

# THE UPANISHADS

*Aitareya and Brihadāranyaka*

Translated from the Sanskrit with detailed Introductions and with Notes and Explanations based on the Commentary of Śri Śankarāchārya, the great Eighth-century Philosopher and Saint of India

BY SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

VOLUME III



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THE UPANISHADS VOLUME III

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## PREFACE

THE PRESENT VOLUME of the Upanishads contains translations of the *Aitareya* and *Brihadāranyaka*. The *Aitareya Upanishad* is a comparatively short treatise, consisting of only thirty-three verses. But the *Brihadāranyaka* is, of all the Upanishads, the most extensive and the most profound. Śankarāchārya's commentary on it is his longest and most scholarly. Here—as in his interpretation of the *Māndukya Upanishad* and Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā*—he has attempted to prove the existence of Brahman as a metaphysical reality by means of both reason and scriptural authority.

As in the first and second volumes of my translations of the Upanishads (published in New York in 1949 and 1952, and in England in 1951 and 1954 respectively), I have given, besides the translation, a detailed explanation of the text, based upon the commentary of Śankarāchārya. Leaders of other schools of Indian philosophy, such as the qualified non-dualistic and the dualistic, have also commented on the Upanishads in order to give support to their respective views; but I have confined myself to Śankarāchārya's interpretations to avoid causing confusion in the mind of the reader and also because, in my opinion, the philosophy of non-dualism as interpreted by Śankarāchārya is the crowning glory of India's philosophical speculation. Only in the light of non-dualism, which has directly or indirectly influenced all the other systems, can one discover in the Vedic literature an inner harmony between apparently different thought currents and perceive the development of a single line of thought culminating in the realization of the identity of Ātman and Brahman. It must be remembered, in this connexion, that non-dualism admits the value of rituals and symbolic meditations at different stages of the aspirant's inner evolution.

No complete English translation of Śankarāchārya's commentary on the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* existed prior to 1934. Swami Madhavananda, the present Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, fulfilled this need by publishing his monumental, scholarly, and lucid translation of the text and commentary through the Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta. His book is an invaluable asset to readers of this greatest of the Upanishads. In preparing my own translation, I have leaned heavily

upon the work of Swami Madhavananda, and I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge my genuine indebtedness. I have also consulted with profit the Bengali translation of the Upanishad by Swami Gambhirananda of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. I am deeply grateful, as well, to Mr. Joseph Campbell, who has very kindly read the whole manuscript and made many helpful suggestions.

In my explanation of the text I have tried to give most of the relevant and important philosophical ideas from Śankarāchārya's commentary, omitting only those dealing with rituals or the refutation of other schools of thought, which would appear highly technical to the average reader.

I have written a rather lengthy introduction to the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, giving a brief summary of the book, chapter by chapter. It will, I hope, help the reader to grasp the thread that runs through the Upanishad. I have also tried to show the value of rituals and symbols for the contemplation of Brahman, which can neither be perceived by the senses nor be comprehended by the mind. This present introduction, describing certain spiritual practices of Vedic times, is intended to supplement those of the two earlier volumes, in which I have given a general survey of the Vedic culture and have dealt with the metaphysics, the psychology, and the ethics of the Upanishads.

In the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* occur a number of concepts pertaining to the evolution of the soul from its first appearance as a phenomenal being to its attainment of Liberation. These concepts, based on the supersensuous experiences of the Vedic rishis, or seers, are accepted by orthodox Hindus as part of the Vedic revelation. Modern minds, though professing admiration for certain of them, dismiss others as unessential or irrelevant. It has been generally overlooked that these concepts may be regarded as a systematic attempt on the part of the Vedic rishis to formulate a comprehensive picture of existence. If viewed in this light, the topics discussed in this Upanishad—such as the creation, the cosmos, the soul and its destiny, the deities (or powers controlling both external nature and the sense-organs in man), the rituals for communing with the deities and for procreating worthy offspring, and the nature of Ultimate Reality together with the disciplines for Its realization—fall into place as parts of a single and satisfying pattern free from inner contradictions. Indeed, it will be found that all the concepts of the Vedic rishis go together; no one of them can stand without the others. In order to grasp the rationale of the disciplines for Liberation, one must also grasp the implications of cosmic evolution and involution, rebirth, the

doctrine of the Five Fires, the Northern and Southern Paths, and so on. When the system conceived by the rishis is thus understood in its entirety, there emerges a picture of life as consistent and coherent as modern thinking could wish—one which, at the same time, satisfies all men's basic urges: physical, emotional, intellectual, ethical, and spiritual.

References to scriptural quotations occurring in the commentaries on both Upanishads have been given except for those passages whose sources I could not find. Where figures appear without the name of any work, the reference is to the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* or the *Aitareya Upanishad* itself, as the case may be.

The use of capital and small letters in certain words and the question of gender always present difficulties to translators of the Hindu scriptures. No distinction is made in Sanskrit between capital and small letters. For instance, the word *ātman* is written in the same way, whether it denotes the Supreme Self or Soul or the embodied self or soul. The difficulty becomes even greater when the word occurs in both senses in one and the same passage. I have used a capital *s* for self and soul, and capital *a* for *ātman*, when they denote Brahman or Ultimate Reality. It has not however been possible to maintain this clear-cut distinction at all times. The same problem arises with gender. I have used the neuter *It* for the words *Brahman* and *Ātman* when they signify Pure Spirit, beyond all distinctions. But I have used the masculine *He* when they refer to the Creator or some similar being belonging to the realm of phenomena. I have likewise used capital letters for the words *consciousness* and *intelligence* when they signify Pure Spirit, and small letters when they signify empirical consciousness or intelligence. With reference to the gods, or deities, small letters and the masculine gender (when not otherwise specified) have been used. But I have used capitals for Prajāpati, Brahmā, Hīranyagarbha, Sutra, Virāj, and Prāna, which are different names of Saguna Brahman and therefore deserve special honour. But when the word *prāna* is used to denote the sense-organs or the vital breath of the embodied creature, a small letter has been used. I believe that intelligent readers will not be much troubled by these difficulties.

In my preface to the first volume of the Upanishads I compared the Vedic literature to a trackless tropical forest, full of lush underbrush, weeds, thorns, and stately trees, and I said that if patient and intrepid travellers continued their search they would be rewarded by discovering

blossoms of rare beauty and fragrance. This remark applies most aptly to readers of the *Brihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*.

God willing, I intend to translate the *Taittiriya Upanishad* and the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* in the fourth volume, thus completing my translation of the eleven major Upanishads.

NIKHILANANDA

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## INTRODUCTION

THE *AITAREYA UPANISHAD* belongs to the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* and is a part of the Rig-Veda. Consisting of three parts, the Upanishad proper begins with the fourth section of the second part of the Āraṇyaka and comprises sections four, five, and six. The preceding part of the Āraṇyaka prescribes rituals for the attainment of oneness with Prāna, or Saguna Brahman. According to some, the attainment of this oneness through rituals and meditation is the goal of human endeavour and the ultimate teaching of the Vedas. Śankarāchārya, however, refutes this view and asserts that Self-Knowledge is the goal. This Knowledge is taught in the *Aitareya Upanishad*.

The Upanishad, as already noted, is divided into three parts. The method by which Self-Knowledge is taught is twofold. First is shown the illusory superimposition of names and forms (*adhyāropa*) upon Brahman, or Ātman, and next, through their refutation (*apavāda*), is revealed the sole reality of Ātman. The verses up to the first sentence of I. ii. 13. deal with illusory superimposition, and then follows the refutation.

The first part of the Upanishad consists of three chapters, with a total of twenty-three verses, and describes the creation. Ātman alone exists as the sole Reality prior to the creation of the names and forms of the phenomenal world, and during their continuance and after their dissolution as well. It projects the created objects through Its wondrous power of *māyā*. The creation is a spontaneous act of the Creator, who is not impelled by any desire or necessity; it is a projection of the Creator's thought. The stages of creation are as follows: the different worlds, Virāt (who represents the totality of all physical bodies), the deities or devas (who control the various organs), the elements, the individual bodies, and the food by which these bodies are sustained. After the creation, the Creator enters into the bodies as their living self. Thus is projected the universe of diversity. Next the Upanishad deals with the refutation (*apavāda*) of this universe, in order to arrive at the Knowledge of Ātman.

The second part of the Upanishad, consisting of one chapter of five verses, begins with the doctrine of the soul's assuming a human body. It then narrates the story of a rishi who, while lying in his mother's womb, came to know about the suffering of the embodied creature, who, on account of ignorance, is subject to unending births and deaths. It tells, further, of the rishi's attaining Liberation through the Knowledge of Ātman.

The third part consists of one chapter of four verses, and begins with a discussion of the nature of Ātman. By realizing Ātman one attains Liberation. The question therefore is asked: "[Of the two selves mentioned in the scriptures,] which one is the Ātman?" Is it that which functions in the body through the various instruments of perception (e.g. the ear, the tongue, the eye, the nose, and the skin)? Or is it that which dwells in the heart as the individual self, for whose experience the organs perform their functions? The real Ātman, it is declared, is Brahman, attributeless Pure Spirit. When conditioned by different limiting adjuncts (upādhis), It is called by such different names as Creator, Inner Controller, Hiranyagarbha, Virāt, deva, man, animal, or insect. One endowed with the Knowledge of the Pure Spirit transcends these forms and the world of duality.

S. N.

## ŚRI ŚANKARĀCHĀRYA'S INTRODUCTION

OM. SALUTATION to the Supreme Self. [The topic of the ritualistic] worship together with the knowledge of the lower Brahman<sup>1</sup> has been completed. That which is the highest goal of work performed with the knowledge [of the lower Brahman] has been conclusively described through the knowledge of the Uktha.<sup>2</sup> It has also been stated: "This is the true Brahman called Prāna.<sup>3</sup> He is the sole God. All other gods are but the [various] powers of this Prāna. He who realizes this Prāna as his self attains to Prāna."

Some firmly believe that this attainment of [oneness with] Prāna is the highest goal of human endeavour; that this is Liberation; that this [oneness] is to be attained by means of the discipline consisting of the performance of work<sup>4</sup> in combination with knowledge, already described; and finally, that there exists nothing else to be attained.

With a view to refuting them the present Upanishad, beginning with the text: "[All] this verily was Ātman only," commences in order to establish the sole knowledge of Ātman [free from all trace of work].

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, Saguna Brahman, or Brahman with attributes. He can be realized by means of appropriate rituals performed with proper meditation (upāsana). The knowledge of Saguna Brahman bestows upon the devotee the highest bliss in the phenomenal world, but not Liberation as conceived by the non-dualistic Vedānta.

<sup>2</sup> The Uktha hymn is the most important among the hymns of praise in the Vedas; it is used mainly in the Mahāvratā sacrifice. See *Āi. Ār. II. i. 2. 1 ff*; *Br. Up. V. xiii. 1.*

<sup>3</sup> The word *Prāna* has several meanings. First, it denotes the vital breath or life in an individual; secondly, the conscious self (prajñātman); thirdly, Hiraṇyagarbha and sometimes even Indra. One of the chief objects of the meditation on Prāna is to show that the life principle in the individual is the same as the life principle in the sun; and by a recognition of their identity and of the true nature of Prāna, the devotee, or he who has rightly meditated on Prāna during his life, enters after death into the world of Hiraṇyagarbha. See *Kau. Up. III. 2.*, where Indra says to Prataḍana: "I am Prāna; meditate on me as the conscious self (prajñātman), as life, as immortality. Life is Prāna; Prāna is life. Immortality is Prāna; Prāna is immortality. . . Prāna is consciousness; consciousness is Prāna."

<sup>4</sup> The word *work* in the Upanishads generally denotes ritualistic worship, which admits the distinction between the doer, accessories of action, and the result. It is opposed to Vidyā, or the unitive Knowledge, which does not admit of any duality whatsoever.

Objection: How can you say that the purpose of the present book is to establish only the Knowledge of Ātman, unrelated to any work?

Reply: Because we do not find [in this book] any other purpose. Further, that the gods, such as fire etc., mentioned [in the Āranyaka portion], are parts of saṃsāra, the phenomenal universe, since they are subject to such limitations as hunger and thirst, will be shown by passages like the following: "He subjected that Person to hunger and thirst" (I. ii. 1). From the Śruti passage stating that Brahman is beyond hunger etc., it can be realized that what is subject to hunger and thirst belongs to saṃsāra.

Objection: Very well, let the Knowledge of the pure Ātman be the means to the attainment of Liberation. But the non-performer of work is not the only one entitled to Liberation; for there is no special statement to that effect, that is to say, the Śruti does not, in this connexion, refer to the order of sannyāsins, who have renounced action. Further, immediately after the [ritualistic] action known as the Brihatisahasra has been introduced [in the Aitareya Brāhmana], the Knowledge of Ātman is discussed [in the Aitareya Upanishad]. Therefore the performer of work alone is entitled to Liberation. It cannot be said that the Knowledge of Ātman is altogether unrelated to work, for the conclusion in this Upanishad is like that in the foregoing section. Just as the Mantra and Brāhmana portions<sup>5</sup> speak of the person associated with work, who has realized his identity with the sun, as the self of all beings, moving and unmoving, in such a text as: "The sun is the Ātman (Ai. Ār. II. ii. 4. 7.), so here too the section begins with the text: "He is Brahman, He is Indra" (Ai. Up. III. i. 3.), then describes [the devotee] as the self of all beings, and concludes by stating that all the immovable objects are guided by Pure Consciousness, or Brahman. The same idea is reiterated in the Upanishad belonging to the Aitareya Samhitā. Having established the relationship of Ātman to work in such a passage as: "It is this Brahman whom the followers of the Rig-Veda demonstrate in the great Uktha," the scripture concludes with the statement: "They say that this Brahman alone dwells in all beings." Likewise, the scripture begins the topic of Ātman, referred to in the passage: "He who is the incorporeal prajñātman," and then says: "He who is in yonder sun is one with it," thus establishing their identity. In the present Upanishad also the question will be asked: "Which one is the Self?" (III. i. 1.), and then it will be said: "Consciousness (Prajñānam) is Brahman" (III. i. 3). There-

<sup>5</sup> See The Upanishads Vol. I, pp. 3-4.

fore the Knowledge of Ātman cannot be unrelated to work. It may be contended that the connexion of Ātman with work has already been mentioned and therefore the repetition here is superfluous and futile. What is meant by the contention is this: Ātman has already been established by the text of the Brāhmana: "O Rishi, I am the Prāna," and also of the Mantra: "The sun is the Ātman [of all things, movable and immovable]. (Ai. Ār. II. ii. 4. 7). In this Upanishad also, while dealing with the question: "Which one is the Self?", it will be established once again that all this is Ātman. Therefore here is a case of repetition. We reject this contention. In our opinion no fault of repetition is involved here, because the purpose here is to ascertain another aspect of the same Ātman. How can there be another aspect? Ātman may be regarded from two different points of view. Either It is associated with work and endowed with the attributes of creation, preservation, and destruction or It subsists in its pure form. The present Upanishad is going to determine which aspect of Ātman should be established. Therefore no blemish of repetition is involved. To be more explicit: The following section of the book, beginning with the text: "[All] this verily was Ātman only" (I. i. 1.), serves to show that even Ātman associated with work may be worshipped as being free from work. Since this fact has not been mentioned in the ritualistic section of this scripture, it is stated here that Ātman alone [free from work] is to be worshipped. The same Ātman may be worshipped as one with the worshipper or as different from him. Though Ātman is one and without a second, It can be different from the devotee, from the standpoint of work, and also non-different from him, when It is non-active. Therefore there is no fault of repetition.

[Scriptural passages are now quoted by the opponent to show that Śruti does not favour the relinquishment of action.] The Iśa Upanishad says: "He who is aware that both knowledge and ignorance should be pursued together, overcomes death through ignorance and obtains immortality through knowledge" (Iś. Up. 11.) and "If a man wishes to live a hundred years on this earth, he should live performing action." (Iś. Up. 2.) The life span of a mortal does not extend beyond one hundred years, so that he might worship Ātman alone after renouncing action.<sup>6</sup>

The Aitareya Brāhmana states that a man lives only for thirty-six

<sup>6</sup> Thus there is no scriptural evidence to show that, in order to worship Ātman, one must become a sannyāsin, who renounces action.

thousand days.<sup>7</sup> The one hundred years are occupied with work. It has just been stated: "If a man wishes to live a hundred years on this earth, he should live performing action." There are other scriptural passages to support this view: "As long as one lives, one should perform the sacrifices especially mentioned for the days of the new and the full moon," and "He should be cremated with the sacrificial vessels." Scripture speaks of the three debts of a man [whose requital calls for action on his part]. Thus the injunction about the life of *sannyāsa*, such as one finds in the passage: "They give up the desire . . . for the worlds and lead the life of religious mendicants" (Br. Up. III. v. 1.), is intended as a eulogy (*arthavāda*) of the Knowledge of *Ātman*; or it applies to those people [such as the blind and the lame] who are disqualified from performing [ritualistic] action.

Reply: No, we refute your contention. For when a man has attained to the true Knowledge of the Self, he does not crave any result from action; therefore it is not reasonable for him to engage in action. Your statements that the performer of action alone attains Self-Knowledge and that Self-Knowledge is related to work are inadmissible. When a man who has realized Brahman as his own self says to himself: "I am Brahman, who is free from all the blemishes of *samsāra* and in whom all desires find their fulfilment," he does not see any fruit to be reaped from what he has done or what he has to do. Because he does not seek any fruit of action, no action is possible for him.

Objection: He may not see the need of fruit, but he performs action because of the scriptural injunction.

Reply: This is not so, for he has attained the Knowledge of the Self and the Self is not subject to the scriptural injunction. He who is conscious of the benefit that accrues from the attainment of what is desirable and the giving up of what is undesirable seeks the means to realize these ends: such a person alone is seen to be subject to scriptural injunctions, and not one who has realized his identity with Brahman, which is beyond all injunctions. If, on the other hand, a person who has realized himself as Brahman and therefore gone beyond the injunctions of the scriptures can be commanded by the scriptures, then

<sup>7</sup> The *Aitareya Brāhmana* contains a hymn called the *Brihatisahasra*. This hymn contains thirty-six thousand words; so also, it is stated in the *Brāhmana*, a mortal lives for thirty-six thousand days. A month, according to this calculation, consists of thirty days, and a year of three hundred and sixty days. Thirty-six thousand days comprise one hundred years, the usual life span of a man.

*no person whatsoever can be pointed out as being beyond the injunctions of the scriptures, even though entitled to be so. Thus all persons would have to be regarded as subject to scriptural injunctions. In that case it would become the imperative duty of all men to perform all kinds of work at all times. This conclusion is undesirable. A man endowed with the Knowledge of Ātman cannot be commanded by anyone to engage in action; for the Vedas, the authority for such an injunction, have come out of his Self.<sup>8</sup> No one can be directed by words that are the product of his own wisdom. An ignorant servant cannot order about his master endowed with much knowledge.*

*Objection: The scriptures are eternal<sup>9</sup> and therefore capable of commanding all men.*

*Reply: No, your contention has already been refuted. But you have not refuted our statement that it is fallacious to say that all persons, without distinction, must perform all kinds of work at all times.*

*Objection: This has been the directive of the scriptures: as the scriptures lay down the injunction about performing action, so also they bid the performer of action to cultivate the Knowledge of Ātman.*

*Reply: This is not so. It is not reasonable to ascribe to the scriptures statements conveying contradictory meanings. The scriptures cannot lay down that the same person should be engaged in contrary things, that is to say, that he should both perform action and desist<sup>10</sup> from it; fire cannot be both hot and cold.*

*Furthermore, the will to obtain the desirable and shun the undesirable is not created by the scriptures. It is [natural and] common to all human beings. If it is contended that it is the creation of the scriptures, we say that in that case it would not be found among the cowherds, who are ignorant of the scriptures. The gist of the matter is that the scriptures should explain only what is not self-evident. If they lay down that Self-Knowledge is inconsistent with duty, how can they again, contrariwise, prescribe duty for an illumined person? There cannot exist coldness in fire or darkness in the sun. If it be objected that such contrariness is not the teaching of the scriptures, we say that the objector's statement is not correct. The conclusion of the scriptures has been given in such a passage as: "One should realize that That is one's Ātman; Brahman is [Pure] Consciousness." That also is the meaning of such*

<sup>8</sup> The Self, as Brahman, is the author of the Vedas.

<sup>9</sup> They are not ascribed to human authorship.

<sup>10</sup> According to the scriptures, Self-Knowledge is inconsistent with action.

scriptural passages as: "Seek Ātman alone" and "That thou art" (Chh. Up. VI. viii. 7). Since the Knowledge of the identity of Brahman and Ātman, when it arises, cannot be refuted by any other knowledge, such Knowledge of identity cannot be denied or proved to be false.

Objection: [As a Knower of the Self, for want of any specific necessity, cannot engage in action, so also] there is no need for his renunciation of action. The lack of necessity is common to both cases. The *Gitā* says that the knower of the Self does not gain anything by giving up action. Therefore if a man says that after realizing Brahman one should practise non-action, he too makes the same mistake; for, as we said before, there is no need for practising non-action.

Reply: No, non-action means lack of action (*akriyāmātratvād butthānasya*); it does not signify any positive action [such as the performance of a sacrifice].<sup>11</sup> The idea of a need arises from ignorance (*avidyā*)<sup>12</sup> and is common to all beings. It is not the inherent characteristic of the thing itself. To explain: When a man is prompted by need and longing, he engages in action through speech, mind, or body. It has been established in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, by such a passage as the following: "He cherished the desire: 'Let me have a wife'" etc. (I. iv. 17.), that the action for the attainment of the fivefold object, such as son and wealth, springs indeed from desires; both end and means are desires.

The efforts associated with speech, mind, and body which impel a man to engage in the fivefold action (*pāṅktakarma*) are the result of ignorance and desire. They cannot be found in the knower of the Self, who is free from ignorance and desire. Therefore the word *butthāna* (the inactivity of an illumined person) denotes absence of action (*kriyābhāvamātram*) and not anything positive like the performance of a sacrifice. This non-action is the very nature of the knower of the Self; therefore no idea of necessity for the pursuit of non-action need be sought. Suppose a man walking in darkness sees light; he falls no more into pits, mire, or brambles. That being the case, the question as to why he does not fall into them does not arise.

Objection: If non-action is the natural characteristic of something, then it cannot be the subject of a scriptural injunction. In the absence

<sup>11</sup> It is the opponent's contention that the practice of non-action is also a kind of action.

<sup>12</sup> The word ignorance (*avidyā*) means, in Vedānta, absence of the Knowledge of Brahman or the Self. A person endowed with knowledge of the phenomenal world is called "ignorant" if he has not attained the Knowledge of Brahman or the Self. The Knowledge of Brahman is called *Vidyā*.

of such an injunction, a householder who has attained the Knowledge of Brahman may remain in that state without engaging in any action; he does not have to become a *sannyāsin*.<sup>13</sup>

Reply: Your contention is not right. The life of the householder is controlled by desire.<sup>14</sup> From such scriptural passages as the following: "This much, indeed, is [the range of] desire" (Br. Up. I. iv. 17.) and "Both these are certainly desires" (III. v. 1.), we can ascertain that non-action or renunciation means the cessation of all relations with son, wealth, and other objects of desire, and not participation in any new action.<sup>15</sup> Therefore it is not possible for a knower of the Self to renounce action and at the same time lead a householder's life. From this it follows that a knower of Brahman does not have to practise austerities or serve his guru.

At this point some householders, being afraid of mendicancy or of the humiliation that accompanies begging, raise an objection, showing the subtlety of their intelligence. They say: "As a *sannyāsin*, for the purpose of maintaining the body, follows the injunction of mendicancy, even so a householder, freed from all desires characterized by the idea of ends and means, should live at home seeking only food and raiment, solely for the purpose of preserving the body. In reply we say that this is unsound. We have already said, in answer to this argument, that the wish to live with his wife in a particular home, which happens to belong to him, is the result of desire. If, on the other hand, he does not live in a home, does not possess anything of his own, and seeks food and clothes solely for the purpose of preserving the body, then he is in reality a religious mendicant. As a *sannyāsin* has need of following the injunction regarding the acceptance of alms and the observance of cleanliness etc., for the support of his body, so also a householder endowed with Knowledge and free from desire would have to follow the injunctions regarding the performance of certain daily obligatory duties enjoined by such a scriptural passage as: "A man should perform the *Agnihotra* sacrifice as long as he lives"; otherwise he would be afflicted with sin. But a man endowed with Self-Knowledge is not subject to such an injunction and cannot be asked to engage in [ritualistic] duties.

<sup>13</sup> A *sannyāsin* is directed to give up all actions because, being absorbed in Brahman, he does not seek or avoid any worldly gain or loss.

<sup>14</sup> That is to say, a man cherishing worldly desires should embrace a householder's life, but a *sannyāsin*, who is free from them, should not.

<sup>15</sup> Śankarāchārya is trying to indicate that any activity is inconsistent with the Knowledge of Brahman.

Therefore such an injunction does not apply to a person illumined with the Knowledge of Ātman.

Objection: *In that case the scriptural injunctions regarding the life-long performance of obligatory duties become useless.*

Reply: *No, they bear meaning with reference to people who are not endowed with Self-Knowledge. Even the injunction regarding the activity of a sannyāsin just for the purpose of the preservation of his body should not be regarded as an incentive for such activity. A man engaged in the Āchamana<sup>16</sup> gets his thirst quenched [though this is not the incentive for his sipping the water]; likewise, a sannyāsin observes certain rules about begging his food, but these rules do not act as an incentive for the asking of the alms in order to preserve his body.<sup>17</sup> But in the case of such rituals as the Agnihotra, neither the injunction nor the action can be regarded as a matter of course.<sup>18</sup>*

Objection: *An injunction regarding an act which is to be done only as a matter of course<sup>19</sup> is useless because one does not obtain any benefit from it.*

Reply: *It is not so, because that injunction [regarding begging etc.] is based upon a previous activity.<sup>20</sup> To give up the old habit entails a great effort. Thus, though abstention from action (butthāna) comes naturally to the knower of the Self, it has been enjoined upon him as a duty by the scriptures.*

*Even one who has not attained Self-Knowledge but is desirous of Liberation should embrace the monastic life. Compare the following scriptural passage: "[A man endowed with] control of the mind and the body." The disciplines for Self-Knowledge, such as control of internal*

<sup>16</sup> A religious ceremony which requires the sipping of water from the palm of one's hand.

<sup>17</sup> The meaning seems to be that the scriptural statement regarding a sannyāsin's mendicancy should not be regarded as an injunction which must be observed. A sannyāsin is beyond all commandments. While not engaged in meditation, a sannyāsin seeks food by begging merely to preserve his body. The scriptures simply state a fact but do not impose an injunction.

<sup>18</sup> The Agnihotra ritual has a definite purpose. If it is not performed the householder reaps an evil result.

<sup>19</sup> The opponent is referring to the begging etc. of a wandering monk, which Śankara says are not to be regarded as an injunction for the preservation of the body.

<sup>20</sup> A monk, during the earlier stage of spiritual discipline, becomes accustomed to earn his food by begging. Though later such a need may not really exist, yet he goes about begging as a matter of habit.

and external activities, do not apply to the other stages of life.<sup>21</sup> We learn from the Śvetāsvatara Upanishad (VI. 21): "Those who went beyond the [first three] stages of life he taught the supreme and sacred Self-Knowledge sought after by all the seers." Compare also Kaivalya Upanishad 2: "Neither by work nor by offspring does one attain Immortality, but solely through renunciation." The Smṛiti also says: "Having realized the Self one should renounce action" and "Let one enter that stage of life (i.e. *sannyāsa*) which is a means to the Knowledge of Brahman." Such disciplines for Self-Knowledge as the practice of continence (*brahmacharya*) etc. are possible only for a *sannyāsin* who has gone beyond all the other stages of life, but not for a householder.

If a means is not fully pursued, it cannot bring about the fruition of an object. The highest result of the action which is to be performed by householders and is secondary to Knowledge has been summed up as the attainment of oneness with the deities, a fruit which belongs to *samsāra*. If the Knowledge of the Supreme Self were to be realized only by one who engaged in action, then the result of action would not have been summed up as something which relates to the world.

Objection: The realization of oneness with the deities is only an indirect result of action [and not the main result].

Reply: That is not correct. Self-Knowledge, whose object is the Self, is entirely opposed to all notions of the deities. The Knowledge of the Self, which deals with the ultimate reality of *Ātman*, devoid of all names, forms, and actions, is the sole means to Immortality. If Self-Knowledge could produce an indirect result [in the form of the attainment of identity with the deities], then it would not have for its object the Self, which is free of all differentiation; such a result is certainly not desirable. The Vājasaneyi Brāhmana, in the passage: "When to him everything, verily, becomes Brahman," denies the knower of the Self all relations of action, agency, and result. The same scripture, in the passage: "When there is, as it were, duality," says that *samsāra*, consisting of action, agency, and result, is the goal of the ignorant. This Upanishad, too, first sums up [for the ignorant] the result, which is the realization of identity with the deities, who are subject to hunger and thirst and belong to the realm of phenomena, and then proceeds

<sup>21</sup> I. e. the life of the student, the married person, and the contemplative.

to explain, in order that the seeker may attain Immortality, the Knowledge which deals with Brahman, the Self of all.

The obstacles created by the threefold debt apply to the ignorant, who seek to attain the world of men, the world of the Manes, and the world of the devas,<sup>22</sup> and not to those who are endowed with Self-Knowledge. The threefold means for the attainment of the three worlds has been described in the Śruti passage: "The world of men should be won through offspring," etc. That the wise, who seek the World of Ātman, are free from the obstacles of debts is shown by the following scriptural passage: "What shall we do with children," etc. Further, the Kaushitaki Upanishad says: "Thus taught the rishis who attained the Knowledge of Brahman" and "The illumined souls of olden times, for this very reason, did not perform the Agnihotra sacrifice."

Objection: The ignorant must not become sannyāsins as long as their debts are not paid.

Reply: It is not so; for no debt is incurred before one embraces the householder's life. If one who is not entitled to incur debt becomes indebted, then everyone will remain under the obligation of debt. This is certainly an undesirable position. Such a scriptural passage as: "Let one leave the householder's life for that of the vānaprasthin, and the life of the vānaprasthin for that of the sannyāsins; or if possible one should embrace the monastic life directly from the stage of the brahmachārin, or the householder, or the vānaprasthin," enjoins even on the householder the monastic life as a discipline for the realization of Self-Knowledge. The scriptural passages prescribing lifelong practice of the Agnihotra or other sacrifices apply only to those ignorant people who do not long for Liberation. The Chhāndogya Brāhmaṇa also states that certain people may perform the Agnihotra sacrifice for twelve nights only and then renounce it. [Therefore the scriptural passage prescribing the lifelong practice of the Agnihotra sacrifice does not conflict with the monastic life.]

The argument that the monastic life is meant only for those who are incapable of performing [ritualistic] work<sup>23</sup> is unsound; for there are special scriptural passages that apply to them. Further, the Smritis teach that all people, without distinction, may either enter any of the stages of life directly or go through them all in succession.

<sup>22</sup> Every householder owes debts to men, the Manes, and the gods. The world of men should be won by begetting children, the world of the Manes through sacrifice, and the world of the gods through vidyā.

<sup>23</sup> I. e. those who are born blind, deaf, or otherwise crippled.

*It was contended that a knower of the Self practises renunciation of action as a matter of course and not on account of any scriptural injunction, and that therefore it makes no difference whether a man stays at home or lives in the forest. We reply that this argument is unsound; for if renunciation of action is natural for the illumined person, he cannot possibly embrace any other order of life. We have already said that the reason for accepting any other order of life is the desire and action prompted by it. Their absence is what is meant by renunciation of action, or monasticism.*

*Whimsical or reckless action is utterly impossible for a man endowed with Knowledge: such action is performed only by those who are completely ignorant. If the performance of action enjoined by the scriptures is not meant for the knower of the Self because of its being too burdensome, how can he be expected to engage in the reckless action resorted to by an ignorant person? An object as perceived by a madman or by one afflicted by the eye disease called timira does not appear so when the insanity or the eye disease is removed; for the distorted appearance was the result of the insanity or the disease of the eye. Therefore it is settled that the knower of the Self renounces all action. He can neither be whimsical nor engage in any form of duty.*

*As regards the text: "He who knows both Vidyā and avidyā,"<sup>24</sup> it does not mean that in the case of a knower of the Self, Knowledge and ignorance may be pursued together. What, then, does the passage mean? The meaning is not that a man can pursue both at the same time. For instance, a person does not see in mother-of-pearl both silver and mother-of-pearl at the same time [but he sees them at different times]. The Katha Upanishad states: "What are known as vidyā and avidyā are contradictory and lead people along different ways." (Ka. Up. I. ii. 4.) Therefore where avidyā exists there cannot be Vidyā. From a scriptural passage such as the following: "Realize Brahman by means of tapasyā (austerities)," we understand that such works as austerities and worship of the guru, which are means of acquiring knowledge, are called avidyā because they belong to avidyā. Through them one obtains knowledge<sup>25</sup> and transcends death in the form of desire. Thus being free from desire, that is to say, having renounced desire, one attains immortality through the Knowledge of Brahman. This is the meaning of*

<sup>24</sup> Vidyā means Knowledge, and avidyā, ignorance (which involves one in ritualistic work).

<sup>25</sup> Here the word does not signify the Knowledge of Brahman.

the text: "He . . . overcomes death through avidyā and obtains immortality through vidyā." (Īś. Up. 11.)

As regards the argument that the entire life of a man should be devoted to karma (ritualistic action), as is known from the scriptural text: "If a man wishes to live for one hundred years on this earth, he should live performing action" (Īś. Up. 2.), we reply that the passage applies to the ignorant; no other meaning is admissible. As regards the contention that Self-Knowledge is not in conflict with [ritualistic] work since both lead to the same result, we have already refuted it by stating that they are related respectively to the unconditioned and the conditioned Brahman. We shall show the same thing in the commentary on the present Upanishad.

Therefore the present Upanishad begins with the sole purpose of revealing the Knowledge of the oneness of Ātman and the pure and actionless Brahman.

## INVOCATION

May my speech<sup>1</sup> be fixed in my mind, may my mind be fixed in my speech!<sup>2</sup> O self-luminous Brahman, be manifest to me. O mind and speech, may you bring me the meaning of the Vedas! May what I study from the Vedas not leave me! I shall unite day and night through this study.<sup>3</sup> I shall think of the right; I shall speak the right. May Brahman protect me, may Brahman protect the teacher! May Brahman protect me, may Brahman protect the teacher!

**Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!**

<sup>1</sup> I. e. the organ of speech.

<sup>2</sup> The meaning is that while the student studies the Upanishad his mind and speech should help each other so that he may understand its significance.

<sup>3</sup> I. e. I shall devote the whole day and night to the study of the Upanishad.



## CHAPTER I

### THE CREATION OF VIRĀT

IN THE BEGINNING [all] this verily was Ātman only, one and without a second. There was nothing else that winked. He bethought Himself: "Let Me now create the worlds."

IN THE BEGINNING ETC: Before the creation, the universe, devoid of the differentiation of names and forms, remained unmanifest, being one with Ātman, and was designated as Ātman. If that be so, it may be contended, does not the selfsame non-dual Ātman exist as the sole reality even after the creation? The answer is that, to be sure, it does. The same Self, or Brahman, which existed before the creation exists even now. Then why does the text use the past tense *was*? In reply we say that though Ātman is the same after the creation as It was before, there is a slight difference. Before the creation, the universe, devoid of the differentiation of names and forms and completely identified with Ātman, was designated by the name *Ātman* alone and also was the object of the knowledge designated by the term *Ātman*. In other words, there was then no such term as *universe*, nor any object denoted by that term. But after the creation, owing to the manifestation of names and forms, the same universe sometimes is known by many different names and also becomes the object of the knowledge denoted by those names and sometimes becomes known by the name *Ātman* alone and becomes the object of the knowledge denoted by that name. This is the difference between the state prior to the creation and that after it. The past tense in the text, conveyed by the word *was*, has been used with this difference in view. One may give the illustration of foam, which prior to its manifestation as such is called water, and afterwards is known both as foam and as water. Ātman alone, one and without a second, exists both before the creation and during the states of preservation and dissolution. Names and forms, which distinguish the phenomenal universe from the state before the creation, are superimposed upon Ātman through māyā.

**THIS:** The manifested universe, diversified by name, form, and desire.

**ĀTMAN:** The word, derived from the root *āp*, *ad*, or *at*, may mean re-

spectively, to *obtain* or *pervade*, to *eat* or *enjoy*, or to *move* without ceasing. The term *Ātman* indicates the "Supreme Reality, omniscient, all-powerful, free from all phenomenal characteristics such as hunger and thirst, eternal, pure, illumined, free, unborn, undecaying, deathless, immortal, fearless, and non-dual." (*Śankarāchārya*.)

**THERE WAS ETC:** The Upanishad here refutes the theories of the Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣhika philosophies, according to which matter, either as undifferentiated prakṛiti or as atomic particles, existed as a separate entity before creation.

**THAT WINKED:** That is to say, prior to the creation there existed nothing besides *Ātman*, whether active or inactive.

**BETHOUGHT:** The creation is a spontaneous action, without any compulsion or logical necessity. How could *Ātman*, who was devoid of sense-organs, think? It is because omniscience is the very nature of *Ātman*, and therefore He needed no organ for the purpose of thinking. Compare: "Devoid of hands and feet, He quickly moves and grasps." The object of His thinking was the creation of the world, whose nature would be determined by the past actions of the living beings of the previous cycle for their experience of pleasure or pain as determined by their good or evil deeds.

The philosophy of *Ātman* is stated in the text in the form of an aphorism (sutra). Later on, by the demonstration that names and forms are mere illusory superimpositions (*adhyāropa*) and then by their refutation (*apavāda*), will be shown the unreal nature of phenomena and the sole reality of *Ātman*. The verses up to the first sentence of I. iii. 13. deal with the topic of illusory superimposition; next follows the refutation.

*Ātman may be compared to an architect who conceives a building in his mind before giving it tangible shape. If it is contended that Ātman, unlike the architect, does not possess any tools or accessories for creation, it may be said in reply that Ātman is both material and efficient cause of the universe, as water is of foam. Or Ātman may be likened to a magician, who, without any accessories, simply by means of his wondrous power, makes one coin appear as many or performs other such feats. The non-dual Ātman, through māyā, a power inhering in Himself, projects the phenomenal world of multiplicity.*

## 2

He created these worlds: Ambhah (the world of water-bearing clouds), Marichi (the world of the solar rays), Mara (the world of

mortals), and Ap (the world of waters). Yon is Ambhah, above heaven; heaven is its support. The Marichis are the interspace. Mara is the earth. What is underneath is Ap.

HE ETC: It should be assumed that at the very outset He created the five rudimentary elements, and next the worlds.

AMBHAH: Which contains such higher planes as Mahah, Janah, and Satyā.

MARICHI: Like the rays of the sun, the interspace is diversified.

MARA . . . EARTH: Where all living beings are committed to death.

AP: Refers to the nether worlds, which are frequented by inferior beings.

*The creation of Virāt, the totality of all physical bodies, is described:*

## 3

He bethought Himself: "Here now are the worlds. Let Me now create world-guardians." Right from the waters He drew forth the Person [in the form of a lump] and gave Him a shape.

WORLDS: The nature of the new creation is determined by the action of the living beings of the previous cycle. The creation also serves as the stage where embodied beings reap the fruit of their past actions, experiencing joy and sorrow according to their past good or evil deeds. This doctrine provides a moral foundation for the universe.

LET ME ETC: Without guardians the worlds would perish.

WATERS: Though the worlds contain all five elements, yet they preponderate in water.

DREW FORTH: Like a potter, who first takes a lump of clay in his hands and then gradually gives it a shape.

SHAPE: Refers to Virāt, the gross form of the Cosmic Person. All the tangible physical objects are part of Him.

*He brooded over the lump, intending to give it the shape of a man.*

## 4

He brooded over Him (the lump). From Him, so brooded over, the mouth was separated out, as with an egg; from the mouth, [the organ of] speech; from speech, fire (the controlling deity of the organ).

Then the nostrils were separated out; from the nostrils, [the organ of] breath (prāna); from breath, air (the controlling deity of the organ).

Then the eyes were separated out; from the eyes, [the organ of] sight (chakshu); from sight, the sun (the controlling deity of the organ).

Then the ears were separated out; from the ears, [the organ of] hearing (śrotra); from hearing, the quarters of space (the controlling deity of the organ).

Then the skin was separated out; from the skin, hairs (i.e. the organ of touch); from the hairs, plants and trees (i.e. air, the controlling deity of the organ).

Then the heart was separated out; from the heart, [the organ of] the mind (manas); from the mind, the moon (the controlling deity of the organ).

Then the navel was separated out; from the navel, the [organ of the] apāna; from the apāna, Death (i.e. Varuna, the controlling deity of the organ).

Then the virile member was separated out; from the virile member, semen (the organ of generation); from semen, the waters (the controlling deity of the organ).

**BROODED OVER:** The text uses a word (*abhyatapat*) which conveys the idea of austerities (tapas). The austerities of the Lord consist in intense thinking.

**AS WITH AN EGG:** That is to say, when the egg is hatched.

**MOUTh:** It will be seen that first the visible instrument is formed, next the subtle organ (indriya) which is the real instrument of perception, and last the controlling deity (devatā) or conscious element which animates the organ. The visible eye is the instrument, and the optic nerve may be called the indriya. The controlling deity is an aspect of the all-pervading Consciousness (Brahman) associated with the organ. The controlling deity is the guardian of the organ.

**APĀNA:** One of the five prānas, which is located about the navel and carries downward unassimilated food and drink.

The controlling deities of the different organs and elements evolve from various parts of Virāt.

*Here ends Chapter One  
of Part One of the  
Aitareya Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER II

### COSMIC POWERS IN THE HUMAN BODY

THESE DEITIES, thus created, fell into this great ocean. He (the Creator) subjected that Person (i.e. Virāt in the form of a lump) to hunger and thirst. They (the deities) said to Him (the Creator): "Find out for us an abode wherein being established we may eat food."

GREAT OCEAN: That is to say, samsāra, or the phenomenal world, "where the great water-currents consist of miseries created by ignorance, desire, and action, and which is filled with vicious crocodiles in the shape of painful diseases, senility, and death. Without beginning or end, shoreless and without bottom, it affords relief in the form of the fleeting joy produced from the contact of the senses with their objects. Alas, this ocean is full of high waves of hundreds of evils lashed by the wind of the intense longing of the senses for their objects, and it roars with the deafening noise of the anguish and cries arising from its numerous hells. But there lies in the ocean a raft of Knowledge, in which are stored the provisions of many goodly virtues, such as truthfulness, integrity, charity, compassion, non-violence, control of the body, restraint of the mind, and determination; and also a track in the form of holy company and renunciation, which leads to the shore of Liberation." (Śankarāchārya.) The gods, or cosmic divinities, also belong to the phenomenal world. Therefore the attainment of oneness with them, as a result of the practice of meditation and rituals, cannot destroy all the miseries of samsāra. This being so, the aspirant, seeking liberation from phenomenal suffering, should realize the Supreme Brahman as his own self and the self of all beings. There is no other way to emancipation.

HE (THE CREATOR): From now on the word *Creator* will be used for *Ātman*.

PERSON: The first-born Purusha, from whom the instruments of perception, sense-organs, and deities were separated out.

HUNGER AND THIRST: As the Purusha was afflicted by hunger and thirst, His offspring, the gods, were also subjected to them.

*After the deities, the individual bodies which are the seats of enjoyment were created. Into these bodies their respective deities entered.*

## 2-3

He (the Creator) brought them a cow. They said: "But this is not enough for us." He brought them a horse. They said: "This, too, is not enough for us."

He brought them a person. The deities said: "Ah, this is well done, indeed." Therefore a person is verily something well done.

He said to the deities: "Now enter your respective abodes."

**Cow:** A tangible body in the shape of a cow, produced like the other beings, from the waters.

**NOT ENOUGH ETC:** They did not consider the cow adequate as an abode or as food. In other words, they considered the cow unfit to eat.

**PERSON:** That is to say, a lump in the shape of a man, like Virāt.

**THIS IS WELL DONE:** Because the person was created by the Lord Himself through His wondrous powers. Man is the highest creation of God. Or the text may signify that the human body is a superior one, because it can be used as the instrument for the performance of good deeds. Through a subhuman body the soul may reap the fruit of past action, but it cannot perform any action which produces fresh fruit, good or evil; for animals, insects, etc. are devoid of conscience, which alone can distinguish between good and evil.

*The deities obeyed the command of the Creator, like the magistrates of an emperor.*

## 4

[The deity] fire became [the organ of] speech and entered the mouth. Air became breath and entered the nostrils. The sun became sight and entered the eyes. The quarters of space became hearing and entered the ears. Plants and trees (i.e. the deity air) became hairs and entered the skin. The moon became the mind and entered the heart. Death became the apāna and entered the navel. The waters became semen and entered the virile member.

**FIRE:** That is to say, the deity which identifies itself with speech and controls it. The same idea applies to air, the sun, etc.

**SPEECH:** That is to say, the organ of hearing. The same idea applies to breath, sight, etc.

Both the organs and their controlling deities entered the body. The text indicates an interrelationship between man and nature, and the various cosmic forces which control them.

*The deities found their abodes. But hunger and thirst did not obtain any, and said to the Creator:*

## 5

Hunger and thirst said to the Creator: "For the two of us find an abode also." He said to them: "I assign the two of you to these deities; I make you co-sharers with them."

Therefore to whatsoever deity an oblation is made, hunger and thirst become sharers in it.

I ASSIGN ETC: Hunger and thirst are mere sensations, and therefore cannot dwell anywhere or eat food unless they do so through an intelligent being.

*Here ends Chapter Two  
of Part One of the  
Aitareya Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER III

### THE EMBODIMENT OF THE SUPREME SELF

HE (THE CREATOR) bethought Himself: "Here now are the worlds and the world-guardians. Let Me create food for them."

LET ME ETC: It is seen in daily life that a powerful master is quite free to reward or chastise those under him. The Lord is similarly free with respect to created objects.

#### 2

He brooded over the waters. From the waters, thus brooded over, there emerged a [condensed] form. The form that so emerged is indeed food.

BROODED OVER: That is to say, intensely meditated upon. This is the austerity (tapas) by means of which the Lord created the universe.

WATERS: That is to say, the five elements.

FORM: Which included cereals, animals, and other living and non-living beings.

#### 3

The food so created wished to flee away. He sought to grasp it with speech. But He was not able to grasp it with speech. If, indeed, He had grasped it with speech, one would then have been satisfied by merely uttering [the word] *food*.

FLEE AWAY: By turning its back upon the eater; because the animals etc. created for food were afraid of the eater.

HE: The lump or Person, who is the totality of the world-guardians. It was the Self, the Creator, who had projected Himself as the Person.

SOUGHT ETC: Because He did not know any other way of taking food.

GRASP . . . SPEECH: That is to say, by mere words.

ONE WOULD ETC: Refers to living creatures, which were born later. Since the Creator could not satisfy His hunger by merely uttering the word *food*, the created beings could not be satisfied in that way either.

BY MERELY ETC: That is to say, one would have had satisfaction through merely talking about food.

## 4-10

[The Creator] sought to grasp it with the breath. But He was not able to grasp it with the breath. If, indeed, He had grasped it with the breath, one would then have been satisfied by merely smelling food.

He sought to grasp it with the eye. But He was not able to grasp it with the eye. If, indeed, He had grasped it with the eye, one would then have been satisfied by merely seeing food.

He sought to grasp it with the ear. But He was not able to grasp it with the ear. If, indeed, He had grasped it with the ear, one would then have been satisfied by merely hearing of food.

He sought to grasp it with the skin. But He was not able to grasp it with the skin. If, indeed, He had grasped it with the skin, one would then have been satisfied by merely touching food.

He sought to grasp it with the mind. But He was not able to grasp it with the mind. If, indeed, He had grasped it with the mind, one would then have been satisfied by merely thinking of food.

He sought to grasp it with the virile member. But He was not able to grasp it with the virile member. If, indeed, He had grasped it with the virile member, one would then have been satisfied by merely emitting food.

He sought to grasp it with the apāna, and He grasped it. This grasper of food is what vāyu (air, or prāna) is. This vāyu is what lives on food.

EMITTING FOOD: That is to say, emitting semen, which is the essence of food.

APĀNA: That part of the prāna which moves downward and by which the food is swallowed. The embodied soul becomes the eater of food by identifying itself with the prāna, which uses the apāna as its instrument.

*After having created the worlds, the world-guardians, and the food by which the world-guardians live, the Lord bethought Himself:*

## 11

He (the Creator) bethought Himself: "How could this [aggregate of body and organs] exist without Me?" Then He said to Himself: "Which way shall I enter it?" He said to Himself further: "If speech

is uttered by the organ of speech, if smelling is done by the breath (prāna), seeing by the eyes, hearing by the ears, touching by the skin, thinking by the mind, eating by the apāna, and the emission [of semen] by the virile member, then who am I?"

How . . . WITHOUT ME: That is to say, without the Lord of the city of the body. The implication of the question is as follows: The body, which is an aggregate of sense-organs, mind, etc. and is held together by the law of cause and effect, must serve the purpose of someone else. And who can that be except Ātman, the Lord of the body?

IF SPEECH ETC: If the organ of speech can utter words by itself, then Ātman will have no function in the body. Furthermore, if the words uttered by the organ of speech do not serve the purpose of someone else, then speaking will be futile, like praise and music in a court in the absence of the king. Therefore, like a king, Ātman should be the ruler, the enjoyer, and the witness of the actions done or left undone by the body.

WHO AM I: That is to say, what will be the function of Ātman? Over whom will Ātman rule? If Ātman does not enter the body, dwell in it, control the organs, and enjoy the fruit of the actions performed by them and the other members of the body, no one will be interested in Ātman or in Self-Knowledge. If, on the other hand, Ātman dwells in the body, He will then be known as the Person for whose sake the body and the organs function, just as a house, consisting of pillars, roof, and other parts, exists for the sake of the householder.

The body, consisting of sense-organs, mind, prāna, and other parts, is an aggregate produced by combination. Such an aggregate must serve the purpose of someone else. A house, for instance, consisting of such parts as pillars, floor, and roof, serves the purpose of its occupant. If the actions of the tongue, eyes, ears, etc. are not performed consciously for someone other than themselves, then these actions are meaningless. In reality, the organs function in different ways so that through their action man may realize the true nature of Ātman, the Master of the body. He will then know Ātman as the witness of the mental states and the animator of the organs.

*After thinking thus, Ātman asked Himself how He should enter the body. This can be done either through the toes or through the crown of the head. Which of the ways should He choose? Ātman said to Himself that He would certainly not enter through the toes, which were the door of entrance of His servant the prāna, who obeyed His orders, but He would enter by the crown of the head.*

## 12

So, piercing the end (i.e. the place where the parting of the hair ends), the Lord entered through that door. That door is known as the vidriti, the cleft. This is the place of bliss.

Ātman [thus embodied] has three abodes, three conditions of sleep. This is one abode, this is another, this is the third.

**THE END:** The very top of the head, at the centre of the brain; the sagittal suture. There are eleven doors of the body: the two nostrils, the two eyes, the two ears, the mouth, the top of the head, the navel, the organ of procreation, and the organ of evacuation.

**PLACE OF BLISS:** When the life-breath leaves the body through the top of the head, the jiva attains to Brahman by gradual stages.

**ABODES:** Ātman dwells in the right eye during the waking state, in the mind during the dream state, and in the space in the heart during deep sleep. Or the three abodes may refer to the body of the father, the womb of the mother, and one's own body. Ānandagiri explains the three abodes as the right eye, the throat, and the heart.

**THREE CONDITIONS OF SLEEP:** The reference is to the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. (See Śankarāchārya's commentary on *Mā. Up.* 5.) An unenlightened person, during the waking state, is ignorant of truth and takes the unreal to be real. Therefore the waking state is not, for him, different from sleep.

**THIS IS ऋC:** The passage suggests that the teacher points out the three places with his finger.

The Supreme Self, omniscient and immutable, passes successively through the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, completely oblivious of His true nature. Though afflicted with miseries from the millions of hammer-blows of worldly calamities, He enjoys happily the slumber created by ignorance, which comes naturally to all phenomenal creatures. (*Adapted from Śankarāchārya.*)

*Vedānta arrives at the Knowledge of Ātman through the discussion of illusory superimposition (adhyāropa), followed by its refutation (apavāda). Having described superimposition, which accounts for the appearance of the universe and diversity, the Upanishad now deals with its refutation in order to arrive at the Knowledge of Ātman.*

## 13

Having been born as the jiva, He realized the elements (bhutas) as one with Himself [and expressed this in words]. What else here would one desire to speak about?

