as the Upanishad says. As students of Vedanta we know that heaven is not infinite, but finite. The word *ananta*, endless distinguishes this from heaven and implies that word 'heaven' is used in a figurative sense. It refers to the state

of realization, the state of bliss called Brahman and not to any heavenly abode which the performers of *yajña*-s would attain. Another word *jyeye* also signifies the same. The word ' *jyeye* ' means 'superior to all' – we may call it the heaven of heavens. That is one's own Self, which is Brahman. The repetition of the word *pratitiṣṭhati* is to indicate the end of the text.

इति चतुर्थः खण्डः

Thus ends part four

केनोपनिषत्पदभाष्यम् सम्पूर्णम्

Thus ends the pada-bhashyam of Sri Shankaracharya

Shanti Mantra

ॐ आप्यायन्तु ममाङ्गानि वाक्प्राणश्चक्षुः श्रोत्रमथो बलमिन्द्रियाणि
च सर्वाणि । सर्वं ब्रह्मौपनिषदं माहं ब्रह्म निराकुर्यां मा मा ब्रह्म
निराकारोदनिराकरणमस्त्वनिराकरणं मेऽस्तु तदात्मनि निरते य उपनिषत्सु
धर्मास्ते मयि सन्तु ते मयि सन्तु ।

ॐ शान्तिः! शान्तिः!! शान्तिः!!!

हरिः ॐ तत्सत्

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