He perceived this very person as the all-pervading Brahman. He said: "Ah, I have seen It."

**HAVING ETC:** That is to say, having acquired the characteristics of the jiva, or embodied soul, as a result of entering the body.

**ELEMENTS:** Such as ākāśa etc.

**AS ONE ETC:** He identified Himself with the body and felt that He was blind, deaf, fair, or crippled and expressed the fact in words.

**WHAT ELSE ETC:** The text is ambiguous. The meaning seems to be as follows: "What else but himself would the embodied soul, while identified with the body, speak about?" For certainly he could not speak about the incorporeal Self.

**HE PERCEIVED ETC:** That is to say, at last he is awakened by the instruction of a compassionate guru, who teaches him the identity of self with Brahman.

## 14

Therefore He (the Supreme Self) is called Idandra. Idandra, indeed, is His name. Him who is Idandra they call indirectly Indra. For the gods appear to be fond of cryptic epithets; yea, the gods appear to be fond of cryptic epithets.

**THEREFORE:** Because of the direct and immediate realization of Brahman as the inmost self.

**IDANDRA:** Lit., the perceiver of this. The Supreme Self is called Idandra because He is directly perceived as Brahman and is not perceived through the sense-organs.

**FOR THE GODS ETC:** It is bad manners to address a venerable person directly by name.

**YEA, ETC:** The repetition indicates the end of the chapter.

*Here ends Chapter Three  
of Part One of the  
Aitareya Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER I

### THE THREE BIRTHS OF THE SELF

**THIS [PERSON]** is, at first, the germ in a man. That which is the semen is here called the germ. This semen is the vigour (tejas) drawn from all the limbs. The man bears the self (i.e. the semen) in the self (i.e. the body). When he pours the semen into a woman, he gives it a birth. This, indeed, is the first birth of the embodied soul.

**THIS [PERSON]:** Refers to the individual self who is about to assume a human body.

**IN A MAN:** That is to say, in the body of the future father.

**SEMEN:** Which is the essence of food and is extracted from all parts of the body.

**BEARS THE SELF:** Semen is the essence of the physical man.

**INTO A WOMAN:** When the proper time for conception arrives.

**A BIRTH:** That is to say, a physical body.

The text describes in a general way the rebirth of the embodied self as a human being. A righteous person who has performed sacrifices according to the scriptural injunctions goes, after death, to the plane of the Moon (Chandraloka) following the Southern Path. There he assumes a watery body and experiences the reward for his pious actions. After the enjoyment is over, he is ready to come down to the earth and takes a liquid form. He descends to the upper plane (Dyu-loka) and then to the clouds. Then he falls on the earth as rain and enters into cereals, plants, or other edibles. With the food, he goes into a human body and becomes semen, which is the essence of the food. When a man is united with a woman, the self in the semen enters the womb and becomes embodied. This topic is discussed in detail in the *Chhândogya Upanishad*, in the section dealing with the Five Fires.

The following is adapted from Śankarāchārya's commentary, as the substance of the present section:

Brahman, the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe, omnipresent and omnipotent, projects the universe out of Himself without the

help of any outside accessories, and enters into all living beings for the ultimate purpose of attaining Self-Knowledge. Having become embodied, He at last realizes that He is Brahman, that He is the whole universe. Since Brahman is incorporeal and all-pervading, a difficulty arises: Brahman is Pure Spirit and not a material entity. How then can He cleave the top of the head and enter into the body? Further, since Brahman is all-pervading and since there is not even a hair unoccupied by Brahman, how can He enter into another substance? In reply it is said that this is a trivial problem. The present Upanishad makes many astounding statements regarding Brahman. It says that Brahman, devoid of senses, perceives; that He creates the world without outside help; that He gathers the Purusha from the waters and fashions, through contemplation, his mouth and other organs, etc. One should not stress these apparent incongruities too much. The purpose of the Upanishad is to demonstrate the sole reality of Brahman and not to emphasize the details of the process of creation. Any other statement in the Upanishad except about the reality of Brahman is a kind of eulogy of Brahman. Further, it may be said that Brahman, like a magician, conjures up this illusory universe. If one knows this fact, one can then realize Brahman's true nature. The Upanishad narrates all these stories regarding the creation in order to make this realization easier. The stories should not be accepted as literally true. The Upanishad teaches the Knowledge of the identity of Brahman and the self and the universe. With the attainment of this Knowledge all the apparent differentiations merge in the non-dual Brahman. Only an ignorant person sees in the universe such distinctions as existence and non-existence, absolute and relative, activity and passivity, cause and effect, happiness and misery, affirmation and negation, and so on. To regard such differentiations as real is like regarding as real the tracks of fish in the water or of birds in the sky. The scriptures give instruction about Brahman through the negative process of "Neti." As long as a man does not know the true nature of his self and regards himself as an embodied being endowed with a name and a form, he wanders in samsāra under the sway of ignorance, desire, and action, assuming various bodies, high or low. At the time of death he leaves one body and then takes another—be it of Brahmā, of a god, of a man, or of an animal—according to his past actions and desires. The Upanishad now describes the experiences which an ignorant, embodied person undergoes through this apparently endless chain of birth and death, so that he may rid himself of desires, which are responsible for rebirths, cultivate renunciation, and attain Freedom and Bliss.

## 2

That semen becomes one with the woman—just like a limb of her own. That is why it does not hurt her. She nourishes this self of his that has come into her.

ONE WITH: That is to say, indistinguishable from.

JUST LIKE ETC: Like her hands, breasts, or other parts of her body.

HURT HER: Like a tumor.

NOURISHES: With suitable food etc.

HIS: That is to say, of her husband.

## 3

She, being the nourisher, should be nourished [by her husband]. The woman nourishes the embryo. Immediately after its birth he (the father) nourishes [with natal ceremonies] the child, which in the beginning was already born [as the embryo]. Nourishing the child from birth onward, he thus nourishes himself for the continuation of these worlds. For thus alone are these worlds perpetuated. This is one's second birth.

NOURISHED: With proper food, drink, clothes, etc. No good relation in this world between two persons is possible without reciprocity of benefits.

NOURISHES ETC: That is to say, nourishes the semen, which is the essence of the husband's body and which has become the embryo.

FOR THE CONTINUATION ETC: The universe will come to an end without procreation. But children do not serve any direct purpose for a man's ultimate liberation.

THUS: That is to say, through procreation.

SECOND BIRTH: The second manifestation of Ātman.

*The benefit that comes from the son to the father is shown. The father has, as it were, two selves: one, his own self, and the other, his self in the form of the son.*

## 4

He (the son) who is the one self (body) of his [father's] is made his [father's] substitute for [performing] virtuous deeds. Then the other self (body) of his [father's], having accomplished his duties and reached his age departs [from this world]. So departing hence, he is born again. This is his third birth.

SUBSTITUTE: Because the father cannot actively worship in old age.

VIRTUOUS DEEDS: As enjoined by the scriptures.

DUTIES: They consist mainly of the debts one owes to the gods, the rishis, and the Manes. The first debt is discharged through the performance of sacrifices, the second through the study of the scriptures, and the third

through the procreation of offspring. In this way the solidarity and the complete well-being of society are maintained.

**DEPARTS:** As he gives up the present body, he takes a new one. It is like a caterpillar taking hold of a new blade of grass as it leaves the old one.

**BORN AGAIN:** As determined by his past action.

**THIRD BIRTH:** The first birth takes place when the father injects the semen, which is the essence of his body, into his wife. The second birth takes place when the child, who is the father in another form, is born from the mother's womb. The third birth is his reincarnation in a new body. Father and son are regarded as identical.

*A statement by the rishi Vāmadeva regarding the suffering of the ignorant jiva in samsāra, of endless births and deaths, and his liberation through Self-Knowledge:*

## 5

About this a rishi has said:

"While still lying in the womb, I came to know all the births of the gods. A hundred strongholds, as if made of iron, confined me, yet I burst through them all swiftly, like a hawk."

Vāmadeva spoke, in this wise, even while lying in the womb.

**CAME TO KNOW:** As a result of the meditation of many previous lives.

**GODS:** Such as the controlling deities of speech, fire, etc.

**STRONGHOLDS:** Physical bodies.

**CONFINED:** That is to say, in the meshes of the world.

**I BURST ETC:** By dint of strength acquired through Self-Knowledge.

**LIKE A HAWK:** As a hawk bursts through a net.

## 6

Thus endowed with Knowledge, he, becoming one with the Supreme Self and soaring aloft on the dissolution of the body, obtained all desires in the heavenly world and became immortal—yea, became immortal.

**KNOWLEDGE:** That is to say, the Knowledge of Ātman.

**HE:** Vāmadeva, the rishi.

**ONE WITH ETC:** That is to say, one with the whole creation. The knowledge of this identity gives the strength to pierce through the net of the world.

**DISSOLUTION ETC:** The final dissolution of the stream of embodied existence, which occurs on the destruction of ignorance.

**OBTAINED ETC:** Even while living in the body, the liberated person obtains, by dint of Self-Knowledge, the fulfilment of all desires.

**YEA, ETC:** The repetition shows the conclusion of the topic.

*Here ends Chapter One  
of Part Two of the  
Aitareya Upanishad.*



## CHAPTER I

### CONCERNING THE SELF

WHO IS HE whom we worship, thinking: "This is the Self (Ātman)"? [Of the two mentioned in the scriptures,] which one is the Self? Is it He by whom one sees form, by whom one hears sound, and by whom one tastes the sweet and the unsweet?

WHOM WE WORSHIP ETC: As taught by Vāmadeva.

WHICH ONE ETC: Two selves have been mentioned in the Upanishads: the one (as the prāna), enters the purusha through the toes, and the other cleaves the top of the head and enters the purusha by that opening. They appear to be different from each other. Which one is the real Self? One is the prāna, or vital breath, which is transformed into the various sense-organs and through them experiences various objects. The other is that which witnesses these sensations and remembers them.

The self which, as the prāna, enters through the toes and transforms itself into the sense-organs cannot be the real Ātman, who is the object of worship. The real Ātman is omniscient, but the sense-organs are not. One sense-organ is unaware of the functioning of another. When the ear hears, it is not conscious of smelling. The senses are mere instruments. Further, the prāna, being the combination of different organs, cannot be Ātman; it serves the purpose of someone else. The real Ātman is He who enters the purusha through the head and remembers the impressions received with the aid of the organs. It is for His experience that the prāna becomes the various organs in order to experience objects.

The Knowledge of Ātman realized by Vāmadeva was transmitted to the world by a succession of teachers. At a later time certain brāhmins, desirous of Liberation through Self-Knowledge, as taught by Vāmadeva, came together and held a discussion about Brahman.

*Now is explained that entity which, though one, is variously differentiated. Evidently the text refers to the Higher Self, which enters the*

*body through the top of the head and is transformed into the mind. It has already been stated that the same Self enters the body through the toes, as the prāna, and becomes transformed into the other organs.*

## 2

It is the heart and the mind. It is [known, in accordance with its different functions, as] consciousness, lordship, knowledge [of arts], wisdom, retentive power of mind, sense knowledge, steadfastness, thought, thoughtfulness, sorrow, memory, concepts, purpose, life, desire, longing [for sense-objects]: all these are but various names of Consciousness (Prajñānam).

**IT:** Refers to the Higher Self, which enters the body through the top of the head.

**HEART:** The word here denotes the buddhi, or intellect, which is endowed with the power of discrimination.

**MIND:** The inner organ that deliberates. All perception takes place through the mind and intellect.

**STEADFASTNESS:** By which a depressed body and mind are stimulated.

**SORROW:** The distress of the mind at the time of sickness etc.

**CONCEPTS:** The thought of forms, such as black and white.

**LIFE:** Any function of the prāna, by which life is maintained.

**DESIRE:** Related to objects not near at hand.

**ALL THESE ETC:** Pure Consciousness is known by these names when conditioned by them.

The prāna, which enters the purusha through the feet, is the lower self and cannot be the object of worship. But the Self which enters through the top of the head and dwells in the heart, and which functions as different kinds of perception, conception, intuition, feeling, and will, is to be regarded as Pure Spirit (Prajñānam).

*The Self, whose nature is Pure Consciousness (Prajñānam), is the Brahman conditioned by upādhis. The limiting adjuncts are superimposed and therefore unreal.*

## 3

He is Brahman, He is Indra, He is Prajāpati; He is all these gods; He is the five great elements—earth, air, ākāśa, water, light; He is all these small creatures and the others which are mixed [with them]; He is the origin [of the moving and the unmoving]—those born of an

egg, of a womb, of sweat, and of a sprout; He is horses, cows, human beings, elephants—whatever breathes here, whether moving on legs or flying in the air or unmoving. All this is guided by Consciousness (Prajñānam), is supported by Consciousness. The basis [of the universe] is Consciousness. Consciousness is Brahman.

**HE IS BRAHMAN:** That is to say, the conditioned Brahman, or Hiranyagarbha. The life principle in all bodies, He is transformed into the various conditions of the mind.

**INDRA:** The chief among the deities.

**PRAJĀPATI:** Virāt, the first-born deity, from whom all the devas, or world-guardians, emanated.

**GODS:** Such as the controlling deities of fire, speech, and water.

**ELEMENTS:** The material causes of all bodies.

**OTHERS . . . MIXED ETC:** That is to say, those which are not exceedingly small, such as serpents.

**OF AN EGG:** Birds and reptiles.

**OF A WOMB:** Mammals.

**OF SWEAT:** Lice etc.

**OF A SPROUT:** Trees and creepers.

**ALL THIS ETC:** The whole creation is a manifestation of Pure Spirit.

**SUPPORTED:** During the states of creation, preservation, and dissolution.

**CONSCIOUSNESS ETC:** Brahman, or attributeless Pure Spirit—untainted, calm, self-content, non-dual, and transcendental—becomes, when conditioned by the upādhi of pure intelligence, the omniscient Lord (Īśvara), the cause of the manifestation of the universe, where all created beings obtain their enjoyments. As the Inner Controller of all, It is called the Antaryāmin. Being associated with the Cosmic Intelligence, which is the seed of the tangible universe, It is known as Hiranyagarbha; being conditioned by the totality of all bodies and born from the Cosmic Egg, It is known as Virāt; being associated with the names of fire, speech, etc., It becomes the devas. Thus Brahman is known by different names and forms when associated with different bodies, ranging from the body of Brahmā to that of an insect. That one Being, who is beyond all conditioning, is described in various ways by different thinkers as It is conceived by their minds.

*The fruit of the Knowledge of Brahman:*

4

He, [having realized oneness with Pure Consciousness,] soared from this world, and having obtained all desires in yonder heavenly world, became immortal—yea, became immortal.

HE: That is to say, Vāmadeva, mentioned in II. i. 5-6. The result of the knowledge described in this verse may apply to any other illumined soul.

SOARED ETC: That is to say, after giving up the body.

*Here ends Chapter One  
of Part Three of the  
Aitareya Upanishad.*

*Here ends the Aitareya Upanishad.*

## THE PEACE CHANT

May my speech be fixed in my mind, may my mind be fixed in my speech! O self-luminous Brahman, be manifest to me. O mind and speech, may you bring me the meaning of the Vedas! May what I study from the Vedas not leave me! I shall unite day and night through this study. I shall think of the right; I shall speak the right. May Brahman protect me, may Brahman protect the teacher! May Brahman protect me, may Brahman protect the teacher!

**Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!**

The peace chant is recited by both teacher and disciple in order to remove any blemish that may have been incurred while imparting or receiving the instruction.



## INTRODUCTION

THE *BRIHADĀRANYAKA UPANISHAD* forms an important part of the philosophical and religious literature of the Vedas. The Vedas<sup>1</sup> consist of two main divisions, namely, Mantra and Brāhmana. Though the Brāhmana reveals, among other things, the meaning of the Mantra, both are regarded as equally authoritative. When a mantra is in the form of a verse, with a fixed number of feet and syllables, it is called a Rig, and devoid of such a fixed arrangement, it is called a Yajus. A Rig that is sung is called a Sāman. These mantras have been grouped together into four Samhitās, or compilations, which are called the Rig-Veda Samhitā, the Yajur-Veda Samhitā, the Sāma-Veda Samhitā, and the Atharva-Veda Samhitā. According to the tradition of the Purānas, this compilation was made by Vyāsa, who is regarded as the author also of the *Mahābhārata*.

Each Samhitā had one or more Brāhmanas, only a few of which are extant. The Yajur-Veda Samhitā has two forms: the Krishna (Dark) and the Śukla (White). The *Taittiriya Brāhmana* is included in the Krishna Yajur-Veda, and the *Śatapatha Brāhmana* in the Śukla Yajur-Veda. The Śukla Yajur-Veda was revealed to Yājñavalkya through the grace of the sun god.<sup>2</sup> Hence, through a derivative meaning, it is also called the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā*, and the *Śatapatha Brāhmana*, the *Vājasaneyi Brāhmana*. Both the Samhitās and the Brāhmanas have a number of sākḥās, or recensions, deriving from their original teachers. The *Śatapatha Brāhmana* has two recensions: the Kānva and the Mādhyandina. The *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* forms the concluding portion of the Āranyaka of both recensions.<sup>3</sup> Śankarāchārya has written his commentary on the Kānva recension. The last two parts of the *Brihadāranyaka* and the first part of the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a description of the divisions of the Vedas, see *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 2 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> The *Brihadāranyaka* belongs to the Āranyaka section of the Yajur-Veda. The *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* forms the concluding part of the *Brihadā-*

describe a rite called the Pravargya Karma. Hence they really form one section. Thus the first part of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* may be regarded as the third part of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*. This Upanishad forming the concluding part of an Āraṇyaka is called an Āraṇyaka Upanishad, and not a Samhitā Upanishad (as is the *Īśa Upanishad*), because it does not belong to a Samhitā.

The literal meaning of the term *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* is "Great Forest Upanishad." Śaṅkarācārya, in the Introduction to his commentary, says that this Upanishad, consisting of six parts, is called "Great" (Bṛihat) because of its length and profundity, and "Forest" (Āraṇyaka) because of its having been taught in a forest. It contains both teaching (upadeśa) and reasoning (upapatti) in support of the teaching. The theme of the book, as of all Vedāntic treatises, is the absolute identity of Ātman and Brahman. This identity has been established by the well-known logical method of jalpa (argument repudiating the views of opponents) and vāda (reasoning for the purpose of discovering Reality).

Śaṅkarācārya—who has written commentaries (bhāṣyas) on the principal Upanishads and other Vedāntic texts—in his explanation of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* reveals his genius in surpassing degree. With forensic skill, subtle dialectics, and eloquence, he upholds the position that non-duality (advaita) is the conclusion of the Vedāntic texts in general and of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* in particular. It will be seen by an intelligent reader of Śaṅkara's commentary that the Brahman of Vedānta represents not merely a theological dogma or a private mystical experience, but a metaphysical reality which can be demonstrated through reasoning. One of the meanings of the word *Upanishad* is "secret doctrine," which emphasizes the mystical and ultra-rational aspect of the teaching. But Śaṅkara, following one of his predecessors, Dramiḍācārya, brings out another meaning, namely, the Knowledge of Brahman (Brahmavidyā), which destroys the beginningless nescience (avidyā) responsible for the repeated sojourning of the soul in saṃsāra and its apparently interminable suffering. This Knowledge, embodied in the book called Upanishad, is to be directly realized through hearing the teaching from a qualified teacher, reasoning on what has been heard, and contemplating the teaching properly understood through reasoning. Thus a harmony is established between

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*raṇyaka*. As will be noted from the text, the last two parts of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* and the first part of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* deal with one and the same topic.

the personal and direct nature of the vision of Ātman and the universal nature of this vision. Throughout his commentary Śankarāchārya reveals himself not only as exeget and philosopher, but also as mystic.

It is sometimes asked whether the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* develops a single theme or is a mere conglomeration of unrelated views. Traditional Hindu interpreters uphold the former view, while some of the Western Orientalists uphold the latter. Sureśvarāchārya, in his illuminating explanation (vārttika) of Śankara's commentary, has pointed out the harmony between the different parts of the Upanishad. He has arranged the book in three divisions (kāndas): the Madhukānda, the Yājñavalkyakānda or Munikānda and the Khilakānda.<sup>5</sup> The first kānda contains the revelation of the principal Advaita doctrines and is called upadeśa (teaching); the second furnishes logical arguments (upapatti) showing the soundness of the upadeśa, and the third deals with certain forms of meditation (upāsānā), by means of which the aspirant experiences what is laid down in the upadeśa.

There exists an apparently unbridgeable gap between the ritualistic section (Karmakānda) of the Vedas, dealing with the various enjoyments (abhyudaya) in the phenomenal universe (samsāra), and the philosophical section of the Upanishads (Jñānakānda), describing the Knowledge of Brahman, which alone enables the aspirant to attain Liberation (moksha) or the Highest Good (nihśreyasa). The section of the Upanishads dealing with the upāsānā, however, supplies the bridge. It shows the way to direct the mind from the performance of rituals to the philosophical contemplation of Brahman.

The Madhukānda, emphasizing the authority of scriptural revelation, describes the major doctrines of the Upanishads, whose aim is to demonstrate the identity of Ātman and Brahman. The method of arriving at this identity is the discussion of what are known in Vedānta as adhyāropa and apavāda. Adhyāropa signifies the illusory superimposition of names and forms, through avidyā, upon the attributeless Brahman. This illusory superimposition accounts for the appearance of the phenomenal universe. Apavāda is the refutation or sublation of the illusory phenomena, which is simultaneous with the experience of Pure Brahman. No further discipline is necessary for this realization. The

<sup>5</sup> The Madhukānda covers the first and second parts of the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*, the Yājñavalkyakānda or Munikānda, the third and fourth parts, and the Khilakānda, the fifth and sixth parts.

moment the illusory nature of the mirage is recognized, the true nature of the desert is revealed.

The phenomenal universe includes the entire realm of names and forms. To it belong all the Vedic rituals and the various meditations associated with them, as well as their results. Even the Horse-sacrifice, the most exalted of Vedic sacrifices, cannot transcend samsāra. The World of Brahmā or Hiranyagarbha, which may be called the highest heaven, belongs also to the phenomenal universe and is therefore transitory. The only entity that transcends the universe is Ātman, non-dual and eternal, which is pointed out by the negation ("neti") of names and forms (II. iii. 6). The aspirant cannot truly long for Self-Knowledge unless he has gone through the entire gamut of experiences in the phenomenal world, ranging from the experience associated with the life of a clump of grass to that associated with Hiranyagarbha. The Upanishad vividly describes the rituals and the meditations for the realization of various enjoyments in the universe of names and forms. By performing these rituals and practising these meditations an aspirant can find out the impermanent nature of all phenomenal enjoyments, including those obtained in Brahmāloka, and turn his attention to the Knowledge of Ātman, which dwells in himself.

While discussing adhyāropa, the Upanishad states that all phenomenal entities are mutually dependent, are objects of mutual enjoyment, and are conditioned by the law of cause and effect (I. v. 1). The whole universe, either in its unmanifested or in its manifested aspect, is of the very essence of names, forms, and action (I. vi.), and is therefore non-Self. Anything that is the result of action belongs to the realm of samsāra. It is impermanent (I. iv. 15.), since the result lasts only as long as the momentum given by the cause endures. Samsāra is perceived to exist as long as duality, the result of avidyā, remains. It disappears with the attainment of the Knowledge of the non-dual Brahman (I. iv. 7; II. iv. 14). Therefore one seeking Liberation cultivates dispassion for all objects of the phenomenal universe, including the supreme position of Hiranyagarbha. In order to show the way to emancipation from the impermanent universe and to the realization of Self-Knowledge, the Upanishad says that the Self alone is to be meditated upon, for in It the prāna and the sense-organs become unified (I. iv. 7). This scriptural statement is called a Vidyā-sutra or Knowledge-aphorism, in contrast with another statement called an avidyā-sutra or nescience-aphorism, which says: "Now, if a man worships another deity, thinking: 'He is

one and I am another,' he does not know." (I. iv. 10.) These two statements describe the subject matter of vidyā and avidyā. The former deals with Ātman and the latter with samsāra. It is also said in connexion with avidyā that nescience, which veils the true nature of Ātman, is the cause of the phenomenal universe.

After thus describing adhyāropa, or the illusory superimposition of names and forms, the Madhukānda deals with apavāda, or their refutation, in order to establish the ultimate oneness of Ātman and Brahman. The text states that there are two forms, incorporeal (amurta) and corporeal (murta), of the phenomenal universe which are superimposed upon Brahman (II. iii. 1). Then the text exhorts (II. iii. 6.) the student to negate them. But it emphatically affirms that Brahman is not void (śunya), though It can never be brought within the scope of affirmation. One may, however, glimpse It through the negation of eliminable factors produced by ignorance. ("Not this, not this"—"Iti na, iti, na.")

It has already been mentioned that the realization of the unreal nature of samsāra and the Knowledge of Ātman accompany each other. Therefore Ātman alone is to be realized, heard of, reflected upon, and contemplated (II. iv. 5). Everything in the world is loved because of Ātman (II. iv. 5). When Ātman is known all things are known (II. iv. 7-9). Unselfish action, rites, and meditations are enjoined as disciplines for the Knowledge of Ātman, as also hearing, reasoning, and contemplation. But through renunciation (sannyāsa) the Knowledge obtained by these means becomes an unshakable, positive experience. The rishi Yājñavalkya embraces the monastic life (IV. vi. 15). The monastic life is also emphasized in other parts of the Upanishad (III. v. 1; IV. iv. 22).

The upadeśa, or teaching, in the Madhukānda is appropriately followed by the upapatti, or argumentative discourse, in the Yājñavalkya-kānda, or Munikānda. Both divisions aim at revealing the oneness of Ātman and Brahman; so both have the same purpose. Thus one finds a similarity between certain important verses of the two divisions.<sup>6</sup> There is likewise a similarity between the topics discussed in the two divisions.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Compare I. iv. 10. with IV. iv. 12; II. iii. 6. with III. ix. 26., IV. ii. 4., IV. iv. 22., and IV. v. 15; II. v. 19. with IV. iii. 7; II. v. 19. with III. viii. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Compare I. iii. with III. i.; I. ii. 1. with III. ii.; I. v. 16. and I. iv. 17. with III. iii.; II. iv. with III. v. 1.

In the Yājñavalkyakānda, the dialectical mode of argument is employed. Yājñavalkya is challenged by learned philosophers in the court of King Janaka (III. i.) to demonstrate his knowledge of Brahman. He silences his interlocutors and fights his way to victory. In this discussion he follows the method of jalpa, by means of which the views of the opponent are refuted.

In the fourth part, in the course of his dialogue with King Janaka, Yājñavalkya employs the method of vāda, that is to say, reasoning for the ascertaining of truth. The earlier dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyi is repeated in order to establish by means of reasoning the Self-Knowledge which has already been affirmed on the authority of the scriptures. In commenting on the last passage of this part (IV. v. 15.), Śankarāchārya discusses the value of the monastic disciplines in the non-dualistic scheme of liberation, and emphasizes the imperative necessity of renunciation of the world for the realization of Brahman. He does not allow any compromise, either in practice or in theory, between the Knowledge of Brahman and the performance of religious rites with or without meditations.

The third division of the Upanishad is known as the Khilakānda, or supplementary section. It contains ethical disciplines and certain forms of meditation helpful for the Knowledge of Brahman. The message of the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* regarding the essence of Reality is given in V. i. 1. The ethical doctrines of the Upanishad are stated in the introduction (V. ii. 1.) regarding self-control, charity, and compassion, by means of which one can suppress, respectively, passion, greed, and anger. The last part of the Khilakānda describes the religious rites and disciplines by which one can earn wealth and procreate righteous children, both of which are necessary in order to enjoy happiness here on earth and after death.

I have tried to show that there is an inner unity throughout the entire *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*. It teaches the non-duality of Reality, and not dualism, qualified non-dualism, the doctrine of difference-and-identity, or any other system. To be sure, there are scholars who do not find this unity of thought in the Upanishad but maintain that it contains different views of Brahman by various thinkers, unrelated to one another. Some try to explain the Upanishad with the help of philology. Others, again, apply the rational method of modern times. They all, it appears, miss the aim of the Upanishad, namely, Self-Knowledge, which transcends logic but does not contradict it.

The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* has been divided by Śankara into six parts, which, again, are subdivided into a total of forty-seven chapters, called brāhmanas. Each chapter contains a number of verses, called kandikās. I shall now give a brief summary of the book.

## PART ONE

Part one contains six chapters. The first, consisting of two verses, and the second, consisting of seven, are devoted to the meditation on the horse and the fire used in the Horse-sacrifice. This, the highest of all Vedic rites, confers upon the sacrificer the boon of attaining Brahmāloka, the highest heaven. Only a kshatriya king is entitled to perform this sacrifice. Others, however, can obtain its result through a symbolic meditation in which the different parts of the sacrificial horse are to be regarded as the different parts of the Creator Prajāpati's body. Brahmāloka is the most exalted plane in the universe. Brahmā, its presiding Deity, is the first manifestation of Brahman, or the Absolute, as a person.<sup>8</sup> An inhabitant of Brahmāloka is conscious of his individuality and at the same time knows his identity with all created entities; thus he enjoys in Brahmāloka a happiness which is unknown to the denizens of other planes, among whom the notion of separation engenders selfishness and sorrow. But Brahmāloka, like everything else in the universe, is impermanent, and so also the happiness experienced there. One who knows this fact becomes dissatisfied with all rites and meditations in which the distinction between the worshipper and the Deity is admitted, and becomes eager for the Knowledge of Brahman, which alone enables one to attain Freedom and Immortality.

The second chapter deals with the origin of the fire used in the Horse-sacrifice. It is created from Hiranyagarbha. One meditating on this fire as Virāj, the physical body of Prajāpati, purifies it. According to the Upanishads, worship may be performed with or without meditation, and will produce accordingly different results. As a result of mechanical worship without meditation, one is born again on earth as a human being. But when the worship is accompanied by meditation on a deity, the worshipper attains the planes associated with that deity. The chapter further describes the evolution of names and forms from Hiranyagarbha. Before the creation, the universe existed as Hiranyagarbha, or the Cosmic Mind, just as a pot, before it is shaped, exists as clay.

<sup>8</sup> See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, pp. 68-71.

The third chapter, consisting of twenty-eight verses, describes the origin of the gods and demons; both are called sons of Prajāpati, and also His organs. When the organs think and act in a righteous manner they are called gods; when they do not, they are called demons. According to the *Aitareya Upanishad*, Prajāpati first projected out of Himself the various physical planes. Next, wishing to create their protectors or guardians, He created from the five elements the Cosmic Person (Virāj) in the shape of an egg. Soon after, the different organs separated out of the egg. The Creator entered into them in different forms. As Agni, the deity fire, He entered the tongue, the organ of speech; as Vāyu, the deity air, the nostrils, the organ of smell; as Surya, the deity sun, the eye, the organ of seeing; as Dik, the deity of the quarters of space, the ear, the organ of hearing; and as Vāyu, the deity air, the skin, the organ of touch. As Chandra, the deity moon, He entered the hridaya, the heart or mind. Prajāpati Himself became the prāna, or vital breath. These devatās, or cosmic deities, were later associated with the organs of individual creatures and became their controlling powers. The organs, themselves inert by nature, cannot perform their functions unless they are animated by Consciousness, which manifests Itself in the physical world as the cosmic deities. Thus the same spirit, or deity, controls both the sun and the eye, fire and the tongue, and so on. This chapter of the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* narrates how, on account of selfishness, the organs of the individual creatures were smitten by the demons, or evil tendencies, and lost contact with their cosmic counterparts. They were rescued by the prāna, or vital breath, which alone functions unselfishly in the embodied being. The vital breath, as already mentioned, is the manifestation of Prajāpati Himself, the Cosmic Prāna. The chapter ends by singing the praise of Prāna.

The fourth chapter consists of seventeen verses. It has already been stated that either through Vedic rites associated with meditation on a deity or through meditation alone a seeker can attain the position of Prajāpati. Though Prajāpati is endowed with many exalted virtues, such as omniscience and omnipresence, yet He too belongs to the realm of phenomena and is not altogether free. The experience of real Freedom and Bliss is possible only through the Knowledge of the Self. The present chapter begins with a statement of the phenomenal nature of Prajāpati. Before the manifestation of the universe He existed alone as Virāj: He was frightened and unhappy. In order to rid Himself of unhappiness, He projected out of Himself, through His wondrous

power of *māyā*, a male and a female form—without, however, effacing His own individual existence. From the union of the male and female forms the race of man was produced. Afterwards He projected pairs of the different species, down to the insects. Thus subhuman beings came into existence. Next He projected the gods—the superhuman beings: Fire from His mouth; Indra, Varuna, and the other gods from His arms; the Vasus, Rudras, and other beings from His thighs; and Pushan from His feet. After the different bodies were manifested, *Ātman* (Consciousness) entered into them all and permeated them to the very tips of the nails. *Ātman* lay hidden in them as fire lies hidden in firewood or a razor in its case. It is *Ātman* that works in the body through the different organs, and is called variously according to their different functions: when breathing, It is called the *prāna*; when speaking, the organ of speech; when hearing, the ear; when thinking, the mind. In *Ātman* alone all the organs are unified. When *Ātman* is known all things are known. It is dearer than a son, dearer than wealth, and dearer than everything else; It is the innermost essence of all. Brahman is to be meditated upon as *Ātman* alone. That Brahman is endowed with omniscience is the result of Its realization that It *Itself* is Brahman. The rishi *Vāmadeva*, too, became omniscient through the Knowledge of *Ātman*. Even the gods cannot injure the knower of *Ātman*, because he becomes their *Ātman*, or self, too. The ignorant<sup>9</sup> man who worships the gods, regarding them as other than his *Ātman*, becomes subservient to them. The gods obstruct his spiritual progress. The person who is ignorant of *Ātman* is committed to the life of *samsāra*, governed by the laws of caste (*jāti*) etc. He performs various rites and rotates in the round of birth and death. In the beginning all people belonged to the *brāhmin* caste. But society cannot flourish without a protector; so the *kshatriya* or military caste was created. But there cannot be any social well-being without wealth; so the *vaiśya* caste was created. And since manual work is necessary to sustain the social structure, the *śudra* caste came into being. In order to control the fierce nature of the military, *dharma* or justice was promulgated. Lest the strong man should use justice in his own interest, *dharma* became embodied in truth. Further, the social structure remains strong when its members discharge their

<sup>9</sup> The word *ignorant*, frequently used in the Upanishads and other Vedāntic texts, refers to persons who have not attained to the Knowledge of Brahman or *Ātman*. All knowledge of the phenomenal world, which is the product of *avidyā*, is called ignorance. The realization of the identity of Brahman and *Ātman* is alone called *Vidyā*, or Knowledge.

mutual obligations. Human beings receive benefits from the gods by paying off their debts to them through the performance of rites. All beings in the phenomenal universe—from the gods to the insects—must perform their respective duties to others for the happiness and welfare of all. Thus even the best life in the world is a life of dependence, and the root cause of dependence is desire, which manifests itself through the longing for a mate and for wealth. It is desire that impels a man to perform religious rites. "Being infatuated with rites performed with the help of fire, and choked with smoke, they do not know their own World, the Self." (*Tai. Br.* III. x. 11. 1.)

The fifth chapter consists of twenty-three verses; highly allegorical and hence abstruse, it deals with the manifestations of Prajāpati in the world of names and forms. The ignorant person is both the enjoyer and the object of enjoyment of the whole universe; everyone is alternately the cause and effect of everyone else. The universe which the ignorant man projects, through meditation and rites, as his object of enjoyment, being divided in its entirety into seven parts, as causes and effects, is called the seven kinds of food. Hence the ignorant man is the father of seven kinds of food. Not Hiranyagarbha alone, but every being in a particular cycle who performs meditation and rites, is spoken of in this chapter as the father of all in the next cycle. The first verse is from the Mantra portion of the Vedas; the second verse explains it. Of the seven kinds of food, one is common to all and sustains the life of all beings. He who keeps this food only for himself becomes a prey to evil. Two foods are assigned to the gods; they represent oblations and other presents to the gods. One food is assigned to animals; the reference is to milk. New-born creatures, among both men and animals, live on milk. The remaining three are kept for the individual himself. They are—from the standpoint of the body—the mind, the organ of speech, and the vital breath (*prāna*), and—from the standpoint of the subtle elements—the earth, the sky, and heaven; the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sāma-Veda; the gods, the Manes, and men; father, mother, and child; the known, the unknown, and the knowable. Verses 11-14 explain the mind, the organ of speech, and the vital breath, from the standpoint of the gods. The mind, the organ of speech, and the vital breath are infinite, and an infinite world is won by him who meditates on them as such. Next Prajāpati is described as the year, consisting of sixteen parts. He who meditates on Prajāpati as such becomes Prajāpati. Verse 16 speaks of the son, of rites, and of meditation as

means to obtain the worlds of men, the Manes, and the gods. Of the mind, the organ of speech, and the vital breath, the last is the greatest, since the prāna goes on functioning even when the other organs are tired. Likewise, among their cosmic counterparts, Vāyu is the greatest of the gods. The prāna is the manifestation of Prajāpati in the individual body. The chapter closes with a eulogy of the prāna; by meditation on its true nature the worshipper transcends his particular body and attains identity with all that exists, of which Prajāpati is the symbol.

The sixth chapter, consisting of three verses, states that the relative universe is composed of name, form, and action alone. They are all non-Self and therefore other than Ātman, or Brahman. The purpose of the chapter is to exhort the aspirant to turn away from the universe. One whose mind is not detached from the non-Self, or the universe, cannot meditate upon the self as Brahman. For those who become averse to the non-Self, the following section deals with the Knowledge of the Self.

## PART TWO

This part comprises six chapters and contains sixty-six verses. The first part dealt with Hiranyagarbha, who is also known as Prāna and Saguna Brahman. Saguna Brahman has different aspects, determined by His association with different upādhis, or limiting adjuncts. The first chapter, consisting of twenty verses, describes Saguna Brahman through a dialogue between Gārgya and King Ajātaśatru. Gārgya says to the king that he worships the deities controlling the sun, moon, lightning, etc. as the Supreme Brahman. Ajātaśatru replies that all these deities, being various forms of Hiranyagarbha, are Saguna Brahman and belong to the realm of phenomena; they are not the Supreme Brahman. Next he explains the Supreme Brahman to Gārgya through the illustrations of dreaming and deep sleep. In dreams the sense-organs do not come in contact with external objects; they remain inactive. At that time the self experiences happiness or misery as determined by its experiences of the waking state. During both the waking and the dream state, the real Self remains unattached, relative experiences being superimposed upon It through ignorance. In deep sleep the true nature of the Self is revealed. Completely free from the pairs of opposites, It dwells in Its own splendour, like a baby or an emperor or a noble brāhmin, and reaches the summit of happiness. Like sparks from a

blazing fire which fly in all directions, the organs, the worlds, the gods, and all beings come forth from Ātman.

The second chapter, consisting of four verses, describes the vital breath, or prāna, as a calf which has the body as its abode, the head as its special resort, strength as its post, and food as its rope. Next are mentioned certain secret names of the vital breath with reference to the eye, which is a part of the head and therefore a special resort of the vital breath. Further descriptions are given of the prāna with reference to the other organs located in the head.

The third chapter, consisting of six verses, describes the two forms of the Supreme Brahman, the gross and the subtle, through which alone the Absolute can be grasped by the finite mind. The gross form consists of three elements, namely, fire, water, and earth. The solar orb is its essence. The subtle form of Brahman consists of two elements, namely, ākāśa and air. The person who dwells in the sun is its essence. The same two forms are then described from the standpoint of the body. The eye is the essence of the gross form, and the person dwelling in the right eye, of the subtle form. On account of being the essence of the subtle, the person dwelling in the eye is also subtle. One accepts his existence from the evidence of the scriptures. This person really denotes the subtle body, which consists of impressions of the gross and subtle objects deposited in the mind. The five elements, from which the body and the organs are created, are called "truth." The Supreme Brahman, which transcends all the elements, is called the "Truth of truth," and can be known only through the elimination of all attributes and distinguishing marks.

The fourth chapter, consisting of fourteen verses, contains the well-known dialogue between Yājñavalkya and his second wife, Maitreyi. The Vedas teach the means of attaining both worldly prosperity and Liberation, or Immortality. Prosperity is obtained by means of religious rites and is enjoyed through transmigratory life in the phenomenal universe, whose highest achievement is the World of Hiranyagarbha. When a person is satiated with enjoyment in samsāra, the domain of ignorance, he seeks Immortality by means of knowledge leading to Self-Knowledge. One is not qualified for this until one has renounced all worldly possessions. Yājñavalkya, who is a householder and a ritualist, on the eve of his embracing the monastic life teaches Maitreyi the secret of Immortality. She spurns the gift of material possessions and longs only for that which enables one to go beyond death. Yājñavalkya speaks to her about the Self, for the sake of which one loves everything

in the world, including wife, husband, children, wealth, etc. It alone is the source of attraction between one object and another, and the origin of all things. When one knows the Self, one knows everything. The Self, which is the same as the non-dual Brahman, alone exists and is the unrelated substratum of the universe. As Pure Intelligence, It is the essence of all things. All entities, like sparks from a fire, come from the Self at the time of creation, and, like foam and bubbles, they disappear in the Self at the time of dissolution. Individual names and forms are projected by avidyā. Once the notion of separation is destroyed through Self-Knowledge, the soul becomes absorbed in the Supreme Self and no more returns to the phenomenal world, just as a lump of salt, once dissolved in the ocean, cannot again be separated from it. When oneness with the Supreme Self is realized, the idea of a separate individuality altogether disappears. But this does not mean a cessation of existence. For the idea of individuality and otherness belongs only to the sphere of duality, which is conjured up by ignorance. When, through knowledge, one realizes that the entire world of phenomena is identical with the non-dual Self, then one no longer perceives the distinction of seer, seeing, and object of seeing.

The fifth chapter, consisting of nineteen verses, describes in the first twelve verses the interdependence and the mutual causal relationship of all entities in the phenomenal universe through the "Doctrine of Honey" (madhu-vidyā) and states that the Self is the ultimate origin of all. When ignorance is dispelled, one sees all these entities as nothing but the Self, just as a mirage is ultimately realized to be nothing but the desert. The Knowledge of the Self is the means to Immortality. Through this Knowledge one becomes all. A eulogy of Self-Knowledge is given, in conclusion, through the story of Dadhyāch and the Aśvins from two mantras of the Vedas. The fifth chapter demonstrates through reason what is stated in the fourth chapter as a proposition, namely, that Self-Knowledge, which is the means to Immortality, is to be attained through proper instruction from a qualified teacher, reflection, and meditation.

The sixth chapter gives the line of teachers through which the instruction of the first two parts of the *Brihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* has been transmitted. The line begins with Hiranyagarbha, who received the instruction from Brahman through direct revelation. The Vedic knowledge has a divine origin and was not created by the human intellect.

## PART THREE

Yājñavalkya is the teacher in the third and the fourth parts; therefore they are called by Sureśvarāchārya the Yājñavalkyakānda or Muni-kānda. These two parts deal with the same Knowledge of Brahman, or Ātman, which has been described in the first two parts. But this is not a case of repetition; for what has been established in the earlier parts through scriptural evidence is demonstrated later on through reasoning. The third part contains nine chapters and ninety-two verses in all; it describes, through the story of King Janaka, the means of acquiring Knowledge: first, appropriate gifts to the teacher, and next, association and discussion with scholars. King Janaka's court furnishes the platform for discussion; according to the story, the king, in order to obtain knowledge, offers a suitable prize to be awarded to the greatest knower of Brahman. Yājñavalkya, who is an expert both in rituals and in the Knowledge of Brahman, claims the prize but is challenged by Aśvala, Janaka's chief priest. The priest, himself an expert ritualist, asks Yājñavalkya certain technical questions regarding sacrificial rites and is silenced by Yājñavalkya. We learn from this chapter that if a sacrifice is performed with a desire for a material result, the sacrificer becomes a victim of new birth, followed again by death. But if certain meditations are practised along with the rituals, then the sacrificer obtains liberation from this death and qualifies himself for "complete liberation," which is the result of the realization of oneness with Hiranyagarbha. This "complete liberation," of course, is quite different from the Liberation attained through Self-Knowledge.

In the second chapter, consisting of thirteen verses, the interlocutor is Ārtabhāga. It deals with the meaning of death, which is defined as identification with the perishable sense-organs and their objects. The person who has freed himself from this identification through the Knowledge of the Self merges, after the falling off of the body, in Brahman. But the unillumined person continues his transmigratory existence governed by the law of karma.

In the third chapter, consisting of two verses, the challenger is Bhujyu. This chapter teaches that even the highest attainment in the relative universe is finite, being the effect of ritualistic action. Neither simple action, nor action performed with meditation, nor disinterested action can directly bring about Liberation. Even life in the World of

Hiranyagarbha is a limited one. The chapter also describes the dimensions of the cosmic orb, which constitutes the body of Virāj.

In the fourth chapter, consisting of two verses, Ushasta asks Yājñavalkya to point out, in a direct manner, the Brahman which is the indwelling self in man. By "self" he means the individual self, which is the accepted meaning of the term. Yājñavalkya describes it as the entity which directs the different vital breaths—such as the prāna and apāna—to perform their functions. It has nothing to do with the Supreme Self.

In the fifth chapter, which consists of only one verse, Kahola repeats Ushasta's question regarding the self, which, however, in the present instance denotes the Supreme Self. The individual self, through identification with the organs and through attachment to objects, becomes subject to death. But the Supreme Self is beyond hunger and thirst, grief and delusion, old age and death. Yājñavalkya teaches that the chief discipline for the Knowledge of the Self is renunciation of all desires, the three most important of which are desire for sons, for wealth, and for the heavenly world. This discipline implies acceptance of the monastic life as the prerequisite for the Knowledge of Brahman.

In the sixth chapter, consisting of one verse, Gārgi, the woman philosopher, is the questioner. She wants Ultimate Reality to be demonstrated through the logic of causality. Yājñavalkya replies that the effect being gross, and the cause subtle, the effect is pervaded by the cause. And in describing the causes of the various entities in the phenomenal universe, proceeding from the gross to the subtle, Yājñavalkya shows that Hiranyagarbha, the most subtle of all phenomenal entities, is the final cause that can be determined by the rational method. When Gārgi then wants to know the cause of Hiranyagarbha, Yājñavalkya warns her not to push her logic too far. Brahman, which is the Ultimate Cause, cannot be known through reason but only on the authority of the scriptures, which are based upon the direct, immediate, and intuitive experience of the seers.

The seventh chapter, consisting of twenty-three verses, describes the Inner Guide, the Antaryāmin. Uddalaka is the interlocutor. He asks Yājñavalkya about the Sutra, the Thread, by which all phenomenal objects are held together, and also about the Inner Controller, who controls this world, the next world, and all beings. Yājñavalkya replies that Hiranyagarbha, who is the support of the elements and the essence of the universe, is the Thread. He describes the Inner Controller as

that Being who inhabits the earth, water, fire, the sun, the moon, and all material entities, who is within them all, whom these entities do not know, whose body all these entities are, and who controls all entities from within. This Inner Controller is the immortal Self. He is never seen, but is the Seer, never heard but is the Hearer, never known but is the Knower. Everything else but Him lies in the realm of phenomena and is perishable.

The eighth chapter, consisting of twelve verses, presents Gārgi for the second time as Yājñavalkya's challenger. She wants to know what pervades the Sutra, which itself pervades all created objects. Yājñavalkya replies that the scriptures describe It through the negation of all attributes, as the Imperishable Brahman. In order to refute a possible contention that such an entity, devoid of all attributes or indicative features, may very well be non-existent, Yājñavalkya says that the existence of Brahman, though it cannot be logically proved, may be established through certain inferential evidences. One of these is the orderliness of creation. Like a boundary wall, Brahman preserves the distinctions among all created entities and keeps them all within their limits. Under the control of Brahman, the stars and planets move along their fixed orbits, time flows in an orderly fashion, the rivers keep to their fixed courses, cause and effect function unerringly in the physical and in the moral world. Brahman is the intangible bridge that connects human beings with the gods, the living with the dead. Though a man is seen to be bound by the laws of time, space, and causality, yet there exists in him an irresistible longing for Freedom—which can be realized only through the Knowledge of Brahman. Except Brahman, or Consciousness, there is no other seer, no other hearer, no other thinker, no other knower. It alone is the Ultimate Reality. After listening to Yājñavalkya's reply, Gārgi announces to the scholars that it will be impossible to defeat him in an argument.

The ninth chapter, consisting of twenty-eight verses, contains the questions of Śākalya, who is a sophist and a redoubtable debater. On account of his impudence Śākalya loses his head. The purpose of this chapter is to convey the directness and immediacy of Brahman. In answer to the question regarding the innumerable deities mentioned in the Vedas, Yājñavalkya states that it is Hiranyagarbha who expands Himself into many deities and contracts them into one. The one God has different names, forms, activities, attributes, and powers, owing to differences of function. People practise different kinds of meditation,

perform different rites, and thus acquire different grades of mental culture. The various gods are but parts of one Cosmic Energy, Hiranyagarbha. Next are described, for the purpose of meditation, the different aspects of the vital breath in the body. Verses 18-24 state how the diversity of creation is unified in the mind. The body and the mind are each other's supports. Their support is the Imperishable Brahman, which can be known only from the evidence of the scriptures. Yājñavalkya asks Śākalya about this Brahman and warns him of his sure death if he cannot answer him. Śākalya, who relies solely upon logic, remains silent and as a result drops dead. Yājñavalkya asks the scholars to interrogate him in any manner they want to; but they keep silent. Finally he asks them about the ultimate root of man and the universe, and they cannot answer. The Upanishad itself states, in reply, that Brahman is the ultimate root of man; during his wandering on earth from birth to birth, he is guided by the law of karma.

#### PART FOUR

The fourth part, divided into six chapters, contains ninety-two verses. The scene is still the court of Janaka, and Yājñavalkya starts the discussion. Brahman is the topic. The first chapter consists of seven verses. In reply to Yājñavalkya, Janaka tells him that he has been instructed by his various teachers to regard the organ of speech, the prāna, the organs of seeing and hearing, the mind, and the heart as Brahman. Yājñavalkya explains that their presiding deities are only different aspects of Brahman, and not Brahman Itself.

In the second chapter, consisting of four verses, Yājñavalkya instructs Janaka by means of the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. The self, functioning through them under different names, at last realizes its transcendental nature (Turiya) and becomes free from fear, grief, and other phenomenal attributes.

The third chapter consists of thirty-eight verses and describes, through a dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Janaka, the identity of the individual self and the Supreme Self. The method is the analysis of the experiences of the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. The second chapter has described the identification of the self with the gross, subtle, and causal bodies for the purpose of different experiences, and the final realization of its identity with the transcendental Brahman. All this has been presented on scriptural authority. The same end is accomplished in the present chapter through reasoning. Janaka

asks Yājñavalkya what serves as light for a man in his daily life—when he moves about and works. Is this light essentially different from the body and outside it? Yājñavalkya says that the sun, the moon, fire, sounds, etc. serve as light; with the help of these a man performs his external activities. Janaka agrees that they no doubt function in this way in the waking state and that they are outside a man. But how—he asks—does one account for the experience of dreaming and dreamless sleep? In dreams, too, one participates in action: one goes about, meets friends, and so on. Furthermore, dreamless sleep is not a state of utter void. Even in that state a man experiences something—as is known from the statement he makes after awaking, that he slept happily. Now, external lights being absent, what illumines the experiences of dreams and deep sleep? Yājñavalkya speaks of the light that is in every man. What is this inner light? It is the self, which is different from the sense-organs and the mind but is their illuminer. The following question now arises. A man possesses a body, senses, mind, and vital breath: which one among these is his self? The reply is that the self is identified with the intellect, is in the midst of the sense-organs, and is the self-effulgent light perceived within the heart. Assuming the likeness of the intellect, it moves between the states of waking and dreaming (and also between this world and the next while it transmigrates). It is the intellect which does the thinking; waking, dreaming, and deep sleep are its different modifications. Since the self becomes identified with the intellect on account of avidyā, it appears to think, move about, and act in other ways, like a light which appears to be coloured when reflected in a coloured object; but in reality, the self does not think or move about. Identified with the intellect, the self moves between the waking and the dream states, alternately discarding and taking up a gross body and organs; likewise it moves between this world and the next, alternately taking up and discarding a gross body and organs. Dream experiences consist largely of impressions gathered during the waking state. Some of the dream experiences, however, are different from those impressions, though they are not altogether new. They must be the result of impressions of experiences in past lives. When a person dreams, he makes use of the impressions of the waking state (of this or another life), makes the body of the waking state unconscious and creates a dream body in its place, and thus dreams. In this state the person is self-illuminated. The diverse experiences in dreams—such as of vehicles, animals, roads, pleasures,

and joys—are not really there for the dreamer. He creates them from past impressions and illumines them by his inner light. Thus the self moves about between different states, remaining unfettered by any of them, like a large fish which moves between two banks of a river without touching either of them. Next the state of deep sleep is described. When a man is tired of the experiences of waking and dreaming, he goes into deep sleep; he then cherishes no more desires and dreams no more dreams. He acts like a hawk which, when tired, folds its wings and makes for its nest.

The Upanishads often describe, through the illustration of dreamless sleep, the experience of the union of the individual self and the Supreme Self. This experience is characterized by absence of desires and of consciousness of the pairs of opposites, and is accompanied by ineffable bliss. Since duality ceases to exist, the self does not in that state possess the knowledge of any specific object. The state is one of consciousness without content; but it is not by any means an unconscious state. If there were a break in consciousness, then the illumined soul, after regaining knowledge of the relative world, would not remember preceding experiences. Further, if consciousness were mutable, then there would have to be another consciousness to witness this mutability. This position leads to the logical fallacy of infinite regress. Consciousness appears to possess a content only in the realm of duality, where one, as it were, sees another, hears another, knows another. Though the self, when experiencing unity, does not see, taste, touch, or know any object, yet it remains as the unchanging knower of knowing, seeing, touching, etc. On account of *avidyā*, the Eternal Subject becomes polarized, as it were, into subject and object. The supreme joy felt in the experience of unity is the result of the absence of duality; of such a joy, husband and wife get a taste when they become one in loving embrace.

The state of deep sleep, too, has the above-mentioned features of the supreme unity. In that state all relative ideas of bondage, scriptures, gods, caste, creed, the world, and good and evil are transcended. The self is not aware of any object; yet it is not unconscious. Otherwise, after waking, it would have no memory of what happened before it went to sleep. In deep sleep it possesses a general consciousness and exists, one and without a second. Every day, a man experiences in deep sleep the union of the individual self with the Supreme Self (*āharaha Brahma gamayati*). But it must be remembered that deep sleep is not

the same as the Knowledge of Ātman. In the former state, the Supreme Knowledge is covered by a fine (sukshma) layer of ignorance (ajnānavritti); that is why one in deep sleep appears bereft of consciousness, as is known by the statement he makes after awaking: "*I did not know anything at that time; I slept happily.*" The reason for his happiness is the absence of duality.

Verse 33 conveys an idea of the Supreme Happiness by stating that the different forms of happiness—including the highest experienced in the relative world—are but particles of that Supreme Happiness.

The verses from 35 to the end of the chapter describe the manner of the soul's giving up the present body and assuming a new one. The subtle body, along with the organs and the prāna, accompanies the soul to the next birth. Where does the soul find materials for its future body? It chooses from the physical universe such material ingredients as will lead to the experience of the results of its past actions. These same past actions determine the future parents who will provide it with a body helpful for this same purpose. But the Supreme Self Itself remains completely unaffected by the experiences of repeated births and deaths, just as It is not affected by the experiences of waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep.

The fourth chapter, consisting of twenty-five verses, deals in detail with the subject of death and rebirth, already introduced (IV. iii. 36). The knowledge gathered in a man's present life and the impressions created by his action accompany the dying man. As the deities controlling the organs cease to function, the man who is about to leave the body loses the power to speak, see, think, or act. Next, the impressions, while they are still in the dying body, create a new body, determined by past knowledge and work, and enter into it. As the self enters the new body, the organs are developed under the guidance of their controlling deities. This is explained by the illustration of gold. As the goldsmith, from the gold he possesses, fashions a newer or better form, so the self fashions a body suited for the world it will inhabit, be it a higher or a lower one. According as it acts and behaves, so it becomes: by doing good it becomes good, by doing evil it becomes evil. Rebirth is determined by the desires the self cherishes. After reaping the fruit of its desires in a higher or lower world, the soul is born in a human body for new action. The superhuman or subhuman body which the soul takes up before being born in a human body is the medium for the experience of the results of past action. In

such bodies one does not perform any work producing fresh results. But the man who has suppressed all desires is not embodied again, because the cause of embodiment is absent. He merges in Brahman. At death the illumined person discards the body, as a snake its old skin, and attains Liberation, which can be achieved by all living beings. Even while dwelling in the body, the illumined person does not torment it by cherishing vain desires. He realizes himself as the self of all and gives up ill-feeling and secretiveness. No mishap, either here or hereafter, can befall a knower of Brahman. Though dwelling in the mortal body, he experiences the bliss and freedom of Immortality. The seeker after the Knowledge of Brahman must give up all worldly talk, which only wearies the tongue. He should cultivate a stainless mind, by which alone he can go beyond diversity and death and realize the oneness of existence. For the purification of the mind, the aspirant should study the scriptures, perform worship and meditation, and practise austerities conducive to this end. In quest of the Supreme Self, he gives up the longing for offspring, wealth, and the heavenly world, all of which bring only a transitory happiness. But the glory of the Self is eternal, without increase or decrease. The Self is the essence of fearlessness, and he who realizes It becomes, indeed, fearless.

The fifth chapter, consisting of fifteen verses, contains a dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī which is virtually a repetition of the fourth chapter of the second part of the Upanishad. The Knowledge of Brahman has been stated, in the latter, as a proposition on scriptural authority. The third part gives the logical proof. The present chapter, following a familiar method of Indian logic, arrives at the conclusion and repeats the proposition.

The sixth chapter consists of three verses. It presents the line of teachers through whom the instruction given in the third and fourth parts of the Upanishads has been transmitted.

## PART FIVE

The fifth and sixth parts of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* together are called the *Khilakānda*, or Supplementary Part. The fifth part consists of fifteen chapters totaling thirty-one verses. The first verse gives the gist of the entire Upanishad, namely, the nature of Brahman, of the manifested universe, and of their mutual relationship. Brahman, beyond time, space, and causality, is infinite. The universe, which is projected from Brahman through *māyā*, is also infinite, because in

reality it is nothing but Brahman. When the physical universe merges in Brahman on the destruction of ignorance, the Infinite Brahman alone remains. This statement may be illustrated by the example of a desert, which, without undergoing any change in itself, produces the illusion of a mirage. When the mirage merges in the desert, as the true nature of the mirage is known, there remains the desert alone. If Brahman and the universe, the apparent cause and effect, were two different entities, then the creation and dissolution of the universe would change the nature of Brahman by a decrease or an increase in Its size. But the creation is *māyā*, and hence not real. The next verse speaks of Om as the effective symbol of Brahman, which cannot be meditated upon without a symbol.

The second chapter, consisting of three verses, deals with the ethics of the Upanishad. Three types of human beings are found in society: the godlike man, the average man, and the demoniacal man. In order to attain perfection, the godlike man, who lacks self-control, should practise restraint of body and senses; the average man, who is greedy, should practise charity; and the cruel, demoniacal man should cultivate compassion. Thus alone can be curbed passion, greed, and anger, the main obstacles to spiritual progress.

The third chapter, consisting of one verse, speaks of the Conditioned Brahman, or *Prajāpati*, who, in the microcosm, or individual, is the heart. He who meditates on *Prajāpati* as the heart attains happiness here and hereafter. The fourth chapter, of one verse, describes *Prajāpati* as the *Satya Brahman*, which consists of gross and subtle forms. The fifth chapter, of four verses, begins with a eulogy of the *Satya Brahman* and then teaches how to meditate on Its different parts. The *purusha* (conscious person) who dwells in and controls both the solar orb and the right eye is Its symbol. The head, two arms, and two legs are Its three limbs. They are represented by *Bhur* (earth), *Bhuvar* (sky), and *Svar* (heaven), which are called the three *vyāhritis*. The sixth chapter, of one verse, states that the same Brahman, conditioned by the mind, is meditated upon by the yogis in their hearts as of the size of a grain of rice, but that It is the lord and ruler of all. The seventh chapter, of one verse, teaches the meditation upon the Conditioned Brahman as lightning. The eighth chapter, of one verse, teaches the meditation upon the Conditioned Brahman as the Vedas, through the symbol of a cow. The ninth chapter, of one verse, teaches the meditation on the same Brahman through the

symbol of the fire in the stomach, which digests food. The tenth chapter, of one verse, describes the goal and the fruit of the different meditations stated above. The worshipper attains the World of Hiranyagarbha and enjoys happiness there for endless years. The eleventh chapter, of one verse, speaks of the suffering from illness, the funeral procession, and cremation as different forms of austerity. One who regards them as such and does not bemoan them obtains the same result as a man gains from the practice of religious austerities. The twelfth chapter, of one verse, teaches that the combination of food and the vital breath is the symbol of the Conditioned Brahman. The word *food* here means the body, which is a modification of the food one eats. The vital breath is the source of strength. The thirteenth chapter, of four verses, asks the aspirant to meditate upon the prāna, a form of the Conditioned Brahman, through the symbols of the Uktha (the most important among the Vedic hymns of praise), the Yajus, the Sāman, and the Kshatra. The fourteenth chapter, consisting of eight verses, teaches the meditation on the Conditioned Brahman through the symbol of the Gāyatri mantra, the most sacred verse of the Vedas. The Gāyatri is also the name of a metre which has three feet of eight syllables each. This mantra is written in the Gāyatri metre. The three worlds—earth, sky, and heaven—constitute the first foot of the Gāyatri; the three Vedas—the Rig, the Yajur, and the Sāma—the second foot; and the prāna, the apāna, and the samāna, the third foot. Next is described a subtle foot of the Gāyatri, which is the fourth (turiya); it is the sun, that is to say, the Conscious Being (Prajāpati) who controls the sun. Yogis alone can recognize this Being; others see only the solar orb. The same Prajāpati dwells in the body as the prāna, which protects the sense-organs. The seventh verse contains the salutation to the Gāyatri and mentions one of its aspects, which is devoid of feet. In this aspect the Gāyatri is the Unconditioned Brahman, devoid of attributes.

The fifteenth chapter contains a single verse. It is a prayer to the Person dwelling in the sun, that is to say, the Satya Brahman, by a dying man who has combined both meditation and rites in his spiritual discipline. The text is identical with verses 15-18 of the *Īśa Upanishad*.

## PART SIX

The sixth part contains five chapters. The aim of the first chapter, which consists of fourteen verses, is to demonstrate the superiority

of the *prāna*, or vital breath. It is the *prāna* that preserves the embryo before the sense-organs begin to function. Later, after they have developed, it enables them to function. The chapter narrates a story of the sense-organs' dispute among themselves about their respective superiority. It is found, however, that even if one particular organ ceases to function, a person can live with the help of the other organs. But they all become helpless without the vital breath, which keeps the body alive. The previous chapter has described the *prāna* as the *Gāyatri*. It is also *Prajāpati* functioning in the body.

The second chapter, consisting of sixteen verses, describes by way of questions and answers what has previously been omitted: the ways followed by the soul after a person's death, the various stages through which the soul passes before it is reincarnated in a human body, and other similar matters. King *Pravāhana* imparts this instruction to the *brāhmin* *Gautama*. Prior to this time this highly mystical knowledge had been known only to the *kshatriya* teachers. When asked how many offerings of oblations are necessary before the soul again becomes embodied in a human form, the king enumerates five. Upon the cremation of the dead body, the immortal part of the man rises from the funeral pyre—like the libation of soma juice, milk, etc. poured into the sacrificial fire—and ascends in a spiritual form to the gods. This immortal part is variously referred to by *Yājñavalkya* as "work" (*karma*), "water" (*āpas*), and "faith" (*śraddhā*); all three terms, however, signify essentially the same thing, inasmuch as the peculiar essence or soul of the "work," which ascends as the sacrificial vapour ("water"), is the "faith" with which it is offered. The gods then offer this "faith" as a libation in the sacrificial fire of heaven, and out of their offering is born King Moon, who is the king of the Manes. This is the first sacrificial fire. (The meaning here is that the soul of the dead person has acquired an aqueous body which enables him to dwell in the world of the Moon; for though the body contains other materials, it is mainly aqueous.) The second sacrificial fire is that of the cloud-world, where the gods offer King Moon as a libation and rain is produced. The third is that of the earth, where the gods offer rain as the libation and food is produced. Man is the fourth sacrificial fire, where the gods offer food as the libation and semen is produced. And woman is the fifth sacrificial fire, where the gods offer semen as the libation and a man is born. In other words, the soul of the dead man first goes, in a subtle form, to the world of the Moon and

enjoys there the fruit of the action he has performed while on earth. After this fruit has been reaped, the soul comes down to the clouds and descends through rain upon the earth. Through rain it enters into barley or rice or other food, and through the food it enters into a man and becomes his semen. The semen is poured into a woman and the soul is born in a human form. Thus the fifth libation becomes a human being. King Pravāhana uses the symbol of the sacrifice in order to give a spiritual interpretation of life.

The next question deals with the ways through which the departed soul travels. There are two ways: the Way of the Gods (*devayāna*) and the Way of the Manes (*pitriyāna*). The Way of the Gods is followed, for example, by a pious householder who, living in the forest during the third stage of life, meditates on Hiranyagarbha. His corpse is offered to the fire, after the manner of a sacrifice, and from it the soul emerges in radiant splendour. The soul first enters into the flame, thence into the day, thence into the bright half of the month when the moon waxes, thence into the bright half of the year when the sun travels northward, thence into the world of the gods, thence into the sun, thence into the lightning, and finally into the World of Hiranyagarbha, where it enjoys felicity for endless years. The different stages of the journey signify the deities controlling them. The meaning of the whole seems to be that the soul, on the way to its destination, passes through regions of ever increasing light, in which is concentrated all that is bright and radiant. But the householder who does not know the meditation on the Five Fires but is a mere ritualist follows the Way of the Manes and travels through regions of darkness. His soul first reaches smoke, thence the fortnight in which the moon wanes, thence the six months during which the sun travels southward, thence the world of the Manes, thence the world of the Moon, where it dwells as a servant of the gods, reaping the fruit of its past work on earth; and after the exhaustion of this fruit it is born again on earth in a human body, following the process described above. Thus reborn, it again performs rites and rotates in the round of *samsāra*. The Upanishad speaks of a third place, where the wicked are born in the forms of such low creatures as mosquitoes and gnats.

The preceding chapter has described both rites and meditations. While meditation can be practised without external accessories, the performance of rites requires wealth. A person endowed with great

ness can easily acquire wealth. The third chapter, consisting of thirteen verses, gives directions for a religious rite called Mantha, by means of which the sacrificer attains greatness. It should be noted that during the Upanishadic period wealth was not despised but was regarded as a means to perform religious rites for the propitiation of the deities, who conferred upon men the boons of happiness and prosperity; and it was to be earned through righteous means laid down in the scriptures. Since the interdependence of human beings, sub-human beings, and the gods was an important part of the Vedic tradition, the gods were supplicated for the fulfilment of desires. Animals were treated with kindness for the same purpose. The chapter concludes with the line of teachers through whom the knowledge of this particular rite was transmitted. It also says that this knowledge should be imparted only to a son or a worthy disciple.

Wealth, without offspring, is inadequate for a happy life in the world. Through a son the line is preserved and the culture protected. The son wins for himself and his father a higher world after death. But a worthy son can be born only through the performance of the sexual act according to certain religious injunctions. One conceived in lust does not fulfil this purpose. Lust is condemned in the third and fourth verses of the fourth chapter. Procreation, as such, is not regarded as a sin; it is the fulfilment of a basic desire and is an important stage in the evolution of the soul. Anyone who seeks happiness in the phenomenal world must not disregard wealth or offspring.

The fourth chapter of the sixth part of the Upanishad, consisting of twenty-eight verses, describes the religious rites by means of which a person may beget a qualified son. But such a rite can be performed only by one who has performed the Mantha rite described in the preceding chapter. A warning is given against the waste of the vital fluid, which is the source of virility, intelligence, and other spiritual virtues. Because of this fact control of carnal desires is extolled as a great spiritual asset. This is the basis of the life of continence practised by brahmachārins and sannyāsins. After the birth of the child, the father invokes the blessings of the deity for the future greatness of the child and exhorts the latter to cultivate the Vedic wisdom. The chapter concludes with words of felicitation addressed to the noble mother of the worthy child.

The fifth and last chapter gives the line of teachers through whom this tradition has been transmitted, beginning with Prajāpati, who

Himself received the Vedic Knowledge, through revelation, from Brahman Itself.

The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* thus presents a comprehensive view of life, which includes both the enjoyment of happiness in the phenomenal world and the attainment of the Highest Good, or Liberation. The former is achieved through religious rites—called karma, or work—and the latter through Vidyā, or the Knowledge of the identity of the individual self and Brahman, or the Supreme Self. The word *karma* in the Upanishads denotes primarily the sacrificial rites by which the worshipper communes with the deities through the offering of oblations. Sometimes it also signifies work for the public welfare (*purta*). Different deities (*devatās* or *devas*) are invoked in different religious rites. Rites, in order to be fruitful, must be accompanied by appropriate meditations (*upāsana*) on the deities.

The deities who fulfil worldly boons are different manifestations of Brahman. It is really Brahman who fulfils desires through these manifestations. The highest manifestation is Prajāpati, also called Hiranyagarbha, Virāj, and Prāna. Prajāpati supports the creation as the cosmic energy. He also dwells in the embodied creature as the prāna, or vital breath, and supports the body and organs. As energy He pervades the entire creation; but His personal aspect is admitted by the scriptures for facility of meditation by the worshipper. He is also meditated upon through such symbols as Om, the Gāyatri, the sun, the moon, the mind, and the prāna in the individual. Through meditation one becomes like the object meditated upon; therefore by meditating on Prajāpati the worshipper realizes, in the end, his own identity with all the created beings. This enables him to enjoy the highest happiness in the creation; he overcomes the idea of separateness, which is the cause of selfishness, sin, and suffering. By propitiating the minor deities, one enjoys finite happiness on earth or in the heavenly worlds.

It should be noted that the whole idea of rites and meditations is based upon the acceptance of the multiplicity of worshipper, result, accessories, and deities. According to non-dualistic Vedānta, multiplicity is the result of avidyā, or nescience. Reality is one and without a second; the Knowledge of Reality can be attained only through the realization of the oneness of existence. This Knowledge is the final teaching of the Upanishads.

According to Śankarāchārya, karma (including meditation on the deities) and the Knowledge of Brahman, having altogether different

aims, are fundamentally opposed to each other, like darkness and light. They cannot co-exist. There is no relationship or meeting-ground between them, just as no meeting-ground exists between darkness and light, or the mirage and the desert.

Yet there is an important place for karma in the realization of the Knowledge of Brahman. Karma, which is dealt with in the Mantra and Brāhmana portions of the Vedas, prepares the aspirant for Knowledge, which is exclusively taught in the Upanishads.

A seeker after Knowledge must first understand that all worldly enjoyments—ranging from that experienced by a clump of grass to that enjoyed by Brahmā—are transitory because they all belong to the realm of avidyā. Next he must be ready to renounce all desire for worldly enjoyment. His soul, time and again, has taken a body in the world of transmigratory existence and enjoyed the pleasures obtainable there. And his experience of the enjoyments in the higher worlds has been made possible through the grace of the deities. After being satiated with all the experiences of the relative world, he seeks the Knowledge of Brahman, practises such virtues as discrimination between the real and the unreal, non-attachment to the unreal, restraint of the organs, control of the mind, forbearance with regard to all physical afflictions, and reverence for the scriptures and the teacher. He also cherishes a single-minded longing for liberation from the phenomenal world. And the teacher instructs him about the Knowledge of Brahman, which removes the illusory notion of the world created by ignorance. The destruction of ignorance is concomitant with Knowledge. No other discipline is necessary. This Knowledge liberates one from the otherwise endless chain of rebirth in saṃsāra.

Thus religious rites are not repudiated by the Upanishads, but recognized as a means of creating the right mood for the practice of the higher disciplines. These rites also help the seeker to purify his mind through the enlargement of his consciousness, and to practise concentration.

The importance of the practice of physical, mental, ethical, and spiritual disciplines for the realization of the Knowledge of Brahman cannot be overemphasized. An intelligent person may derive emotional or intellectual excitement from the reading of such statements as "I am Brahman" and "All is verily Brahman." People are not wanting in modern times who glibly say, "Samsāra is Nirvāna," yet at the same time are attached to worldly pleasures. But the true import of

such statements can be understood only by one whose heart has been purified in the fire of spiritual discipline. The path has been described in the *Katha Upanishad* as being sharp as the edge of a razor. The *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* warns the seeker to guard against such pitfalls as passion, greed, and violence, which are inherent in the life of the world. The *Chhândogya Upanishad* narrates the story of the demon king who, after being instructed by Prajāpati, concludes that the body is Brahman, and asks his followers to provide it with food and raiment and preserve it after death.

In the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* one meets with certain noble characters of ancient India—ideal women, ideal kings, and an ideal monk. Maitreyi, Yājñavalkya's second wife, indifferent to the worldly happiness attainable through wealth and possessions, seeks to know that Reality which enables one to conquer death. Gārgi engages Yājñavalkya in an erudite discussion about Brahman and shows her superiority of intelligence over other Vedic scholars. Other women are also mentioned in the Vedas, one of whom attained the exalted status of a rishi through the knowledge of her identity with Reality. All this throws light on the high position occupied by women in the Vedic society.

Janaka is both king and sage, being known by the well deserved title of rājarshi, or "royal sage." He is called Vaideha, signifying his total detachment from the body; and by a strange coincidence he is the ruler of Videha (north-east of modern Patna). Janaka is the centre of the intellectual life of the court that surrounds him. He invites the Vedic scholars of the Kurus and Panchālas—who dwell farther west, between the Ganges and the Jamuna—to great debates about the theology and philosophy of the Vedas. The *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* describes these meetings in Janaka's court between Yājñavalkya and the king, where the nature of Brahman is discussed. In one of them, at the end of the teaching, Yājñavalkya assures the king that he has attained to fearlessness through the realization of Brahman. The *Upanishad* also speaks of the court of Ajātasatru, King of Kāśi (which lay about Benares), and the court of Jivala, King of the Panchālas, where learned discussions about Brahman and the soul took place.

Yājñavalkya dominates the teachings of the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*. His contribution to the philosophy of Ātman and Brahman is the essence of Advaita Vedānta. He is a great ritualist, a subtle debater, an expert in Vedic exegesis, and at the same time a man with a delicate

sense of humour. Yājñavalkya has two wives and owns land, wealth, and cattle. Wishing to put into practice his own teaching, given in the Upanishad, that one who has gained the Knowledge of the Self abstains from the desires for children, wealth, and the world, and wanders about as a religious mendicant—for what need has he of offspring whose Self is this universe?—Yājñavalkya renounces the worldly life, after having fulfilled the obligations of a householder by making provision for his wives, and becomes a sannyāsin. In Janaka's court he teaches the nature of Ātman and Brahman. According to his philosophy, Ātman, the very stuff of consciousness, is the knowing subject in each of us. There is not and can never be for us a reality outside of Ātman—a universe outside of consciousness. This Ātman is unknowable, because It is the all-inclusive Unity. All relative knowledge presupposes a duality of subject and object. In the realm of duality—which from the highest standpoint does not exist—one sees another, smells, hears, addresses, comprehends, and knows another. The individual ātman in reality is the Supreme Ātman; and in proportion as we rise to this knowledge, the illusion of the object vanishes, until in the end the knowing Subject alone remains. This Subject, which is the knower of knowing, remains unknowable, because one cannot see the seer of seeing, hear the hearer of hearing, comprehend the comprehender of comprehending, or know the knower of knowing. When—as in deep sleep or profound meditation—the Ātman apparently does not see, nevertheless It is seeing, since for the Seer, who is imperishable, there is no cessation of seeing. There exists, however, no second thing besides this Seer, nothing distinct from It for It to see. The most complete and rational exposition by Yājñavalkya of his doctrine of the Ātman's persistence without change through the states of waking, dreaming, deep sleep, death, rebirth, and final Liberation is given in his answer to Janaka's question: "What serves as light for a man?" Yājñavalkya replies that the Ātman moves through all the empirical states, unattached; for nothing cleaves to the Self. In the waking state It surveys the good and evil of this world without being moved thereby; while dreaming, It builds up a world for Itself from the impressions of the waking state of this life or past lives, for It "is indeed the agent"; and finally, in dreamless sleep, It becomes the Prajnā Ātman, the Knowing Self. In deep sleep, though It is bereft of specific consciousness, yet It is not unconscious; It is pervaded by a general consciousness. In that state, though apparently It does not see, yet It is

seeing, since, being immutable and imperishable, Its consciousness cannot be interrupted. The individual self, by casting off the desires created by ignorance, can in this very body recover the Knowledge of its oneness with the Supreme Self and realize Immortality.

The utter oneness of Ātman and Brahman is the most significant contribution of Yājñavalkya to the philosophic thought of India. Brahman is the Reality behind the universe, and Ātman the Reality behind the individual. Though the Reality underlying the universe may be unlimited, It may appear to be something vague; It may also appear to be material in nature. The self, conversely, is clear, directly perceived, and spiritual in nature, though it may appear to be limited by other selves. The realization of the identity of the self and Brahman in a spiritual experience supported by reason establishes the existence of a Reality which is infinite, directly perceived, unlimited, and spiritual. Neither reasoning nor philosophical speculation can soar higher or penetrate deeper than this metaphysical Reality—the non-duality of Existence.

S. N.

## ŚRĪ ŚĀNKARĀCHĀRYA'S INTRODUCTION

OM. SALUTATION TO BRAHMAN<sup>1</sup> and the other sages, forming the line of teachers who are the transmitters of the Knowledge of Brahman, Salutation to our own teacher.

With the words: "The head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn" etc. commences the Upanishad which forms part of the Vājasaneyi Brāhmana.<sup>2</sup> I am writing this concise commentary on the Upanishad for the sake of those who wish to turn away from samsāra, so that they may attain the knowledge of the identity of Brahman and ātman, which destroys avidyā, the cause of the projection of the phenomenal universe.<sup>3</sup>

This Knowledge of Brahman is known by the name of Upanishad, because it entirely uproots samsāra together with its cause (avidyā) for those who are devoted to its study; for the root sad, when used with the prefixes upa and ni, conveys that meaning.<sup>4</sup> The book also

<sup>1</sup> The word *Brahman* in the present context denotes Hiran-yagarbha, or the Absolute identified with the Cosmic Mind. The word also denotes Brahmā, the first manifestation of the attributeless Absolute through māyā. Hiran-yagarbha is the seed and origin of all other deities; therefore by invoking His blessings the commentator invokes the blessings of all the devas, or luminous cosmic forces.

<sup>2</sup> Another name of the Śukla Yajur-Veda. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 6.) The Brāhmana section, of which the Upanishads form the concluding part, is the second section of the Vedas. (*Ibid.* p. 2 ff.)

<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the scriptures is to show the way to destroy the suffering of life together with its cause, ignorance. The knowledge of the identity of Brahman and ātman is the means, and this identity is the subject matter of the scriptures. Knowledge is the means, and Liberation, the result.

<sup>4</sup> The meaning of *sad* is to destroy; the meaning of *upa* is near; and that of *ni* is completely. The word *Upanishad* means, etymologically, that Knowledge which, when received by a disciple from (*upa*) a teacher, totally (*ni*) destroys (*sad*) ignorance, which is the cause of his identification with the phenomenal universe and of his consequent suffering. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 11.)

is designated by the name of Upanishad because it serves the same purpose.

This particular Upanishad, consisting of six parts, is called the Brihadāran'yaka because it was taught in the forest (aranya), and also because of its bulk (brihat).

Now we proceed to show its relation to the ritualistic portion of the Vedas.<sup>5</sup>

All people naturally seek to attain what is good and avoid what is evil. The means to the realization of these two ends<sup>6</sup> are not always known through perception and inference.<sup>7</sup> The Vedas, in their entirety,<sup>8</sup> are therefore devoted to revealing these means, in so far as they are not known through perception and inference.

In matters perceived by the senses, knowledge of the means of attaining the good and avoiding evil is obtainable through perception and inference; therefore this knowledge is not to be sought in the Vedas.

But unless a person is aware of the existence of the self in a future life,<sup>9</sup> he will not feel inclined to attain what is good in that life and avoid what is evil. For there is the example of the materialists.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore the purpose of the scriptures is to establish the existence of the self in a future life and to discuss the particular means of attaining the good and avoiding the evil in that life.

<sup>5</sup> See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> The means to the realization of the Highest Good is the Knowledge of Brahman.

<sup>7</sup> Perception and inference are used as valid evidence only with reference to physical objects in the phenomenal world; but the Knowledge of Brahman is supramental.

<sup>8</sup> Both sections of the Vedas, namely, the ritualistic and the philosophical, are necessary to a man, if he is to obtain the Highest Good. Through the performance of the sacrifices and other forms of worship laid down in the ritualistic section, his heart becomes purified, and he is then qualified to follow the disciplines of the Upanishad (the philosophical section) and acquire the Knowledge of Brahman. Thus the first part of the Vedas is an indirect help, whereas direct experience is attained through following the instruction of the Upanishad.

<sup>9</sup> That is to say, the existence of a self independent of the body.

<sup>10</sup> The materialists do not believe in a self independent of the body; therefore they do not admit the possibility of a future life. According to them, what is called the conscious self is a product of the material elements. When the body is destroyed after death, the conscious self also disappears. Hence, according to them, the experience of happiness or unhappiness in an after-life or by a self independent of the body is mere imagination.

For example, the Katha Upanishad begins its instruction with the words: "There is this doubt about a man when he is dead: Some say that he exists; others, that he does not" (I. i. 20.), and concludes: "He is to be realized as Existence" (II. iii. 13). The same Upanishad, further, begins a topic with the words: "I shall tell you about this profound and eternal Brahman, and also about what happens to the Ātman after meeting death" (II. ii. 6.), and concludes: "Some jivas enter the womb to be embodied as organic beings, and some go into non-organic matter—according to their work and according to their knowledge" (II. ii. 7). Elsewhere, in the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, we find a topic beginning with the words: "The person becomes self-illuminated" (IV. iii. 9.) and ending with the words: "Knowledge, work, and past experience follow the self" (IV. iv. 2.), and another passage: "One becomes good through good karma and evil through evil karma" (III. ii. 13). Also, in a passage beginning with: "I will instruct you" (II. i. 15.), this same Upanishad establishes the existence of the self independent of the body, "full of consciousness . . ." (II. i. 16-17).

Objection: It is a matter of perception.<sup>11</sup>

Reply: We do not admit your contention; for we see a divergence of opinion among the different schools. If the knowledge of the existence of the self in another body were a matter of perception (*pratyaksha*), then the materialists and the Buddhists would not challenge us with the statement that there is no self. For nobody disputes the existence of an object of perception, such as a jar, saying that the jar does not exist.

Objection: You are wrong, since a dead trunk of a tree, for instance, is looked upon variously—as either a man, or an animal, or the like.

Reply: No; for the divergence of views [regarding the stump] disappears when the truth is known. There cannot remain contradictory views when the real nature of an object, such as a stump, is definitely known through perception. The Buddhists, in spite of the fact that there is an "I-consciousness," persistently deny the existence of a self independent of the body.<sup>12</sup> Therefore the existence of the self, which

<sup>11</sup> That the self exists independent of the body is a common experience. Everyone admits the existence of "I-consciousness." Why then should one bother about scriptural evidence?

<sup>12</sup> The Buddhists admit the existence of the subtle body, which they identify with the ego.

is quite different from the ordinary objects of perception, cannot be established by means of perception.<sup>13</sup>

Likewise, neither can the existence of the self be established by inference.<sup>14</sup>

Objection: We do not accept your statement; for the Śruti points out certain grounds of inference (*linga*)<sup>15</sup> to prove the existence of the self, and those grounds of inference are objects of direct perception.

Reply: We do not agree; for it is not perceived [directly] that the self has any relation to a future life. In reality, the existence of the self is known from scriptural evidence and also from certain empirical grounds of inference cited by the scriptures; but the adherents of *Mīmāṃsā* and *Nyāya*, though following in the footsteps of the scriptures, fancy that those Vedic grounds of inference, such as "I-consciousness," are the products of their own intelligence and assert that the self can be known through direct perception and inference.<sup>16</sup>

Be that as it may, a man who believes in a self which is related to a future body seeks to know the specific means by which he can obtain the good and avoid the evil connected with that body. The

<sup>13</sup> About the reality of the self, the scriptures alone furnish proof. Reascning can only indicate it. The illumined seers know the self by direct experience.

<sup>14</sup> Inference is based upon sense perception.

<sup>15</sup> Certain qualities, such as love, hate, pleasure, pain, and volition, are specific to the self, and these qualities are directly perceived. Therefore, according to the adherents of the *Mīmāṃsā* and *Nyāya* schools of philosophy, the existence of the self can be proved both by direct perception and by inference.

<sup>16</sup> Such qualities as pain, pleasure, love, and hate, said to inhere in the self, may very well be characteristics of the mind. Furthermore, certain other characteristics from which the existence of the self can be inferred may be cited by the opponents. But this, too, is done on the basis of scriptural evidence. For from the scriptures alone can we learn that no one could breathe without the *Ātman*. Compare: "Who could make the *apāna* function, who could make the *prāna* function, if that Bliss (Brahman) did not exist in the heart? Brahman alone causes blessedness." (*Tai. Up.* II. 7.) But the opponents of the non-dualistic *Vedānta* imagine that they themselves have discovered all these grounds for the existence of the self and thus assert that the self can be known by direct perception and inference. But they merely repeat what has already been revealed in the scriptures. The purpose of this section is to emphasize the fact that the scriptures, which contain the experiences of past seers, are the sole authority for the reality of the self, or *ātman*, which, being totally supersensuous and supramental, cannot be known in any other way. But the scriptural evidence is to be tested by reason and finally corroborated by experience.

ceremonial portion (*Karmakānda*) of the Vedas serves the purpose of acquainting him with those means.

[But his knowledge of the ceremonial portion cannot bring about the Highest Good of man.] For the cause of the desire to attain the good and avoid evil is ignorance regarding the self, which expresses itself as the idea of one's being the doer and the experiencer.<sup>17</sup> This ignorance can be removed only by its opposite, namely, the knowledge of the self, which in its true nature is identical with Brahman. As long as this ignorance is not removed, a man, impelled by such defects inherent in him as attachment and aversion to the fruits of his works, proceeds to act even against what is recommended or prohibited by the scriptures, and accumulates, in large measure, unrighteous actions,<sup>18</sup> through thought, words, and body, producing both visible and invisible harm—such is the powerful urge of the limitations inherent in him. And as a result he is degraded [in a future life] down to the position of an inanimate object.<sup>19</sup>

But sometimes the tendencies (*samskāras*) created by the pursuit of the scriptures can be very strong and as a result he accumulates in large measure—through acts of thought, word, and body—righteous action conducive to his well-being. Such righteous action is of two kinds: some is accompanied by meditation, and some is devoid of it, that is to say, is mechanical. The latter enables its performer to attain the world of the Manes after death;<sup>20</sup> whereas action coupled with meditation leads to worlds ranging from *devaloka*<sup>21</sup> to *Brahmaloka*. Thus the *Śruti* says: "One who sacrifices to *Ātman* is better than one who sacrifices to the gods." (*Śa. Br. XI. ii. 6. 13.*) And to quote from the *Smṛiti*: "Actions laid down in the Vedas are twofold." (*Man. Sam. XII. 88.*) When righteous and unrighteous actions balance each other, the result is birth in a human body.

Thus a man endowed with the natural defect of *avidyā* etc. may be

<sup>17</sup> The self in its true nature is beyond good and evil.

<sup>18</sup> That is to say, impressions of actions.

<sup>19</sup> According to the law-giver *Manu*, through unrighteous action performed by the body, a man becomes after death a tree or shrub; and through similar action in word or thought, he becomes a bird or a low-caste man. Just when a particular work will produce its appropriate result is determined by its intensity.

<sup>20</sup> A lower plane of existence.

<sup>21</sup> The heavenly world of the gods. *Brahmaloka*, or the Plane of *Brahmā*, is the most exalted plane in the relative universe.

born, as a result of his performance of righteous and unrighteous deeds, in any of the worlds ranging from the Plane of Brahmā to that of inanimate objects. All this falls within the realm of samsāra, which is dependent on name, form, and action.

This manifested universe, characterized by means and ends,<sup>22</sup> was in an undifferentiated state before its manifestation. As the causal relationship between a seed and a sprout is without beginning and end, so also is this samsāra, which is created by the superimposition on Ātman, through ignorance, of action, actor, and result.<sup>23</sup> Samsāra is by nature evil. Therefore with a view to destroying the ignorance of the man who is disgusted with samsāra, and also in order to inculcate the Knowledge of Brahman, which is the very opposite of that ignorance, the Upanishad commences its teaching.

The usefulness of the meditation on the Horse-sacrifice<sup>24</sup> is this: Those who are not entitled to perform the Horse-sacrifice can obtain its result from the meditation itself. To quote the scriptures: "Through meditation or through ceremonies [one obtains the fruit]" (Śa. Br. X. iv. 3. 9); and "This [meditation on the prāna] by itself wins the world" (Br. Up. I. iii. 28).

Objection: This meditation is a part of the sacrifice; is that not so?

Reply: No; for the following scriptural passages allow an option between them: "He who performs the Horse-sacrifice, or who knows it<sup>25</sup> as such" (Tai. Sam. V. iii. 12. 2). Since it occurs in a context dealing with meditation, and since similar meditation is prescribed for ceremonies other than the Horse-sacrifice,<sup>26</sup> we can understand that the same result is attained through meditation as well.

The Horse-sacrifice is the greatest of all sacrifices, for it enables the performer to identify himself with Brahmā in both His collective and His individual aspect.<sup>27</sup> That it has been mentioned at the very

<sup>22</sup> I.e. sustained by the law of cause and effect.

<sup>23</sup> The non-dual Self is free from the notion of causality.

<sup>24</sup> The *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* begins with a symbolic meditation on the Horse-sacrifice. Only kshatriya kings are entitled to perform the Horse-sacrifice and enjoy its result. But brāhmins and others, who are not so entitled, can meditate on the sacrifice as given in the Upanishad and thus reap its fruit.

<sup>25</sup> I.e. meditates on it.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. "This world, O Gautama, is the fire." (Br. Up. VI. ii. 11.)

<sup>27</sup> Brahmā, or Hiranyagarbha, the highest manifestation of the attributeless Brahman in the relative universe, represents the totality of all beings. He also has an individual aspect associated with the deity dwelling in Brahmāloka.

beginning of this Upanishad dealing with the Knowledge of Brahman indicates that all rites fall within the domain of relative existence.<sup>28</sup> It will be shown later that the result of this sacrifice is identification with death.<sup>29</sup>

Objection: But the result of the rites known as *nitya*<sup>30</sup> is not related to *samsāra*.

Reply: It is not so; for the Upanishad sums up the results of all rites [at the conclusion of the chapter].<sup>31</sup>

All rites are connected with the wife.<sup>32</sup> The passage: "Let me have a wife . . ." This much indeed is desire" (I. iv. 17.) shows that all actions are naturally prompted by desires. Next it is shown that through a son, rites, and meditation one wins this world, the world of the Manes, and the world of the gods, respectively (I. v. 16). The conclusion arrived at is that everything in this universe consists of three kinds of food: "Verily, this [universe] is a triad of name, form, and work." (I. vi. 1.) Thus the manifested result of all action belongs to the relative universe.

It is these three which, before the manifestation of the universe, were in an undifferentiated state. They become manifest again [as the gross universe], under the control of the effects of the actions of the living beings [of the previous cycle], as a tree comes out of a seed.<sup>33</sup>

The performer of the Horse-sacrifice goes, after death, to Brahmaloka and experiences there communion with Brahṃā and also identity with all created beings.

<sup>28</sup> According to the Upanishads, no action that is based upon the differentiation of actor, instrument of action, and result entitles its performer to realize Immortality, which is attained only through the unitive Knowledge of Brahman. Since the result of the highest rite, the Horse-sacrifice, belongs to the realm of the relative universe, no other rite can lead the performer beyond it. Thus all actions entangle their performers in the world. Those who are disgusted with the relative universe pursue the Knowledge of Brahman through the disciplines prescribed by Vedānta.

<sup>29</sup> Everything in the relative universe is subject to death.

<sup>30</sup> The action called *nitya* refers to the daily obligatory rites. It is different from actions performed on special occasions (*naimittika*) or actions performed with a special end in view (*kāmya*). The opponent contends that the result of the *nitya* rites is outside the relative universe.

<sup>31</sup> The highest fruit of action is the attainment of the Plane of Brahṃā, which is within the relative universe.

<sup>32</sup> Rites are meant for householders and cannot be performed without a wife. Sannyāsins renounce all rites.

<sup>33</sup> The nature of the happiness and unhappiness in the new cycle is determined by the accumulated actions of the *jīvas* of the cycle previous.

The universe with its twofold aspect of manifestation and non-manifestation, lies within the realm of ignorance. By means of ignorance, again, this universe, consisting of subtile and gross forms, and their essence, is falsely superimposed<sup>34</sup> upon the Self, creating the notions of action, doer, and result.

Although the Self is quite different from the universe—being devoid of name, form, and action, non-dual, eternal, pure, illumined, and free—yet It appears to be associated with the diversity of action, agent, and result: just the reverse of Itself. Therefore, for the welfare of him who, on account of the realization: That is all there is to it (etāvāt idam),<sup>35</sup> becomes disgusted with the universe characterized by means and ends, and consisting of the diversity of action, agent, and result, the Knowledge of Brahman is set forth for the removal of ignorance—the seed of such blemishes as desire and action—which is like the removal of the false notion of a snake from a rope.

The Brihadāranyaka Upanishad begins with the words, "The head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn" in order to stimulate meditation on the Horse-sacrifice. Further, the meditation on the horse is emphasized because the horse is the most important factor in this sacrifice. Its importance is indicated by the fact that the sacrifice is named after it and that Prajāpati (Brahmā) is its presiding deity.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The word *superimposition* (*adhyāropa*) has a technical meaning in Vedānta. It means falsely attributing the properties of one thing to another through ignorance. Vedānta gives the example of seeing a snake in a rope. Brahman is non-dual and ever free. Through ignorance the unreal universe of diverse names and forms is attributed to It. It must be remembered that the substratum is not affected in the least by the characteristics of the superimposed entity. Brahman remains immutable in spite of the false superimposition of the phenomenal universe upon It.

<sup>35</sup> I. e. All actions are limited; they come to an end.

<sup>36</sup> Śankarāchārya has discussed two points in his introduction to the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*. First, he has stated that Ātman, or Brahman, being a supramental and supersensuous experience, cannot be known through direct perception or inference. The Vedas are the sole authority for the reality of Brahman. Second, he has refused to admit that Jñāna (the Knowledge of Brahman) and karma (action) can ever coexist. Jñāna reveals the existence of the non-dual Reality, which is without beginning or end, uncaused, ever free, ever pure, and ever illumined. The result of the Knowledge of Brahman is the attainment of Immortality and the cessation of all evils. This Knowledge is a transcendental experience. Action, on the other hand, recognizes diverse factors, such as doer, instrument, and result. It is the product of desire, which is caused by ignorance. The results of action range from birth as an

inanimate object to birth as the most exalted deity in the highest heaven; but all this belongs to the realm of samsāra, where every experience has a beginning and end. Thus the spheres of Jnāna and karma are quite different. The latter is discussed in the ritualistic portion of the Vedas, which helps a man to enjoy happiness here and hereafter. But Jnāna is the subject matter of the Upanishads, which show the way to the Knowledge of Brahman, or the Highest Good. Only when a man is dissatisfied with the experiences of samsāra through the realization of their ephemeral nature does he give up all rites and ceremonies and pursue the special disciplines laid down in the Upanishads for the knowledge of his oneness with Brahman.

## INVOCATION

**Om. That is full; this is full. This fullness has been projected from that fullness. When this fullness merges in that fullness, all that remains is fullness.**

**Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!**

**THAT:** Pure Consciousness, or the attributeless Brahman.

**FULL:** Perfect.

**THIS:** Hiranyagarbha, the first manifestation of Pure Brahman in the relative universe characterized by a name and a form. It is the World Soul, the totality of all individual souls. The word *this* in the text also means the manifest universe, which, like Pure Consciousness, is perfect, names and forms being māyā.

**PROJECTED:** On account of māyā, or the incomprehensible power of Brahman. This projection or creation is like that of a mirage in a desert, or like that of the snake which a man sees, through illusion, in a rope. The projection does not effect any change whatsoever in Brahman, as the illusory snake does not alter the real nature of the rope, or the mirage, the real nature of the desert.

**MERGES:** That is to say, when, by means of Knowledge, the universe is realized as Brahman.

**ALL THAT ETC:** It is because the Supreme Brahman is the only Reality. The idea of the phenomenal universe is falsely superimposed upon It.



## CHAPTER I

### MEDITATION ON THE HORSE-SACRIFICE

OM. VERILY, the head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn, its eye the sun, its vital breath the wind, its open mouth the Vaiśvānara fire, and the trunk of the sacrificial horse is the year. The back is heaven, the belly the intermediate region, the hoof the earth, the sides the four quarters, the ribs the intermediate quarters, the limbs the seasons, the joints the months and half-months, the feet the days and nights, the bones the stars, the flesh the clouds. Its half-digested food [in the stomach] is the sand, the blood-vessels the rivers, the liver and lungs the mountains, the hair the herbs and trees. The fore part of the horse is the rising sun, and the hinder part the setting sun. Its yawn is lightning, its shaking of the body is thunder, its making water is rain, and its neighing is indeed voice.

**DAWN:** The period of about three-quarters of an hour just before sunrise. As the head is the most important part of the body, so is the dawn of the day; it is the best time for spiritual contemplation.

**ITS EYE ETC:** The eye is close to the head, as the sun is to the dawn.

**VAIŚVĀNARA:** The general epithet of fire. Fire, a manifestation of the cosmic energy, is, according to Vedic tradition, the controlling deity of the mouth.

**TRUNK ETC:** As the different members of the body are connected with the trunk, so also are the months and days with the year.

**BACK ETC:** Because both are elevated.

**BELLY ETC:** Because both are hollow.

**LIMBS ETC:** The limbs are parts of the horse, as the seasons are of the year.

**JOINTS ETC:** Because both connect. Joints connect the parts of the body, and the months and half-months connect the parts of the year.

**FEET ETC:** Because the horse stands on its feet, and the deity, representing time, rests on days and nights.

**BONES ETC:** Because both bones and stars appear white.

**FLESH ETC:** Because flesh sheds blood and the clouds shed water.

**HALF-DIGESTED ETC:** Because both consist of loose parts.

**LIVER AND LUNGS ETC:** Because both are firm and elevated. The word *klomānah* in the text is sometimes translated as spleen instead of lungs.

**HAIR ETC:** Trees and herbs represent long and short hair.

**YAWNING ETC:** Because the one splits the cloud and the other the mouth.

The text describes the meditative worship of Virāj, or Prajāpati, who represents the cosmic aspect of Brahman. This is done through the contemplation of the horse used in the Horse-sacrifice as Prajāpati Himself. Its different parts are regarded as the different parts of Prajāpati; they should be meditated upon as such. Thus the horse is purified and deified into Prajāpati. In the worship of a deity through a symbol or image, the latter is to be transformed into the former. The deity is never to be transformed into the image or symbol. It may appear that some of the similarities between the horse and Prajāpati are rather far-fetched.

The result of the Horse-sacrifice is the attainment of the status of Prajāpati. Only kshatriya kings are entitled to perform the actual sacrifice, but others can achieve the end through meditation. Such a person should meditate upon himself as the sacrificial horse or Prajāpati, and regard the different parts of his own body as different aspects of Prajāpati. Then, after death, he will become one with Prajāpati, who holds the most exalted position in creation. But alas, like everything else, this experience too comes to an end. Even the Horse-sacrifice, which is the highest of all Vedic rites, cannot bestow upon a man the boon of Immortality. The man who knows this becomes dissatisfied with all rites and feels non-attachment towards the universe. Such a renouncer is fit for the Knowledge of Brahman, which alone bestows upon man the Highest Good. The Upanishad begins with the Horse-sacrifice in order to create in the seeker's mind an utter distaste for the entire phenomenal world.

The first chapter of this Upanishad is the third chapter of the Āranyaka. The interpretation of the creation through sacrifice goes back to the Rig-Veda (X. xc. 129); from each of the members of the Purusha, or Cosmic Soul, some part of the universe was created.

*The meditative worship continues with a contemplation of the two sacrificial vessels called mahimān, which are made of gold and silver and are placed before and behind the horse.*

## 2

The day, verily, is the golden cup called mahimān, in front of the horse, which arose pointing it out. Its source is the eastern sea. The

night, verily, is the silver cup called mahimān, behind the horse, which arose pointing it out. Its source is the western sea. These two vessels appeared at either end of the horse. As a racer the horse carried the gods; as a stallion, the gandharvas; as a runner, the demons; as a horse, men. The sea is its stable, and the sea, its source.

DAY ETC: The golden cup is to be meditated upon as the day.

GOLDEN CUP ETC: The golden cup points out the horse as a lightning flash points out a tree.

MAHIMĀN: At the Horse-sacrifice two vessels to hold the sacrificial libations are placed before and behind the horse after it is killed; the one placed before it is made of gold, and the other of silver. They are called mahimān in the technical language of the ritual.

NIGHT: The reference is to a moonlit night.

THESE TWO ETC: This is to eulogize the horse. The horse is so full of glories that two valuable vessels are placed before and behind it.

AS A RACER ETC: This is further eulogy of the horse.

GANDHARVAS: A class of demigods known as the celestial musicians.

SEA ETC: The word *samudra* in the text means both the Supreme Self and the sea. According to the *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa* (III. viii. 4.) the horse has its origin in water. Or the text may mean that the horse arose from and resides in the Supreme Self.

*Here ends Chapter One  
of Part One of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROCESS OF CREATION

IN THE BEGINNING there was nothing whatsoever in the universe. By Death (Hiranyagarbha), indeed, all this was covered—by hunger; for hunger is, verily, death. "Let Me have a mind," was His desire, and He created the mind. Then He moved about, worshipping Himself. From Him, thus worshipping, water was produced. "Verily," Death thought, "while I was worshipping (archatē), water (ka) was produced"; that is why arka (the fire used in the Horse-sacrifice) is so called. Surely, water [or happiness] comes to him who knows how arka (fire) came to be called arka.

**IN THE BEGINNING:** That is to say, before the manifestation of the mind, etc.

**NOTHING WHATSOEVER:** No object differentiated by name and form.

**BY DEATH ETC:** The universe is the projection of Hiranyagarbha's thought.

**COVERED:** Just as such earthen articles as a pot and a dish, before they are created, are pervaded by their cause, namely, clay in the form of a lump, so also was the universe of names and forms pervaded by Hiranyagarbha, Pure Spirit in Its intangible, unmanifested form.

**HUNGER:** Hunger signifies death, because a hungry person, desiring to eat, kills animals.

**LET ME HAVE A MIND:** The word in the text for *mind* is *ātman*, which means, among other things, the body, the organ of thinking (*manas*), the intellect, the individual self, and the Supreme Self. The suitable meaning at a particular place is to be determined from the context.

**CREATED THE MIND:** That is to say, the inner organ, endowed with the power of deliberation. Death first created the mind in order to be able to deliberate upon those effects (i.e. created objects) which will presently be mentioned.

**WORSHIPPING HIMSELF:** Thinking that He was blest.

**WATER ETC:** According to the Vedāntic cosmology, water was created after ākāśa, air, and fire. Therefore the previous creation of these three elements must be assumed, in the present text, as having taken place before that of water.

ARKA: The word is derived from the conjunction of archa (worship) and ka (water and happiness).

SURELY, ETC: This is due to the resemblance of names.

Now the Upanishad describes the origin of the fire fit to be used in the Horse-sacrifice. The story narrated here is intended as a eulogy so that the sacrificer may meditate on the fire.

Śankarāchārya enters upon a detailed discussion of the views of various philosophical schools as to what existed before the manifestation of the phenomenal universe. According to the nihilists, nothing but a void existed prior to the creation. At that time both cause and effect were non-existent. But the logicians (the followers of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣhika schools) say that though there may have been no effect before the creation, the cause cannot have been non-existent at that time, since a lump of clay is perceived to exist before the creation of a pot. Śankara, on the basis of the scriptural passage: "By Death, indeed, all this was covered," refutes the nihilistic view. The words *all this* cannot signify nothing; for instance, the non-existent son of a barren woman cannot be covered by something. He also refutes the view of the logicians and affirms that both cause and effect existed in an unmanifested form prior to the creation. A positive effect such as the tangible universe comes into existence only when there is a cause. A jar cannot be produced in the absence of clay. The effect, too, exists before it is produced. The very fact of its production or manifestation points to its previous existence. Manifestation means coming within the range of experience. For instance, a jar hidden by darkness or some other obstruction becomes manifest when the obstruction is removed by the appearance of light, or in some other way. Like the jar, the universe too, one can understand, existed before its manifestation. A statue which a sculptor carves out of a block of marble exists in the marble; the sculptor merely removes the obstruction to its manifestation. In common experience we find that people do not strive for things which they know to be non-existent. Besides, if the effect before its manifestation is absolutely non-existent, like the proverbial horns of a hare, it cannot be connected with its cause, for connexion requires two positive entities. Therefore, according to Śankara, the effect does exist before it is manifested. It is important to remember that non-dualism does not accept any essential difference between cause and effect. The effect is a mere name—a word to serve a practical purpose in the phenomenal world.

## 2

Water, verily, is arka. What was then like froth on the water became solidified; that was earth. After the earth was created, Hiranya-

garbha was tired. From Him, thus fatigued and heated, came forth His essence as brightness. That was Fire.

**ARKA:** The word really means fire, and not water; for it is mentioned in the section dealing with fire, and not water. It will be stated later on (I. ii. 7.) that this fire is the arka.

**EARTH:** That is to say, the world in its embryonic state.

**TIRED:** "For everyone is tired after work, and the creation of the world was certainly a great feat on the part of Hiranyagarbha." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**HEATED:** Because Hiranyagarbha, prior to the creation, practised austerities, that is to say, brooded intensely on the future world. Deep thinking often heats the body.

**FIRE:** Virāj, or the Cosmic Person, who is identified with the totality of all bodies. He sprang from the Cosmic Egg and was endowed with a body and organs. He is the first embodied being, the primal ancestor of all creatures. Compare *Manu Samhitā* I. 8-9: "Prajāpati first created water and next transmitted into it seed [of the accumulated action of the people of the preceding cycle] in order to bring about the creation. Then there arose from that water a radiant golden egg, from within which appeared Virāj (Brahmā), the first of all embodied creatures."

Fire, or Hiranyagarbha, is also known as Virāj, Prāna, Prajāpati, and so on.

*The three parts of Virāj are described to assist meditation:*

### 3

He divided Himself into three: [fire one-third,] the sun one-third, and the air one-third. Thus Prāna (Virāj) is divided into three. His head is the east, and His arms are that (the north-east) and that (the south-east). His hinder part is the west, and His two hip-bones are that (the north-west) and that (the south-west). His sides are the south and the north, His back is heaven, His belly is the intermediate region, and His chest is the earth. Thus He stands firm on water. He who knows this stands firm wherever he goes.

**HE:** Prajāpati or Hiranyagarbha, who had already transformed Himself into Virāj.

**THUS ETC:** Virāj divided Himself into three parts, namely, fire, the sun, and the air, without undergoing any change in Himself. The idea of division is māyā, on account of which one thing is erroneously superimposed upon another, without effecting any change in the latter, as in a mirage.

**HIS HEAD ETC:** Now is described the process of meditation on Virāj through the fire kindled for the Horse-sacrifice. Thus the fire becomes purified, that is to say, loses its physical aspect.

**HEAD IS THE EAST:** Both being most important.

**HIP-BONES ETC:** Both form angles with the back.

**BACK ETC:** Here the description follows that of the horse in the Horse-sacrifice.

**STANDS FIRM:** Or the Sanskrit word *pratiishthati* in the text may mean rest. In that case the result is the attainment of a resting-place wherever the knower of this fire goes.

**HE WHO ETC:** This is only a subsidiary result; the primary result, which is the conquest of rebirth on earth through the attainment of Liberation by gradual stages, will be stated in I. ii. 7.

The Upanishads, especially the older ones, often prescribe meditation through symbols. These symbols play a very important part in the scriptures. They enable the finite, earthbound mind gradually to enlarge its horizon. Concrete symbols are the stepping-stones to the comprehension of abstract ideas.

*It has been stated that there existed in the beginning Hiranyagarbha, also known as Death or Hunger. He manifested Himself in the Cosmic Egg as Virāj, or the first tangible being, endowed with a body and organs, and afterwards He divided Himself into three parts. The process of division is now described:*

## 4

He desired: "Let a second self be born of Me," and He (Death or Hunger) brought about the union of speech with the mind. What was the seed there became the year. Prior to that there had been no year. He (Death) bore him (the year) for as long as a year, and after that time projected him. Then, when he was born, Death opened His mouth [to devour him]. He (the child) cried: "Bhān!" and that, indeed, became speech.

**HE:** Hiranyagarbha.

**LET A . . . ME, ETC:** So that the incorporeal Hiranyagarbha might become an embodied creature.

**SELF:** The word *ātman* in this particular context signifies body or form.

**SPEECH:** The Vedas.

**WITH THE MIND:** That is to say, he reflected on the Vedas. According to

Hindu tradition, the Vedas, the scriptures, signify eternal wisdom and contain the order of creation. The Cosmic Spirit, or Hiranyagarbha, brings forth the created world with the help of the Vedic wisdom. Desirous of creation, He broods intensely over that wisdom, which then becomes manifest as the tangible universe.

**SEED:** The cause of Virāj, the first embodied being. This seed is the knowledge and work accumulated in Prajāpati's lives in previous cycles; it becomes embodied as Virāj (the totality of all bodies) in the next cycle. "Hiranyagarbha, absorbed in the thought of creation, projected water, and then entered into it as the seed, which, becoming transformed into the embryo, or the Cosmic Egg, became the year." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**PRIOR ETC:** That is to say, prior to Virāj, who makes the year, there was no time. One part of Virāj is the sun. Prior to the sun, time cannot exist.

**PROJECTED HIM:** By breaking the egg. The symbol of a bird is often used for Hiranyagarbha.

**OPENED HIS MOUTH:** In order to swallow him, because Hiranyagarbha was hungry.

**CRIED: "BHĀN!":** Because the child was frightened. Fear is the result of avidyā, or ignorance, without which no embodiment or creation is possible. A person under the influence of avidyā thinks of duality and thus falls a victim to fear. The word *bhān* suggests the interjectional theory regarding the origin of language.

*Seeing the child frightened and crying, He, Death, said to Himself:*

5

He thought: "If I kill him, I shall have but very little food," and through [the union of] that speech and that mind He brought forth all this, whatever there is: the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sāma-Veda, the metres, the sacrifices, men, and animals. Whatever He (Death) brought forth He resolved to eat. Verily, because He eats (ad) everything, therefore is Aditi (Death) called Aditi. He who knows why Aditi came to have this name of Aditi becomes the eater of everything, and everything becomes his food.

**IF I KILL HIM, ETC:** Virāj is the seed. If Death ate Virāj, he would have had very little food; there cannot be any crop if the seed is eaten. But he wanted a great quantity of food, so that he might eat it for a long time. Death thought thus and desisted from eating the child.

**THROUGH . . . THAT SPEECH ETC:** That is to say, by reflecting again and again on the Vedas.

**ALL THIS ETC:** All movable and immovable entities.

**RIG-VEDA ETC:** It may be contended that Death had projected Virāj through the union of the Vedas and the mind; so how can it now be said that He projected the Vedas? In answer it may be stated that the Vedas mentioned previously were in an unmanifested state, being of the nature of eternal knowledge, whereas the Vedas in the present instance are the manifested knowledge by means of which the ceremonies are guided.

**SACRIFICES ETC:** All the created things enumerated in the text are associated with the sacrifice in some form or other. The creation itself is a sacrifice.

**WHY ADITI CAME ETC:** Because Death is identified with all things, He is said to be the eater of the whole universe.

The result of this contemplation is that the aspirant becomes identified with all things in the universe. For this reason everything becomes his food, that is to say, the object of his experience. He alone who is identified with everything can enjoy it all. It is the constant teaching of the Vedas that a man should break the limits of his selfish existence and feel himself to be one with the universe. This is the secret of real happiness.

*This and the following verses give the etymological meaning of Aśvamedha and Aśva.*

## 6

He desired: "Let me sacrifice again with the great sacrifice." He was tired and he practised austerities. From Him thus fatigued and heated, His fame and vigour departed. The prānas (organs) are verily fame and vigour. When the prānas went out His body began to swell, but the mind was set on the body.

**AGAIN:** This word indicates that He had performed a Horse-sacrifice in His previous life, as a result of which He was born at the beginning of the present cycle as Prajāpati. Cherishing the thought of the previous sacrifice, He desired to repeat it again in this life.

**PRACTISED AUSTERITIES:** All creative efforts bear fruit through austerity. Through austerity the mind acquires intensity and concentration, without which no creation is possible.

**FAME ETC:** One retains and enjoys fame and vigour as long as the organs function in the body.

**BODY ETC:** That is to say, it became impure; no sacrifice can be performed through an impure body.

**THE MIND ETC:** Just as a person cherishes his favourite objects even when he is away from them.

## 7

He desired: "Let this body of Mine be fit for a sacrifice, and let Me be embodied through this [body]." [Thinking thus, He entered the body.] Because the body swelled (aśvat), therefore it came to be called horse (aśva). And because it became fit for sacrifice (medhya), therefore the Horse-sacrifice came to be known as Aśvamedha. He who knows this verily knows the Horse-sacrifice.

[Prajāpati, desiring again to sacrifice with the great sacrifice, imagined Himself as the horse,] and letting the horse remain free, He reflected [on it]. At the end of a year he sacrificed it to Himself and dispatched the [other] animals to the gods. Therefore [priests even now] sacrifice to Prajāpati the sanctified [horse] dedicated to all the gods.

Verily, the sun who shines yonder is the Horse-sacrifice. His body is the year. This [earthly] fire is the arka (sacrificial fire), whose limbs are these worlds. So these two, fire and the sun, are the arka and the Aśvamedha (Horse-sacrifice). These two, again, become the same god, Death. He who knows this conquers further death; death cannot overcome him; death becomes his self; and he becomes one with these deities.

**DESIRED:** With the mind attached to the body, Prajāpati desired.

**SWELLED:** In the absence of the organs.

**IT CAME ETC:** The statement that Prajāpati entered the body (aśva) is a eulogy of the horse.

**AND BECAUSE ETC:** On account of Prajāpati's entering the body.

**DISPATCHED ETC:** Because Prajāpati reflected thus, others should likewise regard themselves as the sacrificial horse and meditate in this way: "When I am sanctified [with the mantras], I am dedicated to all the gods, but when I am killed, I am dedicated to myself. The other animals, domestic and wild, are sacrificed to their respective deities, who are only parts of myself."

**HIS BODY:** The year is called the sun's body because it is made by the sun.

**THESE TWO, AGAIN, ETC:** There was before but one deity, who later differentiated himself in three ways (I. ii. 3). After the ceremony is over, he again becomes one deity, Death.

**HE WHO KNOWS THIS:** That is to say, he who knows: "I alone am Death, the Horse-sacrifice. There is but one deity identical with myself and attainable through the horse and fire."

CONQUERS FURTHER DEATH: After dying once, he is not born to die any more. This is the relative immortality enjoyed in Brahmaloaka.

DEATH . . . SELF: This is why death cannot overcome him. A dweller in Brahmaloaka does not return to earth.

HE BECOMES . . . DEITIES: This is the result attained by such a knower.

This section describes the origin and nature of the agni (fire) used in the Horse-sacrifice, as also the evolution of the universe. The sacrificer should meditate on the fire as Prajāpati, or Hiranyagarbha. Before the manifestation of name and form, the universe existed as Hiranyagarbha, just as a pot, prior to its manifestation, exists as clay.

*Here ends Chapter Two  
of Part One of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER III

### THE PRĀNA: ITS GLORIES AND REDEEMING POWER

THERE WERE two classes of Prajāpati's sons: the gods (devas) and the demons (asuras). Naturally, the gods were few and the demons many. They struggled with one another for [mastery of] these worlds. [Being overwhelmed by the demons,] the gods said: "Well, let us overcome the demons at the sacrifice (jyotishtoma) by means of the Udgitha."

**THERE WERE ETC:** The story refers to an incident in the previous life of the Prajāpati of the present cycle. An extremely meritorious person performed the Horse-sacrifice in the previous cycle, and, as a result, attained the exalted position of Prajāpati (the World Soul) in the present one. The offspring mentioned in the text belonged to Prajāpati in His previous life.

**THE GODS AND THE DEMONS:** By the word *sons* are meant the organs of speech, hearing, etc. They signify both gods and demons. "When the organs think and act according to the scriptural injunctions to gain spiritual ends, they are called gods. But those very organs become demons when their actions and thoughts are guided only by sense perception and inference and are directed to secular ends." (*Adapted from Śankarāchārya's commentary.*)

**NATURALLY:** It is well known that the organs have a stronger tendency towards physical objects than towards the spiritual ones recommended by the scriptures. Hence the gods are fewer and less strong than the demons. The spiritual inclination of the mind is rare and attained with great effort.

**THEY STRUGGLED ETC:** The demons wanted to win the worlds through thoughts and actions prompted by the inclinations of their physical nature, whereas the gods wanted to achieve the same end by means of spiritual tendencies cultivated through knowledge of the scriptures. In this rivalry between the gods and the demons, sometimes one side won, and sometimes the other. "Sometimes the organs act and think in obedience to spiritual laws, and when this happens the worldly tendencies based upon sense perception are suppressed. This is the victory of the gods and the defeat of the

demons. Sometimes the reverse happens. When the demons triumph, unrighteousness prevails and the result is the man's degradation; he may assume bodies as low as those of trees and stones. When the gods triumph, there is a preponderance of virtue, and the result is the man's upward evolution; he can even attain the status of Prajāpati. When neither side wins, the result is birth in a human body." (*Adapted from Śankarāchārya's commentary.*)

**UDGITHA:** A part of the Sāma-Veda chanted at the sacrifice. The gods intended to defeat the demons through the Udgitha, that is to say, by identifying themselves with the chanter (prāna, or the vital breath) of the Udgitha.

The relationship of this chapter with the previous one is as follows: It has been stated in the preceding chapter that the higher result of the ceremonial worship known as the Horse-sacrifice, combined with meditation, is the attainment of identity with Hiranyagarbha, or Death. The present chapter will indicate the source of rites and meditation.

## 2

They said to the organ of speech: "Chant [the Udgitha] for us." "So be it," said speech and chanted for them. Whatever enjoyment common to all comes from the organ of speech, it secured for the gods by chanting, while [the enjoyment derived from] the fine utterance [of the words] it utilized for itself. Now, the demons knew that through this chanter the gods would overcome them. They charged at it (speech) and pierced it with evil. That evil is what is found today when one speaks improperly; that is that evil.

**ORGAN OF SPEECH:** In this verse and the succeeding ones, the organ refers to that deity or part of the Spirit which controls and regulates the organ by identifying itself with it. The physical organ, by itself, is inactive. It can function only when it is guided by the Spirit. The organs, animated by the Spirit, perform action and experience its results; the Self, or Ātman, is the detached witness.

**CHANT:** Different classes of priests participate in a sacrifice. The hotri chants the prayers from the Rig-Veda; the udgātri, those from the Sāma-Veda; and the adhvarju chants from the Yajur-Veda. Another priest, called Brahmā, sits as witness and gives his approval of the ceremonies by nodding.

**ENJOYMENT COMMON ETC:** That is to say, the common good of all the organs that comes through the organ of speech.

**SECURED:** In the jyotishtoma sacrifice, twelve Sāma hymns are chanted by the udgātri. The fruit of chanting the first three of these, called

pavamāna, goes to the person for whose benefit the sacrifice is performed, and that of the rest to the chanting priest.

**WHILE ETC:** The three chants, the result of which is enjoyed by the sacrificer, were sung by the organ of speech in an ordinary manner. But the nine chants whose result the priest (here the organ of speech) himself enjoys were sung with especial care, that is to say, with the correct enunciation of the syllables, etc.

**OVERCOME THEM:** That is to say, thoughts and actions prompted by natural desires would be suppressed by the knowledge acquired through the light of the scriptures.

**THEY CHARGED ETC:** Evil entered through the fault furnished by the attachment of the organ of speech to its own enjoyment.

**EVIL:** Attachment, which is the inherent evil of the demons.

**THAT EVIL ETC:** What was injected into Prajāpati's organ of speech in His previous incarnation is noticeable even today.

**ONE SPEAKS ETC:** Refers to what is opposed to the injunction of the scriptures. "It prompts one to speak, even against one's wishes, what is inelegant, dreadful, false, and so on. That it still persists in the vocal organs of people, who have all descended from Prajāpati, is inferred from this effect of improper speaking." (*Śankarāchārya.*) The effect conforms to the cause. Prajāpati is the cause or progenitor of the subsequent generations of human beings.

Selfishness is the original sin. All the improper actions and thoughts indulged in by a man through his various organs are the result of the evil that strikes him when he is mindful of his own good and forgets the welfare of all.

## 3

Then they said to the organ of smell: "Chant [the Udgitha] for us." "So be it," said the organ and chanted for them. Whatever enjoyment common to all comes from the nose, it secured for the gods by chanting, while [the enjoyment derived from] fine smelling it utilized for itself. Now, the demons knew that through this chanter the gods would overcome them. They charged at it and pierced it with evil. That evil is what is found today when one smells improper things; that is that evil.

## 4

Then they said to the organ of seeing: "Chant [the Udgitha] for us." "So be it," said the organ and chanted for them. Whatever enjoy-

ment common to all comes from the eye, it secured for the gods by chanting, while [the enjoyment derived from] fine seeing it utilized for itself. Now, the demons knew that through this chanter the gods would overcome them. They charged at it and pierced it with evil. That evil is what is found today when one sees improper things; that is that evil.

## 5

Then they said to the organ of hearing: "Chant [the Udgitha] for us." "So be it," said the organ and chanted for them. Whatever enjoyment common to all comes from the ear, it secured for the gods by chanting, while [the enjoyment derived from] fine hearing it utilized for itself. Now, the demons knew that through this chanter the gods would overcome them. They charged at it and pierced it with evil. That evil is what is found today when one hears improper things; that is that evil.

## 6

Then they said to the mind: "Chant [the Udgitha] for us." "So be it," said the mind and chanted for them. Whatever enjoyment common to all comes from the mind, it secured for the gods by chanting, while [the enjoyment derived from] fine thinking it utilized for itself. Now, the demons knew that through this chanter the gods would overcome them. They charged at it and pierced it with evil. That evil is what is found today when one thinks improperly; that is that evil.

Likewise they also touched these [other] deities with evil—smote them with evil.

[OTHER] DEITIES: For instance, the deities identified with the skin, hands, feet, etc., not mentioned before.

The gods came to the conclusion that the deities controlling the various organs, whom they tested one by one, were incapable of securing the desired result from the chanting of the Udgitha, because of their attachment to their individual pleasure.

*Even with the help of the individual deities of speech, sight, and the rest, the gods were not able to transcend death.*

## 7

Then they said to the vital breath in the mouth: "Chant [the Udgītha] for us." "So be it," said the vital breath and chanted for them. The demons knew that through this chanter the gods would overcome them. They charged at it, intending to pierce it with evil. But as a clod of earth, hitting a stone, is scattered, even so they were scattered in all directions, crushed, and completely destroyed. Thereupon the gods became established [in their true selves] and the demons perished. He who knows this becomes his true self, and his spiteful kinsman perishes.

**VITAL BREATH:** The energy (prāna) which sustains the body and is located in the cavity of the mouth. Unlike the other organs, it is free from attachment to any particular part of the body and is therefore taintless.

**THEY CHARGED ETC:** Having succeeded with the organs of speech, sight, etc., the demons desired to contaminate the vital breath, also.

**EVEN SO ETC:** Because the vital breath, as stated above, is free from the taint of selfishness.

**THEREUPON ETC:** It was the evil of attachment on the part of the organs that checked the manifestation of their innate divine nature. But now they overcame the evil and took refuge in the vital breath, which is free from all taint.

**BECAME ESTABLISHED ETC:** According to Vedānta, the various cosmic forces controlling fire, wind, etc. also control the various organs in the human body, there being no essential difference between macrocosm and microcosm. But owing to avidyā (ignorance) the forces identify themselves with the bodily organs and thus forget their spiritual nature. With the cessation of evil, however, they give up their identification with the body and realize their true natures, namely, fire, wind, etc.

**HE WHO ETC:** The sacrificer in the previous cycle, as described in the above verses, tested the deities of speech and the other organs, discarded them because they were contaminated with the evil of attachment, and identified himself with the taintless vital breath. Thus he gave up his identification with the tangible body, as represented by the organ of speech etc., and regarded himself as one with the cosmic body of Virāj, and as a result attained the position of Prajāpati in the present cycle. Likewise, a man even now, by ridding himself of his attachment to the limited body, may attain the status of Prajāpati.

**SPITEFUL KINSMAN:** That is to say, the power of evil, which obstructs spiritual progress. As stated before, the same organs can act both as the power of good and as the power of evil. A kinsman, who is supposed to be

a friend, can also act as an enemy, especially when the division of ancestral property is involved.

*The Upanishad resumes the story. Why should one identify oneself with the vital breath in the mouth, to the exclusion of the various organs? Because, the Śruti continues, the vital breath is the common self of both the body and the organs.*

## 8

Then the organs said: "Where is that which joined us [to our true selves]?" [After deliberation they discovered that] it was here, within the mouth (āsyē). Hence the vital breath (prāna) is called *ayāsyā*, and also, because it is the essence (rasa) of the limbs (anga) of the body, *āngirasa*.

THEN: After the realization by the organs of their divine nature.

WHERE ETC: People who have been helped by somebody generally remember their benefactor.

HERE: In the aggregate of body and organs.

WITHIN ETC: The presence of the prāna is most tangibly observed in the mouth.

HENCE ETC: The prāna does not identify itself with any particular organ or limb of the body.

THE ESSENCE ETC: In the absence of the prāna the limbs wither away.

"Since the vital breath is the common self of all the limbs and organs of the body and is itself without any form, and therefore pure and unattached, it alone, and not any organ, should be regarded as a man's true self—this is the import of the passage. It is the Ātman, manifesting Itself as the prāna, which should be realized as the Self, since correct notions lead to well-being, and erroneous notions, as we find, lead to evil." (Śankarāchārya.)

*The purity of the vital breath (prāna) may be challenged, since it is the self (ātman) of the various organs and as such can be contaminated through contact with them. In reply it is said:*

## 9

That deity is called "dur," because death is far (dur) from it. From him who knows this, death is far away.

**THAT DEITY:** The vital breath within the sacrificer's body, which the gods recognized as their saviour.

**DEATH:** The evil of attachment. It is attachment to physical objects and the desire to possess them that are responsible for birth in the world. Birth is always accompanied by death.

**FAR ETC:** Though close to the vital breath, death is still far away from it, because the vital breath is free from attachment.

**WHO KNOWS THIS:** That is to say, who meditates on the prāna as endowed with purity. The result of such meditation is twofold: the destruction of sin and the attainment of the lofty position of the deity. "Meditation (upāsana) means approaching the form of the deity, or the like, as it is presented by the eulogistic portion of the Vedas relating to the objects of meditation, and concentrating on it, excluding all worldly thoughts, till one is completely identified with it as with one's body, conventionally regarded as one's self. Compare: 'Being a god, he attains the gods' (IV. i. 2)." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

*Death, or evil, is caused by identification with particular objects, through innate ignorance, for the purpose of selfish enjoyment. Hence it is incompatible with the knowledge of one's identity with the vital breath. The knowledge of identity is based upon scriptural injunctions and not prompted by any selfish motive. In other words, death, which is the result of the attachment of the organs to sense-objects, cannot affect one who identifies himself with the vital breath, which is free from all taint of attachment.*

## 10

That deity took away death, the evil of these gods, and carried it to where the end of the quarters is. There it deposited their evil. Therefore let no one go to a person [of that region], or to the country beyond the border, lest he should meet there with evil, with death.

**DEATH:** Death is the result of the evil or sin of attachment to sense-objects, prompted by innate ignorance (avidyā). Hence death is evil. One can overcome death by ridding oneself of selfishness through identification with all, here described by the symbol of the vital breath. "Evil keeps away from this knower, just because it is out of place there." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**GODS:** The various organs who identified themselves with the vital breath.

**END OF ETC:** Apparently there is no end of the quarters. But the word *quarters* here refers to the stretch of country where the Vedic knowledge

prevails. Therefore the "end of the quarters" refers to the region inhabited by people who hold views opposed to the wisdom of the Vedas.

DEPOSITED: The word *vinyadadhāt* in the text means, literally, "left in a contemptuous manner." Evil, which is the result of the contact of the senses with their objects, must inhere in some living being. Hence it was left among the people beyond the border.

GO TO ETC: That is to say, associate in any manner whatsoever.

*It has just been stated that through meditation on the prāna (vital breath) as the self, one rids oneself of sin. The other result of the meditation, the attainment of the deity, is now described:*

## 11

That deity, after taking away the death—the evil—of the gods, carried them beyond death.

Death, or evil, limits a man to the body and is removed by his identification with the prāna. Therefore the prāna is called the destroyer of death. By carrying the gods, that is to say, the organs, beyond evil, it made them realize their divine nature. (*Adapted from Śankarāchārya's commentary.*)

## 12

First of all, it carried the organ of speech, which is the foremost organ. When the organ of speech was freed from death it became fire. That fire, having transcended death, shines beyond its reach.

It: The vital breath.

ORGAN: The word *organ*, as before, signifies the deity controlling the organ. As already stated, different deities (*devatā*) or cosmic forces—such as fire, air, the sun, etc.—are the controllers of the organs of speech, smell, sight, etc. Through ignorance they identify themselves with the organs and thus forget their divine nature.

FOREMOST: The tongue is called the chief organ because it is a more important instrument in the chanting of the Udgitha than the other organs.

THAT FIRE, ETC: The difference between the state before deliverance and the state after it is this: In the former, the organ of speech is not conscious of its true nature, which is fire; a victim of evil, it is not very luminous. But in the latter state it is free from evil and therefore shines with great brilliance.

*The above interpretation should be applied to verses 13-16:*

## 13-15

Then it carried the organ of smell. When it was freed from death it became air (Vāyu). That air, having transcended death, blows beyond its reach.

Then it carried the organ of sight. When it was freed from death it became the sun (Surya). That sun, having transcended death, shines beyond its reach.

Then it carried the organ of hearing. When it was freed from death, it became the quarters (Disah). Those quarters, having transcended death, remain beyond its reach.

The organ of smell is controlled by the cosmic power called air (Vāyu); the organ of sight, by the sun (Surya); and the organ of hearing, by the quarters (Disah).

## 16

Then it carried the mind. When the mind was freed from death it became the moon (Chandra). That moon, having transcended death, shines beyond its reach. Thus, verily, that deity carries beyond death him who knows this.

**THUS, VERILY, ETC:** The same result can be obtained by the worshipper at the present day; that is to say, he can transcend evil and death through giving up the narrow view of life and identifying himself with the omnipotent Spirit.

## 17

Next it (the vital breath) obtained eatable food for itself by chanting. For whatever food is eaten, is eaten by the vital breath alone, and it (the vital breath) rests on that (the food).

**NEXT:** After chanting the three hymns called pavamāna, the result of which is to be shared by all the organs.

**IT OBTAINED ETC:** It chanted the nine remaining hymns, the results of which, as already stated, go to the priests. (The sacrificer purchases these results from the priests by paying them a fee.)

**FOR WHATEVER ETC:** Though the vital breath secured eatable food for itself by singing the nine hymns, yet this did not lead to any evil, because in the absence of food the vital breath cannot dwell in the body, and

consequently the sense-organs, too, cannot live. Whatever food is eaten by creatures in the world is eaten by the vital breath alone. That food is transformed into the body, where the *prāna* dwells, and this fact also keeps the sense-organs alive. Therefore there is no question of the *prāna*'s contracting evil, like the other organs, as a consequence of attachment.

*How is it that all food is eaten by the prāna alone, since the organs, too, are benefited by the food? The answer is that the benefit comes through the vital breath. How so? This is explained:*

## 18

The gods said to the vital breath: "Verily, just this much is all the food there is, and you have secured it for yourself by chanting. Now give us, please, a share of this food."

"Then sit around facing me."

"So be it."

They sat down around the vital breath. That is why whatever food one eats through the vital breath satisfies the organs.

So do his relatives sit around facing him who knows this; he becomes the supporter of his kinsmen, the greatest among them and their leader, a good eater of food, and their lord.

Whoever, among his kinsmen, desires to be a rival of the man who has this knowledge is not able to support his dependents. But, on the other hand, he who follows him (the knower of the vital breath) and who, following him, desires to support his dependents is certainly able to do so.

**GODS: ORGANS.** The derivative meaning of the word *god* is "luminous one." The organs are called gods because they reveal or bring to light their respective objects.

**THAT IS WHY ETC:** Since the organs sit thus at the command of the vital breath, the food eaten by it, while sustaining life, also satisfies them. The organs have no independent relation to food. The proof that the organs do not eat food independently is that when the vital breath gives up the body, they too follow it.

**SO DO . . . SIT AROUND ETC:** That is to say, they come to him for refuge.

**LEADER:** As the vital breath is of the organs.

**GOOD EATER ETC:** Free from sickness as a result of overeating.

**DESIRES . . . RIVAL:** Like the demons who challenged the power of the vital breath.

WHO, FOLLOWING . . . DEPENDENTS: Just as the organs desired to support themselves by following the vital breath.

*The vital breath (prāna) has been called āngirasa (I. iii. 8.), and further it has been stated (I. ii. 18.) that the organs are under its control. The reasons are now given:*

## 19

It is called ayāsa āngirasa, for it is the essence (rasa) of the limbs (anga). Yes, the prāna is the essence of the limbs. From whichever limb the vital breath departs, that limb withers right there; therefore it is verily the essence of the limbs.

YES: This is a matter of common experience.

The gist of the whole passage is that the object of meditation should be the prāna and not the organs.

*Prāna is the self not only of the body and organs but also of the Vedas—the Rig, Yajur, and Sāman. Thus the Upanishad extols it by describing it as the self of all. That is why it is a fit object of meditation.*

## 20

It is also Brihaspati (lord of the Rig-Veda). Speech is Brihati (Rig), and the vital breath is its lord (pati). Therefore it is called Brihaspati.

BRIHATI: A metre consisting of thirty-six syllables, used in the Rig-Veda. Brihati also stands for the whole of the Rig-Veda.

THE VITAL BREATH ETC: The prāna is called the lord of speech. "For it gives rise to speech, since the verses of the Rig-Veda are recited through the air which is propelled by the fire in the stomach. Or the prāna is called the lord of speech, being its protector, for speech is protected by the vital breath; a dead man has no power to utter words." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

*Prāna is also the self of the Yajur-Veda.*

## 21

It is also the Brahmanaspati (lord of the Yajur-Veda). Speech is Brahman (Yajur), and the vital breath is its lord (pati). Therefore it is called Brahmanaspati.

*And prāna is the self of the Sāma-Veda too.*

## 22

Prāna is Sāman, too. Speech is, verily, sā and this (prāna) is ama. Sāman (the chant of the Sāma-Veda) is known by that name because it is sā (speech) and ama (prāna). Or because it (prāna) is equal (sama) to a white ant, equal to a mosquito, equal to an elephant, equal to these three worlds, nay, equal to this universe; therefore it (prāna) is indeed the Sāma-Veda. He who knows this vital breath to be such attains union with it or lives in the same world with it.

**SPEECH ETC:** The word *Sāman* denotes both speech and the vital breath. "Further, it denotes a chant consisting only of tones, etc., which are produced by the vital breath." (*Śankarāchārya*.)

**THESE THREE WORLDS:** The body of Virāj.

**EQUAL TO THE UNIVERSE:** The form of Hiranyagarbha.

**OR BECAUSE ETC:** The vital breath (prāna) is equal to all these bodies—of the white ant, mosquito, etc.—in the sense that it is present in its entirety in them, just as "cowness" is present in all cows. But prāna cannot be measured in terms of bodies, for it is formless and all-pervading. Nor does this "equality" mean simply that it fills these bodies by expansion or contraction, according to the size of the objects. Prāna is infinite. It is an all-pervading principle which assumes in different bodies their particular size. (*Adapted from Śankarāchārya's commentary*.)

**HE WHO ETC:** The knower of the prāna experiences oneness with it through meditation and enjoys the great happiness arising from identity with the all-pervading prāna.

## 23

And it is also the Udgitha. The vital breath is verily ut, for by the vital breath all this [universe] is upheld (uttabdha); and speech is githa (song). And because it is ut and githa, therefore it is Udgitha.

**UDGITHA:** A particular division of the Sāma-Veda, and not the chant.

## 24

Regarding this [there is also the following anecdote]: Brahmadata, the great-grandson of Chikitāna, while drinking king [soma], said: "Let this soma strike off my head if I say that the ayāsyā āngirasa chanted the Udgitha through any other means than this [vital breath and speech]." Surely he chanted through speech and the vital breath.

**THERE IS ETC:** The story is given in the Vedas.

**STRIKE OFF ETC:** For being a liar; that is to say, if he should tell a lie.

**AYĀSYA ĀNGIRASA:** The prāna, which dwells in the mouth. It refers to the priest who chanted in the sacrifice performed by the ancient sages.

The mention of his taking this oath shows that one must have firm conviction about this knowledge.

## 25

He who knows the wealth of this sāmān (vital breath) obtains wealth. Tone, indeed, is its wealth. Therefore let one who is going to perform the sacrificial work as a priest desire that his voice may have a good tone, and let him perform the sacrifice through that voice with a good tone. Therefore people desire to see at a sacrifice a priest with a good voice, like one who has wealth. He who thus knows what is the wealth of the sāmān obtains wealth.

**TONE:** Sweetness of voice. Tone is the ornament of a voice; for chanting, when performed with a good tone, sounds magnificent.

**PRIEST:** The chanter.

**DESIRE ETC:** "One does not get a good tone by the mere wish; one should follow other effective means, such as cleansing the teeth and drinking oil." (*Adapted from Śankarāchārya's commentary.*)

## 26

He who knows the suvarna (gold) of the sāmān (vital breath) obtains gold. Tone is verily its gold. He who thus knows what is the gold of the sāmān obtains gold.

**TONE:** The difference between the word *tone* in the previous verse and in the present one is this: in the former it signifies only sweetness of voice, whereas in the latter it signifies correct articulation according to the laws of phonetics.

**GOLD:** The same word (suvarna) is used in the text for both gold and correct sound.

## 27

He who knows the support of the sāmān (vital breath) gets a support. Speech verily is its support. For, supported in speech, the vital breath is transformed into a chant. Some say the support is in food (the body).

**SPEECH:** The word here denotes certain parts of the body, such as the root of the tongue, the chest, head, throat, teeth, lips, nose, and palate.

One can meditate either on speech or on food as the support of the vital breath.

## 28

Next follows the edifying repetition (*abhyāroha*) only of the hymns called *pavamānas*. The priest called *prastotri* indeed chants the *sāman*. While he chants it, let the sacrificer recite these [Yajur verses]:

“Lead me from the unreal to the real. From darkness lead me to light. From death lead me to immortality.”

When the mantra (verse) says: “Lead me from the unreal to the real,” “the unreal” means death, and the “real,” immortality; so it says, “From death lead me to immortality,” that is to say, “Make me immortal.”

When it says: “From darkness lead me to light,” “darkness” means death, and “light,” immortality; so it says: “From death lead me to immortality,” that is to say, “Make me immortal.”

In the verse: “From death lead me to immortality,” there is nothing that is hidden.

Then come the remaining hymns, with which, by singing them, [the chanter] should obtain food for himself. Therefore while they are being chanted let the sacrificer ask for a boon—anything that he desires. Whatever objects this chanter, endowed with such knowledge, desires for himself or for the sacrificer, he obtains by his chanting. This [meditation] by itself wins the world (*Hiranyagarbha*). He who thus knows the *sāman* (the *prāna*, or vital breath)—for him there is no fear of not being admitted into that world.

**EDIFYING REPETITION:** Because the repetition elevates him to his innate divinity.

**“THE UNREAL” MEANS DEATH:** The word *death* refers to the actions and thoughts prompted by a man’s natural impulses. They are unreal because they lead to degradation.

**AND THE “REAL”:** The word *real* refers to actions and thoughts regulated by the scriptures. They are real because through them one identifies oneself with those things which lead to the realization of one’s divinity.

**“DARKNESS” MEANS . . . DEATH:** Ignorance, being of the nature of a veil, is darkness; further, ignorance is called death since on account of it a man is subject to rebirth, which ultimately leads to death.

“FROM DEATH . . . IMMORTALITY”: That is to say, “Help me to realize the divine status of Virāj.” The first verse means: “Help me to identify myself with the means of realization instead of with things that are not such.” The second verse means: “Help me to go beyond even that (for striving is also a form of ignorance) and attain identity with the result.” The third verse gives the combined meaning of the first two.

NOTHING . . . HIDDEN: The meaning is not obscure and therefore requires no further explanation.

BY ITSELF: That is to say, without the rites. The Brāhmana part of the Vedas is used by the vānaprasthins, who dwell in the forest. They do not have the facilities to perform concrete ceremonies. Through meditation alone they obtain the result.

WIN THE WORLD: The word *world* means Hiranyagarbha, who is the universal form of the vital breath (prāna).

FOR HIM . . . THERE IS ETC: “For he has already realized his identity with Hiranyagarbha and therefore cannot possibly pray for further attainment of Him. A man who is already in a village is not eager to know about when he will reach it, as is a man in the forest. Expectation is always about something remote, something other than one’s self; it is impossible with regard to one’s own self. Therefore there is no possibility of his fearing lest he should fail to attain identity with Hiranyagarbha.” (Śaṅkarāchārya.)

The fruit of identity with Hiranyagarbha, or the World Spirit (prāna in its cosmic form), accrues to him who has realized his identity with Him. The experience of the identity is thus described: “I am the pure vital breath, untouched by the evils which are characteristic of the demons, that is to say, the organs when they are attached to the senses. The organs, by taking refuge in me, have been freed from these evils which spring from one’s natural thoughts and have realized their true selves as fire, the sun, the moon, and the rest; and they are connected with all bodies by partaking of the eatable food that belongs to me. Being the āngirasa, I am the essence of all beings. I am the self of speech, manifesting itself as Rig, Yajur, Sāman, and Udgitha, for I produced it and pervade it. I am transformed into a chant as Sāman, and have the external embellishment of a good voice; and I also have a melodious and correct sound, consisting of fine articulation according to phonetics. And when I become the chant, the throat and other parts of the body are my support. With these attributes I am completely present in all bodies—including those of the white ant and the mosquito—being myself formless and all-pervading.”

*Here ends Chapter Three  
of Part One of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CREATION AND ITS CAUSE

IN THE BEGINNING, this [universe] was the self (Virāj) alone, in the shape of a person. He reflected and saw nothing else but His self. He first said: "I am He." Therefore He came to be known by the name *I* (*Aham*). Hence, even now, when a person is addressed, he first says: "It is I," and then says whatever other name he may have. And because He, before (purva) the whole group [of aspirants], burnt (aushat) all evils, therefore He is called Purusha. He who knows this verily burns up him who wishes to be [Virāj] in advance of him.

**IN THE BEGINNING:** Before the manifestation of any other body.

**VIRĀJ:** The first embodied being, born of the Cosmic Egg. He is endowed with a human form. It is important to remember that Śankarāchārya uses the word *Prajāpati* to denote both Hiranyagarbha and Virāj. The former applies to Brahman when identified, through māyā, with the totality of subtle bodies, and the latter, to Brahman when identified, through māyā, with the totality of gross bodies.

**I AM HE:** That is to say, *Prajāpati*, the self of all. He obtained this knowledge because he had already been purified by the Vedic knowledge.

**THE NAME "I":** That Virāj came to be known by the name *Aham* will be mentioned later (V. v. 4).

**HENCE EVEN ETC:** Because this happened with the cause (Virāj), therefore, even to this day, when a person—who is the effect of Virāj—is addressed, he first says: "It is I," and then mentions his other name.

**OTHER NAME:** Such as Devadatta or Yajnadatta, the name given by his parents. All people, without any distinction whatsoever, use the name *Aham* (*I*). Therefore it may be inferred that *Aham* is the name of Virāj, who is the cause of all. Next the specific names of the persons are uttered. Therefore it stands to reason that these names were created after *Aham*.

**AND BECAUSE . . . EVILS:** In a previous incarnation, when, as a religious student, he was the first of all the candidates who wanted to attain the status of Virāj and practised adequately the rites and meditation laid down in the Vedas for this purpose.

**EVILS:** Obstructions.

HE WHO ETC: The meaning is that he who uses the best means is the first to attain the result, and he who is deficient in his means does not succeed. The word *burn* is used in a figurative sense. In common experience, too, we find that "when several people are having a running contest, the man who first reaches the destination may be said to burn the others, as it were, for they are shorn of their strength." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

It has been explained before that one attains the status of Hiranyagarbha through a combination of Vedic rites and meditation. The same result is attained through meditation on the *prāna*, or vital breath. The purpose of the present section is to describe the power and glories of Hiranyagarbha in the projection, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe. What will all this lead to? "The sum total of the results of meditation and rites belongs to the relative world; for Virāj (the highest position in the relative world) has been described as possessing such characteristics of the phenomenal universe as fear and dissatisfaction, and as being endowed with a body and organs, etc. Further, all objects in the relative world, either gross or subtle, are governed by the causal law and are therefore transitory. The Knowledge of Brahman alone leads to Liberation and the Highest Good. This chapter will prepare the mood of the aspirant for this Knowledge; for one who is not disgusted with things of the world, consisting of a diversity of means and ends, is not entitled to cultivate the knowledge of the unity of Brahman and the self, just as one who is not thirsty has no use for a drink. Therefore the present chapter delineates the supreme results of meditation and rites in order to introduce, later, the topic of the Knowledge of Brahman." (*Adapted from Śankarāchārya's commentary.*)

*All the glories and powers of Virāj, which are derived from the pursuit of the Vedic rites and meditation, fall within the range of transigratory existence. He, too, is subject to fear and dissatisfaction.*

## 2

He was afraid. Therefore people [still] are afraid when alone. He thought: "Since there is nothing else but Myself, what am I afraid of?" Thereupon His fears were gone; for what was there to fear? Assuredly, it is from a second [entity] that fear arises.

HE WAS ETC: Virāj was afraid, like any other phenomenal being. An embodied being is afraid of death, which is a false notion created by *māyā*. The soul is immortal.

PEOPLE [STILL] ETC: Since people are embodied beings, they too are afraid when alone. They are afraid of death, like Virāj.

**HE THOUGHT ETC:** The means of removing the false notion that causes the fear is, as is well known, right knowledge of the Self. Virāj, like us, applied this means and got rid of fear. He too is a phenomenal being.

**A SECOND:** The second entity is merely projected by ignorance. Fear disappears when, through right knowledge, a person sees the oneness of existence. Compare: "What delusion, what sorrow, can there be for him who beholds that oneness?" (*Iś. Up.* 7.)

Though Virāj, like other embodied beings, belongs to the relative universe, there exists a difference between Him and others. Brahman is the inmost Spirit of all beings; the difference between one being and another lies in the density of the upādhi, or limitation, created by ignorance. In Virāj this upādhi is very thin; through it He can see the oneness of existence. As already stated, through the practice of religious disciplines in a previous life, the mental impurities of Virāj had been almost destroyed and he was born in the present cycle with an almost completely pure mind and body.

*There is another reason why the position of Virāj belongs to the realm of the relative universe. He did not have contentment.*

## 3

He was not at all happy. Therefore a person [even today] is not happy when alone. He desired a mate. He became the size of a man and wife in close embrace. He divided this body into two. From that [division] arose husband (pati) and wife (patni). Therefore, as Yājñavalkya said, the body [before one accepts a wife] is one half of oneself, like the half of a split pea. Therefore this space is indeed filled by the wife. He was united with her. From that [union] human beings were born.

**THEREFORE A PERSON ETC:** The characteristics of the cause are present in the effect.

**HE DESIRED ETC:** Satisfaction is a state of mind produced by conjunction with a desired object. A person who is attached to such an object feels troubled in mind when separated from it. This is called dissatisfaction. So Virāj desired a mate, that is to say, a wife, in order to rid Himself of dissatisfaction.

**HE BECAME ETC:** As He thus longed for a wife, He visualized Himself as being embraced by a wife. Now, the will of Virāj always comes true (satyasamkalpa). Thus He became like a man and his wife embracing each

other in order to remove their dissatisfaction. It should be remembered that Virāj did not wipe out His former self in order to assume this new form, as milk does when becoming curds. He remained as He was. But, being a person of true resolve, He projected another body of the size of man and wife united in close embrace. Such a phenomenon is called māyā. On account of māyā one entity appears to become another, like a desert appearing as a mirage, without losing its own nature. The different theories about the creation given here or in other Upanishads are applicable only to the finite mind, which tries to understand Ultimate Reality from its limited standpoint. According to the non-dualistic interpretation of the Upanishads, from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality there has never been any creation. Brahman alone exists, one and without a second.

YĀJNAVALKYA: One of the Vedic rishis.

THEREFORE THIS SPACE ETC: Since one half of a man is lacking when he is without a wife, representing the other half, he therefore espouses a mate and thus gets his complement.

HE WAS ETC: He, Virāj, called Manu after He had divided Himself, was united with the woman Śatarupā, who was His daughter, and now accepted her as His wife.

FROM THAT [UNION]: From the union of Manu and Śatarupā.

Prajāpati divided Himself into two: man and woman. Both are elements of Him. They are not separate. There is no ultimate dualism between the male and female principles.

The first embodied creature was alone. When conscious of His loneliness, He felt fear and sadness. He rid Himself of fear, however, after realizing that there was nothing else of which to be afraid. He overcame sadness through a mate, having divided Himself into two parts, called husband and wife.

*From the union of the two the race of man was produced. The original human pair gave rise to animal forms.*

#### 4

She reflected: "How can he unite with me after having produced me from himself? Well, let me hide myself." She became a cow, the other (Manu) became a bull and was united with her; from that [union] cows were born. The one became a mare, the other became a stallion; the one became a she-ass, the other became a he-ass and was united with her; from that [union] one-hoofed animals were born. The one became a she-goat, the other became a he-goat; the one be-

came a ewe, the other became a ram and was united with her; from that [union] goats and sheep were born. Thus, indeed, he produced everything that exists in pairs, down to the ants.

**SHE ETC:** Śatarupā, born of Virāj, was His daughter. Union with one's own daughter is vile.

**LET ME ETC:** By changing into another species.

**DOWN TO THE ANTS:** All these births were in conformity with the actions of these creatures in their past births.

## 5

He (Virāj) realized: "Indeed, I am the creation, for I produced all this." Therefore He became the creation. He who knows this becomes a creator in this creation of Virāj.

**INDEED, I AM ETC:** The world which Virāj projected was not different from Him. He Himself was the world. Nothing in the creation is different from Virāj.

## 6

Then He (Virāj) rubbed back and forth thus and produced fire from its source: the mouth and the hands. Therefore both the hands and mouth are hairless inside.

When they (the priests) speak of particular gods, saying: "Sacrifice to him," "Sacrifice to that one," [they are mistaken]; for these are all His manifestations: He Himself is all the gods.

Now, whatever is liquid, He produced from semen; and that is soma. This universe is indeed this much: food and the eater of food. Soma is food; and fire, the eater of food. This is the highest creation of Virāj, that He projected the gods, who are even superior to Him. This is the highest creation because He, although mortal Himself, manifested the immortal. And he who knows this verily becomes [a creator] in this highest creation of Virāj.

**THEN:** After having projected this world consisting of pairs.

**RUBBED ETC:** He put His hands into His mouth and went on rubbing back and forth.

**FIRE:** The god of fire is described in the Vedas as the special benefactor of the brāhmin caste. The brāhmins also sprang from the mouth of Virāj (see Rig-Veda, *Purusha Sukta*). Both having been produced from the same source, the brāhmins are especially favoured by fire, as a younger brother

by his elder brother. The strength of the brāhmins lies in their mouths. They are the reciters and teachers of the Vedas. Likewise, Virāj produced from His arms, which are the abode of strength, Indra and the other gods, and also the kshatriyas. Indra is the favourite deity of the military men, whose strength lies in their arms. From His thighs, which are the source of effort, Virāj manifested the Vasus and other gods, and also the vaiśya caste, which is especially favoured by them. The vaiśyas are devoted to agriculture and derive strength greatly from their thighs. And lastly, from His feet Virāj manifested Pushan, the god of earth, and also the śudras, who are especially favoured by Pushan. The duty of the śudras is to serve the other castes. Thus the four castes sprang from the four principal parts of the body of Virāj.

**HE HIMSELF ETC:** According to non-dualistic Vedānta, cause and effect are non-different from each other. Virāj is both the material and the efficient cause of created objects, like the spider and its web. The real aim of the text is not to emphasize the details of the creation, but to indicate that all the gods and other created beings are non-different from Virāj, their cause.

**WHEN:** While discussing ceremonials.

**THEY:** Priests who know the rites only in a superficial manner.

**SAYING:** At the time of sacrifice.

**NOW, WHATEVER ETC:** The Upanishad states that all objects, differentiated as food and its eater, are nothing but Virāj, or Prajāpati.

**SOMA:** The moon deity, who is often described as possessing a liquid body.

**EATER OF FOOD:** That is to say, fire, which, as already described, is produced from the mouth of Virāj and is non-different from Him.

**HIGHEST CREATION ETC:** That is to say, the manifestation of the gods.

**ALTHOUGH HIMSELF ETC:** Before bringing out the universe (including the gods), Virāj practised meditation and performed sacrifice in order to make Himself sinless. But the gods, from the very moment of their creation, were sinless. Therefore the creation is nobler than the Creator Himself.

**MORTAL:** As stated before, a mortal person, through the performance of sacrifices and so forth, becomes Virāj in his next life. The gods are immortal, though in a relative sense.

*All the disciplines laid down in the Vedas—consisting of rites and meditation, and depending upon diverse factors, such as agent, instrument, and result—belong to the relative universe; they attain their final fruition when the aspirant realizes his identity with Hiranya-*

*garbha, who is the root of the tree of the universe. This tree must be pulled out by its very root; there lies the ultimate goal of man. The unmanifested state, the root of the manifested universe, is described in order to show its relative nature and spur the aspirant to realize the attributeless Brahman:*

## 7

Now, all this [universe] was then undifferentiated. It became differentiated by name and form: it was known by such and such a name, and such and such a form. Thus to this day this [universe] is differentiated by name and form; [so it is said:] "He has such a name and such a form."

This Self has entered into these bodies up to the very tips of the nails, as a razor lies [hidden] in its case, or as fire, which sustains the world, [lies hidden] in its source. People do not see the Self, for [when viewed in parts] It is incomplete: when breathing, It is called the vital breath (prāna); when speaking, the organ of speech; when seeing, the eye; when hearing, the ear; when thinking, the mind. These are merely Its names according to Its functions. He who meditates on one or another of Its aspects does not know, for It is then incomplete: the Self is separated from Its totality by being associated with a single characteristic.

The Self alone is to be meditated upon, for in It all these become unified. Of all these, this Self alone should be known, for one knows all these through It, just as one may find [an animal which is lost] through its footprints. He who thus knows the Self obtains fame and association [with dear ones].

**ALL THIS:** Refers to the universe differentiated into name and form. Before becoming differentiated the universe was in an unmanifested state. It is implied that the effect existed in the form of the cause and that the cause appears as the effect.

**NAME AND FORM:** These two (nāma and rupa) constitute the tangible universe. The nāma, or name, is expressed through a word, which is inseparable from the idea. Therefore it really denotes the idea or the essence of which the rupa, or form, is the visible embodiment. The nāma is grasped by the intellect and the rupa is apprehended by the senses. The world consists of form (rupa), and idea (nāma), of which form is the outer crust. Form is corporeal and idea is incorporeal.

**THIS SELF:** The aim of the scriptures is "to teach of the Self, on which the

differences of agent, action, and result have been superimposed by primordial ignorance. This [Self] is the cause of the whole universe. On It name and form exist, as they pass from the undifferentiated to the differentiated state, like foam—an impurity—when it appears on limpid water. The [Self] is distinct from name and form, being intrinsically eternal, pure, enlightened, and free." (*Śaṅkarāchārya*.)

**ENTERED:** Like the reflection of the sun in water. The sun does not really enter the water; one merely imagines it to have entered it when one sees its reflection in the water. Before the manifestation of the universe, the Self is not perceived, but after it is manifested, the Self is perceived within the intellect (*buddhi*), like the reflection of the sun in water. The scriptural passages describing the projection of the universe, the entrance of the Self into it, its continuance, and its dissolution do not refer to any actual projection and so on; they merely serve as aids to the realization of the Self, which is the highest end of man. The description of the Self's entrance into the universe is but a metaphorical way of saying that It is to be realized in the universe.

**THESE BODIES:** From *Hiranyagarbha* down to a clump of grass.

**VERY TIPS ETC:** The Self, as intelligence, is felt in every part of the body.

**AS A RAZOR ETC:** As a razor lies in one part of the case (the barber's instrument-bag), or as fire lies in wood, pervading it, so does the Self reside in the body—both in a particular and in a general way. There It is perceived as performing the function of living as well as of seeing, smelling, etc.

**PEOPLE ETC:** They do not realize that the Self has entered into the body and performs the functions mentioned in the text. They see the conditioned aspects and not the undivided nature of the Self, in which all these aspects become unified.

**SOURCE:** Wood or the like.

**IT IS INCOMPLETE:** In Its conditioned aspects.

**WHEN BREATHING, ETC:** When the Self performs the function of breathing, and none other, It is called the vital breath, or *prāna*. It is an incomplete aspect of the Self, because the other aspects are not taken into consideration.

**THESE ARE . . . ACTIONS:** They do not describe the Self as It is in Its totality.

**THE SELF . . . MEDITATED UPON:** That is to say, the Self endowed with all the aspects.

**BECOME UNIFIED:** As the different reflections of the sun become one in the sun when the reflecting media are removed.

**FOR ONE KNOWS ETC:** Just as one may find a missing animal by searching for it through its footprints, so everything can be truly understood if one knows the Self.

THUS KNOWS ETC: That is to say, knows how the Self, entering into name and form, became known through name and form as the Self.

FAME: The word *kirti* in the text may also mean the knowledge of unity coveted by seekers of Liberation.

ASSOCIATION: The word *śloka*m in the text may also mean Liberation, which results from the unitive Knowledge.

The description of the results of Self-Knowledge, such as fame and association with dear ones, is a mere eulogy of the scriptural injunctions. The seeker of Knowledge does not care for any earthly reward.

*Another reason why the Self should be known to the exclusion of everything else:*

## 8

This [Self] is dearer than a son, dearer than wealth, dearer than everything else, [because] It is innermost. If one [holding the Self dear] were to say to a person who speaks of anything other than the Self as dear, that he, the latter, will lose what he holds dear—and the former is certainly competent to do so—it will indeed come true.

One should meditate upon the Self alone as dear. He who meditates upon the Self alone as dear—what he holds dear will not perish.

DEARER . . . SON: A son is universally held dear in the world: but the Self is dearer than a son. This shows that It is extremely dear.

INNERMOST: The body and the organs are nearer to oneself and more inward than a son or wealth, which are external things. But the Self is nearer even than these. A thing which is extremely dear deserves to be attained by the utmost effort. Therefore one should make the utmost effort to realize the Self, abandoning what is imposed on one by the scriptures as one's duty for the attainment of other dear objects (for instance, marriage, for the sake of having a son).

IT . . . COME TRUE: The dear one will die, for the knower of the Self speaks only the truth.

WILL NOT PERISH: All people who have near and dear ones suffer when these die. But the knower of the Self has transcended the limited vision of earthly attachment and aversion; therefore he is not a victim of such suffering. But the scriptures speak here in terms that are merely conventional. Or this may be a eulogy of the choice of the Self as dear in preference to the non-Self. Or the fruit may accrue to one who is an imperfect knower of the Self.

*In the passage: "The Self alone is to be meditated upon" (I. iv. 7.), the Knowledge of Brahman, which is the essence of the Upanishadic teachings, has been briefly indicated. This passage needs further elucidation. The necessity for the Knowledge of Brahman should also be stated.*

## 9

They say: "Since men think that by the Knowledge of Brahman they become all, what, pray, was it that Brahman knew by which It became all?"

**THEY:** Seekers of Brahman, who are disgusted with the transitory world and who, having obtained the blessing of a qualified teacher, long to attain the Highest Good, which is completely other than all phenomenal values.

**MEN:** Men alone, of all living beings, are qualified to attain both prosperity (abhyudaya) and Liberation (niḥśreyasa), which are the goals of the Vedic teaching.

**WHAT, PRAY ETC:** The Vedas say that Brahman is all. Now, the question is: did Brahman become all without knowing anything, or through knowledge of something? If the former is true, then others, too, can become all without knowledge; in that case no knowledge is necessary. If the latter is true, then the question arises: which did It know—Itself or others? If Brahman became all by the knowing of Itself, then this identity with all, which is the result of the Knowledge of Brahman, becomes just like the result of an action, and therefore transitory. If, on the other hand, Brahman became all by knowing others, then it is to be assumed that those others, too, had become all. If that be so, then what did those others know by which they became all? This position leads to a *regressus ad infinitum*. It can be taken for granted that Brahman did not become all without knowing something.

*If indeed Brahman became all by knowing something, we ask, what was it? To this question the Upanishad gives the following faultless reply:*

## 10

This [self] was indeed Brahman in the beginning. It knew itself only as "I am Brahman." Therefore it became all. And whoever among the gods had this enlightenment, also became That [Brahman]. It is

the same with the seers (*rishis*), the same with men. The seer Vāmadeva, having realized this [self] as That, came to know: "I was Manu and the sun." And to this day, whoever in a like manner knows the self as "I am Brahman," becomes all this [universe]. Even the gods cannot prevent his becoming this, for he has become their Self.

Now, if a man worships another deity, thinking: "He is one and I am another," he does not know. He is like an animal to the gods. As many animals serve a man, so does each man serve the gods. Even if one animal is taken away, it causes anguish [to the owner]; how much more so when many [are taken away]! Therefore it is not pleasing to the gods that men should know this.

**THIS [SELF]:** When Brahman enters the body (I. iv. 7.), It is perceived as the embodied self indicated by "thou" in the Vedic statement "That thou art." The word *this* in the text refers to the embodied self.

**BRAHMAN:** The Supreme Brahman, and not Brahman with attributes.

**IN THE BEGINNING:** That is to say, even before realizing its true nature. Even before the realization, the self is Brahman and identical with all; "but owing to ignorance it superimposes upon itself the notion that it is not Brahman and that it is not all, and consequently thinks, through mistake, that it is a performer of action and the experiencer of its fruits, that it is happy or miserable, and that it transmigrates. But really it is Brahman, different from all these, and is all." (*Śankarāchārya*.)

**IT KNEW ETC:** It knew its own natural Self, free from differentiation superimposed by ignorance, through the instruction of a compassionate teacher.

**ITSELF ONLY:** And not any other being.

**THEREFORE IT ETC:** The self became all, since by the cessation of the superimposed notion of not being Brahman its effect, the notion of not being all, was destroyed. Hence men are justified in thinking that through the Knowledge of Brahman they will become all. The question: "What, pray, was it that Brahman knew by which It became all?" has been answered. The self was indeed Brahman in the beginning; it knew itself only as "I am Brahman"; therefore it became all. No other knowledge is necessary to realize the Great Identity.

**GODS ETC:** The words *gods*, *seers*, *men*, etc. are used from the relative standpoint. Brahman alone exists; on account of ignorance It appears to have assumed the bodies of gods, seers, men, etc. and is regarded as other than Brahman. After the attainment of Knowledge, It discovers Its true nature and thereby becomes all.

**HAVING REALIZED ETC:** The knowledge and the attainment of identity are simultaneous, like eating a meal and being satisfied by it.

"I WAS MANU ETC": Rig-Veda IV. xxvi. 1.

**AND TO THIS DAY ETC:** Someone may think that the Knowledge of Brahman and the attainment of identity with all may be possible for the gods, on account of their extraordinary power, but that men of the present age, owing to their limited power, can never achieve these. This erroneous notion is removed. Any man at any time can realize Brahman by controlling his interest in outer things.

**IN A LIKE MANNER KNOWS ETC:** That is to say, knows Brahman as his inner Self.

**BECOMES ALL THIS:** Because his notion of limitation, which is the effect of ignorance, is destroyed by the Knowledge of Brahman. From the standpoint of Brahman there is no difference between the great seers of the past and the weak human beings of today.

**EVEN THE GODS:** Powerful as they may be. The word *gods* (*devas*) refers to those mortals who, as a result of meritorious action performed on earth, go, after death, to higher planes and become custodians of various cosmic forces. They hold these exalted positions for many, many years and afterwards are reborn in human bodies. Worldly men worship them for the attainment of material prosperity.

**CANNOT PREVENT ETC:** The gods are sustained by the oblations offered in the rites and sacrifices performed by men. Therefore they do not want men to pursue the Knowledge of Brahman, in which case the latter would not be interested in propitiating the gods through sacrifices. Thus the gods are said to put obstacles in the way of men's attaining the Knowledge of Brahman.

**HAS BECOME THEIR SELF:** The knower of Brahman becomes one with the gods. No one can show hostility to himself. The gods succeed in their effort to put obstacles in the way only of one who seeks a result which is other than the Self and is separated from them by the notion of time, space, and causation, but not of the illumined person who is their Self and is not separated from them by the notion of time, space, and causation.

**NOW, IF ETC:** Refers to an ignorant person who worships a god "different from himself and approaches him in a subordinate position, offering him praise, salutations, sacrifices, presents, self-surrender, etc." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**ANOTHER:** That is to say, his subordinate. The ignorant man must serve the god like a debtor. The god is regarded as a creditor because the ignorant man, seeking worldly prosperity, owes him worship, sacrifice, etc.

**DOES NOT KNOW:** Does not know the truth.

**HE IS LIKE . . . GODS:** As cows or other animals are used for various services, such as carrying loads or giving milk, so is an ignorant man used by the gods for many services, such as the performance of sacrifices.

**EACH MAN:** Each ignorant person, who is equivalent to many animals.

**TAKEN AWAY:** Seized by a tiger, for instance.

**HOW MUCH ETC:** "What is there to wonder at if the gods feel mortified when a man, equivalent to many animals, rids himself of the idea that he is their creature, as when a householder is robbed of many animals?" (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**THEREFORE IT IS NOT ETC:** The gods do not wish men to know the ultimate truth, for then they realize the subordinate position the gods hold, and give up making offerings to them. "The world of the gods, O Arjuna, is filled with those who perform rites. And the gods do not want mortals to surpass them." (*Mahābhārata* XIV. xx. 59.)

The gods do not want to set free those who are still attached to worldly pleasures and who propitiate them through sacrifices to secure those ends. They use such ignorant persons as householders use their animals. But seekers of Liberation should worship the gods in a different spirit. They should supplicate them for faith and devotion. Pleased with their fervour, the gods will grant them these spiritual virtues. Therefore aspirants should worship the gods in order to receive their blessings for the attainment of the Knowledge of Brahman.

*The gist of the scriptures has been put in the sentence: "The Self alone is to be meditated upon" (I. iv. 7). Further, by way of eulogy it has been said that the knower of Brahman becomes all. Ignorance of Brahman relegates a man to the relative plane, where he lives as a debtor to the gods and is dependent upon them. He does his duties to them, as an animal to men. Life on earth is governed by the laws of caste (jāti) and the stages (āśrama). The following verses explain what these castes are, because of which dependent men are bound to the rites connected with the castes, and transmigrate. It is the ignorant man alone who is obligated to perform rites, and not the knower of Brahman.*

In the beginning this (the kshatriya and other castes) was indeed Brahman, one only without a second. He, being one, did not flourish. He projected, further, an excellent form, kshatriyahood—those kshatriyas (rulers) among the gods: Indra, Varuna, Soma (Moon), Rudra, Parjanya, Yama, Mrityu (Death), and Iśāna. Therefore there is none higher than the kshatriyas. Thus at the Rājasuya sacrifice, the brāhmin sits below and worships the kshatriya. He confers that glory

on kshatriyahood alone. But brāhminhood is [nevertheless] the source of kshatriyahood. Therefore even though the king is exalted [in the sacrifice], at the end of it he resorts to brāhminhood as his source. He who slights a brāhmin strikes at his own source. He becomes more evil, as one who slights his superior.

**IN THE BEGINNING:** Before the evolution of the castes.

**BRAHMAN:** That is to say, Virāj or Prajāpati, who identified Himself with the brāhmin caste. In the beginning there was only one caste or class, the brāhmin; there was no differentiation in society.

**BEING ONE:** Being without protectors, such as the kshatriyas.

**DID NOT FLOURISH:** That is to say, the brāhmins could not discharge their task properly. According to the Hindu tradition, the brāhmin caste is the creator of the spiritual culture; that is why a brāhmin is universally respected. But the kshatriya (the military and governing) caste is the protector of that culture. Harmony between the two castes and their mutual respect insure the continuation of the spiritual culture.

**THOSE . . . GODS:** Indra, Varuna, and others are known in the world as the kshatriyas among the gods.

**INDRA:** The king of the gods.

**VARUNA:** The king of the aquatic animals.

**SOMA:** The king of the brāhmins.

**RUDRA:** The king of the beasts.

**PARJANYA:** The king of lightning, rain etc.

**YAMA:** The king of the Manes.

**DEATH:** The king of diseases.

**ISĀNA:** The king of the luminous celestial orbs.

**THERE IS NONE ETC:** Because the kshatriya is the controller and protector even of the brāhmin caste.

**RĀJASUYA:** A ceremony in which a king is anointed.

**HE CONFERS ETC:** At a certain stage of the sacrifice, the priest says to the king: "You, O King, are a brāhmin."

**HE RESORTS ETC:** That is to say, he puts the priest forward.

**HE WHO SLIGHTS:** Being proud of his strength.

**MORE EVIL ETC:** The kshatriya is by nature evil, on account of his violence; he becomes more so by hurting his source.

Harmony between the brāhmins and the kshatriyas marked the most glorious period of Hindu culture.

## 12

Yet He (Virāj) did not flourish. He projected the vaiśya caste—those classes of gods who are designated in groups: the Vasus, Rudras, Ādityas, Viśve-devas, and Maruts.

**DID NOT ETC:** Still He lacked someone who could earn wealth.

**WHO ARE . . . GROUPS:** The vaiśyas abound in groups, for they succeed in acquiring wealth mostly in combination, not singly.

**VASUS:** A group of eight.

**RUDRAS:** A group of twelve.

**ĀDITYAS:** A group of thirteen.

**VIŚVE-DEVAS:** Lit., all the gods.

**MARUTS:** A group of forty-nine.

The Vedic rishis recognized the value of wealth in the performance of the religious rites through which men communed with the gods.

## 13

Still He did not flourish. He projected the śudra caste—Pushan. This [earth] is verily Pushan (the nourisher); for it nourishes all that exists.

**PUSHAN:** He who nourishes, through work.

A well-developed culture requires wisdom, power, wealth, and service. Wisdom is the foundation, power is its protector, wealth helps in its dissemination, and service keeps the whole social order going. This is the basis of the caste system in India. The four castes discharge their four appointed functions. These distinctions are found also among the gods. The four castes—like the head, arms, thighs, and feet of a man—are interdependent. The welfare of one means the welfare of all. There is no question of the exploiting of one by another.

*Even after projecting the four castes, Prajāpati did not flourish. He was afraid that the kshatriya, on account of his superior strength, would be tyrannical and unruly. Therefore He next projected justice, based upon truth.*

## 14

Yet He did not flourish. He projected, further, that excellent form, justice (dharma). This justice is the controller of the kshatriya. Therefore there is nothing higher than justice. So even a weak man hopes [to defeat] a stronger man through justice, as one does with the help of a king. Verily, that which is justice is truth. Therefore if a man speaks the truth, they say he speaks what is just, and if he speaks what is just, they say he speaks the truth; for justice alone is both these.

CONTROLLER ETC: Justice is fiercer even than the fierce kshatriya.

TRUTH: Truth is the understanding of things in accordance with the scriptures, which contain records of the true experiences of the ancient seers. It is the same thing that, when practised, is called justice, and, when understood in accordance with the scriptures, is called truth.

JUSTICE . . . THESE: Justice, in its double aspect of theory and practice, controls all—those who know the scriptures as well as those who do not. If a person is in doubt about the true import of the scriptures, he should ascertain it by observing what is practised by good people. Again, if he is in doubt regarding the conduct of good people, he should ascertain its meaning from the injunctions of the scriptures. Thus justice and truth are mutually dependent.

Dharma, which denotes law or justice, is that by which unruly impulses are controlled. Even kings are subordinate to dharma. Dharma is not made in the interest of the strong. It cannot be arbitrary. It is the embodiment of truth.

*At first the four castes were created among the gods, and afterwards among men, following the classification among the gods. The Vedic rituals could not be performed without caste divisions.*

### 15

So these [four castes were projected]: the brāhmin: the kshatriya, the vaiśya, and the śudra. Among the gods Prajāpati became a brāhmin as fire, and among men [He became] the brāhmin. He became a kshatriya [among men] through the [divine] kshatriyas, a vaiśya through the [divine] vaiśyas, and a śudra through the [divine] śudras. Therefore people desire to attain the results of their rites among the gods through fire, and among men as a brāhmin. For Prajāpati [directly] projected Himself as these two forms.

Now, if a man departs from this world without realizing his own World (the Self), It, being unknown, does not protect him—as the Vedas, unrecited, or as a deed unaccomplished, do not [protect him]. Nay, even if one who does not know It (the Self) should perform here on earth a great many meritorious acts, those acts will in the end surely perish for him. One should meditate only upon the World called the Self. He who meditates upon the World called the Self—his work does not perish; for from this very Self he projects whatever he desires.

**AMONG THE GODS ETC:** Prajāpati directly manifested Himself, among the gods, as a brāhmin in the form of fire, and among men, as the brāhmin. Fire and the brāhmin are His direct manifestations. In the other castes He appeared in a changed form. For instance, He became a kshatriya on earth only after having become the divine kshatriyas, and so on.

**THEREFORE PEOPLE DESIRE . . . FIRE:** If a person wishes to obtain a place in heaven among the gods, he must offer oblations in the fire, which is a form of Prajāpati.

**AMONG MEN ETC:** If a person wishes to obtain the highest goal in the world of men, he does not have to perform rites depending on fire. He can obtain it simply by being born as a brāhmin, who is a projection of Prajāpati. A brāhmin may attain perfection through the repetition of sacred formulas, whether or not he performs rites depending on fire.

**DEPARTS FROM THIS WORLD:** That is to say, departs from samsāra, the transmigratory world in which one is born through ignorance and desire.

**BEING UNKNOWN:** Being obstructed by ignorance and therefore virtually becoming extraneous to himself.

**DOES NOT PROTECT HIM:** By removing his evils such as grief, delusion, and fear, just as the man in the story fails to protect himself by not knowing that he is the missing tenth man.<sup>1</sup>

**AS THE VEDAS ETC:** If the Vedas are not recited, they do not help a man by enlightening him concerning the rites etc.

**A DEED:** Such as ploughing.

**IF ONE ETC:** Even though he may be a remarkable genius.

**MERITORIOUS ACTS:** Such as the Horse-sacrifice.

**WILL IN THE END ETC:** That is to say, after he has enjoyed their fruits, they perish like the splendour arising from the fantasy of a dream. These meritorious works are bound to perish, for their causes—ignorance and desire—are unstable. Hence there is no hope that the protection afforded by the results of meritorious acts should be eternal.

**HIS WORK . . . PERISH:** For the simple reason that a knower of the Self does not do any work with a view to obtaining a result. An ignorant man continuously suffers from the misery of transmigration because he returns

<sup>1</sup> The reference here is to a story about ten men who swam across a stream. On the farther shore one of them counted their number to see if everyone had safely crossed, and to everyone's dismay found that one was missing. Then each one took his turn at counting, but the result was always the same. So they began to lament. Just then a kindly passer-by inquired what it was all about, and on being told what had happened, he readily understood the situation and asked one of them to count again. When the man stopped at nine, the new-comer said to him: "You are the tenth man." This he repeated to the rest of them, and then they saw their mistake and went away happy. In counting, each one had forgotten to count himself.

to earth when the result of his past action is exhausted. Not so the knower of the Self. As Emperor Janaka said: "If Mithila (the capital) is ablaze, nothing of mine is burning." (*Mahābhārata* XII. clxxvi. 56.)

**FOR FROM ETC:** The worshipper of the Self attains to the Supreme Self. The fruit that is mentioned in the text is only a eulogy of Self-Knowledge. Or the passage may mean that the worshipper of the Self realizes his identity with all.

*It has been said that an ignorant man, identifying himself with his caste, stage of life, and so on, and being controlled by justice (dharma), thinks that he has certain duties to the gods and others, and is dependent on them like an animal. Now, what are those duties that make him so dependent, and who are the gods and others whom he serves, like an animal, through his actions? The answer is given:*

## 16

Now, this self (the ignorant person) is an object of enjoyment (lokah) to all beings. In so far as he offers oblations in the fire and performs sacrifices, he becomes an object of enjoyment to the gods. In so far as he studies the Vedas, he becomes an object of enjoyment to the rishis. In so far as he makes offerings to the Manes and desires children, he becomes an object of enjoyment to the Manes. In so far as he gives shelter and food to men, he becomes an object of enjoyment to men. In so far as he gives fodder and water to the animals, he becomes an object of enjoyment to the animals. In so far as beasts and birds and even ants find a living in his home, he becomes an object of enjoyment to these. Just as one wishes no injury to one's body, so do all beings wish no injury to him who has this knowledge. All this, indeed, has been known and well investigated.

**THIS SELF:** The householder, who identifies himself with the body and the organs, cherishes various desires, and performs actions to fulfil those desires.

**OBJECT OF ENJOYMENT:** The ignorant person is dependent upon various beings, from the gods to the ants, for the fulfilment of his desires. Thus, through what is known as his caste duties, he serves these beings. He is a debtor to them and makes himself an object of enjoyment to them. They help him in the fulfilment of his desires.

**OFFERS OBLATIONS ETC:** The ignorant person greatly desires a place in heaven. He considers it his duty to offer oblations to the gods to secure this end. Thus he becomes tied to them, being dependent on them, like an animal. Hence he is their object of enjoyment.

**JUST AS ONE ETC:** Because he helps the gods and others by so many services, they too desire his safety.

**WHO HAS THIS KNOWLEDGE:** That is to say, who thinks that he is an object of enjoyment to all beings and that he must discharge his obligations, like a debtor. They protect him in all respects and safeguard their claim, as a householder protects his animals. The ignorant person, on account of his worldly desires, has placed himself under the authority of the gods, etc.

**KNOWN:** Compare: *Śa. Br. I. vii. 2. 6.*

**WELL INVESTIGATED:** Compare: *Śa. Br. I. vii. 2. 1.*

All beings in the relative universe, from the gods to the ants, are slaves of desires which are satisfied through the fulfilment of their duties to one another. The cosmic process reveals the interdependence of men, the gods, the rishis, the Manes, and the animals. Duties to men are discharged through the giving of shelter to guests and strangers; to the gods, through the offering of oblations; to the rishis, through study of the scriptures; to the Manes, through the begetting of children; to the animals, by offering them fodder and water. These duties constitute an important factor in the Hindu ethics. And the gods, the rishis, the Manes, etc. protect men from injury.

*If a man, by knowing Brahman, can rid himself of that bondage of duty which makes him an animal, as it were, under what compulsion does he take up the bondage of ritualistic work, as if he were helpless, and not the pursuit of Knowledge, which is the means to freedom? The answer, in one word, is desire. As the Katha Upanishad states, fools, endowed with outgoing tendencies, pursue objects of desire. The Manu Sahmitā (II. 4.) describes all activities as the result of desire. This is elaborated below:*

17

In the beginning this [aggregate of desirable objects] was but the self, one only. He cherished the desire: "Let me have a wife, so that I may be born [as the child]; and let me have wealth, so that I may perform rites." This much, indeed, is [the range of] desire; even if one wishes, one cannot get more than this. Therefore, to this day, a man who is single desires: "Let me have a wife, so that I may be born [as the child]; and let me have wealth, so that I may perform rites." So long as he does not obtain each one of these, he thinks he is incomplete.

Now, his completeness [can also come in this way]: The mind is his self, speech his wife, the vital breath his child, the eye his human wealth, for he finds it with the eye; the ear his divine wealth, for he hears it with the ear; the body his [instrument of] rites, for he performs rites through the body. [So] this sacrifice has five factors—the animals have five factors, men have five factors, and all this that exists has five factors. He who knows this obtains all this.

**IN THE BEGINNING:** Before marriage.

**SELF:** Here the word *self* means an ignorant man identified with the body and the organs.

**ONE ONLY:** It alone existed, enveloped in ignorance, which is the root of the desire for a wife and so forth.

**WIFE:** A wife qualifies a man belonging to the three upper castes for the Vedic rites. Without her they cannot be performed. The goal of the Vedic teaching is twofold: worldly prosperity and the Highest Good. The majority of men are inclined towards worldly prosperity, which consists in the enjoyment of happiness on earth and life in heaven after death. The heavenly world can be obtained only through sacrifices. This is why sacrificial rites play such an important part in the Vedas, especially in the Karmakānda, or ritualistic section.

**WEALTH:** Such as cows. Butter and other milk products are important ingredients of the sacrifice.

**THIS MUCH . . . DESIRE:** Desire has two aspects: means and end. The means include wife, son, wealth, and rites. The end comprises the three worlds, namely, those of men, the Manes, and the gods. There cannot be any desire other than the desires for means and for ends. Prompted by this twofold desire, an ignorant man helplessly enmeshes himself, like a silk-worm, and through absorption in rituals becomes outgoing in his tendencies and does not know the Self. As the *Taittiriya Brāhmana* (III. x. 11. 1.) says: "Being infatuated with rites performed with the help of fire, and choked by smoke, they do not know their own World, the Self."

**EVEN IF ETC:** "Desire consists of the hankerings after ends and means, which are either visible or invisible and belong to the special sphere of the ignorant man. Hence the wise should renounce them." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**THEREFORE, TO THIS DAY, ETC:** In ancient times an ignorant man possessed of desire wished thus, and others before him also did the same. Such is the way of the world. It has been said that even Virāj (the first created being) was unhappy in being alone, and to remove that boredom wished for a wife, and he was united with her, which led to the creation. Because it was like this, therefore, even to this day, an unmarried person seeks a mate.

**NOW, HIS COMPLETENESS ETC:** If he cannot make himself complete in any other way, he may pursue the following instruction of the scripture to bring about his completeness.

**MIND:** The mind is the chief of the organs because the rest follow the mind.

**SPEECH ETC:** Speech follows the mind, as a wife follows her husband.

**VITAL BREATH ETC:** Speech and mind, standing for wife and husband, produce the vital breath (prāna). Rites represent the activity of the vital breath.

**EYE ETC:** Human wealth, that is to say, the wealth used in ceremonies, is seen by the eye; therefore the eye is called human wealth.

**BODY ETC:** For the man who considers himself incomplete, completeness can be attained in this way through imagination, just as it can be brought about externally through a wife etc.

**THIS SACRIFICE ETC:** It can be performed through meditation even by one who does not perform rites.

**HE WHO KNOWS THIS ETC:** He who imagines himself to be the sacrifice consisting of five factors realizes the universe as his own self.

*Here ends Chapter Four  
of Part One of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER V

### MANIFESTATIONS OF PRAJĀPATI

THE FOLLOWING are the mantras:

“[I shall now disclose] that the father produced seven kinds of food through meditation and rites. One is common to all [eaters]. Two he assigned to the gods. Three he designed for himself. And one he gave to the animals. On it (food) rests everything—whatsoever breathes and whatsoever breathes not. Why are not these foods exhausted although they are always being eaten? He who knows the cause of this inexhaustibility of the food eats food with pre-eminence (pratika). He obtains [identity with] the gods and lives on nectar.”

The ignorant householder is both the enjoyer and the object of enjoyment of the whole universe. That is to say, everyone is alternately the cause as well as the effect of everyone else. The universe, which the ignorant man projected as his object of enjoyment through his meditation and rites, being divided in its entirety into seven parts as causes and effects, is called the seven kinds of food, because it is an object of enjoyment. Hence he is the father of the seven kinds of food. Not Hiranyagarbha alone, but every being in a particular cycle who performs meditation and rites according to the scriptures, is here spoken of as the father of all in the next cycle.

*The foregoing is explained:*

2

When it is said: “That the father produced seven kinds of food through meditation and rites,” the statement means that the father indeed produced them through meditation and rites. When it is said: “One is common to all [eaters],” it means that the food which is eaten is that which is common to all. He who appropriates this food is never free from evil, for this is, verily, the general food. When it is said: “Two he assigned to the gods,” the statement means oblations made in the fire and presents offered otherwise to the gods. Therefore

people make oblations in the fire and offer presents otherwise to the gods. Some, however, say that the two foods refer to the new-moon and full-moon sacrifices. Therefore one should not engage in sacrifices for material ends. When it is said: "One he gave to the animals," the statement refers to milk; for at first men and animals live on milk alone. That is why they first make a new-born babe lick melted butter or they put it to the breast. And they speak of the new-born calf as not yet eating grass. When it is said: "On it rests everything—whatsoever breathes and whatsoever breathes not," it means that everything rests on milk, all that breathes and breathes not. It is further said [in another Brāhmana] that by making offerings of milk in the fire for a year one overcomes further death; but one should not think thus. For he who knows this overcomes further death the very day he makes the offering, because he offers all eatable food to the gods. When it is asked: "Why are not these foods exhausted although they are always being eaten?" the answer is that the eater is indeed the cause of this inexhaustibility, for he produces this food again and again. When it is said: "He who knows the cause of this inexhaustibility," the statement means that the eater is indeed the cause of this inexhaustibility, for he produces this food through meditation and rites. If he did not do this the food would be exhausted. When it is said: "He eats food with *pratika*," the word *pratika* means pre-eminence; hence the meaning is that he eats food pre-eminently. The statement: "He obtains [identity with] the gods and lives on nectar," is a eulogy.

**MEDITATION AND RITES:** The Sanskrit words *medhā* and *tapas*, in the text, usually mean intelligence and austerity. But in this particular context the words have different meanings. The ignorant person, endowed with desires, performs scriptural rites and meditation (contemplation of deities), and the result is the creation of the universe. The attaining of the state of trees, stones, and other stationary objects is the result of actions not approved by the scriptures. But here scriptural rites are referred to, because through their help the higher planes are created. But even these planes are governed by the law of causality and belong to the realm of ignorance. The Upanishad mentions them in order to create in the minds of seekers an aversion for all phenomenal creation. "For since this entire gross and subtle universe is impure, transitory, composed of ends and means, painful, and within the category of ignorance, one becomes disgusted with it, and for one thus disgusted the Knowledge of Brahman has to be introduced." (*Śaṅkarāchārya.*)

**THE FOOD WHICH ETC:** The father, after producing the different kinds of food, designed this to be the common food of all eaters.

**NEVER FREE FROM EVIL:** Compare: "But wicked men, who cook food only for themselves, verily eat sin." (B. G. III. 13.) "He is verily a thief who enjoys the things that they (the gods) give without offering to them anything in return." (B. G. III. 12.)

**OFFERING . . . OTHERWISE:** Refers to the subsidiary offerings which are made after the oblations in the fire.

**SOME, HOWEVER, SAY ETC:** The Upanishad upholds this view.

**MELTED BUTTER:** Which is a modification of milk.

**AS NOT . . . GRASS:** That is to say, still living on milk.

**ON MILK RESTS . . . NOT:** The oblations made in the fire rise to the sun; from the sun comes rain; from rain, food; from food, living beings. Thus the whole universe is the result of the oblations offered in the Fire-sacrifice (Agnihotra). Milk is an integral part of the oblations.

**ONE OVERCOMES . . . DEATH:** After death one is born among the gods, no more to die.

**FOR . . . MAKES THE OFFERING:** He has not to wait for a year, but attains identity with the universe in one day.

**HE OFFERS . . . THE GODS:** While offering oblations, he regards himself as one with the oblations, which are the food of the gods. Thus he attains identity with the gods as their food. Being one with all the gods (that is to say, with Prajāpati), he overcomes death. He attains to final Liberation at the end of the cycle, without being born again on earth. Death is the result of individualization.

**WHY ARE NOT ETC:** Since the time when the father created the seven kinds of food and distributed them to different kinds of eaters, they have been constantly eating these foods, for they live on them. And the foods ought to be exhausted, since everything that is made must wear out. But they are not diminishing, for we see that the universe remains intact. So there must be a cause of their permanence. Hence the question.

**THE ANSWER IS ETC:** Just as in the beginning the father was the producer of the different kinds of food through his meditation and rites, so those to whom he gave the foods, although they are their eaters, are their fathers as well, for they produce them through their meditation and rites.

**IF HE DID NOT ETC:** Just as the eater is continuously eating the foods, he is also creating them according to his meditation and rites. Hence, by continuously creating them, the eater is the cause of their permanence. For this reason the foods are not exhausted although they are being eaten. Therefore the whole universe—consisting of a series of meditations<sup>1</sup> and rites,

<sup>1</sup>The word *meditation* (*upāsana*) means thinking of a deity while performing a rite associated with that deity.

means and ends, actions and results—although transient, impure, flimsy, and comparable to foam, a mirage, or a dream, appears nevertheless to those who have identified themselves with it to be undecaying, eternal, and full of substance. The second part of this Upanishad will inculcate the Knowledge of Brahman for those who are disgusted with the universe.

HE . . . PRE-EMINENTLY: He who knows that the being who is the father of the different kinds of food is the cause of their permanence, pre-eminently eats food and never becomes a subsidiary part of it. Unlike an ignorant man, this sage, being the self of the foods, becomes only their eater and never a food.

*The four kinds of food have been described in the previous verse. Now the remaining three, the results of the rites with five factors, are explained:*

## 3

“Three he designed for himself”—that is to say, the mind, the organ of speech, and the vital breath; these he designed for himself. [They say:] “My mind was elsewhere, I did not see it; my mind was elsewhere, I did not hear it.” It is clear that a man sees with his mind and hears with his mind. Desire, determination, doubt, faith, lack of faith, steadfastness, lack of steadfastness, shame, intelligence, and fear—all this is truly the mind. Even if one is touched from behind, one knows it through the mind; therefore [the mind exists].

Whatever sound there is, it is just the organ of speech; for it serves to determine a thing, but it cannot itself be revealed.

The prāna, apāna, vyāna, udāna, samāna, and ana—all these are but the vital breath (prāna). This body (ātmā) consists of these—the organ of speech, the mind, and the vital breath.

[THEY SAY:] “MY MIND . . . HEAR IT”: A doubt is raised regarding the existence and the nature of the mind. The Upanishad says that there is a mind apart from the external organs. Mere representation by the organ is not enough for perception. There must be an organ of attention; and that is the mind.

IT IS CLEAR ETC: Therefore it is understood that an internal organ called the mind, which joins itself to the objects of the organs, exists; for in its absence the eye and other organs fail to perceive their respective objects, although otherwise they have the capacity to do so. Hearing, seeing, and the like are impossible when the mind is engaged elsewhere.

**DESIRE:** Sexual attraction and the like.

**DETERMINATION:** Finding out whether a thing before one is white or blue, and so on.

**FaITH:** Belief in the efficacy of rites directed to invisible ends, as well as in the existence of the gods and the like.

**STEADFASTNESS:** Stimulation of the body, mind, etc. when they are depressed.

**EVEN IF ETC:** This is a second argument for the independent existence of the mind. Even without seeing, one can distinguish between the touch of the hand and that of the knee. That which helps one distinguish between different kinds of sensation is the mind.

**SOUND:** Whether uttered by the tongue or produced by musical instruments.

**IT CANNOT . . . REVEALED:** It is self-luminous, like a lamp. To reveal is the very function of the organ. If something else is imagined to be its revealer, one is faced with a *regressus ad infinitum*.

**PRĀNA:** The vital breath that goes upwards; its functioning is connected with the heart and is capable of moving to the mouth and nostrils.

**APĀNA:** The vital breath that goes downwards; it functions below the heart and extends down to the navel. It helps excretion.

**VYĀNA:** The diffused breath; it regulates the prāna and apāna and is the nexus between them. The cause of actions requiring strength, it sustains life when there is neither inhalation nor exhalation, as, for example, when one is pulling the string of a bow to discharge an arrow at a target; at such a time breathing stops.

**UDĀNA:** It functions upwards, leading the soul in deep sleep to the inner Reality or conducting the illumined soul from the body, at death, through the aperture at the top of the head.

**SAMĀNA:** It helps in the assimilation of food and drink.

**ANA:** A generalization of the different functions of the vital breath, concerned with the general activities of the body.

**BODY:** The word *ātman*, which really means *self*, here denotes the body because the body is accepted as the *ātman* by the ignorant.

The three kinds of food, namely, the mind, the organ of speech, and the vital breath, are described here from the standpoint of the body. They will presently be explained from the standpoint of the elements and the gods.

*The explanation of the foods with reference to the subtle elements or Hiranyagarbha, who is the deity identified with the totality of subtle bodies:*

## 4

These verily are the three worlds: the organ of speech is this world (the earth), the mind is the intermediary world (the sky), and the vital breath is that world (heaven).

## 5

These verily are the three Vedas: the organ of speech is the Rig-Veda, the mind is the Yajur-Veda, and the vital breath is the Sāma-Veda.

## 6

These verily are the gods, the Manes, and men: the organ of speech is the gods, the mind is the Manes, and the vital breath is men.

## 7

These verily are father, mother, and child: the mind is the father, the organ of speech is the mother, and the vital force is the child.

## 8-10

These verily are what is known, what is to be known, and what is unknown. Whatever is known is a form of the organ of speech, for it is the knower. The organ of speech protects him [who knows its different manifestations] by becoming that [which is known].

Whatever is to be known is a form of the mind, for the mind is what is to be known. The mind protects him [who knows this] by becoming that [which is to be known].

Whatever is unknown is a form of the vital breath, for the vital breath is what is unknown. The vital breath protects him [who knows this] by becoming that [which is unknown].

FOR IT . . . KNOWER: Because it is self-luminous.

FOR THE MIND . . . KNOWN: Because the mind takes the form of doubt and considers the pros and cons of a thing.

THE VITAL BREATH PROTECTS HIM ETC: That is to say, the vital breath becomes his food in the form of what is unknown.

*The following three verses explain the organ of speech, the mind, and the vital breath from the standpoint of the gods:*

## 11

The earth is the body of that organ of speech, and this fire is its luminous organ. And as far as the organ of speech extends, so far extends the earth, and so far extends fire.

**BODY:** The external container.

**THIS FIRE:** Terrestrial fire.

**LUMINOUS ORGAN:** "The vocal organ of Hiranyagarbha has two forms: one is the effect (body), the container, and is non-luminous; and the other is the instrument (organ), the content, and is luminous." (*Śankarāchārya*.)

## 12

Now, heaven is the body of this mind, and that sun [yonder] is its luminous organ. And as far as the mind extends, so far extends the earth, and so far extends fire. The two (fire and the sun) were united, and from that was born the vital breath. It (the vital breath) is the supreme Lord (Indra). It is without a rival. A second being is, indeed, a rival. He who knows this has no rival.

**WERE UNITED:** Fire and the sun were united between the two halves of the cosmic shell. The sun, as the father, performs the function of generation. Fire, or the organ of speech, as the mother, performs the function of manifestation. It is well known that the sun, which stands for the father, ripens the seed, and the fire (heat) from the earth, which stands for the mother, manifests the sprout.

**IT IS . . . RIVAL:** The statement contains a direction for meditation.

## 13

Next, water is the body of this vital breath, and that moon [yonder] is its luminous organ. And as far as the vital breath extends, so far extends water, and so far extends the moon. These are all equal, all infinite. He who meditates upon them as finite wins a finite world, but he who meditates upon them as infinite wins an infinite world.

**THESE:** The organ of speech (vāk), the mind, and the vital breath (prāna). These are the three kinds of food produced by the father (i.e. the spiritual aspirant in the previous cycle who now has become Prajāpati) through rites and meditation. The whole universe in its gross and subtle aspect is pervaded by them.

**EQUAL:** In extent. They pervade whatever concerns the animate world

in its aspects relating to the body (ādhyātmiḥ) and the elements (ādhibhautika).

**INFINITE:** They last as long as the relative universe lasts. Surely one does not know of any relative universe apart from the bodies and organs. It has already been stated that speech, mind, and vital breath consist of the body and organs.

**WINS . . . WORLD:** The result is commensurate with the meditation.

## 14

That Prajāpati, represented by the year, consists of sixteen parts. The nights [and days] are fifteen of his parts, and the constant point is the sixteenth. He [as the moon] is increased and decreased by the nights [and days]. Through the sixteenth part he permeates all living beings as the new-moon night and rises the [following] morning. Therefore, in honour of this deity, on this night let no one cut off the breath of any breathing being, not even of a lizard.

**NIGHTS:** That is to say, lunar days.

**HE . . . NIGHTS [AND DAYS]:** The lunar days are here called the parts. In the bright fortnight Prajāpati, who is the moon, is filled by the lunar days beginning with the first, through the gradual increase of parts; that is to say, he increases till he attains the fullness of his orb on the full-moon night. He also decreases by them in the dark fortnight through the gradual decrease of parts, till only the constant point is left on the new-moon night. Prajāpati is the symbol of time.

**PERMEATES ETC:** By means of the water they drink and the cereal they eat.

**LET NO . . . LIZARD:** The killing of animals is generally forbidden by the scriptures, except on certain specified occasions (compare: *Chh. Up.* VIII. xv. 1). The present text is not in conflict with this injunction; it does not advocate the killing of animals at other times than the new-moon night. This is only a special prohibition in honour of the deity.

Prajāpati consists of five factors: father, mother, child, wealth, and rites. Heaven, the sun, and the mind are the father; the earth, fire, and the organ of speech are his wife, the mother; the vital breath is their child; the lunar days, or the parts, are wealth (for they increase and decrease like it); and the fact that these parts, which are divisions of time, cause changes in the universe is the rites. Thus Prajāpati, as a whole, emerges as the result of rites with five factors, which is quite in accordance with his desire: "Let me have a wife, so that I may be born [as the child]; and let me have wealth, so that I may perform rites." (I. iv. 17.)

## 15

Verily, the person who knows this is himself that Prajāpati who is endowed with sixteen parts and who is represented by the year. Wealth constitutes fifteen of his parts, and the body is his sixteenth part. He is increased and decreased by that wealth. This body is the nave and wealth is the felloe. Therefore even if a man loses everything, but lives in his body, people say that he has lost only his felloe [which can be restored again].

VERILY, THE PERSON ETC: Prajāpati should not be considered to be altogether remote, because he is directly observed to be the man who knows about his identity with Prajāpati.

WEALTH: Such as cattle and fields.

THE BODY ETC: The body corresponds to the constant point of the moon.

WEALTH ETC: Wealth stands for the outer trappings, like the spokes and felloe of a wheel.

HE HAS LOST ETC: That is to say, he has been deprived of his outer trappings only, like a wheel losing its spokes and felloe. In other words, if he is alive, he can again grow by means of wealth.

*It has been stated in a general way that a son, rites, and meditation lead to the attainment of the different worlds. Now the definite relation between the means and the ends is described:*

## 16

Now, these are, verily, the three worlds: the world of men, the world of the Manes, and the world of the gods. The world of men can be gained through a son only, and by no other rite; the world of the Manes through rites; and the world of the gods through meditation. The world of the gods is the best of the worlds. Therefore they praise meditation.

RTES: Such as the Agnihotra sacrifice.

MEDITATION: The Sanskrit word *upāsana*, as already noted, means a form of worship in which meditation on the deity plays an important part. The word *rites* (*karma*) refers to ritualistic worship without meditation.

*The three means called a son, rites, and meditation have been related to their respective results, the three worlds. A wife, being an aid to the obtaining of a son and to the performance of rites, is not regarded*

*as a separate means, nor is wealth, which is a necessary aid to the rites. Therefore they are not mentioned. But how a son helps one win the world of men is now explained:*

## 17

Now therefore follows the entrusting: When a man thinks he is about to die, he says to his son: "You are Brahman, you are the sacrifice, and you are the world." The son replies: "I am Brahman, I am the sacrifice, I am the world."

[The Śruti explains the thoughts of the father:]

"Whatever has been studied by me (the father) is all unified in the word *Brahman*. Whatever sacrifices have been made by me (the father) are all unified in the word *sacrifice*. And whatever worlds were to be won by me (the father) are all unified in the word *world*. All this is indeed this much. He (the son), being all this, will protect me from [the ties of] this world." Therefore they speak of a son who is well instructed as being conducive to the [winning of the] world; and therefore [a father] instructs him.

When a father who knows this departs from this world, he—along with his own organ of speech, mind, and vital breath—penetrates his son. If, through a lapse, any duty has been left undone by him, the son exonerates him from all that; therefore he is called a son. The father remains in this world through the son. The divine and immortal organ of speech, mind, and vital breath enter into him (the father).

**THE ENTRUSTING:** This is the name of a rite so called because by means of it a father entrusts his duties to his son.

**WHATEVER . . . BRAHMAN:** That is to say: "Let the study of the Vedas, which so long was my duty, be henceforth done by you, for you are Brahman."

**WHATEVER . . . SACRIFICE:** "Let whatever sacrifices were to be performed by me, whether I have performed them or not, be henceforth performed by you."

**WHATEVER WORLDS . . . WORLD:** "Whatever worlds were to be won by me, whether I have won them or not, you should win for me."

**ALL THIS ETC:** The whole duty of the householder is to study the Vedas, perform sacrifices, and win the worlds.

**HE (THE SON) ETC:** By performing these duties himself.

**WHEN A FATHER ETC:** Owing to the cessation of the wrong notion which limited them to the body, the father's organ of speech, his mind, and his

vital breath, in their cosmic form pervade everything—the earth, fire, and everything else—like the light of a lamp that has been inside a jar, when the jar is broken. And the father himself, along with his organs, pervades everything; for he is identified with the organ of speech, the mind, and the vital breath. He has attained identity with Hiranyagarbha and so becomes the self of all, including his son. The idea is this: “A father who has a son instructed in this way, remains in this very world, after his own death, as that son; he should not be considered to be dead.” (*Adapted from Śankarāchārya’s commentary.*)

**THEREFORE . . . CALLED A SON:** The derivative meaning of the word son (*putra*) is one who saves (*tra*) the father by completing the latter’s omissions.

**THE FATHER . . . SON:** Thus a householder wins this world of men through his son.

**DIVINE ETC:** That is to say, those pertaining to Hiranyagarbha.

**ENTER ETC:** They pervade the father, who has entrusted his duties to his son.

*How the divine speech etc. enter into him will be described in the following two verses:*

## 18

The divine organ of speech from the earth and fire enters into him. That is the divine organ of speech through which whatever he says is fulfilled.

**THE DIVINE ORGAN ETC:** The divine organ of speech (belonging to Hiranyagarbha), consisting of the earth and fire, is the material of the vocal organs of all. But in an ignorant man it is limited by attachment and other evils pertaining to the body. In a sage, these evils being eliminated, it becomes all-pervading, like water when the obstructions have been removed.

**WHATEVER . . . FULFILLED:** His words become irresistible and infallible.

## 19

The divine mind from heaven and the sun permeates him. That is the divine mind through which he becomes joyful only and grieves no more.

The cause of pain and suffering is identification with the limited personality created through ignorance. When the limitation is destroyed, the sage attains identity with all and experiences supreme happiness.

## 20

The divine vital breath from water and the moon permeates him. And, verily, that is the divine vital breath which, whether moving or not moving, neither feels pain nor is injured. He who knows this becomes the self of all beings. As is this deity (Hiranyagarbha), so is he. And as all beings honour this deity, so do they honour him. Howsoever creatures may grieve, that grief of theirs remains with them; but only merit goes to him. No demerit ever goes to the gods.

**MOVING:** Refers to living beings that move.

**SELF OF ALL ETC:** That is to say, the vital breath, the mind, and speech, which constitute the self.

**HOWSOEVER ETC:** Individuals suffer on account of their identification with limited things. But in the World Soul all individuals are included; the suffering of the individual cannot affect Him.

The following is adapted from Śankarāchārya's commentary:

It may be contended that if one becomes the self of all beings and identifies oneself with their bodies and organs, one may then be affected by their joys and sorrows. The answer is in the negative. Those who identify themselves with limited objects are seen to be affected by sorrow. For instance, when they are abused by someone, they think that that person has abused them. But the sage who is the self of all does not particularly identify himself with either the object that is abused or the agency that abuses, and cannot therefore be miserable on that account. Likewise, there is no ground for sorrow on account of the death of someone else. A man feels miserable when someone dies, thinking that he was his son or brother—the grief being the result of this relationship, and when this cause is absent, one is not afflicted even though witnessing the death. Likewise, the sage, who is not identified with limited things, having no defects—such as fake notions about “mine” or “yours,” and so on, which lead to misery—is not affected by it.

## 21

Next follows the consideration of the vow (meditative worship):

Prajāpati projected the organs. They, when they were projected, quarrelled with one another. The organ of speech resolved: “I will go on speaking”; the eye: “I will go on seeing”; the ear: “I will go on hearing.” So did the other organs, according to their functions. Death, having taken the form of weariness, laid hold of them—it overtook

them, and having overtaken them, restrained them. Therefore does the organ of speech become tired, and so do the eye and the ear. But death did not overtake the vital breath (prāna) in the body. The other organs resolved to know it and said: "This is verily the greatest among us; whether moving or not moving, it neither feels pain nor is injured. Well then, let us assume its form." They all assumed its form. Therefore they are called prānas after it.

In whatever family there is a man who knows this—that family they call by his name. And whoever competes with one who knows this, shrivels and, after shrivelling, in the end dies. This is with regard to the body.

**OVERTOOK THEM:** Appeared among these organs, as they were engaged in their functions, in the form of weariness.

**DOES . . . BECOME TIRED ETC:** That is to say, even to this day.

**BUT DEATH ETC:** This is why even now the breath (prāna) functions tirelessly.

**THEY ALL ASSUMED ETC:** That is to say, they realized the vital breath as their own self. The other organs have the form of the vital breath in so far as they perceive objects. Nothing is mobile except the vital breath. And it is observed that the functions of the organs are always preceded by movement.

## 22

Now with regard to the gods. Fire resolved: "I will go on burning"; the sun: "I will go on giving heat"; the moon: "I will go on shining." And so did the other gods, according to their functions. As is the vital breath in the body among the organs, so is air (vāyu) among the gods. The other gods fade, but not air. Air is the deity that never sets.

For the purpose of meditative worship one should identify oneself with the vital breath with reference to the body, and with air with reference to the gods.

## 23

Now there is this verse (śloka):

The gods observed the vow of that from which the sun rises and in which it sets. This [vow] is followed today and this will be followed tomorrow. The sun rises verily from the prāna (the vital breath in its

cosmic form) and also sets in it. The gods even today observe the same vow which they observed then.

Therefore a man should observe a single vow—he should perform the functions of the prāna and apāna (respiration and excretion), lest the evil of death should overtake him. And if he performs them, let him try to complete them. Through this he obtains identity with that deity, or lives in the same world with it.

**GODS:** Fire and the rest, as also the organ of speech, etc. in the body.

**THE SUN RISES . . . SETS:** The sun rises from the air, as the organ of speech in the body rises from the vital breath. The same prāna is regarded as the air with reference to the gods, and as the vital breath with reference to the body. The sun rises from the air and sets in it. The organ of speech also rises from the vital breath and sets in it. Compare: "When a man sleeps, his organ of speech is merged in the vital breath, and so are the mind, the eye, and the ear. And when he awakes, these again arise from the vital breath. This is with reference to the body. Now with reference to the gods: When fire goes out, it sets in the air. Hence they speak of it as having set. It indeed sets in the air. And when the sun sets, it enters the air, and so does the moon. The quarters too rest on the air, and they again rise from the air." (Śa. Br. X. iii. 3. 6-8.)

**PERFORM . . . APĀNA:** Respiration and excretion are the functions of the prāna and apāna. They never stop. Therefore the aspirant should remain detached from the functions of all the other organs and observe this one vow only.

**EVIL OF DEATH:** In the form of fatigue.

**THROUGH THIS ETC:** That is to say, through the observance of this vow of identification with the vital breath, thinking: "The vocal and other organs in all beings as well as fire and the other gods are part and parcel of me, and I, the vital breath, initiate all movement."

**DEITY:** The vital breath, or prāna, of which Hiranyagarbha is the cosmic aspect.

The purpose of this meditative worship is to help men enlarge the consciousness which is usually confined to a particular body and attain identity with all that exists, of which Hiranyagarbha is the symbol.

*Here ends Chapter Five  
of Part One of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER VI

### THE THREE ASPECTS OF THE UNIVERSE

VERILY, this [universe] is a triad of name, form, and work. Of those names [which are in daily use], speech (sound in general) is the source (uktha), for from it all names arise. It is their common feature (sāman), for it is common to all names. It is their Brahman (self), for it supports all names.

**THIS [UNIVERSE]:** Belonging to the realm of ignorance, the universe consists of means and ends. The realization of identity with Hiranyagarbha is the highest achievement of a man in the relative universe. Prior to the state of manifestation, the universe remains in an undifferentiated state, like a tree in a seed.

**NAME, FORM, AND WORK:** These three constitute the phenomenal universe. They all are non-Self, that is to say, different from Brahman. Therefore one who is desirous of Liberation should turn away from the universe.

**SOURCE:** As salt rock is the source of particles of salt.

**COMMON FEATURE:** The effect is not different from the cause.

**IT IS THEIR BRAHMAN:** Names are derived from sound, since they have no reality apart from sound.

**IT SUPPORTS ALL NAMES:** On account of their relationship as cause and effect and as general and particular, and because the one gives the other its reality.

The purport of the present section is this: One whose mind is not averse to this non-Self is not inclined to meditate upon the Self as I am Brahman; for the two tendencies—one outward-going and the other devoting itself to the inner Self—are contradictory. Therefore one should turn away from the phenomenal universe.

#### 2

Next, of forms, the eye is the source (uktha), for from it all forms arise. It is their common feature (sāman), for it is common to all forms. It is their Brahman (self), for it supports all forms.

**FORMS:** The word *forms* here means colours, such as black, white, etc.  
**EYE:** Refers to visible form in general.

## 3

Next, of work, the body is the source (uktha), for from it all works arise. It is their common feature (sāman), for it is common to all works. It is their Brahman (self), for it supports all works.

These three together are one—this body; and the body, although one, is these three. This immortal entity is covered by truth: the vital breath is the immortal entity, and name and form are truth, and by them the immortal entity is covered.

**BODY:** That is to say, activity in general. The activity of the body is called the body, for it has been stated that one works through the body. Further, all activity is manifested in the body.

**THESE THREE ETC:** Name, form, and work are to be regarded as one because they form each other's support, are the cause of each other's manifestation, and further, merge in each other—like three sticks supporting each other.

**THIS BODY:** The aggregate of the body and the organs (I. v. 3).

**COVERED BY TRUTH:** Name and form, consisting of the five elements, cover the immortal entity.

The vital breath (the subtle body), covered by the gross body, is difficult to understand. Ātman, or the Self, covered by the subtle body, is extremely difficult to understand. Therefore one should be attentive to the subject of Ātman, which will be discussed in the following section.

*Here ends Chapter Six  
of Part One of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*



## CHAPTER I

### RELATIVE ASPECTS OF BRAHMAN

OM. THERE LIVED of yore a man of the Garga family called proud Bālāki, who was [an eloquent] speaker. He said to Ajātaśatru, the king of Kāśī: "I will tell you about Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "For this proposal I give you a thousand [cows]. People indeed rush, saying: 'Janaka, Janaka.' [I too have some of his virtues.]"

**A MAN ETC:** Being a descendant of the Garga family, he was known as Gārgya. As will be seen presently, he knew only Brahman conditioned by māyā, who belongs to the realm of ignorance.

**PROUD:** Because he was really ignorant regarding the true nature of Brahman.

**SPEAKER:** That is to say, expositor.

**PEOPLE RUSH ETC:** People who want to hear or speak about Brahman or want some present rush to Janaka. Gārgya, through his proposal, gave the king a chance to prove that he too had those qualities.

**JANAKA, JANAKA:** Two sentences, namely, "Janaka is benevolent" and "Janaka loves to hear" have been condensed into "Janaka, Janaka."

The Upanishad speaks of both Knowledge (Vidyā) and ignorance (avidyā). The non-dual Self (Ātman) alone is the subject matter of Knowledge. Any other entity associated with differentiation belongs to ignorance. Whatever has been taught in the first part of the Upanishad refers to ignorance, avidyā. This ignorance deals with Prāna, also known by such names as Vaiśvānara, Virāj, and Hiranyagarbha. Prāna is the totality of all objects; the sun, moon, and other cosmic phenomena are its different organs. The same Prāna is present in the individual body as the conscious agent and the experiencer. It has various modifications according to the different external media through which it manifests itself. Prāna is often described as the conditioned Brahman (Saguna Brahman) or the inferior Brahman (Apara Brahman) on account of its association with avidyā. Gārgya, though a brāhmin, regarded this conditioned Brahman as the Self, or the attribute-

less Brahman. But Ajātaśatru, though a kshatriya, knew the Supreme Brahman to be the Self. The former represents imperfect knowledge of Brahman, and the latter, perfect knowledge. While Gārgya worshipped Brahman as the sun, moon, etc., as limited, as active and passive, Ajātaśatru knew Brahman to be Ātman. Through a dialogue between the two, the Upanishad will explain the Supreme Brahman. This method of instruction is adopted because if a subject is presented in the form of a story comprising a *prima facie* view and a final conclusion, it is easily understood by the listener. Another purpose of the dialogue form is to show that the Supreme Brahman is to be known through faith and not through mere reasoning.

*The king was eager to listen and turned towards Gārgya.*

## 2

Gārgya said: "That being (purusha) who is in the sun, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk to me about him. I meditate upon him as all-surpassing, as the head of all beings, and as resplendent." Whosoever thus meditates upon him becomes all-surpassing, the head of all beings, and resplendent.

THAT . . . SUN: "The being who identifies himself both with the sun and with the eye, and who, having entered the body through the eye, resides in the heart as the ego, the experiencer, and the agent." (Śankarāchārya.) The Spirit is described with regard to the gods and the body. Gārgya worshipped Brahman in the aggregate of the body and organs and asked the king to do so.

NO, NO! ETC: The king evidently knew the aspect of Brahman on which Gārgya meditated. So he asked the brāhmin to tell him some other aspect which he did not know.

WHOSOEVER ETC: He who meditates upon the conditioned Brahman obtains a limited result; for the result must correspond to the particular attributes meditated upon. "One becomes exactly like Him upon whom one meditates." (Śa. Br. X. v. 2. 20.)

*When Ajātaśatru refuted the presentation of the sun as Brahman, Gārgya put forward another:*

## 3

Gārgya said: "That being (purusha) who is in the moon, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk to me about him. I meditate upon him as the great, white-robed, radiant

Soma." Whosoever thus meditates upon him has, every day, abundant soma pressed for him in his principal and auxiliary sacrifices, and his food never runs short.

**THAT . . . MOON:** The same being dwells also in the mind as the experiencer and the agent.

**SOMA:** The word denotes the moon as well as a creeper which, together with its juice, was indispensable for Vedic sacrifices.

Gārgya worshipped as Brahman that being who is identified with the moon, the mind, and the Soma. This is certainly the conditioned Brahman.

## 4

Gārgya said: "That being (purusha) who is in lightning, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk about him. I meditate upon him as luminous." Whosoever thus meditates upon him becomes luminous, and his progeny too becomes luminous.

**LIGHTNING:** The same being dwells also in the skin and in the heart.

**PROGENY:** Because lightning may be of diverse forms, the result of this meditation is reaped both by himself and by his progeny.

## 5

Gārgya said: "This being (purusha) who is in the ākāśa, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk about him. I meditate upon him as full and unmoving." Whosoever thus meditates upon him is filled with progeny and cattle, and his progeny is never extinct from this world.

**THIS . . . ĀKĀŚA:** The same being who dwells in the outer ākāśa (space or ether) is also in the ākāśa in the heart.

## 6

Gārgya said: "This being (purusha) who is in the air, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk about him. I meditate upon him as the Lord (Indra), as irresistible, and as the unvanquished army." Whosoever thus meditates upon him becomes ever victorious, invincible, and a conqueror of enemies.

**THIS . . . AIR:** The same being dwells also in the vital breath and in the heart.

**AS . . . ARMY:** Because the air-gods (Maruts) are regarded as a group.

## 7

Gārgya said: "This being (purusha) who is in fire, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk about him. I meditate upon him as forbearing." Whosoever thus meditates upon him becomes forbearing, and his progeny becomes forbearing.

**THIS . . . FIRE:** The same being dwells also in speech and in the heart.

## 8

Gārgya said: "This being (purusha) who is in water, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk about him. I meditate upon him as agreeable." Whosoever thus meditates upon him—to him comes what is agreeable, not what is disagreeable, and to him are born children who are agreeable.

**THIS . . . WATER:** The same being dwells also in semen and in the heart.  
**AGREEABLE:** That is to say, harmonious with the scriptures.

## 9

Gārgya said: "This being (purusha) who is in the mirror, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk about him. I meditate upon him as shining." Whosoever thus meditates upon him becomes shining, and his progeny too becomes shining, and he outshines all those with whom he comes in contact.

**THIS . . . MIRROR:** The same being dwells also in any other shining object, such as a sword, and in the intellect.

## 10

Gārgya said: "The sound that arises behind a man while he walks, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk about him. I meditate upon him as life." Whosoever thus meditates upon him reaches his full age on this earth, and life does not depart from him before the completion of that time.

**FULL AGE:** As determined by his past work.

## 11

Gārgya said: "This being (purusha) who is in the quarters, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk

about him. I meditate upon him as second and as inseparable." Whosoever thus meditates upon him gets companions, and his followers never part with him.

**THIS . . . QUARTERS:** The same being dwells in the ears and in the heart. The reference is to the *Aśvins*, the twin gods who are never separated from each other. The quarters also cannot be separated from one another.

## 12

Gārgya said: "This being (*purusha*) who consists of shadow, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk about him. I meditate upon him as death." Whosoever thus meditates upon him reaches his full age on this earth, and death does not overtake him before the completion of that time.

**THIS . . . SHADOW:** The same being dwells in the external darkness, in the ignorance within, and in the heart.

## 13

Gārgya said: "This being (*purusha*) who is in the self, I meditate upon as Brahman." Ajātaśatru said: "No, no! Please do not talk about him. I meditate upon him as self-possessed." Whosoever thus meditates upon him becomes self-possessed, and his progeny too becomes self-possessed.

Gārgya remained silent.

**THIS . . . THE SELF:** The same being dwells in the self (*Prajāpati*), in the intellect, and in the heart.

**SILENT:** When Gārgya's conceptions of Brahman were thus rejected one by one because the king had already known them, he had nothing more to say and fell silent, with his head down.

## 14

Ajātaśatru said: "Is this all?"

"That is all."

"By knowing that much one cannot know Brahman."

"Let me approach you as a student," said Gārgya.

**BY KNOWING ETC:** Gārgya knew only the conditioned Brahman and not the Absolute Brahman, which is the ultimate cause of all things; yet he had attempted to teach Ajātaśatru about the Supreme Brahman.

**THAT MUCH:** Knowledge of the conditioned Brahman is not altogether futile. In the realm of ignorance, Brahman can be comprehended only in its relative aspects. Through meditation on the conditioned Brahman, without any motive, the aspirant acquires knowledge of the Supreme Brahman. It has been shown in the first part of the Upanishad that the relative phases of Brahman cannot be discarded so long as one is attached to the world.

**LET ME APPROACH ETC:** The profound knowledge of Brahman can be transmitted only by a teacher to his disciple. Gārgya knew this injunction. Therefore, though a brāhmin, he asked the kshatriya king to accept him as his disciple.

The reply of Ajātaśatru implies that there is another aspect of Brahman which should be known.

## 15

Ajātaśatru said: "It is contrary to usual practice that a brāhmin should approach a kshatriya, thinking: 'He will teach me about Brahman.' Nevertheless, I will instruct you." [So saying,] he took Gārgya by the hand and rose. They came to a sleeping man. [Ajātaśatru] addressed him by these names: Great, White-robed, Radiant, Soma. The man did not get up. [The king] pushed him again and again with his hand till he awoke. Then he got up.

**IT IS ETC:** Scripture forbids a brāhmin to approach a kshatriya, whose role is not that of a spiritual teacher, for instruction about Brahman. Therefore Ajātaśatru wanted Gārgya to remain as a teacher.

**NEVERTHELESS ETC:** But in spite of this he agreed to instruct Gārgya.

**HE TOOK ETC:** Ajātaśatru noticed that Gārgya was abashed; in order to set him at ease he took him by the hand.

**GREAT, WHITE-ROBED, ETC:** These are epithets of the prāna.

The fact that the sleeping man did not awake when addressed by the epithets mentioned in the text shows that the being described by Gārgya was not Brahman. Two different beings were referred to as Brahman by Gārgya and Ajātaśatru. According to Gārgya, the Prāna was Brahman. Prāna, or the vital breath which sustains the universe and the individual body, is the Saguna or conditioned Brahman. The Brahman referred to by Ajātaśatru is the jiva, or soul, which in reality is the Nirguna or attributeless Brahman. (Brahman in association with māyā appears as the jiva.) The jiva is the master, and the prāna is the subordinate. The difference between the jiva and the prāna is not noticed in the waking state, since

at that time their attributes are confused; one cannot ascertain whether the functioning of the sense-organs is guided by the prāna or by the jiva. But during sleep the prāna remains awake, and not the jiva. As the prāna did not respond when addressed by its specific names, even though awake, it cannot be Consciousness, or Brahman. If the prāna were the real experiencer, then it should have heard the sound made by Ajātaśatru when he addressed it by those names. It may be contended that the aggregate of the body and the senses is Brahman; there is no need to conceive anything else as Ultimate Reality. In reply it may be said that this is not true. Had the aggregate been Brahman, then it should have responded even when the man was asleep, for the aggregate remains the same during both sleep and waking. Therefore there exists a reality which is quite different from the aggregate of the body and organs, including the prāna. Furthermore, the prāna is a compound (I. v. 15; V. xiii. 14; Pr. Up. II. 6; VI. 6.), and therefore, according to a well-known Vedāntic doctrine, it serves the purpose of another being, as does a house, a vehicle, or any other object consisting of parts. The prāna is an organ and hence a material entity. Its apparent consciousness is a reflection of Brahman. As a matter of fact, Brahman associated with māyā appears as the prāna. Therefore it is clear that there is an Absolute Consciousness, or Brahman, free from limitations and differentiations, which is the goal of the teachings of the Upanishad and which is other than and different from the various aspects of the Saguna Brahman, or prāna, which Gārgya regarded as the Supreme Brahman.

*After having demonstrated that Ātman, or Brahman, is other than the body or the organs or their aggregate, Ajātaśatru continued his teaching.*

## 16

Ajātaśatru said: "When this being full of consciousness (identified with the intellect) was thus asleep, where was it then and whence did it thus come back?" Gārgya did not know the answer.

**CONSCIOUSNESS:** The word *vijnāna* here means intellect or buddhi, that is to say the determinative faculty. Ātman reflected in the buddhi or limited by the upādhi of the buddhi appears as the jiva, or individual soul. The phrase *full of consciousness (vijnānamaya)* means "which is perceived in the intellect, which is perceived through it, and which perceives through it." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**WHERE WAS IT THEN:** The question implies that Ātman, in Its true nature, is free from the notions of action, agency, and result. These notions,

which are the results of past action, are not experienced in deep sleep. At that time Ātman remains in a transcendental state.

**WHENCE DID IT ETC:** The implication of the question is that when the jiva awakes it deviates from its true nature and becomes conscious of action, agency, and result.

*The questions asked by Ajātaśatru he then answered himself since Gārgya did not know the answers. The aim is to show that there is in Ātman, or Pure Consciousness, a total absence of action, agency, and experience of the result.*

## 17

Ajātaśatru said: "When this being full of consciousness (vijñāna maya) is thus asleep, it absorbs, at that time, the functions of the organs through its own consciousness and rests in the Supreme Self (ākāśa) that is in the heart. When this being absorbs them, it is called svapiti. Then the organ of smell is absorbed, the organ of speech is absorbed, the eye is absorbed, the ear is absorbed, and the mind is absorbed."

**FUNCTIONS OF THE ORGANS:** That is to say, their capacity to perceive their respective objects.

**THROUGH ITS . . . CONSCIOUSNESS:** The intellect (buddhi), through which the ātman perceives, is a limitation (upādhi) superimposed upon the ātman through ignorance, which is the material of which the intellect is made. (Compare dream experience: the mind, buddhi, etc. which function in dreams arise from ignorance alone.)

**SUPREME SELF:** During the state of deep sleep the ātman gives up its differentiated forms created by its connexion with the mind and remains in its undifferentiated, natural, absolute self. But it must be remembered that during deep sleep the self does not experience Liberation. Though the effect of ignorance is not felt, yet the ātman remains covered by a thin layer of ignorance. Hence one is not aware of anything in deep sleep.

**SVAPITI:** The literal meaning of the word is "merged (apiti) in its own self (svam)."

When the organs are absorbed or restrained in deep sleep, the self rests in its true nature.

*It may be contended that though, in the dream state, the ātman is dissociated from the body and the organs, yet in that state it feels happy or miserable just as in the waking state; therefore it may be presumed*

*that the ātman is endowed with such characteristics as pleasure and pain and that they are not superimposed upon it because of its contact with the body and organs through ignorance. The reply is that dream experiences are unreal.*

## 18

When the self remains in the dream state, these are its achievements (results of past action): It then becomes a great king, as it were; or a noble brāhmin, as it were; or attains, as it were, high or low states. Even as a great king, taking with him his [retinue of] citizens, moves about, according to his pleasure, within his own domain, so does the self, taking with it the organs, move about according to its pleasure, in the body.

AS IT WERE: The suzerainty and other experiences of the self in the dream state are false. They are contradicted by waking experience. Therefore the self is not actually connected, in dreams, with pain, pleasure, etc. It may be contended that as waking experiences are real in the waking state, so also are dream experiences real in the dream state. The reply is that waking experiences are not real, but are superimposed upon the self on account of ignorance. Likewise, dream experiences too are falsely superimposed upon the self. Further, dream and waking experiences, on account of *being seen* (driśvatvāt), are unreal. (Every object that is perceived is impermanent and therefore unreal.) Thirdly, when a man dreams that he has become an emperor and has been visiting different parts of his kingdom with a large retinue, he is actually lying in bed in his small room; there is no real connexion between the dream and his actual state. Therefore the dream is not real. (For a detailed discussion of the subject, see *Māndukya Upanishad, Gauḍapāda Kārikā* II, 1-15.)

TAKING . . . ORGANS: That is to say, withdrawing them from the places they occupy in the waking state.

IN THE BODY: One does not see dream objects outside the body.

From the standpoint of Reality there is no difference between dream and waking experience. The world experienced in the waking state is as unreal as the dream world. "Hence it goes without saying that the self is pure and is never connected with action, its factors, and its results. Since both in the waking and in the dream state we observe that the gross and subtle worlds consisting of action, its factors, and its results are but the objects of the seer, therefore the seer, the self, is different from its objects, that is to say, the worlds perceived in those states, and is therefore pure." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

*It has been said that the self "moves about according to its pleasure." The opponent may contend that there is a natural relationship between the self and the dream objects, and therefore the self becomes impure through this relationship. The Upanishad replies:*

## 19

Next, when the self goes into deep sleep—when it does not know anything—it returns along the seventy-two thousand nerves called *hitā*, which extend from the heart throughout the whole body, and remains in the body. As a baby or an emperor or a noble *brāhmin* lives, having reached the summit of happiness, so does the self rest.

**WHEN THE SELF ETC:** In deep sleep the self attains its natural state of perfect purity, though covered by a thin layer of ignorance.

**WHEN IT . . . ANYTHING:** In deep sleep the self is bereft of specific consciousness. But the consciousness which is the very stuff of the self always remains undiminished.

**SEVENTY-TWO THOUSAND ETC:** The heart, which is shaped like a lotus bud, is the seat of the intellect (*buddhi*). The external organs are subject to the intellect. During the waking state, the intellect extends along the nerves, interwoven like a fish-net, to the periphery of the body and directs the organs in accordance with the individual's past actions. The individual self (*jivātmā*) pervades the intellect with a reflection of consciousness. When the intellect contracts, the self, too, contracts; that is called the sleep of the individual. When the self perceives the expansion of the intellect, it is waking experience. The self follows the nature of the intellect, its limiting adjunct, as the reflection of the moon follows the nature of the water or other medium in which it is reflected.

**IT RETURNS ETC:** When the intellect that had the waking experience returns to deep sleep along these nerves, the individual self, too, returns; it remains in the body, uniformly pervading it, as fire pervades a heated iron ball. In deep sleep the self manifests its general consciousness.

**BABY:** Who is free from all the worries of the world.

**EMPEROR:** Whose subjects are entirely dependent upon him.

**NOBLE BRĀHMIN:** Who is exceedingly mature in erudition, and modest.

**AS A BABY ETC:** It is a well-known fact that all these—the baby and the rest—while they remain in their normal state are exceedingly happy. It is only when they depart from it that they feel miserable. Therefore their normal state is cited as an illustration. The reference is not to their sleep.

**SO DOES . . . REST:** So does the individual remain in his own natural self during sleep, beyond all relative attributes.

*It was asked (II. i. 16): "Whence did the self thus come back?" In reply it is said that the self did not exist somewhere else; so there is no question of its coming back: the self is always all-pervading. Are there no other entities, such as the organs, gods, etc., besides the self? No, they too emanate from Ātman. This is now explained:*

## 20

As the spider moves along the thread [it produces], or as from a fire tiny sparks fly in all directions, even so from this Ātman come forth all organs, all worlds, all gods, all beings. Its secret name (Upanishad) is "the Truth of truth." The vital breaths are the truth, and their truth is Ātman.

**MOVES ALONG ETC:** The thread is not different from the spider. There is no factor in the movement that is extraneous to the spider.

**AS A SPIDER . . . DIRECTIONS:** These two illustrations show activity even where there is no multiplicity of factors, and also a natural unity existing before the activity starts. The spider, without any extraneous help, moves along a thread which is non-different from itself. From a fire, without any extraneous cause, tiny sparks fly in all directions.

**FROM THIS ĀTMAN:** From the real nature of the individual self. The creation of the organs, worlds, etc. is not ascribed to the tangible individual self, but to the Supreme Self, or Brahman, which is in essence non-different from the individual self, and which appears as the individual self after It has penetrated into an individual body.

**ALL THE ORGANS ETC:** It is the Self, or Ātman, from which this world of moving and unmoving objects continually proceeds, like sparks from a fire; in which it is merged like a bubble in water; and with which the world is filled during its existence.

**ALL BEINGS:** From Hiranyagarbha down to a clump of grass.

**UPANISHAD:** The word means "that which brings one near [Brahman]," that is to say, it is a word denoting Brahman. That the power to "bring near" is a speciality of this particular name *Upanishad* is known on the authority of the scriptures alone.

**THE VITAL BREATHS ETC:** This sentence will be explained in the next two chapters.

Śankarāchārya, in explaining the present verse, discusses in detail whether the individual self, which awoke through being pushed and which is the perceiver of sounds, forms, etc. and subject to transmigration, is, according to the scriptures, the Ultimate Reality denoted by the secret name of *Upanishad*, or whether that Reality is a transcendental entity.

The following is a very brief adaptation from his commentary:

One is faced with a problem: Suppose that the Ultimate Reality is the individual, transmigrating self, and then, that that self becomes the object of knowledge, called Brahman, and that by knowing it and through union with it one attains all. The scriptures say that to know Reality is to become one with It and realize identity with all. But if that be so, then many scriptural passages describing the transcendental Absolute as Ultimate Reality will be futile. On the other hand, if the Absolute is the only Reality and if there is no individual self, then the scriptural injunction regarding spiritual discipline will be useless. How is the problem to be solved?

*Prima facie view:* The individual self is Ultimate Reality. The text of the Upanishad speaks of the origin of the universe from a self which awoke on being pushed with the hand; which is the perceiver of sounds, forms, etc.; and which moves from the dream state to dreamless sleep. There are many scriptural passages which speak of the individual self as Brahman, or Ultimate Reality. Compare: "Not for the sake of all, my dear, is all loved, but it is loved for the sake of the self" (II. iv. 5; IV. v. 6); "This [Self] is dearer than a son, dearer than wealth" (I. iv. 8); "It knew itself only as 'I am Brahman'" (I. iv. 10). It will be said, farther on: "If a man knows the Self as *I am this*" (IV. iv. 12). Lastly, all the Vedānta scriptures put forward the inner self as identical with Brahman. Therefore the individual self which awoke on being pushed is Ultimate Reality.

The above view may be contested on scriptural grounds by those who believe in *Īśvara*, who is the efficient and not the material cause of the universe. According to them a transcendental Supreme Self is the cause of the universe. Compare: "That which transcends hunger and thirst" (III. v. 1); "Under the mighty rule of this Imperishable" etc. (III. viii. 9); "[It] is never contaminated by the misery of the world, being outside it" (*Ka. Up.* II. ii. 11). Hence one should worship this transcendental Being, Brahman, with flowers, hymns, prostration, sacrifices, repetition of Its name, meditation, etc. Knowing It through worship, one becomes Brahman, the Ruler of all. But one must not think of the transcendental Brahman as the individual self.

The non-dualist Śāṅkarāchārya refutes the above-mentioned positions thus:

The scriptures speak of the Supreme Self, or Brahman, as entering the individual body. Beginning with: "He made bodies" etc. (II. v. 18.), the text says: "He, the Supreme Person, entered the bodies" (*ibid.*); "He transformed Himself in accordance with each form" (II. v. 19); "After projecting it, the Self entered into it" (*Tai. Up.* II. vi. 1); "He is, indeed, the inner Self of all beings" (*Mu. Up.* II. i. 4); "One only, without a second" (*Chh. Up.* VI. ii. 1); "This universe is that Supreme Brahman

alone" (*Mu. Up.* II. ii. 11); "All this is but the Self" (*Chh. Up.* VIII. xxv. 2); etc. All these passages indicate the ultimate non-existence of an individual phenomenal self which is other than the Supreme Self. The conclusion is that the individual self is identical with Brahman.

*Objection:* If such is the import of the scriptures, then the Supreme Self becomes relative; It must feel the miseries arising from Its contact with all bodies. In that case the scriptural passages establishing the transcendence of the Supreme Self stand refuted. If, on the other hand, it can somehow be maintained that the Supreme Self is not connected with the miseries arising from contact with the bodies of different beings, it becomes impossible to refute the charge of the futility of all spiritual instruction, for there is nothing for the Supreme Self to achieve or to avoid. It may also be contended that the Supreme Self becomes the individual self after undergoing a modification and that the individual self is both different from and identical with the Supreme Self: in so far as it is different, it is affected by relativity, and in so far as it is identical, it is the transcendental Brahman. This position that the individual self is a modification of the Supreme Self postulates the Supreme Self as an aggregate of many things or as consisting of parts; otherwise no modification is possible.

*Reply:* The above view is opposed to the scriptures. Compare: "[Brahman is] without parts, without actions, tranquil" (*Śvet. Up.* VI. 19); "That great, birthless Self is undecaying, immortal, undying" (*Br. Up.* IV. iv. 25); "[It] is not born; It does not die" (*Ka. Up.* I. ii. 18); etc. If the individual self is a portion of the immutable Supreme Self, then it will find it impossible to go, after death, to places in accordance with its past work, or else the Supreme Self will be subject to transmigration.

*Objection:* Suppose we say that the individual self is a portion of the Supreme Self detached from It like a spark of fire, and that that transmigrates.

*Reply:* In that case the Supreme Self will be wounded by the breaking off of a part. But this is unthinkable.

*Objection:* The scriptural text gives the illustration of the sparks of fire.

*Reply:* But the purpose of the illustration is different. The scriptures are merely informative. They do not seek to alter things, but merely supply information about the nature of things unknown. When the text says that the organs, the gods, the worlds, and the beings are like tiny sparks, it really signifies their oneness with the Supreme Self. In actual experience we see that sparks of fire may be regarded as identical with fire. Similarly, a part may be considered identical with the whole. That this is so appears also from the introduction and conclusion: in all the Upanishads first the identity is stated, then by means of illustrations and reasoning the universe is shown to be a modification of or a part of or like the Supreme

Self, and the conclusion again brings out the identity. The scriptural passages setting forth the origin, continuity, and dissolution of the universe are meant to strengthen the idea of the identity of the individual self and the Supreme Self; otherwise there would be a break in the topic.

Regarding this, teachers of Vedānta narrate the following parable: A certain prince was discarded by his parents as soon as he was born, and was brought up in a fowler's home. Not knowing his princely descent, he thought himself to be a fowler and pursued the fowler's duties, not those of a king, as he would have if he had known himself to be such. When, however, a very kind man who knew the prince's origin told him who he was—that he was not a fowler, but the son of a king, and had by chance come to live in a fowler's home—being thus informed, he gave up the notion that he was a fowler, and, knowing that he was a king, took to the ways of his ancestors. Similarly, this individual self, which is of the same nature as the Supreme Self, being separated from It like a spark of fire, has penetrated the wilderness of the body, organs, etc., and, although really transcendental, has taken on the attributes of the latter, which are relative, and thinks that it is this aggregate of the body and organs, that it is lean or stout, happy or miserable—for it does not know that it is the Supreme Self. But when a teacher enlightens it—saying that it is not the body etc. but the transcendental Supreme Brahman—it then gives up the pursuit of worldly desires and is convinced that it is Brahman. When it is told that it has been separated from the Supreme Brahman, like a spark, it is firmly convinced that it is Brahman, as the prince was convinced of his royal birth. We know that a spark is one with fire before it becomes separated. Therefore the example of the sparks of fire is meant only to strengthen a man's idea of the oneness of the individual self and Brahman, and not to establish the multiplicity caused by the origin, continuance, and dissolution of the universe. The scriptures speak of the Self as homogeneous and unbroken consciousness, like a lump of salt. Compare: "He goes from death to death who sees in It, as it were, diversity" (IV. iv. 19). Therefore the mention in all the Vedānta texts of the origin, continuance, and dissolution of the universe is meant only to strengthen our idea of Brahman's being a homogeneous unity, and not to make us believe in the origin, continuance, and dissolution of the universe as an actuality.

Nor is it reasonable to suppose that a part of the indivisible, transcendental Supreme Self becomes the relative, individual self; for the Supreme Self is intrinsically without parts. If a part of the indivisible Supreme Self is supposed to be the relative, individual self, it is tantamount to taking the former to be the latter.

In trying to ascertain the true nature of Brahman, men of wisdom should not think of It in terms of whole and part or cause and effect. For

the essential purpose of all the Upanishads is to remove all finite conceptions about Brahman. Therefore we must know Brahman to be undifferentiated, like the sky. All relative conditions in the transcendental Self are possible only through the limiting adjuncts of name and form. A relative condition is not real, but erroneous, like the notion that a crystal is red or some other colour, owing to its association with limiting adjuncts such as a red cotton pad. If we admit the Supreme Self to be indivisible, it will be absolutely impossible to maintain that the individual self is either a part, a modification, or an inherent power of the Supreme Self or that it is something different from It. The scriptural passages referring to the relationship of whole and part, etc., are for the purpose of ultimately establishing their oneness, not their difference.

*Objection:* If the Ultimate Reality is the non-dual Brahman, then the ritualistic passages of the Vedas are left without any object to apply to,<sup>1</sup> and hence they cannot lead to valid knowledge.

*Reply:* It is not so; for such valid knowledge is palpable. The Vedas say that one who desires heaven must perform sacrifices. Actions, their factors, and their results are the creation of ignorance. People who are subject to ignorance believe in them. When through their help a man who desires to gain something good or to avoid something evil proceeds to adopt a means of which he has only a vague, not a definite, idea, the scriptures simply tell him about that; they say nothing either for or against the truth of the diversity of actions, their factors, and their results, which people have already taken for granted. For the scriptures only prescribe means for the attainment of desired ends and the avoidance of untoward results. To be explicit: As the scriptures that deal with rites having material ends accept the desires as they are—although they are the result of erroneous notions—and prescribe means for attaining them, and do not refrain from doing this on the ground that desires are an evil, being the result of erroneous notions, similarly, these scriptures dealing with rites accept the diversity of actions and their factors as they are—although they proceed from error—and enjoin rites, seeing some utility in them, whether it be for the attainment of some particular desired end or for the avoidance of some particular untoward result. The scriptures do not refrain from enjoining them simply because the utility relates to something that is unreal, on account of their being within the domain of ignorance, as with rites having material ends. Nor would ignorant people cease to engage themselves in those rites, for we see them performing them, as do those who are swayed by desires.

People have innumerable desires and attachments. Therefore they are

<sup>1</sup> The aim of the rituals is to enable the performer to attain the heavenly world.

lured by attachment to external objects, and the scriptures are powerless to hold them back; nor can they persuade those who are naturally averse to external objects to go after them. But the function of the scriptures is to point out what leads to good and what to evil, thereby indicating the particular relations that subsist between ends and means—just as a lamp, for instance, helps to reveal forms in the dark. But the scriptures neither hinder nor direct a person by force, as if he were a slave. We see how people even disobey the scriptures because of an excess of attachment, etc. Therefore, according to people's varying tendencies the scriptures variously teach the particular relations subsisting between ends and means; and people themselves adopt particular means according to their tastes, the scriptures simply remaining neutral—like the sun, for instance, or a lamp. Some one may think the highest goal to be not worth striving after. One chooses one's goal according to one's knowledge and seeks to adopt corresponding means. Therefore the Vedānta texts that teach the unity of Brahman are not antagonistic to the ritualistic scriptures. Nor are the latter thereby deprived of their scope. Neither do the ritualistic scriptures, which uphold differences, such as the various factors of an action, nullify the authority of the Upanishads as regards the unity of Brahman. For the means of knowledge are effective in their respective spheres.

It has been objected that if Brahman is the only Reality, there will be no one to receive instruction and profit by it; hence instruction about unity will be useless. This is wrong. It is however true that when the transcendental Brahman is realized as the only existence, there is neither instruction, nor instructor, nor the result of receiving instruction, and therefore the Upanishads are useless. But the instruction is necessary before realization, while differences are perceived to exist. Therefore the Upanishads teaching the unity of Brahman are valid. So the conclusion is that the highest secret name of "the Truth of truth" belongs to the Supreme Brahman and to none else.

*Here ends Chapter One  
of Part Two of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER II

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PRĀNA

HE WHO KNOWS the calf together with its abode, its special resort, its post, and its rope, kills his seven hostile kinsmen. The vital breath in the body is indeed the calf; this body is its abode, the head its special resort, strength its post, and food its rope.

**HOSTILE KINSMEN:** The seven organs which are located in the head—namely, the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils, and the mouth—called kinsmen, since they are born with a person. The kinsmen are of two kinds: those who envy and those who do not. Here the sense-organs are called hostile because they hinder a man from perceiving the inner self. (Compare *Ka. Up.* II. i. 1.)

**VITAL BREATH:** The vital breath (prāna) dwells in the body as the subtle body (lingātmā) and in its fivefold form pervades the body. The organs—such as speech and mind—rest on it. It was this vital breath, or the subtle body, that was addressed as “Great, White-robed, Radiant, Soma” (II. i. 15). It is said to be like a young calf because it is not in direct contact with objects, as are the sense-organs.

**SPECIAL RESORT:** Because the vital breath is connected with particular parts of it.

**STRENGTH:** Which comes out of food and drink.

**FOOD:** The food that we eat is changed into three forms. The grossest part is excreted from the body and is absorbed into the earth. The middle part, namely, chyle, being transformed into blood etc., nourishes the gross body. The finest part, called “nectar,” goes past the navel to the heart, penetrates the seventy-two thousand nerves that spread from there, generates strength, and thereby helps the subtle body, which is the aggregate of the inner organs, and is here called the calf. Food is therefore the connecting link between the vital breath and the body, like a calf’s rope with a loop at either end.

The preceding chapter broached the topic: “I will instruct you [about Brahman]” (II. i. 15). In this connexion it has been stated that from Brahman the universe originates, by It the universe is sustained, and into

It the universe is dissolved. Now, the constituents of the universe are the five elements, and these elements consist of name and form. It has already been said that name and form are called "truth"; and Brahman is the "Truth" of this "truth." The reason for the elements' being called "truth" will be explained in the next chapter. Because the body, organs, and vital breath consist of the gross and subtle elements, they are called "truth." In order to define the nature of these elements, the present and the following chapters are introduced. It has been said: "The vital breaths are the truth, and their truth is Ātman" (II. i. 20). Now the nature of the vital breath is described in order to explain what the vital breath is and how many and what its secret names are. The purpose is to describe and explain the secret name of Brahman.

*Now certain secret names regarding the vital breath dwelling in the head, with reference to the eye, are mentioned:*

## 2

These seven gods that prevent decay worship it (the calf): through these pink lines in the eye, Rudra attends on it; through the water in the eye, Parjanya attends on it; through the pupil of the eye, the sun attends on it; through the black of the eye, fire attends on it; through the white portion, Indra; through the lower eyelid, the earth; and through the upper eyelid, heaven attends on it. He who knows this—his food does not diminish.

SEVEN GODS ETC: They prevent decay because they make the prāna imperishable by supplying food for it.

## 3

Regarding this there is the following mantra:

"There is a bowl which has its mouth below and which bulges at the top. Manifold knowledge has been put into it; seven sages sit on its rim, and the organ of speech, which has communication with the Vedas, is the eighth."

What is called the "bowl which has its mouth below and which bulges at the top" is this head [of ours], for it is a bowl which has its mouth below and which bulges at the top. When it is said: "Manifold knowledge has been put into it," this refers to the organs; these indeed represent manifold knowledge. When it is said: "Seven sages sit on its

rim," this refers to the organs; they indeed are the sages. "The organ of speech, which has communication with the Vedas, is the eighth" because the organ of speech is the eighth and communicates with the Vedas.

**WHAT IS ETC:** In these lines the Śruti explains the mantra.

**THESE INDEED . . . KNOWLEDGE:** Because they are the cause of the perception of sound etc.

**ORGAN OF SPEECH:** The tongue counts as two: as the organ of taste it will be named in the next verse as the seventh sage; as the organ of speech it is here spoken of as the eighth.

*Who are the sages that sit on the rim of that bowl?*

4

These two [ears] are Gotama and Bharadvāja: this one (the right) is Gotama and this one (the left), Bharadvāja. These two [eyes] are Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni: this one (the right) is Viśvāmitra and this one (the left), Jamadagni. These two [nostrils] are Vaśishtha and Kaśyapa: this one (the right) is Vaśishtha, and this one (the left), Kaśyapa. The tongue is Atri, for through the tongue food is eaten. Atri is the same as atti (eating). He who knows this becomes the eater of everything, and everything becomes his food.

**HE WHO KNOWS THIS ETC:** That is to say, he who knows the true nature of the vital breath, as described above, becomes the vital breath in the body, and is only the eater, associated with the abode and the special resort, and not food. In other words, he is entirely removed from the category of food.

*Here ends Chapter Two  
of Part Two of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER III

### THE TWO FORMS OF BRAHMAN

VERILY, THERE ARE two forms of Brahman: gross and subtle, mortal and immortal, limited and unlimited, definite and indefinite.

**THERE ARE ETC:** Through the superimposition of these forms, on account of avidyā, the transcendental Supreme Brahman is defined or comprehended.

**IMMORTAL:** That is to say, relatively speaking.

**LIMITED:** Which moves a little distance and then stops.

**UNLIMITED:** Which continues to move without stopping, and is pervasive.

**DEFINITE:** Endowed with particular characteristics which distinguish it from others.

**INDEFINITE:** Which can only be distantly referred to as something we do not definitely know.

The body and the organs, designated as "truth," are modifications of the five elements, also called "truth." They are limiting adjuncts of Brahman; through their elimination by means of the negative method of "Neti, neti"—"Not this, not this"—the true nature of Brahman is revealed.

#### 2

The gross form is that which is other than air and ākāśa. It is mortal, limited, and definite. The essence of that which is gross, which is mortal, which is limited, and which is definite is the sun that shines, for it (the sun) is the essence of the three elements.

**THAT WHICH IS OTHER . . . ĀKĀŚA:** That is to say, the remaining three elements: earth, water, and fire.

**IT:** The triad of elements called gross.

**DEFINITE:** Endowed with noticeable peculiarities of its own. For that very reason it is limited, and being limited it is mortal, and hence it is also gross.

**SUN:** The sun is the quintessence of the three elements. The shining solar orb is the representation of the body of Virāj.

*The preceding verse has described the gross cosmic body (the solar orb) with reference to the gods. Now the subtle body with reference to the gods will be described:*

## 3

Now the subtle: It is air and ākāśa. It is immortal, it is unlimited, and it is indefinite. The essence of that which is subtle, which is immortal, which is unlimited, and which is indefinite is the Person (Purusha) in the solar orb, for that [Person] is the essence of the two elements. This is with reference to the gods.

**PERSON:** That is to say, Hiranyagarbha, which is the vital breath, or prāna. It is the cosmic organ, corresponding to the organs in the body. By the word *Person*, the subtle body of Hiranyagarbha is meant, and not His conscious self.

**THE ESSENCE ETC:** Air and ākāśa are the principal ingredients of the cosmic subtle body. The other three elements also are there, but they play a subordinate part.

## 4

Now with reference to the body: The gross form is that which is other than the air and the ākāśa that is in the body. It is mortal, it is limited, and it is definite. The essence of that which is gross, which is mortal, which is limited, and which is definite is the eye; for it (the eye) is the essence of the three elements.

**THAT WHICH IS OTHER THAN ETC:** That is to say, the remaining three constituent elements of the body: earth, water, and fire.

**IT:** The triad of the elements called gross.

**EYE:** The eye is the essence of the three gross materials that build up the body, for it is that which lends importance to the three gross elements; another reason is the priority of the eye in point of time: in the embryo it is the eyes that are first formed. (*Śa. Br. IV. ii. 1.*) Furthermore, the sun enters the body as the eye. (*Ai. Br. I. ii. 4.*)

## 5

Now the subtle: It is the air and the ākāśa that is in the body. It is immortal, it is unlimited, and it is indefinite. The essence of that which is subtle, which is immortal, which is unlimited, and which is indefinite is the person (purusha) that is in the right eye, for that [person] is the essence of the two elements.

**THE ESSENCE OF ETC:** That is to say, the subtle body. This is stated on the evidence of the scriptures. The essence of the subtle must be subtle; therefore the person that is in the right eye is intangible.

*The distinction between the gross and the subtle—which are called “truth,” and which are the limiting adjuncts of Brahman with reference to the gods and the body—has been described in the twofold aspect of body and organs. Now the scripture will describe the form of that person identified with the organs:*

## 6

The form of that person is like a cloth dyed with turmeric, or like grey sheep’s wool, or like the [scarlet] insect called Indragopa, or like a tongue of fire, or like a white lotus, or like a flash of lightning. He who knows this—his splendour is like a flash of lightning.

Now, therefore, the description of Brahman: “Not this, not this”; for there is no other and more appropriate description than this “Not this.” Now the designation of Brahman: “The Truth of truth.” The vital breath is truth, and It (Brahman) is the Truth of that.

**PERSON:** That is to say, the subtle body. It is produced by the union of the intellect (vijñāna) and the impressions of gross and subtle objects, and consists of the impressions. The description shows that the subtle body is the mind and not the self. According to the Yogāchāra school of the Buddhist idealists, the self is the mind. According to the Naiyāyikas and Vaiśeshikas, the impressions, like the colour of a cloth, are the attributes of the self, which is a substance. The Sāmkhyas hold that the mind, which is dependent on prakṛiti and is possessed of the three guṇas, is a separate entity; it subserves the purpose of the self and operates for its highest good, namely, liberation through experience.

**CLOTH . . . TURMERIC:** In the presence of the objects of enjoyment the mind receives a corresponding tinge of impressions, wherefore a man under such circumstances is said to be attached, as a cloth, for instance, is said to be dyed. The colouring varies sometimes according to the objects presented to the mind, and sometimes according to the tendencies of the mind itself.

**FLASH OF LIGHTNING:** This refers to Hiranyagarbha, who suddenly manifests Himself, like lightning, as He emanates from the Undifferentiated.

**NOW, THEREFORE:** Having thus completely described the nature of “truth,” the Śruti proceeds to explain the “Truth of truth.”

**“NOT THIS, NOT THIS”:** Brahman does not possess any distinguishing marks which can be described by words. By the elimination of all differ-

ences due to limiting adjuncts, the words *Not this, not this* refer to something which has no distinguishing mark such as name, or form, or action, or heterogeneity, or species, or qualities. These two negative particles are used in an all-inclusive sense, so as to eliminate every possible specification that may occur.

FOR THERE IS NO ETC: It may be asked whether it is fair to describe Brahman as "Not this, not this" after making such a fuss about It. We reply: It is the only apposite description of Brahman.

*Here ends Chapter Three  
of Part Two of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER IV

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND MAITREYI (I)

“MAITREYI, my dear,” said Yājñavalkya, “I am going to renounce this life. Let me make a final settlement between you and Kātyāyani (his other wife).”

**THIS LIFE:** The householder's life. He intended to embrace the life of renunciation, which is the highest stage of life.

**LET ME MAKE ETC:** He wanted to put an end to the relationship that existed between Kātyāyani and Maitreyi through him, their common husband, and to divide his property between them. Yājñavalkya also, in this manner, sought the consent of his wives for his embracing the life of renunciation. If the wife is living, the husband cannot give up the family without her permission.

The goal of the Vedic teachings is twofold: prosperity in the world, and Liberation, or the Highest Good. The former is attained through the transmigratory life in *samsāra*, whose highest attainment, as stated before, is the realization of *Hiranyagarbha*, or identity with all. All this belongs to the realm of *avidyā*, or ignorance, and is obtained through the performance of the Vedic rites, whose necessary accessories are a wife, son, wealth, etc. Through them one attains to the worlds of men, of the Manes, of the gods, etc. Those who disobey the scriptural injunctions assume subhuman bodies and are thus degraded to the level of stocks and stones. The entire subject matter of *avidyā* has been discussed in the first part of the Upanishad. When a man is disgusted with the transmigratory existence, which is the result of ignorance, he seeks the Highest Good through realization of the Self, which is attained through Knowledge (*Vidyā*). “The Self alone is to be meditated upon” (I. iv. 7); “This [Self] is dearer than a son” etc. (I. iv. 8). The second part introduces the Self in the words: “I will tell you about Brahman” (II. i. 1.) and teaches the true nature of the Self through the elimination of attributes—“*Neti, neti*” (II. iii. 6). The Upanishad now emphasizes the fact that the Knowledge of the Self can be attained only through renunciation. Desires are fulfilled through rites, which are associated with wife, son, wealth, etc., and cannot lead to Self-Knowledge. A son, wealth, and the like produce their specific results in the relative

world, but not Liberation, which transcends time, space, and causality. But sages endowed with Self-Knowledge are free from desires. "Men are bound by rites and freed by Knowledge. Hence the sages who have known the Truth do not perform rites." (*Mahābhārata* XII. ccxlvii. 7.) The present verse points out that Yājñavalkya, who had been a ritualist, was renouncing the world. The story is introduced with a view to enjoining renunciation of the world as a discipline for the Knowledge of the Self.

## 2

Thereupon Maitreyi said: "Venerable Sir, if indeed the whole earth, full of wealth, belonged to me, would I be immortal through that?" "No," replied Yājñavalkya, "your life would be just like that of people who have plenty. Of Immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth."

**THROUGH THAT:** That is to say, through rites, which can only be performed with the help of wealth. It must be remembered that, according to the Vedas, worldly prosperity, which all seek, is enjoyed through the grace of the gods by propitiating them through rites.

**NO HOPE:** Even in imagination.

**THROUGH WEALTH:** That is to say, through rites performed with wealth. According to the Vedic view, the gods, men, and subhuman beings lead a life of interdependence.

## 3

Then Maitreyi said: "What should I do with that which would not make me immortal? Tell me, venerable Sir, of that alone which you know [to be the only means of attaining Immortality]."

## 4

Yājñavalkya replied: "My dear, you have been my beloved [even before], and [now] you say what is after my heart. Come, sit down; I will explain it to you. As I explain it, meditate [on what I say]."

**I WILL EXPLAIN IT:** That is to say, the Knowledge of the Self, which alone confers Immortality.

**MEDITATE:** Those who recite the Vedas without understanding their meaning are compared to the lifeless pillars which bear the weight of a roof. Or, just as a donkey bearing a bundle of sandalwood knows its weight but not its fragrance, so also is a brāhmin who knows the texts of the scriptures but not their significance.

The Knowledge of the Self is imparted when the wealth through which rites are performed is rejected.

*With a view to teaching renunciation as a means of Immortality, Yājñavalkya seeks to create non-attachment to wife, husband, sons, etc., so that they may be given up. The enumeration is in the order of their closeness to us as a source of joy.*

## 5

Then Yājñavalkya said: "Verily, not for the sake of the husband, my dear, is the husband loved, but he is loved for the sake of the self [which, in its true nature, is one with the Supreme Self].

"Verily, not for the sake of the wife, my dear, is the wife loved, but she is loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the sons, my dear, are the sons loved, but they are loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of wealth, my dear, is wealth loved, but it is loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the brāhmin, my dear, is the brāhmin loved, but he is loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the kshatriya, my dear, is the kshatriya loved, but he is loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the worlds, my dear, are the worlds loved, but they are loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the gods, my dear, are the gods loved, but they are loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the beings, my dear, are the beings loved, but they are loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the All, my dear, is the All loved, but it is loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, my dear Maitreyi, it is the Self that should be realized—should be heard of, reflected on, and meditated upon. By the realization of the Self, my dear—through hearing, reflection, and meditation—all this is known.

**VERILY, ETC:** The word *verily* (*vai*) recalls something that is well known.

**SELF:** The word *ātman*, in the text, no doubt signifies the individual self. But it is the Supreme Self, or Brahman, which under the spell of avidyā appears as the individual self. The real attraction of things for a man is the attraction of the Spirit, or Brahman, for the Spirit which is the

indwelling essence of all. Dead matter cannot attract dead matter. Ignorant persons do not know the source of attraction and turn it into selfish love.

ALL: It has already been said: "This [Self] is dearer than a son" etc. (I. iv. 8). The present verse serves as a detailed commentary on that statement. Our love for other objects is secondary, since they ultimately contribute to the pleasure of the Self. Through love of the world and of earthly possessions we find opportunities to love the Self alone. Our love of the Self, or Spirit, is primary.

SHOULD BE HEARD OF: From a qualified teacher or the scriptures.

REFLECTED ON: Scriptural instruction should not be accepted on blind faith.

MEDITATED UPON: Through meditation the conviction of the Self's reality is obtained in direct experience. When hearing, reflection, and meditation are combined in a student, then alone is the unitive Knowledge of Brahman realized; it is not realized through hearing or reflection alone.

ALL THIS: That is to say, the entire phenomenal universe.

It is only through avidyā, or ignorance, that the Self superimposes upon Itself the false notions of caste, stages of life, etc., and performs rites and duties suitable to them. Through hearing, reflection, and meditation, this superimposition is destroyed and a man becomes free of all worldly obligations.

*How can one rid oneself of worldly duties through the Knowledge of the Self? In reply it is said that there is nothing besides the Self. If there were any such thing it would not be known; but there is no such thing; the Self alone is everything. Therefore, the Self being known, everything will be known. How is it that the Self is everything?*

## 6

"The brāhmin rejects one who knows him as different from the Self. The kshatriya rejects one who knows him as different from the Self. The worlds reject one who knows them as different from the Self. The gods reject one who knows them as different from the Self. The beings reject one who knows them as different from the Self. The All rejects one who knows it as different from the Self. This brāhmin, this kshatriya, these worlds, these gods, these beings, and this All—are that Self.

REJECTS ETC: The notion that there can exist anything which is different from Brahman is the result of ignorance. Hence a person who sees this differentiation is denied Self-Knowledge.

**THIS BRĀHMIN ETC:** Everything springs from the Self, is dissolved in the Self, and remains permeated with the Self as long as it lasts; for nothing can be perceived apart from the Self. Therefore everything is the Self.

*How can it be said that everything is the Self, or Brahman, as long as it endures? It is because the Self, as Pure Intelligence, inheres in everything. This is explained by an illustration:*

## 7-9

“As the various particular [kinds of] notes of a drum, when it is beaten, cannot be grasped by themselves, but are grasped only when the general note of the drum or the general sound produced by different kinds of strokes is grasped;

“And as the various particular notes of a conch, when it is blown, cannot be grasped by themselves, but are grasped only when the general note of the conch or the general sound produced by different kinds of blowing is grasped;

“And as the various particular notes of a vinā, when it is played, cannot be grasped by themselves, but are grasped only when the general note of the vinā or the general sound produced by different kinds of playing is grasped;

[Similarly, no particular objects are perceived in the waking and dream states apart from Pure Intelligence.]

**GENERAL NOTE:** The particular kinds of notes are modifications of the general note; they have no existence apart from the general note.

**GENERAL SOUND . . . STROKES:** The particular kinds of notes cannot be perceived as distinct notes, because they have no separate existence. We see in everyday life that if a thing cannot be perceived apart from something else, the latter is the essence of that thing.

**VINĀ:** A kind of stringed musical instrument like a lute or guitar.

Several examples are given to indicate the existence of varieties of genera; there are many distinct kinds of genera, sentient and insentient. They are all included in the supreme genus, Pure Intelligence. Just as a drum, a conch, and a vinā have distinct general tones and also particular notes of their own, which are included in their general tone, so during the continuance of the universe, all the diverse entities are unified in Brahman, or Pure Intelligence, because the varieties of genera and particulars are not different from It.

*As the universe is nothing but Brahman during the state of continuance, so also it is Brahman prior to its manifestation. In other words, the universe is Pure Spirit at all times.*

## 10

“As from a fire kindled with wet fuel various [kinds of] smoke issue forth, even so, my dear, the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sāma-Veda, the Atharvāngirasa, history (itihāsa), mythology (purāna), the arts (vidyā), the Upanishads, verses (ślokas), aphorisms (sutras), elucidations (anuvyākhyānas), and explanations (vyākhyānas) are [like] the breath of this infinite Reality. From this [Supreme Self] are all these, indeed, breathed forth.

AS FROM ETC: As before the separation of the sparks, embers, and flames, all these are nothing but fire, and therefore there is but one substance, fire, so it is reasonable to infer that this universe differentiated into names and forms is, before its origin, nothing but Pure Intelligence.

SMOKE: Including sparks etc.

ATHARVĀNGIRASA: The Atharva-Veda.

ARTS: Which deal with music, dancing, etc.

VERSES: The mantras occurring in the Brāhmanas.

APHORISMS: Those passages of the Vedas which present the truth most succinctly.

RIG-VEDA . . . EXPLANATIONS: By all the topics mentioned in the text are meant the Mantras and the Brāhmanas, which constitute the Vedas. They are eternally existent but are revealed at the beginning of each cycle.

BREATHED FORTH: As a man's breath comes out without any effort, so do all these come out of Brahman.

Name and form, which are really non-different from each other, are the limiting adjuncts (upādhis) of the Supreme Brahman, and once they are differentiated from Brahman it is impossible to tell whether they are identical with or different from It, as with foam and water. Name and form, in varying degrees of grossness or subtleness, constitute the relative universe. They issue forth from Brahman without any effort, like a man's breath.

*Furthermore, it is not only at the time of its origin and continuance that the universe—on account of its non-existence apart from Pure Intelligence—is Brahman, but at the time of dissolution also. Just as bubbles, foam, etc. are non-existent apart from water, so name, form, etc., which are the effects of Pure Intelligence and dissolve in It, are*

*non-existent apart from It. Therefore Brahman is to be realized as Pure Intelligence, one and homogeneous.*

## 11

“As the ocean is the one goal of all waters (i.e. the place where they merge), so the skin is the one goal of all kinds of touch, the nostrils are the one goal of all smells, the tongue is the one goal of all savours, the ear is the one goal of all sounds, the mind is the one goal of all deliberations, the intellect is the one goal of all [forms of] knowledge, the hands are the one goal of all actions, the organ of generation is the one goal of all [kinds of] enjoyment, the excretory organ is the one goal of all excretions, the feet are the one goal of all [kinds of] walking, the organ of speech is the one goal of all the Vedas.

**GOAL:** Meeting-place, place of dissolution or unification.

**WATERS:** Such as rivers, lakes, etc.

**SO THE SKIN ETC:** By the word *skin* is meant touch in general, which is perceived by the skin. In the general sensation of touch all the different kinds of touch are merged; they have no separate existence apart from the general sensation of touch. The general sensation of touch merges in the general deliberation of the mind, which, in its turn, merges in the general cognition of the intellect: the former is a nonentity without the latter. Finally, the general cognition of the intellect merges in Pure Intelligence, the Supreme Brahman, like different kinds of water in the ocean. This applies to all the organs of perception. When, through these successive steps, sound and the rest, together with their organs, merge in Pure Intelligence, there are no more limiting adjuncts, and Brahman, which is Pure Intelligence, alone remains. Therefore Brahman alone must be regarded as one and without a second.

**TOUCH:** Such as soft, hard, rough, smooth, etc.

**THE HANDS ETC:** As is the case with the objects of the sensory organs, the objects of the motor organs—such as the different kinds of speaking, grasping, walking, excretion, and enjoyment—also merge in their general functions, like different kinds of water merging in the ocean, and can no longer be distinguished. These general functions are, again, nothing but the vital breath (*prāna*), which is identical with Intelligence. (Compare *Kau. Up.* III. 3.)

It is true that the text speaks of the mergence of the objects only and not of the organs. But objects and organs belong in the same category. The organs are but modes of the objects, by means of which the objects are perceived. There is the example of light, which is but a mode of colour

and is an instrument for revealing colours. Thus objects like sound, touch, form, savour, and smell are responsible for the creation of their respective organs.

*The Purānas speak of a natural dissolution (pralaya) at the end of a cycle. But this is only a relative dissolution. At the beginning of the new cycle, the creatures, who have remained in unmanifested forms during the period of this dissolution, become manifest again. The dissolution which is consciously effected through the Knowledge of Brahman, however, is called absolute dissolution; this happens through the cessation of ignorance. The knower of Brahman does not return to the phenomenal world. This is explained by an illustration:*

## 12

“As a lump of salt dropped into water becomes dissolved in water and cannot be taken out again, but wherever we taste [the water] it tastes salt, even so, my dear, this great, endless, infinite Reality is Pure Intelligence alone. [This self] comes out [as a separate entity] from these elements and with their destruction [this separate existence] also is destroyed. After attaining [oneness] it has no more consciousness. This is what I say, my dear.”

So said Yājñavalkya.

**DROPPED INTO WATER ETC.:** By the word *water* is evidently meant water of the sea. The water is the cause of the salt. It solidifies, through heat and connexion with particles of earth, into a lump of salt. That cohesive factor, heat, disappears when the lump comes in contact with its cause, the water. This is called the dissolution: the lump of salt is dissolved in water.

**THIS GREAT . . . REALITY:** The water of the ocean through heat becomes a lump of salt; likewise, the Self, which consists of Pure Intelligence, through connexion with the body and organs caused by ignorance becomes a finite entity, that is to say, a jiva, or living creature. When the lump of salt falls into the water, its cause, the finite aspect disappears and it remains as the water from which it sprang; likewise, when through the Knowledge of Brahman ignorance is destroyed, the limiting adjunct of the body and organs (which is the effect of ignorance) also disappears; thus is destroyed the specific consciousness of the self, caused by its connexion with the body and organs, and the Self remains as Pure Consciousness, which is Its true nature.

**REALITY:** The Sanskrit word *bhuta* in the text denotes a fact, for like a fact

It (Reality) never deviates from Its nature. Or the word may denote truth. Ātman is great and true. There may be, for instance, things in the world as big as the Himālayas, created by a dream or an illusion, but they are not true.

**PURE INTELLIGENCE:** The Sanskrit word *vijnānaghana* in the text means, literally, a solid mass of intelligence, excluding—like a solid mass of gold or iron—everything of a different kind.

[THIS SELF] COMES OUT ETC: Brahman in association with avidyā appears as the elements, which are transformed into the body, organs, and sense-objects, consisting of name and form. They are like foam and bubbles on the limpid water of the Supreme Self. With the aid of these elements the self *comes out* like a lump of salt. As from water, reflections of the sun, moon, and so on arise, or from the proximity of a red cotton pad etc., a transparent crystal turns red etc., so from the limiting adjuncts of the elements, transformed into body and organs and sense-objects, the self comes out clearly as an individualized entity. Through the instruction of the scriptures and the teacher, these elements, which are the cause of individualization, merge in Brahman, as rivers merge in the ocean.

**DESTROYED:** When the elements are destroyed, this individualized existence is also destroyed with them. As the reflections of the sun, moon, etc. and the colour of the crystal vanish when their causes—the water, the red cotton pad, etc.—are removed, and only the sun, moon, etc. remain as they are, so the endless, infinite, and limpid Pure Intelligence alone remains.

**NO MORE CONSCIOUSNESS:** That is to say, no more *particular* consciousness. “No more is there such a thought as: ‘I, So-and-so, am the son of So-and-so; this is my land and wealth; I am happy or miserable.’ For such particular consciousness is due to ignorance, and since ignorance is absolutely destroyed by the realization of Brahman, how can the knower of Brahman, who is established in his nature of Pure Intelligence, possibly have any particular consciousness? Even when a man is in the body, particular consciousness is impossible for him in a state of deep sleep; so how can it ever exist in a man who has been absolutely freed from the body and organs?” (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**SO SAID ETC:** This is how Yājñavalkya propounded the philosophy of Ultimate Reality to his wife Maitreyi.

*The statement that after the attainment of Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, one loses particular consciousness confused Maitreyi.*

Then Maitreyi said: “Just here you have bewildered me, venerable Sir, by saying that after attaining [oneness] the self has no more consciousness.”

Yājñavalkya replied: "Certainly I am not saying anything bewildering, my dear. This [Reality] is enough for knowledge, O Maitreyi."

**JUST HERE ETC:** Maitreyi thought that Yājñavalkya attributed contradictory qualities to Brahman by saying at first that Brahman is Pure Consciousness and then that the self attaining It loses consciousness.

**CERTAINLY ETC:** Yājñavalkya did not attribute Pure Consciousness and absence of consciousness to one and the same entity. Particular consciousness belongs to the individual self, which is the result of ignorance and which is connected with the body and organs. This self is destroyed by the Knowledge of Brahman, which results in the destruction of the particular consciousness. It is like the destruction of the reflection of the moon and its light when the water in which the moon is reflected is removed. The moon, however, which is the reality behind the reflection, remains as it is. Likewise, Pure Consciousness, which is the transcendent Brahman, remains unchanged even when ignorance, the cause of individual existence, is destroyed by Knowledge. The reason for Maitreyi's confusion is that what Yājñavalkya referred to as particular consciousness she regarded as Pure Consciousness. From the standpoint of Reality, the Self is Pure Consciousness, and from the standpoint of individual existence, It may be said to be endowed with particular consciousness.

**THIS:** The great, endless, infinite Reality.

*How the individual self, disconnected from body and organs, loses particular consciousness is now stated:*

14

"For when there is duality, as it were, then one smells another, one sees another, one hears another, one speaks to another, one thinks of another, one knows another. But when everything has become the Self, then what should one smell and through what, what should one see and through what, what should one hear and through what, what should one speak and through what, what should one think and through what, what should one know and through what? Through what should one know That owing to which all this is known—through what, my dear, should one know the Knower?"

**WHEN THERE IS DUALITY:** That is to say, in the presence of the individual self, which is conjured up through ignorance by association with the limiting adjuncts of the body and organs.

**AS IT WERE:** From the standpoint of Brahman duality is an appearance. Brahman is one and without a second. Whenever the scriptures speak of the

universe, the individual soul, created objects, etc., the words "as it were" are implied.

**ONE SMELLS ETC:** The word *one* refers to the unreal individual aspect of the Supreme Self, which is like the reflection of the moon in water. It is the unreal individual self that smells with the nose. The word *one* refers to the agent, *another* to the object, and *smells* to the action and its result.

**ONE KNOWS ANOTHER:** This is the state of ignorance. But when ignorance is destroyed by the Knowledge of Brahman, there remains nothing but the Self.

**WHAT . . . SMELL:** That is to say, What object should be smelt, who should smell, and through what instrument? "Everywhere an action depends upon certain factors; when these are absent the action cannot take place; and in the absence of action there can be no result. Therefore so long as ignorance exists there will be actions, their factors, and their results. But this will not happen with a knower of Brahman; for to him everything is the Self, and there are no other factors or results of actions apart from It. When one truly realizes the non-dual Self, there cannot be any consciousness of actions, their factors, or their results."

**THROUGH WHAT ETC:** The Self cannot be an object of knowledge. It is the eternal Knower. As fire cannot burn itself, so the Self cannot know Itself; the Knower cannot have knowledge of something that is not its object. The whole universe is known by the Self through different instruments. But through what instrument should one know the Knower of the universe?

**THROUGH WHAT, MY DEAR, ETC:** When to the knower of Brahman, who has discriminated the Real from the unreal, there remains only the absolute and non-dual Subject, through what instrument should one know that Knower or Subject?

*Here ends Chapter Four  
of Part Two of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER V

### THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF CREATED OBJECTS

THIS EARTH is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this earth. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this earth and the bright, immortal, corporeal being who is in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**HONEY:** The Sanskrit word in the text is *madhu*, which here means *effect*. The word is used to denote the causal relationship and mutual dependence of the earth and all beings: the one cannot exist without the other. Bees make honey, and the honey makes or supports the bees. Bees and honey are both cause and effect, or at all events mutually dependent. They are conducive to each other's welfare. The earth is created from the actions of all beings (from Hiranyagarbha down to the clump of grass), and the beings are dependent upon the earth.

**BRIGHT:** Endowed with the light of intelligence.

**CORPOREAL BEING:** The self identified with the subtle body.

[THESE FOUR] ETC: That is to say, the earth, all beings, the immortal being in the earth, and the immortal being in the body. These four are the composite effect of all beings, and all beings are the effect of these four. They are mutually dependent and conducive to one another's welfare. Hence they all have originated from the same cause, they all belong to the same genus, and in the end they will all merge in the same substance. That cause which is the origin, support, etc. of all is Brahman. Brahman alone is real. Everything else is an effect, a modification, a mere name, an effort of speech.

**BUT THIS SELF:** Which has been premised in the passage: "This All [is] that Self" (II. iv. 6).

The previous section stated that Immortality can be attained only by means of Self-Knowledge, through the practice of renunciation, and that

no rite is necessary to achieve this goal. It was stated further that the Self should be heard of, reflected on, and meditated upon. The reasoning associated with the reflection is that the universe has sprung from the Self, has the Self alone for its genus, and dissolves into the Self. Now, the validity of this reasoning may be questioned. The purpose of the present section is to remove this doubt, chiefly through scriptural authority.

## 2

This water is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this water. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this water and the bright, immortal being existing as the semen in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**SEMEN ETC:** Water is the chief component of semen.

## 3

This fire is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this fire. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this fire and the bright, immortal being identified with the organ of speech in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**FIRE:** Which exists especially in the organ of speech. Vedānta speaks of fire as the controlling deity of the organ of speech.

## 4

This air is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this air. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this air and the bright, immortal being identified with the vital breath in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

The air and other elements are called "honey" because they serve the body by furnishing the materials for it. The bright, immortal beings are called "honey" because they serve the body as the organs.

## 5

This sun is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this sun. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this sun and the bright, immortal being identified with the eye in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**EYE:** The luminous power that controls the sun is the same as that which controls the eye.

## 6

These quarters are the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of these quarters. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in these quarters and the bright, immortal being identified with the ear in the body and with the time of hearing [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**EAR:** The power that controls the quarters and the power that controls the ear are identical.

**TIME OF HEARING:** The power that controls the ear is especially manifest at the time of hearing.

## 7

This moon is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this moon. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this moon and the bright, immortal being identified with the mind in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**MIND:** The deity identified with the moon is the same as that which is identified with the mind.

## 8

This lightning is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this lightning. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this lightning and the bright, immortal being identified with the light in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**LIGHT IN THE BODY:** That is to say, the light manifested in the skin. The deity identified with lightning is the same as the deity identified with the organ of the skin.

## 9

This thunder-cloud is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this thunder-cloud. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this thunder-cloud and the bright, immortal being identified with sound and with the voice in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**WITH SOUND . . . VOICE:** The one refers to sound in general made by the body, and the other to the special sound manifested in the voice.

## 10

This ākāśa is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this ākāśa. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this ākāśa and the bright, immortal being identified with the ākāśa in the heart in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**ĀKĀŚA:** The outer ākāśa, or space, and the ākāśa in the heart are controlled by the same deity.

## 11

This dharma (righteousness) is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this dharma. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this dharma and the bright, immortal being identified with the dharma in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**THIS DHARMA:** Although righteousness is not directly perceived, as material objects are, it is here qualified by the word *this*, as though it were, because its effects are directly perceived. Dharma, it has been said (I. iv. 14.), is what is approved of by the Śrutis and the Smritis; it is the power which controls even the kshatriyas. Dharma is practised by good people; it creates the variety in the universe by transforming the elements according to their inner nature. Dharma produces its effect in two forms: In its general form it controls the elements such as earth and air, and in its special form it controls the aggregate of the body and organs.

**DHARMA IN THE BODY:** Which controls the aggregate of the body, and the organs in the individual body.

## 12

This truth is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this truth. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in this truth and the bright, immortal being identified with truth in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

Like dharma, truth also is twofold: general and particular. The general form is inherent in the elements that constitute the earth, and the particular is inherent in the body and organs. "The wind blows through truth." (*Mahā. Up. XXII. 1.*)

## 13

This mankind is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this mankind. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in mankind and the bright, immortal being

identified with mankind in the body [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**THIS MANKIND ETC:** Including other species as well, all of which are endowed with body and organs controlled by dharma.

**LIKEWISE . . . IN MANKIND:** Refers to the immortal being identified with all species, human and non-human. The word *mankind* here includes all species endowed with an aggregate of body and organs controlled by dharma. When a particular aggregate is related to a species, for instance the human, it is called by the name of that species. All living beings, belonging to different species, are conducive to one another's welfare.

**BRIGHT, IMMORTAL . . . BODY:** Refers to the immortal being identified with a particular species.

## 14

This cosmic body (ātman) is the honey (effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (effect) of this cosmic body. Likewise, the bright, immortal being who is in the cosmic body and the bright, immortal being identified with the [individual] self [are both honey]. [These four] are but this Self. [The Knowledge of] this [Self] is [the means to] Immortality; this [underlying unity] is Brahman; this [Knowledge of Brahman] is [the means of becoming] all.

**THIS COSMIC BODY:** Refers to the body of Virāj, which embraces all the bodies and organs of all species: human, subhuman, and divine. The first verse of this section refers only to the earth, which is a particular aspect of Virāj.

**BRIGHT . . . COSMIC BODY:** Refers to the Cosmic Mind, which is the essence of the subtle elements.

**THE [INDIVIDUAL] SELF:** Whose purpose the aggregate of gross and subtle bodies subserves.

## 15

And verily this Self is the Ruler of all beings, the King of all beings. Just as all the spokes are fixed in the nave and the felloe of a chariot wheel, so are all beings, all gods, all worlds, all organs, and all these [individual] creatures fixed in this Self.

**THIS SELF ETC:** That is to say, the individual self when merged in the Supreme Self. When the self, possessed of the limiting adjuncts of the body

and organs created by ignorance, has merged in the Supreme Self, through the Knowledge of Brahman, it becomes Pure Intelligence, devoid of exterior or interior, the Self of all beings, and an object of universal homage.

**RULER ETC:** The expressions "Ruler of all" and "King of all" qualify each other. A man may be a king simply by living like a king, but he may not be a ruler.

**CREATURES:** That is to say, the reflection of the Supreme Self in different bodies.

**IN THIS SELF:** That is to say, in the knower of Brahman, who has realized his identity with the Supreme Self. Such a person, illumined with the Knowledge of Brahman, identifies himself with all beings, regarding them as his limiting adjuncts, or upādhis; thus he becomes the self of all. Again, free of limiting adjuncts, he is seen as Pure Intelligence, birthless, undecaying, immortal, fearless, and described as "Not this, not this."

The question was asked: What did Brahman know by which It became all? (I. iv. 9.) Now the answer is given: It became all by hearing about the true nature of the Self from the teacher and the scriptures, by reflecting on It through reasoning, and by directly realizing It as described in the present section of the Upanishad. Even before realization one is Brahman—for the self is always Brahman—but through ignorance one considers oneself to be different from It. One is always all, but through ignorance one considers oneself to be otherwise. Therefore, banishing this ignorance through the Knowledge of Brahman, the knower of Brahman, having all the while been Brahman, becomes Brahman, and having all the while been all, becomes all.

*The Knowledge of Brahman leading to Immortality, which Maitreyi asked about of her husband, has been completely dealt with. In order to extol this Knowledge, the following story is introduced through two mantras:*

## 16

This, verily, is the honey (madhu-doctrine) which Dadhyāch, versed in the Atharva-Veda, taught the Aśvins. The Mantra (the rishi) perceived this and said:

"O Aśvins in human form, I will disclose that terrible deed of yours, called damśa, which you performed out of greed, as the thunder-cloud discloses the approaching rain. I will disclose the honey (madhu-doctrine), which Dadhyāch, versed in the Atharva-Veda, taught you through the head of a horse."

**MANTRA:** The word here means the rishi, or seer, to whom the mantra, or Vedic text, was revealed.

**TERRIBLE DEED:** The story referred to in the text occurs in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* XIV. i. 1. 4. The two Aśvins, the physicians to the gods, wanted to learn the secret of the doctrine of honey (madhu-doctrine) from the rishi Dadhyāch, who was versed in the Atharva-Veda. But the rishi was reluctant to impart this knowledge because Indra, the ruler of the gods, had threatened to cut off his head if he disclosed it to anyone else. But the Aśvins promised to save him from this dire calamity. The rishi asked them how they would protect him from Indra. The Aśvins said that if he accepted them as disciples, they would themselves cut off his head and preserve it somewhere. Then they would fix a horse's head in its place and the rishi would teach them through that head. Indra, perceiving that he was giving the instruction, would no doubt cut off this horse's head, whereupon the Aśvins would restore his own. The rishi agreed to this proposal. The Aśvins cut off his head and substituted for it the head of a horse, through which the rishi instructed them in the honey-doctrine. Thereupon Indra cut off the horse's head and the Aśvins quickly restored the rishi's own head. (*Śa. Br. XIV. i. 1. 22-24.*) The story illustrates the extreme difficulty which even the gods had to face in order to procure this knowledge. Thus the text is a eulogy of the honey-doctrine.

The purpose of the story is to praise the Knowledge of Brahman, which enabled the Aśvins, who committed a terrible deed, to escape its harmful consequence.

*The other mantra:*

17

This, verily, is the honey (madhu-doctrine) which Dadhyāch, versed in the Atharva-Veda, taught the Aśvins. The Mantra (the rishi) perceived this and said:

“O Aśvins, you fixed a horse's head on Dadhyāch, versed in the Atharva-Veda, who, O terrible ones, wishing to be true to his promise, taught you the [ritualistic] meditation on the honey (madhu-doctrine) connected with the sun, and also the secret (spiritual) meditation on it.”

**WISHING ETC:** To keep one's solemn promise is even more important than to preserve one's life.

**CONNECTED ETC:** The story as narrated in the Vedas is as follows: Vishnu, proud of his well-earned superiority over the other gods, once stood resting his chin on the end of a bow. The jealous gods got some white ants to gnaw

off the bow-string, and as a result Vishnu's head was severed. His head became the sun. Now, Vishnu means the sacrifice, because He is identified with it. As the sacrifice cannot remain without a head, the gods asked their physicians, the Aśvins, to restore the head. The restoration was performed with a rite called Pravargya. This rite, described in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, includes the honey, or the madhu-doctrine, connected with the sun. (See *Śa. Br. XIV. i. 1. 6-10; Tai. Ār. V. i. 3-6.*)

SECRET . . . MEDITATION ETC: That is to say, the knowledge of the Supreme Self, also called the madhu-doctrine, described in this and the preceding chapter. One part of the madhu-doctrine, taught in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, deals with a rite, and the other part, to be taught in the next two verses, deals with the knowledge of Brahman, which is free from all rites.

*The two foregoing verses have related the story which is connected with the Pravargya rite. The two following mantras will deal with the meditation on Brahman:*

## 18

This, verily, is the honey (madhu-doctrine) which Dadhyāch, versed in the Atharva-Veda, taught the Aśvins. The Mantra (rishi) perceived this and said:

"He (the Lord) made bodies with two feet; He made bodies with four feet. Having first become a bird (the subtle body), He, the Supreme Person, entered the bodies. On account of His dwelling in all bodies (pur), He is called the Person (Purusha). There is nothing that is not covered by Him, nothing that is not pervaded by Him."

BODIES WITH TWO FEET: Men and birds.

BODIES WITH FOUR FEET: Animals.

THERE IS NOTHING ETC: The Lord envelops everything, both within and without. It is He who, as name and form (i.e. as the body and organs), is inside and outside of everything.

The text speaks of the non-duality of the Self.

## 19

This, verily, is the honey (madhu-doctrine) which Dadhyāch, versed in the Atharva-Veda, taught the Aśvins. The Mantra (the rishi) perceived this and said:

"He (the Lord) transformed Himself in accordance with each form,

and [each] form of His was for the sake of making Him known. The Lord (Indra), through His māyās, appears manifold; for to Him are yoked ten horses, nay, hundreds.

“This Ātman is the organs; It is ten and thousands—many and infinite. This Brahman is without antecedent or consequent, without interior or exterior. This self, the all-perceiving, is Brahman. This is the teaching [of the Upanishads].”

**HE TRANSFORMED ETC:** That is to say, He assumed the likeness of each form. The Lord, in the process of manifesting name and form, transformed Himself in accordance with name and form.

**AND [EACH] FORM ETC:** Were name and form not manifested, the transcendental nature of the Self would not be known. Without name and form there cannot be any scriptural injunction, relationship between teacher and disciple, or consequent Knowledge of Brahman.

**MĀYĀS:** The word means diverse knowledge, or false superimposition. The plural number is because of the diversity of the created beings.

**APPEARS MANIFOLD:** The notion of multiplicity is the result of ignorance; Brahman is non-dual Pure Intelligence.

**HORSES:** Organs.

**HUNDREDS:** Because there are a great many creatures. There are a large number of sense-objects. It is to reveal these objects, and not the Self, that the organs are yoked.

**THIS ĀTMAN ETC:** It is not a fact that Ātman is one entity and the organs another. Ātman, through māyā, appears as the organs.

**IT IS TEN ETC:** Because there is an infinite number of beings.

**ANTECEDENT:** Cause.

**CONSEQUENT:** Effect.

**WITHOUT . . . EXTERIOR:** That is to say, there is nothing else, inside or outside Brahman.

**THIS SELF:** The inner self that sees, hears, thinks, understands, and knows.

**ALL-PERCEIVING:** Because it is in reality the Self of all.

**THIS IS ETC:** This teaching leads to Immortality and fearlessness.

*Here ends Chapter Five  
of Part Two of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LINE OF TEACHERS

NOW THE LINE of teachers [through whom the honey, or the madhu-doctrine, has been transmitted]:

Pautimāshya [received it] from Gaupavana. Gaupavana from another Pautimāshya. [This] Pautimāshya from [another] Gaupavana. [This] Gaupavana from Kauśika. Kauśika from Kaundinya. Kaundinya from Śāndilya. Śāndilya from Kauśika and Gautama. Gautama

2

From Agniveśya. Agniveśya from Śāndilya and Anabhimlāta. Anabhimlāta from [another] Anabhimlāta. This Anabhimlāta from [still another] Anabhimlāta. [This] Anabhimlāta from Gautama. Gautama from Saitava and Prāchinayogya. Saitava and Prāchinayogya from Pārāśarya. Pārāśarya from Bhāradvāja. Bhāradvāja from [another] Bhāradvāja and Gautama. Gautama from [still another] Bhāradvāja. [This] Bhāradvāja from Pārāśarya. Pārāśarya from Baijavāpāyana. Baijavāpāyana from Kauśikāyani. Kauśikāyani

3

From Ghritakauśika. Ghritakauśika from Pārāśaryāyana. Pārāśaryāyana from Pārāśarya. Pārāśarya from Jātukarnya. Jātukarnya from Āsurāyana and Yāska. Āsurāyana from Traivani. Traivani from Aupajandhani. Aupajandhani from Āsuri. Āsuri from Bhāradvāja. Bhāradvāja from Ātreya. Ātreya from Mānti. Mānti from Gautama. Gautama from [another] Gautama. [This] Gautama from Vātsya. Vātsya from Śāndilya. Śāndilya from Kaiśorya Kāpya. Kaiśorya Kāpya from Kumārahārita. Kumārahārita from Gālava. Gālava from Vidarbhikaundinya. Vidarbhikaundinya from Vatsanapāt Bābhava. Vatsanapāt Bābhava from Pathin Saubhara. Pathin Saubhara from Ayāsya Āngirasa. Ayāsya Āngirasa from Ābhuti Tvāshtra. Ābhuti Tvāshtra from Viśvarupa Tvāshtra. Viśvarupa

Tvāshtra from the Aśvins. The Aśvins from Dadhyāch Ātharvana. Dadhyāch Ātharvana from Ātharvana Daiva. Ātharvana Daiva from Mrityu Prādhvamsana. Mrityu Prādhvamsana from Prādhvamsana. Prādhvamsana from Ekarshi. Ekarshi from Viprachitti. Viprachitti from Vyashti. Vyashti from Sanāru. Sanāru from Sanātana. Sanātana from Sanaga. Sanaga from Parameshthin (Virāj). Parameshthin from Brahmā (Hiranyagarbha). Brahman is self-born. Salutation to Brahman.

**BRAHMĀ:** In His mind the Vedas were revealed through the grace of Brahman.

**BRAHMAN:** The Vedas are but another form of Brahman, who is self-existent; therefore they have no human authors. They are non-personal, but are revealed through individuals, who, however, are not their authors. The Vedic knowledge is timeless, though its revelation is possible at any time.

The line of teachers of the madhu-doctrine, whose purpose is to expound the Knowledge of Brahman, is given as a eulogy of the Knowledge of Brahman. This text is also a mantra to be expounded and regularly repeated.

*Here ends Chapter Six  
of Part Two of the  
Brihadāraṇyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER I

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND AŚVALA

OM. JANAKA, Emperor of Videha, performed a sacrifice in which gifts were freely distributed [among the priests]. Brāhmin scholars from [the countries of] Kuru and Panchāla were assembled there. Emperor Janaka of Videha wished to know which of these brāhmins was the most erudite Vedic scholar. So he confined a thousand cows in a pen and fastened on the horns of each ten pādas of gold.

EMPEROR: A ruler, after the performance of the Rājasuya sacrifice, in which all the kings of the country offer him allegiance, proclaims himself emperor (samrāt).

BRĀHMIN SCHOLARS: The brāhmins regularly studied the Vedas and were versed in their meaning.

KURU AND PANCHĀLA: These countries were known far and wide for their Vedic scholars.

PĀDAS: A pāda is about one-third of an ounce.

The present chapter deals with the same topic as the previous one, namely, the identity of the Self and Brahman; yet this is not a repetition. The previous chapter emphasizes scriptural evidence, whereas the present one emphasizes reasoning. When these two, scripture and reasoning, demonstrate the unity of the Self and Brahman, that unity becomes as evident as "a fruit lying on the palm of one's hand." Needless to say, experience through meditation is the final proof of truth. The story of Janaka may be taken either as being a eulogy of knowledge or as showing the way to its acquisition. One of the ways to acquire knowledge is to give gifts to scholars. Through gifts people are won over; and in the present story we see that plenty of gold and a thousand cows are offered. Another customary way of acquiring knowledge, which also is shown in the present chapter, is association with scholars and discussion with them. This enriches one's knowledge.

*Having confined the cows, Janaka addressed the brāhmins:*

## 2

He said to them: "Venerable brāhmins, let him among you who is the best Vedic scholar drive these cows home."

None of the brāhmins dared. Then Yājñavalkya said to one of his pupils: "Dear Sāmsravā, drive these cows [home]." He drove them away.

The brāhmins were furious and said: "How does he dare to call himself the best Vedic scholar among us?"

Now [among them] there was Aśvala, the hotri priest of Emperor Janaka of Videha. He asked Yājñavalkya: "Are you indeed the best Vedic scholar among us, O Yājñavalkya?"

He replied: "I bow to the best Vedic scholar, but I just wish to have these cows."

Thereupon the hotri Aśvala determined to question him.

**VENERABLE BRĀHMINS ETC:** Janaka knew that all the brāhmins present there were Vedic scholars; he wanted to ascertain who was the greatest among them.

**BEST VEDIC SCHOLAR:** The word *brahmishtha* in the text means, literally, "highest knower of Brahman." As the Vedas teach about Brahman, a Vedic scholar is, at least intellectually, a knower of Brahman.

**DARED:** That is to say, to arrogate to himself the position of the greatest scholar.

**SĀMSRAVĀ:** The word means, literally, "one who knows the chanting of the Sāma-Veda." Yājñavalkya was principally a scholar of the Yajur-Veda. As the pupil's name implies knowledge of the Sāma-Veda, which is the Rig-Veda set to music, Yājñavalkya must also have known these two Vedas. The Atharva-Veda is subsidiary to the other three. Hence by implication Yājñavalkya was versed in all four Vedas.

**HE DROVE ETC:** Yājñavalkya, by accepting the prize meant for the best Vedic scholar, indirectly declared himself to be the best.

**AŚVALA:** He prided himself on being the greatest Vedic scholar and was insolent owing to the royal patronage. So he was the first to challenge Yājñavalkya.

**HOTRI:** A priest whose duty is to invoke the gods in a sacrifice with recitations from the Rig-Veda.

**I BOW ETC:** This shows Yājñavalkya's sense of humour.

**THEREUPON ETC:** By accepting the prize meant for the best Vedic scholar, Yājñavalkya had practically declared himself to be such.

*In the section on the Udgitha (I. iii.) it has been briefly stated how a sacrificer can transcend death through the rites associated with five factors together with meditation on the rites. The present section gives certain particulars about the meditation:*

## 3

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “since everything here (i.e. connected with the sacrifice) is overtaken by death, since everything is overcome by death, by what means does the sacrificer free himself from the reach of death?”

“Through the hotri priest and the organ of speech looked upon as fire. The sacrificer’s organ of speech is the hotri. This organ of speech is fire; this fire is the hotri; this [fire] is [the means to] liberation; this is complete liberation.”

**EVERYTHING HERE:** That is to say, the accessories of this rite, such as the priests and the fire.

**OVERTAKEN BY DEATH:** Because the ritualistic sacrifice is attended by natural attachment to the result, which brings about new birth to be followed in turn by death.

**HOTRI PRIEST ETC:** The sacrificer’s organ of speech is the hotri, in relation to sacrifices. The same organ of speech is the fire known to all, with reference to the gods.

**THIS FIRE IS THE HOTRI:** Compare Śa. Br. VI. iv. 2. 6.

**THIS [FIRE] . . . LIBERATION:** The two auxiliaries of a sacrifice, namely, the priest called hotri and the organ of speech, being finite, are overcome by death, that is to say, are subject to incessant change. If the sacrificer regards these two auxiliaries as finite, he is subject to repeated deaths. But if he looks upon them as fire, which is their divine (adhidaiva) aspect, he is liberated from death. Therefore the text says: “This is liberation.” In other words, looking upon the hotri priest and the organ of speech as fire is liberation.

**THIS IS COMPLETE LIBERATION:** The liberation just mentioned, which consists in looking upon the hotri priest and the organ of speech in their divine aspect, is also spoken of as complete liberation. Liberation means going beyond death, which consists in attachment to the limitations relating to the body and material elements. It is called complete liberation because it leads to the attainment of the status of Virāj. (Neither “liberation” nor “complete liberation” refers to the Liberation which results from the Knowledge of Brahman.)

*Liberation from death—which latter is another name for ritualistic sacrifice directed by natural attachment due to ignorance—has been explained in the preceding verse. But fire and the other accessories of ritualistic sacrifice are subject to change. Time is the cause of change, which includes death. There are, again, two forms of time: solar and lunar. The following verse describes liberation from the solar time, consisting of day and night:*

## 4

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “since everything here is overtaken by day and night, since everything is overcome by day and night, by what means does the sacrificer free himself from the reach of day and night?”

“Through the adhvaryu priest and the eye looked upon as the sun. The sacrificer’s eye is the adhvaryu. This eye is the sun. This sun is the adhvaryu; this [sun] is [the means to] liberation; this is complete liberation.”

**ADEVARYU PRIEST:** A priest whose duty it is to prepare the various accessories of a sacrifice and offer the oblations, while reciting from the Yajur-Veda.

**THIS [SUN] . . . LIBERATION:** The liberation consists in viewing the sacrificer’s eye and the adhvaryu priest, stripped of their material limitations, in their divine aspect.

**COMPLETE LIBERATION:** Because there can be no day and night for one who has identified himself with the sun.

*Liberation from the lunar time:*

## 5

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “since everything here is overtaken by the bright and dark fortnights, since everything is overcome by the bright and dark fortnights, by what means does the sacrificer free himself from the reach of the bright and dark fortnights?”

“Through the udgātri priest and the vital breath looked upon as the air. This vital breath is the udgātri. This vital breath is the air; this air is the udgātri; this [air] is [the means to] liberation; this is complete liberation.”

**UDGĀTRI PRIEST:** The priest who chants hymns from the Sāma-Veda.

The sacrificer who has attained identity with the air by meditating on the identity of the udgātri priest and his own vital breath (I. iii. 24.) goes beyond the dark and bright fortnights.

*What is the support by means of which the sacrificer attains a result transcending death, or, in other words, is liberated? The answer follows:*

## 6

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “since the sky is, as it were, without a support, by means of what support does the sacrificer go to heaven?”

“Through the Brahmā priest and the mind looked upon as the moon. The sacrificer’s mind is the Brahmā. The mind is the moon; this moon is the Brahmā; this [moon] is [the means to] liberation; this is complete liberation.”

So far about the ways of liberation; now about the meditation based upon resemblance.

AS IT WERE: This suggests that there is a support to heaven, though it is not known. The question is: What is that unknown support by means of which the sacrificer attains to heaven and achieves liberation?

GO TO HEAVEN: That is to say, becomes released.

BRAHMĀ PRIEST: The priest who supervises the sacrifice.

THIS MIND ETC: What the mind of the sacrificer is with reference to the body, the moon is with reference to the gods. The moon, again, is the Brahmā priest. Through the support of the mind viewed as the moon, the sacrificer attains to heaven as the result of his rites; in other words, he is liberated.

NOW ABOUT ETC: The meditation based on resemblance is called sampad upāsana. Through this discipline a person engaged in an inferior sacrifice like the Fire-sacrifice (Agnihotra) may reap the result of a superior sacrifice like the Horse-sacrifice (Aśvamedha). The process is as follows: The sacrificer meditates on some point of similarity between the Fire-sacrifice and the Horse-sacrifice. It is impossible for an average man to perform an expensive sacrifice like the Aśvamedha. But while performing an ordinary sacrifice like the Agnihotra he can meditate upon the idea that this sacrifice will produce the same result that accrues from the performance of the Aśvamedha. Thus he will obtain the desired result. Therefore such meditation is fruitful. That is why it is being described.

## 7

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “how many [kinds of] Rig verses will the hotri priest use today in this sacrifice?”

"Three kinds."

"And which are these three?"

"The introductory, the sacrificial, and the eulogistic as the third."

"What does he (the sacrificer) win through them?"

"All this that has life."

**INTRODUCTORY:** Those hymns which are used before the sacrifice starts.

**SACRIFICIAL:** Those hymns which are chanted at the time of offering the oblation.

**EULOGISTIC:** Those hymns which are used in praise of the deity.

**ALL THIS THAT ETC:** That is to say, whatever is living in the three worlds. The preceding verse has referred to the meditation based upon resemblance. Mention is made here of the three classes of Rigs. Life exists in the three worlds: earth, heaven, and the interspace. On account of the resemblance in number, the sacrificer, through meditation, wins the three worlds.

## 8

"Yājñavalkya," said he, "how many [kinds of] oblations will the adhvaryu priest offer today in this sacrifice?"

"Three."

"And which are these three?"

"Those which, when offered, blaze upward; those which, when offered, make a great noise; and those which, when offered, sink down."

"What does he (the sacrificer) win through them?"

"By those which, when offered, blaze upward, he wins the world of the gods; for the world of the gods shines bright, as it were. By those which, when offered, make a great noise, he wins the world of the Manes; for this world of the Manes is excessively noisy. By those which, when offered, sink down, he wins the world of men; for the world of men is down below."

**BLAZE UPWARD:** Refers to oblations of wood, clarified butter, etc.

**MAKE . . . NOISE:** Refers to oblations of flesh.

**SINK DOWN:** Refers to oblations of milk, soma-juice, etc.

**BY THOSE ETC:** The offerings made are bright, and the result—the world of the gods—is also bright. On account of this resemblance, the sacrificer meditates that the bright offerings he is making are the very form of the result he seeks through the sacrifice, namely, the world of the gods. And he further meditates that he is achieving the world of the gods. Thus he wins the result. The nature of the meditation determines that of the result.

**MAKE A NOISE ETC:** Because of the resemblance in producing a terrific noise. Attached to the world of the Manes is the city of the god of death, where people subjected to tortures raise an uproar. On account of this resemblance to the world of the Manes, the sacrificer thinks in his meditation that he is actually winning that world.

**DOWN BELOW:** The world of men is lower than the upper worlds. The liquid offering goes down. The sacrificer, when making the oblation of milk or soma-juice, meditates that he is actually attaining the world of men.

## 9

"Yājñavalkya," said he, "with how many gods does the Brahmā priest [seated] on the right protect the sacrifice today?"

"With one."

"Which is that one?"

"The mind. The mind is indeed infinite, and infinite are the Viśve-devas. An infinite world he (the sacrificer) wins thereby."

**WITH HOW MANY ETC:** The plural number is used for the sake of conformity with the two preceding questions; for only one god is meant here. Or perhaps the interrogator wanted to confuse Yājñavalkya.

**MIND:** It is through the mind—that is to say, through meditation—that the Brahmā priest performs his function in the sacrifice.

**THE MIND . . . INFINITE:** Because of its infinite modifications.

**VIŚVE-DEVAS:** A particular group of deities, ten in number.

**AN INFINITE ETC:** Because of the resemblance as regards infinitude.

## 10

"Yājñavalkya," said he, "how many [kinds of] hymns of praise will the udgātri priest chant today in this sacrifice?"

"Three."

"And which are these three?"

"The introductory, the sacrificial, and the eulogistic as the third."

"Which are those that have reference to the body?"

"The prāna is the introductory hymn, the apāna is the sacrificial hymn, and the vyāna is the eulogistic hymn."

"What does he (the sacrificer) win through them?"

"Through the introductory hymn he wins the earth, through the sacrificial hymn he wins the sky, and through the eulogistic hymn he wins heaven."

Thereupon the priest Aśvala held his peace.

HELD HIS PEACE: Aśvala realized that his opponent was too astute for him and admitted defeat.

*Here ends Chapter One  
of Part Three of the  
Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER II

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND ĀRTABHĀGA

THEN ĀRTABHĀGA, of the line of Jaratkāru, questioned him.

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “how many grahas (organs) are there, and how many atigrahas (objects)?”

“Eight grahas,” he replied, “and eight atigrahas.”

“And which are these eight grahas and eight atigrahas?”

GRAHAS: The literal meaning of *graha* is “that which perceives,” hence, an organ.

ATIGRAHAS: Lit., “that which is greater than a graha”; here the word means a sense-object, because the latter determines the nature of the perception.

The preceding chapter has described liberation as liberation from death, which is characterized by time and rites. Now will be explained the significance of the word *death*. Death consists of the organs and their objects. Man, due to natural ignorance, is identified with these, and because they are finite and belong to the sphere of relativity, man is mortal. Even the position of Hiranyagarbha falls within the sphere of death, because it is attained as a result of certain rites, which are associated with a perishable agent and accessories. Anything that is determined by the causal law must be finite and perishable. Attachment to the sense-organs and their objects cannot lead to Immortality. They are discussed in this section in order to stimulate the spirit of dispassion, which alone leads to Immortality.

#### 2

“The Prāna (the nose), indeed, is the graha; it is controlled by the apāna (odour), the atigraha; for one smells odours through apāna (the air breathed in).”

ODOUR: Odour is called the apāna because of its association with the air breathed in. A man smells, by means of the nose, odours presented by the air breathed in.

## 3

“The vāk (the organ of speech), indeed, is the graha; it is controlled by the atigraha, name; for one utters names through the organ of speech.

THE VĀK ETC: Sounds or words are the objects of the organ of speech. On account of attachment to words, people make utterances which are untrue, pernicious, rude, or offensive. The organ has been created to give expression to words. Therefore the organ of speech is said to be controlled by the atigraha, name; for it is a fact that people get into all sorts of trouble because of their attachment to words.

## 4

“The tongue, indeed, is the graha; it is controlled by the atigraha, taste; for one knows tastes by the tongue.

## 5

“The eye, indeed, is the graha; it is controlled by the atigraha, colour; for one sees colours through the eye.

## 6

“The ear, indeed, is the graha; it is controlled by the atigraha, sound; for one hears sounds with the ear.

## 7

“The mind, indeed, is the graha; it is controlled by the atigraha, desire; for through the mind one cherishes desires.

## 8

“The hands, indeed, are the graha; they are controlled by the atigraha, work; for one performs work by means of the hands.

## 9

“The skin, indeed, is the graha; it is controlled by the atigraha, touch; for one feels touch through the skin. These are the eight grahas and eight atigrahas.”

## 10

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “since all this is the food of death, who, pray, is that god to whom death is the food?”

"Fire, indeed, is death; it is the food of water. [One who knows this] conquers further death."

**SINCE ALL ETC:** That is to say, since everything is born and finally becomes a victim of death in the form of grahas and atigrahas.

**WHO, PRAY, ETC:** The implication of this question is as follows: If Yājñavalkya mentions the death of death, then his answer will lead to a *regressus ad infinitum*; for next it will be asked who is the death of the second death. If, on the other hand, there is no death of death, there will then be no liberation from death in the form of grahas and atigrahas.

**FIRE, INDEED, ETC:** Fire destroys everything and is therefore called death; but, in turn, fire is destroyed by water. Thus it can be asserted that there is a death of death, which swallows up all the grahas and atigrahas, that is to say, the organs and their objects. One can free oneself from the senses and their objects and be liberated from relative existence.

## 11

"Yājñavalkya," said he, "when this [liberated] person dies, do his organs depart from him or not?"

"No," replied Yājñavalkya, "they merge in him only. The body swells, is inflated, and in that state the dead [body] lies at rest."

**WHEN THIS ETC:** That is to say, after death (i.e. the organs and objects) has been swallowed by another death (i.e. the realization of the Supreme Self).

**ORGANS:** The word *organs* here includes both the organs (such as the tongue, the skin, and the mind), which are called grahas, and also their objects, which are called atigrahas. The atigrahas create the subtle impressions which impel a person to future action.

**MERGE IN HIM ONLY:** That is to say, in the man of realization, who is identical with Brahman. From Brahman all the organs and objects are produced, as waves are produced from the ocean. Their projection is the result of ignorance, and when the ignorance is destroyed they again become Brahman.

**THE BODY SWELLS ETC:** It is the body that dies, and not the man endowed with the Knowledge of Brahman.

The liberated person does not go anywhere after his bondage has been destroyed. He wakes from ignorance as a man wakes from sleep.

*When an illumined person dies, the organs (grahas), objects (atigrahas) in the form of impressions, and all else merge in him. From*

*his standpoint nothing is left. From the standpoint of the world his name alone remains.*

## 12

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “when such a man dies, what is it that does not leave him?”

“The name. For the name is infinite, and infinite are the Viśve-devas. He [who knows this] wins thereby an infinite world.”

FOR THE ETC: The name is called infinite because it is cherished for ever. The Viśve-devas are in reality ten in number; but etymologically the word embraces all the gods. They possess an infinity of names. He who knows this teaching becomes identified with the Viśve-devas, who possess an infinity of names, and wins through this identification an infinite world. This is a eulogy of the teaching.

From the relative standpoint, the name of an illumined person is cherished for ever after his death. Therefore the name is declared to be infinite from that standpoint. But from his own standpoint, even the name does not exist. The disappearance of the grahas and atigrahas in Brahman is like the extinction of a flame. This is called Liberation.

*What happens to an unillumined person after death? He again assumes a physical body according to the law of karma.*

## 13

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “when the vocal organ of this dead person merges in fire, the nose in air, the eye in the sun, the mind in the moon, the ear in the quarters, the body in the earth, the ākāśa (space) in the heart in the external ākāśa, the hair on the body in the herbs, the hair on the head in the trees, and the blood and semen are deposited in water, where is that person then?”

Yājñavalkya said: “Give me your hand, dear Ārtabhāga. We shall decide this between ourselves; we cannot do it in a crowd.”

Then they went out and deliberated, and what they talked about was karma (work), and what they praised was karma: one becomes good through good karma and evil through evil karma.

Thereupon Ārtabhāga, of the line of Jaratkāru, held his peace.

DEAD PERSON: Refers to a person who dies without having attained the highest knowledge and is conscious of possessing a body.

**VOCAL ORGAN:** The words *vocal organ*, *nose*, *mind*, etc. in the text refer not to the tangible, physical organs etc., but to their controlling deities, such as fire, air, etc. These deities, localized in the living person, merge, after his death, in their cosmic counterparts. The organs do not merge in Brahman before Liberation. When the controlling deities cease to work, the organs become idle tools. When the soul takes a new body, the controlling deities animate its different organs and parts.

**DEPOSITED:** The word implies that they are again withdrawn when a new body is taken.

**WHERE IS THAT ETC:** That is to say, Where does that person then rest? What is that support resting on which he again takes a body and organs, and through which the bondage known as the *grahas* and *atigrahas* commences?

**IN A CROWD:** The different schools of philosophy have put forward different entities as the support in question, such as nature, chance, time, work, destiny, etc. Therefore a mere debate would create great confusion. This is why Yājñavalkya suggested that they should retire to a solitary place to discuss the question.

**KARMA:** They concluded that karma is the support which causes the repeated taking up of the physical body, characterized by *grahas* and *atigrahas*. Nature, chance, and the rest may, however, be indirect causes.

**HELD HIS PEACE:** He found it impossible to defeat Yājñavalkya.

*Here ends Chapter Two  
of Part Three of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER III

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND BHUJYU

NEXT BHUJYU, the grandson of Lahya, questioned him.

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “we were travelling in [the country of] Madra as [religious] students, when we came to the house of Patanchala, of the line of Kapi. His daughter was possessed by a gandharva. We asked him (the gandharva): ‘Who are you?’ He said: ‘I am Sudhanvan, of the line of Angiras.’ While asking him about the limits of the world, we said: ‘Where were the descendants of Parikshit?’ And likewise I ask you, Yājñavalkya, where were the descendants of Parikshit? [Tell me,] where were the descendants of Parikshit?”

NEXT ETC: It has been stated at the very beginning of the Upanishad that the Horse-sacrifice, whether performed along with meditation or without meditation, produces the greatest merit. It is the highest of all rites. But the result falls within the realm of the relative universe, which is a world of bondage. Now will be stated the range and the extent of the universe, so that one may understand the entire world of bondage. Through the performance of ritualistic action, however exalted it may be, one cannot attain Liberation.

POSSESSED ETC: A gandharva is a semi-celestial being. The young woman in question was being used by him as a medium.

DESCENDANTS OF PARIKSHIT: The word *Pārikshitas* in the text means, literally, Parikshit’s descendants. Here it refers to those of his descendants who were emperors and performers of the Horse-sacrifice. Bhujyu asked where the descendants of Parikshit went after death.

AND LIKEWISE ETC: Bhujyu had learnt the answer to his question from a superhuman source. Evidently he was sure that Yājñavalkya would not be able to give the answer through human knowledge.

The following is adapted from Śankarāchārya’s commentary:

The grahas (sense-organs) and atigrahas (objects) constitute bondage. The bound soul is a victim of repeated births and deaths. Freedom from rebirth is Liberation. That Liberation is possible has been asserted in the statement that there is a death of death. It has been stated, further, in the

preceding chapter, that the liberated person does not go anywhere. The organs and body (i.e. the deities controlling them) of the liberated person merge in Brahman, while the organs of the transmigrating person return to him when he is reborn. It is work that determines the nature of rebirth: one becomes good through good work and evil through evil work. Relative existence in the universe is controlled by good and evil work. Evil work subjects a man to suffering. Good work leads a man to his cherished goal.

Now, Liberation is the most cherished goal. One may contend that this, too, is attainable through work.<sup>1</sup> As the work becomes better and better, its results also become so. Hence one may presume that an excellent work—for instance, the Horse-sacrifice associated with meditation—may lead to Liberation. Or even disinterested work coupled with meditation, one may contend, will produce Liberation. Śankara refutes both these positions. According to him, work has no access to Liberation, “which is not an effect, is eternal, unmanifested, beyond name and form, and devoid of all the characteristics of action, with its accessories and results.”

Liberation is not an effect; it is simply the destruction of bondage, and not a newly produced entity. Bondage is ignorance and cannot be destroyed by work; for work is possible only in the phenomenal world. The function of work is to produce or bring within reach or modify or purify something; it has no other function besides these, since no one knows of any other function. And Liberation is not one of those results. It is self-existent Knowledge, which only remains hidden by ignorance.

*Objection:* This may apply to ordinary work. But disinterested work together with meditation is quite different, and may produce Liberation.

*Reply:* No, there is no evidence—neither perception nor inference, nor analogy nor implication nor scriptural statement—to prove that work has any other function than those already enumerated.

*Objection:* If you say that Liberation is the effect of Knowledge, it may also be contended that it is the effect of work.

*Reply:* The function of Knowledge is to dispel ignorance, which obstructs Liberation, the true nature of the ever existent Ātman. Because Knowledge removes the obstruction, Liberation is figuratively said to be the effect of Knowledge. But work cannot dispel ignorance; and one cannot imagine any other obstruction to Liberation but ignorance that could be removed by work; for Liberation is eternal and identical with the Self of the aspirant.

*Objection:* Suppose we say that work removes ignorance.

*Reply:* No; ignorance is by nature non-manifestation; Knowledge is manifestation. Therefore Knowledge is the reverse of ignorance and can

<sup>1</sup> The word *work* is generally used in the Upanishads to denote ritualistic action.

destroy it; but work is not the reverse of ignorance, and therefore cannot destroy it. Ignorance, whether it means want of knowledge, or doubt, or a wrong notion, is always removed by Knowledge, but never by work in any of its forms; for there is no inherent conflict between ignorance and work. Further, we said before that work produces a definite result, in the form of production or attainment or modification or purification.

*Objection:* Suppose we say that Liberation is one of these four.

*Reply:* No; Liberation is eternal and therefore cannot be produced or modified. For the same reason it cannot be purified. Liberation cannot be attained, because it inheres in the identity of the individual self and Brahman, which always exists.

The highest result of work—for instance, of the Horse-sacrifice—is oneness with Virāj, or Hiranyagarbha, who lies within the limits of relative existence. It is by no means the same as Liberation.

## 2

Yājñavalkya said: “The gandharva, I suppose, told you that they went where those who perform the Horse-sacrifice go.”

“And where do they go who have performed the Horse-sacrifice?”

“Thirty-two times the space traversed by the sun’s chariot in a day makes this plane (loka); around it, covering twice the area, is the world (prithivi); around the world, covering twice the area, is the ocean. Now, as is the edge of a razor or the wing of a fly, so is there just that much space [between the two halves of the cosmic shell. Through that opening they go out].

“Fire, in the form of a falcon, delivered them to Vāyu. Vāyu, placing them in itself, took them where [previous] performers of the Horse-sacrifice were.”

Thus did the gandharva praise Vāyu. Therefore Vāyu alone is the aggregate of all individuals. He who knows this, as stated above, conquers further death.

Thereupon Bhujyu, the grandson of Lahya, held his peace.

**THEY:** The descendants of Parikshit.

**THIRTY-TWO . . . WORLD:** The dimensions of the cosmic orb are described. Thirty-two times the space traversed by the sun during a day and night is pervaded by the sun’s rays. If we add to this the space covered by the moon’s light, we obtain the dimensions of the universe, which constitutes the body of Virāj and in which people reap the fruit of their past actions.

**FIRE:** Refers to the fire kindled at the Horse-sacrifice.

DELIVERED: Fire, being gross, had no access there.

VĀYU: This word, meaning air, signifies Hiranyagarbha, whose body is the aggregate of all subtle bodies. He is the Cosmic Mind, or rather, Consciousness limited by the upādhi of the aggregate of all minds—the first manifestation of Brahman in the relative universe.

VĀYU . . . ALL INDIVIDUALS: From the standpoint of the microcosm, Vāyu pervades each individual, and from the standpoint of the macrocosm, it pervades the whole universe.

CONQUERS ETC: He is no longer born on earth as a mortal man.

Identity with Hiranyagarbha is the limit of a person's attainment through rites coupled with meditation. But this identity is not Liberation, which is obtained only through Self-Knowledge.

*Here ends Chapter Three  
of Part Three of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER IV

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND USHASTA

THEN USHASTA, the son of Chakra, questioned him.

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “explain to me the Brahman that is immediately and directly perceived—the self that is within all.”

“This is your self that is within all.”

“Which [self] is within all, Yājñavalkya?”

“That which breathes through the prāna is your self that is within all. That which moves downward through the apāna is your self that is within all. That which pervades through the vyāna is your self that is within all. That which goes out with the udāna is your self that is within all. This is your self that is within all.”

EXPLAIN TO ME ETC: Ushasta wanted to be shown Brahman as clearly as one shows a cow by taking hold of its horn and saying: “This is a cow.”

IMMEDIATELY: That is to say, not obstructed from the seer, or subject, by anything.

DIRECTLY: Ushasta did not want Brahman to be described in an indirect way, through symbols. The scriptures often describe Brahman through such symbols as the ear, the mind, and so on.

THE SELF . . . ALL: The word *self* refers to the inner, individual self, that being the accepted meaning of the term.

WHICH [SELF] IS . . . YĀJNAVALKYA? Three entities are indicated: the gross body, the subtle body consisting of the organs, and a third entity, whose existence is being debated. Which one of these is Brahman?

THAT WHICH BREATHES . . . PRĀNA ETC: That is to say, that which enables the prāna, apāna, etc. to perform their respective functions. The prāna, apāna, etc. are like wooden puppets; unless they are operated by an intelligent principle, they cannot perform any function, such as breathing or the like. Being operated by the individual self, which is distinct from them, they breathe and perform their other functions. Hence there exists in man an intelligent substance which causes the body and the organs to function.

It has already been stated that a man attached to the organs (grahas) and objects (atigrahas) is reborn. Birth is controlled by merit and demerit.

The result of the highest merit is identification with Hiranyagarbha. Now the question arises as to whether or not there exists an entity which assumes repeated births and if it exists, then what it is like. If a man realizes it as the unconditioned Self, free from actions and their accessories, he is freed from rebirth.

## 2

Ushasta, the son of Chakra, said: "You have explained it as one might say: 'Such is a cow,' 'Such is a horse.' Tell me precisely the Brahman that is immediate and direct—the self that is within all."

"This is your self that is within all."

"Which is within all, Yājñavalkya?"

"You cannot see the seer of seeing; you cannot hear the hearer of hearing; you cannot think of the thinker of thinking; you cannot know the knower of knowing. This is your self that is within all; everything else but this is perishable."

Thereupon Ushasta, the son of Chakra, held his peace.

**YOU HAVE ETC:** The gist of Ushasta's remark, as given in Śankara's commentary, is as follows: As a man first proposes one thing and then, being in doubt, says something else—for instance, having proposed to point out a cow or a horse, he merely describes them by saying: "A cow is that which walks," or "A horse is that which runs"—so you too have indicated Brahman through certain characteristics, such as breathing etc.

**THIS IS ETC:** Yājñavalkya adheres to his first statement: Brahman is exactly as he has described it.

**EVERYTHING ELSE:** Such as the gross or the subtle body.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

Ushasta is evidently asking Yājñavalkya to point out the self as one would a jar. But that is impossible. Why so? Owing to the very nature of the self. How is that? The self is the witness of vision etc. Vision is of two kinds: ordinary and real. Ordinary vision is a function of the mind when it is connected with the eye. It is an act and as such it is subject to change. But the vision that belongs to the self is like the heat and light of fire. Being the very essence of the seer, it is unchanging. Because real vision appears to be associated with ordinary vision, which is subject to change, it is spoken of as the witness of objects. Ordinary vision is coloured by the objects seen by the eye. It appears to be connected with the real vision of the self, though in reality it is but its reflection. Ordinary vision, moreover, has a beginning and an end, and is pervaded by real vision. Thus the real vision of the self is metaphorically spoken of as the witness, and, although

eternally seeing, is described as sometimes seeing and sometimes not seeing. But, as a matter of fact, the vision of the seer never changes. Compare: "It thinks, as it were, and moves, as it were" (IV. iii. 7), and "There is no cessation of the vision of the seer" (IV. iii. 23). Seeing is the very stuff of the seer, or self. As the self is immutable, so also is seeing. Such terms as *seer*, *hearer*, and *thinker* repeat only conventional expressions used by ordinary people.

*Here ends Chapter Four  
of Part Three of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER V

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND KAHOLA

NEXT KAHOLA, the son of Kushitaka, questioned him.

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “explain to me the Brahman that is directly and immediately perceived—the self that is within all.”

“This is your self that is within all.”

“Which [self] is within all, Yājñavalkya?”

“It is that which transcends hunger and thirst, grief, delusion, old age, and death. Having realized this Self, brāhmins give up the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, and the desire for the worlds, and lead the life of [religious] mendicants. That which is the desire for sons is the desire for wealth, and that which is the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds; for both these are but desires. Therefore a brāhmin, after he is done with scholarship, should try to live on that strength which comes of scholarship. After he is done with that strength and scholarship, he becomes meditative, and after he is done with both meditateness and non-meditateness, he becomes a knower of Brahman.

“How does the knower of Brahman behave? Howsoever he may behave, he is such indeed. Everything else but this is perishable.”

Thereupon Kahola, the son of Kushitaka, held his peace.

NEXT ETC: Bondage and its causes have been described. The existence of that which is bound and also its distinctness from the body etc. have been mentioned. Now Self-Knowledge together with renunciation, which is the means of Liberation, will be discussed. That is why Kahola's question is introduced.

QUESTIONED: Though it appears that Ushasta and Kahola asked the same question, yet there is a difference. Ushasta wanted to know if there was a self which was distinct from the body and not bound by the organs and their objects. Kahola asked about the real nature of the self. Therefore though one and the same self has been mentioned twice, it is mentioned the second time with a view to adding certain details, namely, the self's transcendence of hunger, thirst, etc.

**THAT WHICH TRANSCENDS ETC:** Such attributes as hunger and thirst are superimposed by the ignorant upon the Self, which is Pure Consciousness, through māyā. It is like attributing form or colour to the sky, which is in reality free from such attributes. Compare: "The one Ātman, dwelling in all beings, is never contaminated by the misery of the world, being outside it." (*Ka. Up. II. ii. 11.*)

**GRIEF:** The discontent that one feels as one reflects on some covetable object. Such an object is the seed of desire, because it kindles desire in the person who hankers after it.

**DELUSION:** Error or confusion arising from wrong perception. It is a form of ignorance, the fruitful source of all misery.

**OLD AGE:** The modification of the body and organs, marked by wrinkles, grey hair, etc.

**DEATH:** The fall of the body; the last modification to overtake it. Hunger, thirst, etc., which affect the vital breath (prāna), mind, sense-organs, and body, are ever present in living beings in unbroken succession like the days and nights. But that which is described as the "seer of seeing" and so forth, and which is within all, being the Self of all beings from Hiran-yagarbha down to the clump of grass, is ever untouched by such relative attributes as hunger and thirst, etc., just as the sky is uncontaminated by such impurities as clouds or dust.

**HAVING REALIZED THIS SELF:** That is to say, as their inmost reality.

**BRĀHMINS:** Refers to members of the brāhmin caste, who, according to the strict Vedic tradition, are qualified to renounce the world for the attainment of Liberation. People belonging to other castes may obtain Liberation through different spiritual disciplines.

**DESIRE FOR SONS:** Through sons one wins this world. The statement implies marriage. Brāhmins seeking Liberation free themselves from the entanglements of married life.

**DESIRE FOR WEALTH:** Through wealth one procures cattle etc., which are the accessories of the sacrificial rites. Through such rites one wins the world of the Manes.

**DESIRE FOR THE WORLDS:** That is to say, for all relative existence. One renounces the desire for sons, wealth, and the worlds through the Knowledge of Brahman. One gives up everything that is not the Self.

**THAT WHICH IS THE DESIRE ETC:** The desire for means is the desire for results; therefore the text says that the desires are one. People adopt different means, actuated by desires for results. (The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary: Knowledge and ignorance cannot coexist in the same individual; for they are contradictory, like light and darkness. "Knowledge" refers to the undifferentiated Pure Consciousness, and "ignorance" to the relative universe with its different planes and also to the rites

which are the means to their attainment. Therefore the knower of the Self must give up all actions, their accessories, and their results, which belong to the realm of ignorance.)

**LEAD THE LIFE ETC:** Refers to brāhmins of past times who discarded the holy thread, the tuft of hair, etc., which are necessary accessories for the performance of the ritualistic worship, by means of which the aspirant attains the world of the gods, the world of the Manes, or the world of men.

**LIFE OF A [RELIGIOUS] MENDICANT:** Refers to the highest order of monks, known as paramahamsas. They give up the outer signs of a monk's life, prescribed by the Smritis, by means of which monks sometimes obtain food and other necessities of existence. Paramahamsas give up all outer signs of holiness and live on alms received without much effort.

**THEREFORE A BRĀHMIN, ETC:** Refers to seekers of Self-Knowledge in contemporary times.

**SCHOLARSHIP:** Knowledge of the Self received from the teacher and the scriptures, which is theoretical knowledge. Having acquired it, the aspirant should renounce all desires. This renunciation is the culmination of scholarship.

**LIVE ON THAT STRENGTH ETC:** The ignorant derive their strength from the means and results of action. The knower of Brahman discards that and resorts simply to that strength which comes from the Knowledge of the Self. When he does this, his sense-organs have no more power to drag him down to the objects of desire. It is only the ignorant, devoid of the strength of knowledge, who are attracted by the sense-organs to desires for objects, visible or invisible. Spiritual strength is derived from the total elimination of the desire for objects through the Knowledge of Brahman. Hence the knower of Brahman should try to live upon that strength. Compare: "By Ātman one obtains strength." (*Ke. Up. II. 4.*)

**BECOMES MEDITATIVE:** That is to say, becomes a yogi in communion with Brahman. Having eliminated ideas about the non-Self, the aspirant becomes a yogi. This is the culmination of scholarship and strength.

**HE BECOMES A KNOWER OF BRAHMAN:** He realizes the goal: the conviction that all is Brahman. The literal meaning of the word *brāhmin*, in the text, is "knower of Brahman."

**HOWSOEVER ETC:** This is a tribute to the Knowledge of Brahman and does not indicate any reckless behaviour on the part of an illumined person. He is always conscious of his identity with Brahman. While a struggling student, he gave up all unrighteous actions and performed only righteous ones. Therefore if he ever engages in action after the attainment of Knowledge, he can perform only good actions and never evil ones.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

When the statement is made that the Self transcends hunger and thirst,

grief and delusion, etc., it may be contended that the Self cannot both possess these attributes and be beyond them. In answer it is stated that the phenomenal self, which is associated with such attributes as hunger and thirst, is unreal and is conjured up by māyā. For instance, a desert appears as a mirage or a rope as a snake because of the attributes falsely imputed to them. But in spite of these false imputations, the desert and the rope do not lose their true nature. Likewise, the true nature of the Self is never affected by the false imputations of hunger and thirst, etc.

*Objection:* Will not the scriptural passages regarding the non-dual and undifferentiated nature of the Self be contradicted if one admits the existence of such limiting adjuncts (upādhis) as name and form?

*Reply:* No; there is the instance of foam on water and of articles made of clay. When the true nature of the foam or of a jar is properly investigated, it is realized that they have no existence separate from water and clay, respectively. Likewise, when, following the scriptural evidence, name and form are analysed from the standpoint of Brahman, it is realized that they have no existence as separate entities. When, on account of primordial ignorance, the reality of Brahman—which, like the desert and the rope, never undergoes any change—is not distinguished from such limiting adjuncts as the body and the sense-organs, created by name and form, and we take these limiting adjuncts to be real in themselves, then this phenomenal existence consisting of things other than Brahman has full play. The unreal phenomenal existence created by differentiation is, indeed, a fact for those who do *not* believe in the existence of things other than Brahman as well as for those who believe in them. But believers in the highest truth, while discussing according to the scriptures the existence or non-existence of things apart from Brahman, conclude that Brahman alone exists, one and without a second, and beyond all finite relations. When Brahman is definitely known, it is realized that things different from It do not exist. But the ignorant, who believe in the existence of the phenomenal world, are justified in holding to their faith and engaging in actions to attain definite results. Therefore the real (scriptural) outlook and the phenomenal (conventional) outlook depend entirely on knowledge or ignorance of Brahman. The phenomenal world exists from the relative standpoint; it has no existence from the absolute standpoint.

*Here ends Chapter Five  
of Part Three of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER VI

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND GĀRGI (I)

THEN GĀRGI, the daughter of Vachaknu, questioned him.

"Yājnavalkya," said she, "if all this is pervaded by water, by what, pray, is water pervaded?"

"By air, O Gārgi."

"By what, pray, is air pervaded?"

"By the sky, O Gārgi."

"By what is the sky pervaded?"

"By the world of the gandharvas, O Gārgi."

"By what is the world of the gandharvas pervaded?"

"By the world of the sun, O Gārgi."

"By what is the world of the sun pervaded?"

"By the world of the moon, O Gārgi."

"By what is the world of the moon pervaded?"

"By the world of the stars, O Gārgi."

"By what is the world of the stars pervaded?"

"By the world of the gods, O Gārgi."

"By what is the world of the gods pervaded?"

"By the world of Indra, O Gārgi."

"By what is the world of Indra pervaded?"

"By the World of Virāj, O Gārgi."

"By what is the World of Virāj pervaded?"

"By the World of Hiranyagarbha, O Gārgi."

"By what, pray, is the World of Hiranyagarbha pervaded?"

"Do not, O Gārgi," said he, "question too much, lest your head should fall off. You are questioning too much about a deity about whom we should not ask too much. Do not ask too much, O Gārgi."

Thereupon Gārgi, the daughter of Vachaknu, held her peace.

ALL THIS: All that is composed of earth.

PERVADED: The words *otāscha protascha* in the text mean, literally, "woven like the warp and woof of a cloth." Gārgi's question presupposes

an inference: the effect is pervaded by the cause, the limited by the (relatively speaking) unlimited, and the gross by the subtle. A pot (effect) is pervaded by clay (cause); earth (gross) is pervaded by water (subtle); and the world (limited) is pervaded by the sky (unlimited). Thus earth, which, being the effect, is gross and limited, is pervaded by water, which, being the cause, is subtle and unlimited. The form of the inference is that the cause, the subtle, and the unlimited are woven, like the warp and woof of a cloth, in the effect, the gross, and the limited. Each preceding element, in the questions asked by Gārgi, is pervaded by the succeeding one, till we come to the Self which is within all. All the objects below the Self consist of the five elements. The Upanishad speaks of the Self as "the Truth of truth" (II. i. 20). The truth is the five elements, and the Truth of truth is the Supreme Self.

BY WATER: "Otherwise earth would be scattered like a handful of fried barley flour." (*Śaṅkarāchārya.*)

BY WHAT . . . WATER ETC: Since water, too, being an effect, is gross and limited, it must be pervaded by something; and that is air.

DO NOT, O GĀRGI, ETC: The cause of Hiranyagarbha, or the Sutra (mentioned in the next verse), cannot be ascertained by inference. This cause is Brahman, which is known only through the evidence of the scriptures. Inference is a form of proof based upon reasoning and sense-data. Brahman is beyond the senses and the mind. Therefore Yājñavalkya warns Gārgi against pushing her inquiry too far.

ABOUT WHOM . . . MUCH: That is to say, who is not to be reasoned about.

DO NOT ASK ETC: The implication is that Gārgi should not ask more unless she wished to die.

This chapter and the two following chapters aim at describing the nature of that which has been stated to be the Self, or Brahman, that is within all. The idea is to show how an aspirant can realize his true Self, which is immediate and direct and within all, and is beyond all relative attributes, by taking up in order each element external to it and negating it.

*Here ends Chapter Six  
of Part Three of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER VII

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND UDDĀLAKA

THEN UDDĀLAKA, the son of Aruna, questioned him.

“Yājñavalkya,” said he, “in [the country of] Madra we lived in the house of Patanchala, of the line of Kapi, studying the scriptures on the sacrifices. His wife was possessed by a gandharva. We asked him (the gandharva): ‘Who are you?’ He said: ‘I am Kabandha, the son of Atharvan.’ He said to Patanchala Kāpya and those studying the scriptures on the sacrifices: ‘O descendant of Kapi, do you know that Sutra by which this world, the other world, and all beings are held together?’ Patanchala Kāpya said: ‘I do not know it, venerable Sir.’ [Then] he (the gandharva) said to Patanchala Kāpya and those studying the scriptures on the sacrifices: ‘O descendant of Kapi, do you know that Inner Controller who controls this world, the next world, and all beings?’ Patanchala Kāpya said: ‘I do not know him, venerable Sir.’ [Then] he (the gandharva) said to Patanchala Kāpya and those studying the scriptures on the sacrifices: ‘O descendant of Kapi, he who knows that Sutra and that Inner Controller indeed knows Brahman; he knows the worlds, he knows the gods, he knows the Vedas, he knows the beings, he knows the self, he knows everything.’ He (the gandharva) explained it all to them, and I know it. If you, Yājñavalkya, do not know that Sutra and that Inner Controller, and still take away the cows that belong only to the knowers of Brahman, your head will fall off.”

“I know, O Gautama, that Sutra and that Inner Controller.”

“Anyone might say: ‘I know, I know.’ Tell us what you know.”

**SUTRA:** Lit., thread. The word is metaphorically used for prāna, the cosmic energy.

**ALL BEINGS:** From Hiranyagarbha down to the clump of grass.

**ARE HELD TOGETHER:** That is to say, strung on a thread, like the pearls of a necklace.

**WHO CONTROLS ETC:** Who causes them to move like wooden puppets, that is to say, makes them perform their respective functions.

**HE WHO KNOWS ETC:** This is in praise of the meditation on the Sutra and the Inner Controller within it.

**ALL BEINGS:** Hiranyagarbha and the rest, who are held together by the Sutra and ruled by the Inner Controller, who dwells within the Sutra.

**IF YOU ETC:** If you do not know Brahman.

**YOUR HEAD ETC:** That is to say: "I will burn you with my curses."

**GAUTAMA:** Refers to Uddālaka.

**ANYONE MIGHT SAY ETC:** "Any fool can say what you have said. What is the good of such bluster? Show it in action"—such is the implication of Uddālaka's words.

This section aims to describe the inmost entity of the World of Hiranyagarbha. The nature of the Sutra can be taught only through oral instruction; this is done through an anecdote.

## 2

Yājñavalkya said: "Vāyu, O Gautama, is that Sutra. By Vāyu, as by a thread, O Gautama, are this world, the other world, and all beings held together. Therefore, O Gautama, they say of a person who dies that his limbs have been loosened; for they are held together by Vāyu as by a thread."

"Quite so, Yājñavalkya. Now describe the Inner Controller."

**VĀYU:** The word means, literally, air, which, like ākāśa, supports earth. But in the present context it denotes Hiranyagarbha, the personified manifestation of Brahman whose body is the aggregate of all subtle bodies and whose mind is the aggregate of all minds. Hiranyagarbha has both a collective and an individual aspect. In the collective aspect He pervades all entities, and in the individual aspect He sustains the individual. He is the support of the elements and the essence of the universe.

**THEREFORE, O GAUTAMA:** A pearl necklace is held together by a string. When the string is broken the pearls are scattered. Vāyu is the string that holds together the limbs of a man. When it leaves him the limbs are loosened.

## 3

[Yājñavalkya said:] "He who inhabits the earth, yet is within the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, and who controls the earth from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

**YET IS ETC:** The purpose of this qualifying clause is to distinguish the Inner Controller from the general inhabitants of the earth, who, though dwelling on the earth, are not within it.

**WHOM THE EARTH ETC:** That is to say, whom the deity identified with the earth does not know.

**BODY:** The Inner Controller has no body or organs of His own. Those belonging to the deity identified with the earth serve as His body and organs. In other words, the body and organs of the deity function in the presence of the Inner Controller.

**YOUR SELF:** The word *your* implies that He is the Self of others as well.

## 4-14

“He who inhabits water, yet is within water, whom water does not know, whose body water is, and who controls water from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits fire, yet is within fire, whom fire does not know, whose body fire is, and who controls fire from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits the sky, yet is within the sky, whom the sky does not know, whose body the sky is, and who controls the sky from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits the air, yet is within the air, whom the air does not know, whose body the air is, and who controls the air from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits heaven, yet is within heaven, whom heaven does not know, whose body heaven is, and who controls heaven from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits the sun, yet is within the sun, whom the sun does not know, whose body the sun is, and who controls the sun from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits the quarters [of space], yet is within them, whom the quarters do not know, whose body the quarters are, and who controls the quarters from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits the moon and stars, yet is within the moon and stars, whom the moon and stars do not know, whose body the moon and stars are, and who controls the moon and stars from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits the ākāśa, yet is within the ākāśa, whom the

ākāśa does not know, whose body the ākāśa is, and who controls the ākāśa from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits darkness, yet is within darkness, whom darkness does not know, whose body darkness is, and who controls darkness from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits light, yet is within light, whom light does not know, whose body light is, and who controls light from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.”

This much with reference to the gods (*adhidaivatam*). Now with reference to beings (*adhibhutam*).

THIS MUCH ETC: That is to say, this much is the meditation on the Inner Controller as pertaining to the gods.

BEINGS: The different grades of beings, from *Hiranyagarbha* to the clump of grass.

## 15

[Yājñavalkya said:] “He who inhabits all beings, yet is within all beings, whom no beings know, whose body all beings are, and who controls all beings from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.”

This much with reference to the beings. Now with reference to the body.

## 16-23

[Yājñavalkya said:] “He who inhabits the nose (*prāna*), yet is within the nose, whom the nose does not know, whose body the nose is, and who controls the nose from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits [the organ of] speech, yet is within speech, whom speech does not know, whose body speech is, and who controls speech from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits the eye, yet is within the eye, whom the eye does not know, whose body the eye is, and who controls the eye from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

“He who inhabits the ear, yet is within the ear, whom the ear does not know, whose body the ear is, and who controls the ear from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

"He who inhabits the mind, yet is within the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body the mind is, and who controls the mind from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

"He who inhabits the skin, yet is within the skin, whom the skin does not know, whose body the skin is, and who controls the skin from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

"He who inhabits the intellect (vijñāna), yet is within the intellect, whom the intellect does not know, whose body the intellect is, and who controls the intellect from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

"He who inhabits the organ of generation, yet is within the organ, whom the organ does not know, whose body the organ is, and who controls the organ from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

"He is never seen, but is the Seer; He is never heard, but is the Hearer; He is never thought of, but is the Thinker; He is never known, but is the Knower. There is no other seer than He, there is no other hearer than He, there is no other thinker than He, there is no other knower than He. He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. Everything else but Him is perishable."

Thereupon Uddālaka, the son of Aruna, held his peace.

**ORGAN OF GENERATION:** The word *retas* means semen. It is used here to denote the organ of generation.

**HE IS NEVER SEEN:** He is never the object of anyone's ocular perception.

**BUT IS THE SEER:** As Pure Intelligence, which is close to the eye and to all the other organs.

**HE IS NEVER THOUGHT OF:** He is not an object of deliberation by the mind; for people think only of those things that they have seen or heard, but the Inner Controller is neither seen nor heard.

**HE IS NEVER KNOWN:** He is not definitely grasped, like colour or pleasure.

*Here ends Chapter Seven  
of Part Three of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND GĀRGI (II)

THEN THE DAUGHTER of Vachaknu said: "Venerable brāhmins, I shall ask him two questions. If he answers me these, then none of you can defeat him in discussing Brahman."

[The brāhmins said:] "Ask, O Gārgi."

Gārgi had been warned previously by Yājñavalkya not to push her inquiry too far and thereby lose her head. In order to ward off this danger, she now asks permission of the brāhmin scholars to question Yājñavalkya. After discussing the nature of the conditioned Brahman (Saguna Brahman), the Upanishad proceeds to describe the Supreme Brahman devoid of attributes.

#### 2

Gārgi said: "O Yājñavalkya, I [shall ask] you [two questions]: As a man of Kāśī or the King of Videha, scion of a heroic line, might string his unstrung bow, take in his hand two bamboo-tipped arrows highly painful to enemies, and approach [his enemies] closely, even so, O Yājñavalkya, do I confront you with two questions. Answer me these."

"Ask, O Gārgi."

KĀŚĪ: The modern city of Benares, whose inhabitants were famous for their heroism.

#### 3

She said: "O Yājñavalkya, what pervades that [Sutra] which is above heaven and below the earth, which is heaven and earth as well as [what is] between them, and which—they say—was, is, and will be?"

HEAVEN: The upper half of the cosmic shell.

EARTH: The lower half of the cosmic shell.

THEY SAY: On the authority of the scriptures.

WAS, IS, ETC: In the past, present, and future.

The diverse objects of the relative universe become unified in the Sutra. Gārgi asks what it is that pervades the Sutra, as the warp and woof pervade a piece of cloth.

## 4

He said: "That, O Gārgi, which is above heaven and below the earth, which is heaven and earth as well as [what is] between them, and which—they say—was, is, and will be, is pervaded by the [unmanifested] ākāśa."

The unmanifested universe, consisting of the Sutra, or Hiranyagarbha, exists in the unmanifested ākāśa at all times—during the states of projection, preservation, and dissolution.

## 5

She said: "I bow to you, O Yājñavalkya. You have fully answered this question of mine. Now brace yourself for the other."

"Ask, O Gārgi."

The Sutra itself is inscrutable to ordinary minds and difficult to explain. How much more so, then, is that which pervades it.

*The question and answer are repeated only to emphasize what has already been stated.*

## 6-7

She said: "Yājñavalkya, what pervades that [Sutra] which is above heaven and below the earth, which is heaven and earth as well as [what is] between them, and which—they say—was, is, and will be?"

He said: "That, O Gārgi, which is above heaven and below the earth, which is heaven and earth as well as [what is] between them, and which—they say—was, is, and will be, is pervaded by the [unmanifested] ākāśa."

"What pervades the ākāśa?"

Evidently Gārgi wanted to put Yājñavalkya into a dilemma: The question appears to be unanswerable. The ākāśa is pervaded by the immutable Brahman, which cannot be explained. If Yājñavalkya did not explain It, he would be guilty of what is called, in logic, "non-comprehension." If, on the other hand, he tried to explain the inscrutable, he would be guilty of what is called "contradiction."

## 8

He said: "That, O Gārgi, the knowers of Brahman call the Imperishable. It is neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long, neither red nor moist; It is neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor ākāśa; It is unattached; It is without taste or smell, without eyes or ears, without tongue or mind; It is non-effulgent, without vital breath or mouth, without measure, and without exterior or interior. It does not eat anything, nor is It eaten by anyone.

**THE KNOWERS ETC:** In order to avoid being charged with either "non-comprehension" or "contradiction," Yājñavalkya quotes the knowers of Brahman as his authority.

**IMPERISHABLE:** The Sanskrit word *aksharam* in the text means "that which does not change or decay."

**NEITHER GROSS . . . LONG:** By this fourfold negation Yājñavalkya indicates that Brahman is not a substance.

**NEITHER RED ETC:** Redness is a quality of fire. Moisture is a characteristic of water. By the denial of redness and moisture it is indicated that Brahman is not a quality.

**SHADOW:** The nature of a shadow is indescribable.

**WITHOUT MEASURE:** Nothing can measure It, nor does It measure anything.

Through this negative description Yājñavalkya implied that Brahman is devoid of all attributes and is one only, without a second.

*The Upanishad tries to indicate Brahman by the denial of qualifying attributes or characteristic marks. But, anticipating the popular misconception that Brahman might, in that case, be void or non-existent, the Upanishad gives inferential evidence—from the orderliness of creation—to demonstrate Its existence.*

## 9

"Verily, under the mighty rule of this Imperishable, O Gārgi, the sun and moon are held in their respective positions. Under the mighty rule of this Imperishable, O Gārgi, heaven and earth are held in their respective positions. Under the mighty rule of this Imperishable, O Gārgi, moments, muhurtas, days and nights, fortnights, months, seasons, and years are held in their respective positions. Under the

mighty rule of this Imperishable, O Gārgi, some rivers flow eastward from the white mountains, others flowing westward continue in that direction, and still others keep to their respective courses. Under the mighty rule of this Imperishable, O Gārgi, men praise those who give, the gods depend upon the sacrificer, and the Manes upon the Darvi offering.

**MUHURTAS:** A muhurta is equivalent to about forty-eight minutes.

**SOME . . . EASTWARD:** Such as the Ganges.

**DARVI OFFERING:** A class of independent offerings which neither have subsidiary parts nor are subsidiary to any other sacrifice.

Inferential evidence regarding the existence of Brahman given in the text is as follows: (a) As from a lamp we infer the existence of its maker, so from the sun and moon we infer the existence of the omniscient God, the Imperishable. Like a master controlling his servants, the Creator of the sun and moon compels them, although they are powerful, to rise and set, increase and decrease, at a fixed time and place and according to fixed causes. (b) Heaven and earth are endowed with parts, and hence liable to disintegrate; they are heavy, and hence liable to fall; they are governed by the respective conscious deities identified with each of them, and hence they could follow independent courses. But nothing of all this happens, because the Imperishable, like a boundary wall, preserves the distinctions among things, keeping all things within their limits. The unfailing index of the existence of the Imperishable is the fact that heaven and earth obey a fixed order; this would be impossible were there not a conscious, transcendental Ruler. Compare: "Who has made heaven powerful and earth firm." (*Ri. X. cxxi. 5.*) (c) As in daily life all items of income and expenditure are carefully calculated by an accountant appointed by his master, so are the various divisions of time controlled by their Master, the Imperishable. (d) There are conscious deities who identify themselves with rivers. Thus the rivers could whimsically change their courses. But they are not able to do so, and keep to their original courses. This also indicates the existence of the Imperishable. (e) Gifts would not be praised as a laudable work unless there were an Imperishable Agent who bestowed the fruits of action. The giver, the receiver, and the gift all perish in the course of time. Though we do not directly see the connecting of the giver and the fruit of his gift, yet it is a well-known fact that those who give are praised. Therefore there must be such an Imperishable Agent who connects givers with the results of their charity. (f) The gods are powerful; yet they depend for their sustenance upon the offerings of sacrificers, who are ordinary mortals. Such a humiliating position is possible for the gods only because they are under

the mighty rule of the Lord. Likewise the Manes are dependent for their sustenance on the Darvi offering.

*Here is another proof of the existence of the Imperishable: One is bound to suffer from rebirth until one knows the Imperishable. Therefore that Imperishable must exist, the knowledge of which puts a stop to repeated births and deaths.*

## 10

“Whosoever in this world, O Gārgi, without knowing this Imperishable, offers oblations, performs sacrifices, and practises austerities, even for many thousands of years, finds all such acts but perishable. Whosoever, O Gārgi, departs from this world without knowing this Imperishable is miserable. But he, O Gārgi, who departs from this world after knowing the Imperishable is a knower of Brahman.

MISERABLE: Like a slave bought for a price.

The apparently endless series of births and deaths in samsāra cannot be brought to an end by dualistic worship, sacrifices, or the practice of austerities. These merely produce temporary results in the phenomenal universe. It is only through the Knowledge of the Imperishable that rebirth and the suffering in the world come to an end and one obtains Freedom and Bliss. This fact supplies another proof of the existence of Brahman.

*It may be contended that insentient matter, the pradhāna of the Sāṃkhya philosophy, is endowed with the power of rulership or authority. Prakriti, or nature, is the self-creating, self-preserving, and self-destroying entity. It is not necessary to assume that Brahman, or Consciousness, exists as the guiding principle of the universe. In reply to this contention it is said:*

## 11

“Verily, that Imperishable, O Gārgi, is never seen but is the Seer; It is never heard, but is the Hearer; It is never thought of, but is the Thinker; It is never known, but is the Knower. There is no other seer but This, there is no other hearer but This, there is no other thinker but This, there is no other knower but This. By this imperishable, O Gārgi, is the [unmanifested] ākāśa pervaded.”

IS NEVER SEEN . . . SEER: The Imperishable is not an object of vision, but is vision itself.

THERE IS NO OTHER SEER ETC: The Immutable Brahman is in every instance the Witness, the Seer of seeing, etc.

THERE IS NO OTHER KNOWER ETC: Knowledge is a conscious act and cannot be attributed to unconscious matter.

The Brahman which is immediate and direct, which is the Self within all and is beyond the relative attributes of hunger, thirst, etc., and by which the unmanifested ākāśa is pervaded, is the extreme limit, the ultimate goal, the Truth of truth.

## 12

Then said Gārgi: "Venerable brāhmins, you may consider yourselves fortunate if you can get off from him through bowing to him. None of you, I believe, will defeat him in arguments about Brahman."

Thereupon the daughter of Vachaknu held her peace.

IF YOU CAN ETC: The import of Gārgi's remark is that the brāhmins must never dream of defeating him in argument, much less attempt it.

The Inner Controller has been described in III. vii. 3-23. Now, what is the difference between the individual self, the Inner Controller, and the Imperishable Brahman? According to some philosophers, the Imperishable Brahman may be compared to an infinite ocean, whose nature never changes. The Inner Controller is the slightly agitated state of this ocean, and the individual self, which is ignorant of the Inner Controller, is the extremely agitated state. According to other philosophers, these are all different states, powers, or modifications of the Imperishable. But according to Śankarāchārya, there is no intrinsic difference between these three entities. They are all, by nature, Pure Intelligence and, like a lump of salt, homogeneous. Brahman is one and without a second, and never in reality undergoes any change. It is not endowed with any attributes. The apparent difference between the Inner Controller, the individual self, and Brahman is the result of association with upādhis, or limiting adjuncts, projected by māyā. When associated with the upādhi of the body and organs, which are the product of ignorance, desire, and work, It is called the transmigrating individual self. When associated with the upādhi of unlimited knowledge and power, It is called the Inner Controller. Likewise, when associated with the upādhis of the bodies of Hiranyagarbha, Virāj, the gods, men, animals, trees, and stones, the Imperishable Brahman is known by those specific names and forms. Therefore the difference between the indi-

vidual self, the Inner Controller, and the Imperishable Brahman is the result of association with limiting adjuncts and is not intrinsic. The conclusion of all the Upanishads is: "One only, without a second." (*Chh. Up.* VI. ii. 1.)

*Here ends Chapter Eight  
of Part Three of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER IX

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND VIDAGHDHA

THEN VIDAGHDHA, the son of Śakala, asked him: "How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya?" Yājñavalkya ascertained the number through [the group of mantras known as] the Nivid, and said: "As many as are mentioned in the Nivid of the Viśve-devas—three hundred and three, and three thousand and three."

"Very good," said Śākalya (the son of Śakala), and asked again: "How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya?"

"Thirty-three."

"Very good," said Śākalya, and asked again: "How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya?"

"Six."

"Very good," said the other, and asked again: "How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya?"

"Three."

"Very good," said the other, and asked again: "How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya?"

"Two."

"Very good," said he, and asked again, "How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya?"

"One and a half."

"Very good," said he, and asked again: "How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya?"

"One."

"Very good," said Śākalya, and asked: "Which are those three hundred and three, and those three thousand and three?"

**NIVID:** A group of verses in the Rig-Veda giving the number of the gods, recited in the eulogistic hymn to the Viśve-devas.

The present chapter is introduced in order to convey the immediacy and directness of Brahman by a reference to the contraction and expansion of the different gods who are ruled by It.

## 2

Yājñavalkya said: "There are only thirty-three gods. These others are but manifestations of them."

"Which are these thirty-three?"

"The eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, and the twelve Ādityas—these are thirty-one. And Indra and Prajāpati make up the thirty-three."

## 3

"Which are the Vasus?" asked Śākalya.

"Fire, the earth, the air, the sky, the sun, heaven, the moon, and the stars—these are the Vasus; for in them all this [universe] is placed (vasavah). Therefore they are called Vasus."

**FIRE ETC:** The Vasus transform themselves into the bodies and organs of all beings, which serve as the support for their work and its fruition, and also into their dwelling-places. These Vasus enable beings to live (vāsayanti), and they themselves live as well.

## 4

"Which are the Rudras?" asked Śākalya.

"The ten organs in the human body, with the mind as the eleventh. When they depart from this mortal body, they make [one's relatives] weep. Because they make them weep (rud), therefore they are called Rudras.

**TEN ORGANS ETC:** The five sensory and the five motor organs.

**WHEN THEY DEPART ETC:** After a person has completely experienced the results of his past action which has given birth to his present body.

## 5

"Which are the Ādityas?" asked Śākalya.

"There are twelve months in the year. These are the Ādityas, because they move along carrying (ādadānāh) all this with them; therefore they are called Ādityas."

**ALL THIS:** That is to say, a person's longevity and the results of his works.

## 6

“Which is Indra and which is Prajāpati?” asked Śākalya.

“The thunderclap is Indra and the sacrifice is Prajāpati.”

“Which is the thunderclap?”

“The thunderbolt.”

“Which is the sacrifice?”

“The animals.”

**THUNDERBOLT:** That is to say, the vigour or strength which kills others. As killing is a function of Indra, he is called the thunderbolt.

**ANIMALS:** The sacrifice is called the animals because it depends on them.

## 7

“Which are the six [gods]?” asked Śākalya.

“Fire, the earth, the air, the sky, the sun, and heaven; for these six comprise all those.”

**FIRE, ETC:** These are the same gods that are classified as Vasus, leaving out the moon and the stars.

**ALL THOSE:** The thirty-three and the other gods already mentioned. In other words, the Vasus and the others that have been enumerated in detail are included in these six.

## 8

“Which are the three gods?” asked Śākalya.

“These three worlds, because all those gods are comprised in these three.”

“Which are the two gods?”

“Matter and the vital breath (prāna).”

“Which are the one and a half?”

“This [air] that blows.”

**THREE WORLDS:** The earth and fire, taken together, make one world; the sky and the air make another; and heaven and the sun make the third. These are the three gods.

**TWO GODS:** These include all the gods that have been enumerated.

## 9

[Yājñavalkya said:] “Concerning this some say: ‘Since the air blows as one substance, how can it be one and a half (adhyardha)?’ [The

answer is:] It is one and a half because by its presence everything attains surpassing glory (adhyārdhnot)."

"Which is the one God?"

"The vital breath (Hiranyagarbha); it is Brahman which is called That (Tyat)."

THAT: The word *Tyat* in the text signifies something which is remote.

The gods may be regarded as being one as well as many. The infinite number of gods is included in the limited number mentioned in the *Nivid*; these again are included in the successive smaller numbers—thirty-three and so on—down to the one vital breath. Again, it is this vital breath which expands into all these numbers up to infinity. Thus the vital breath alone is one and infinity; it also includes the intermediate numbers. The one God has different names, forms, activities, attributes, and powers, owing to differences of function. People perform different kinds of meditation and rites and acquire different grades of mental culture; thus they attain identity with fire, etc., which are all parts of the cosmic energy. Hence the above-mentioned differences among the gods.

*Now eight other forms of the same vital breath, which is an aspect of Brahman, are set forth for the purpose of meditation:*

### 10

[Śākalya said:] "Verily, whosoever knows that Being whose body is the earth, whose organ of vision is fire, whose light is the mind, and who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety, he indeed knows, O Yājñavalkya."

"I know that Being of whom you speak—who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety. It is the Being who is in this body. Go on, Śākalya."

"Who is His deity (cause)?"

"Nectar (chyle)," said Yājñavalkya.

WHOSE LIGHT ETC: Who considers the pros and cons of a thing through the mind. In other words, this Being has the earth for His body and fire for His eye, and He weighs things with the mind. He is identified with the earth and is possessed of body and organs. Hiranyagarbha, from the standpoint of the gods (*adhidaiva*), identifies Himself with the earth, and from the standpoint of the individual body (*adhyātmā*), identifies Himself with the individual person and becomes the support of the body and organs.

**WHO IS THE ULTIMATE ETC:** The earth is referred to as mother. As the skin, flesh, and blood derived from the mother, the Being identified with the earth becomes the ultimate support of the bone, marrow, and semen derived from the father.

**HE INDEED ETC:** Śākalya implies that Yājñavalkya does not know this Being and yet poses as a scholar.

**IT IS THE BEING ETC:** The Being is identified with the body, derived from the mother (earth). The body preponderates in earthy elements.

**GO ON, ETC:** But as something more is to be said about the Being, by way of description, Yājñavalkya wants Śākalya to proceed with further questions.

**NECTAR:** It is the watery essence of food that is eaten which produces the blood stored up in the mother. This blood produces the skin, flesh, and blood of the foetus, which are the support of the bone, marrow, and semen derived from the father.

## 11

[Śākalya said:] “Verily, whosoever knows that Being whose body is lust (kāma), whose organ of vision is the intellect, whose light is the mind, and who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety, he indeed knows, O Yājñavalkya.”

“I know that Being of whom you speak—who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety. It is the Being who is identified with lust. Go on, Śākalya.”

“Who is His deity?”

“Women,” said Yājñavalkya.

**LUST:** The desire for sex pleasure.

**WOMEN:** For men’s lust is inflamed by them.

## 12

[Śākalya said:] “Verily, whosoever knows that Being whose body is colours, whose organ of vision is the eye, whose light is the mind, and who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety, he indeed knows, O Yājñavalkya.”

“I know that Being of whom you speak—who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety. It is the Being who is in the sun. Go on, Śākalya.”

“Who is His deity?”

“Truth (the eye),” said Yājñavalkya.

COLOURS: Such as white and black.

TRUTH: The word *satyam* here means *eye*. According to the scriptures, the sun has been produced from the eye of Virāj (Ri. X. xc. 13). He who, from the standpoint of the gods, is identified with the sun, is, again, from the standpoint of the individual body, identified with colours. The sun is the manifester of colours; in it all the colours are accumulated.

## 13

[Śākalya said:] "Verily, whosoever knows that Being whose body is the ākāśa, whose organ of vision is the ear, whose light is the mind, and who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety, he indeed knows, O Yājñavalkya."

"I know that Being of whom you speak—who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety. It is the Being who is identified with the ear and with the time of hearing. Go on, Śākalya."

"Who is His deity?"

"The quarters," said Yājñavalkya.

According to the scriptures, the quarters are produced from the ear of Virāj. He who, from the standpoint of the gods, is identified with the quarters is, again, from the standpoint of the individual body, identified with the ear.

## 14

[Śākalya said:] "Verily, whosoever knows that Being whose body is darkness, whose organ of vision is the intellect, whose light is the mind, and who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety, he indeed knows, O Yājñavalkya."

"I know that Being of whom you speak—who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety. It is the Being who is identified with shadow (ignorance). Go on, Śākalya."

"Who is His deity?"

"Death," said Yājñavalkya.

DARKNESS: Such as one experiences at night.

DEATH: It is said in the scriptures that death is the deity of the Being identified with shadow.

He who, from the standpoint of the gods, is identified with darkness is, again, from the standpoint of the individual body, identified with the person who says: "I am ignorant."

## 15

[Śākalya said:] “Verily, whosoever knows that Being whose body is [particular] colours, whose organ of vision is the eye, whose light is the mind, and who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety, he indeed knows, O Yājñavalkya.”

“I know that Being of whom you speak—who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety. It is the being who is in the mirror. Go on, Śākalya.”

“Who is His deity?”

“The vital breath,” said Yājñavalkya.

**COLOURS:** In verse 12 of the present chapter, reference was made to colours in general; but here specific colours that reflect are meant.

**VITAL BREATH:** Through rubbing, a sword becomes bright and acquires the power of reflecting. This rubbing is done through the action of the vital breath (prāna).

## 16

[Śākalya said:] “Verily, whosoever knows that Being whose body is water, whose organ of vision is the intellect, whose light is the mind, and who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety, he indeed knows, O Yājñavalkya.”

“I know that Being of whom you speak—who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety. It is the Being who is in water. Go on, Śākalya.”

“Who is His deity?”

“Varuna (rain),” said Yājñavalkya.

**WATER:** Water in general.

**VARUNA:** The word here signifies rain. Rain-water fills reservoirs, lakes, etc.

## 17

[Śākalya said:] “Verily, whosoever knows that Being whose body is semen, whose organ of vision is the intellect, whose light is the mind, and who is the ultimate support of the body and organs in their entirety, he indeed knows, O Yājñavalkya.”

“I know that Being of whom you speak—who is the ultimate support

of the body and organs in their entirety. It is the Being who is identified with the son. Go on, Śākalya."

"Who is His deity?"

"Prajāpati (the father)," said Yājñavalkya.

IT IS THE BEING ETC: The word *son* here signifies the bones, marrow, and semen derived from the father.

FATHER: It is from the father that the son is born.

*For the purpose of meditation the vital breath, or prāna, has been described through eight different forms or gods; each god has three divisions, namely, a general form, a special form, and a cause, or deity. The text will now proceed to show how the same vital breath, divided into five forms according to the different quarters, is unified in the mind.*

## 18

[When Śākalya kept silent] Yājñavalkya addressed him thus: "Śākalya, have these brāhmins made you their instrument [such as tongs] for burning charcoal?"

THEIR INSTRUMENT ETC: The brāhmins, or Vedic scholars, in Janaka's court have been using Śākalya as a pair of tongs, or in other words have made him their cat's-paw. He did not perceive that he was being consumed by Yājñavalkya's fire. The gist of the text is that it is dangerous to enter into a controversy with a knower of Brahman.

*Now will be described the quarters, the deities identified with them, and their support; ultimately the diversity of the creation will be unified in the mind:*

## 19-20

"Yājñavalkya," said Śākalya, "what Brahman do you know, that you have thus flouted these Vedic scholars of Kuru and Panchāla?"

[Yājñavalkya replied:] "I know the quarters, with their deities and supports."

[Śākalya said:] "If you know the quarters, with their deities and supports, what deity are you identified with in the east?"

"With the deity sun."

"In what does the sun find its support?"

"The eye."

"In what does the eye find its support?"

"Colours, for one sees colours with the eye."

"In what do colours find their support?"

"The heart (mind)," [said Yājñavalkya,] "for one knows colours through the heart. Therefore it is in the heart that colours find their support."

"Just so, Yājñavalkya."

WHAT DEITY . . . EAST: The Vedas teach that in this very life one becomes identified with and attains the deity one meditates upon. "Being a god, he attains the gods." (*Br. Up.* IV. i. 2.) If Yājñavalkya was identified with the quarters—Śākalya wanted to know—who was his presiding deity in the east with whom he was united?

SUN: The sun was Yājñavalkya's deity in the east.

EYE: Compare: "From the eye the sun was produced" (*Ri. X. xc. 13 ff*); "From sight, the sun [was separated out]" (*Ai. Up. I. 4*).

COLOURS: The eye, itself a modification of colours, is directed by them so that it may perceive them. The eye, together with the sun and the east, and all that lies in the east, rests on the colours. The entire east, together with the eye, is but the colours.

HEART: The word here signifies the mind. The mind is transformed into colours. The idea is that since one remembers colours—which lie in the form of impressions—through the mind, colours have the mind for their support.

Yājñavalkya had had the experience that his own mind was divided into five forms according to the quarters and was identified with the quarters, and thus with the whole universe as his own self.

## 21

["Yājñavalkya," said Śākalya,] "what deity are you identified with in the south?"

"With the deity Yama (the god of justice)."

"In what does Yama find his support?"

"The sacrifice."

"In what does the sacrifice find its support?"

"The remuneration of the priests."

"In what does the remuneration find its support?"

"Faith, for when a man has faith he remunerates the priest. Therefore it is in faith that the remuneration finds its support."

"In what does faith find its support?"

"The heart (mind)," [said Yājñavalkya,] "for one knows faith through the heart. Therefore it is in the heart that faith finds its support."

"Just so, Yājñavalkya."

**SACRIFICE:** Yama, together with the south, finds his support in the sacrifice, which is his cause. How is it that Yama is the effect of the sacrifice? The priests officiate in the sacrifice, and the sacrificer redeems it from them by means of a remuneration and wins the south, together with Yama, through that sacrifice. Hence Yama, being its effect, finds his support in the sacrifice together with the south.

**FAITH:** Liberality; also faith in the Vedas, coupled with devotion.

## 22

["Yājñavalkya," said Śākalya,] "what deity are you identified with in the west?"

"With the deity Varuna (the god of rain)."

"In what does Varuna find his support?"

"Water."

"In what does water find its support?"

"Semen."

"In what does semen find its support?"

"The heart," [said Yājñavalkya,] "Therefore they say of a newborn child who resembles [his father] that it seems as if he has sprung from [his father's] heart—that he has been created of [his father's] heart, as it were. Therefore it is in the heart that semen finds its support."

"Just so, Yājñavalkya."

**WATER:** Varuna is the effect of water. Compare: "Faith is water" (*Tai. Sam.* I. vi. 8. 1.) and "From faith He created Varuna."

**SEMEN:** Compare: "From the semen, the waters [were separated out]" (*Ai. Up.* I. i. 4).

**HEART:** The semen is the effect of the heart. Lust is a modification of the heart; for the semen issues from the heart of a man under its influence.

## 23

["Yājñavalkya," said Śākalya,] "what deity are you identified with in the north?"

"With the deity Soma (the moon and the creeper of that name)."

"In what does Soma find its support?"

"The initiatory rite."

"In what does initiation find its support?"

"Truth. Therefore they say to the one who is initiated: 'Speak the truth'; for it is in the truth that initiation finds its support."

"In what does the truth find its support?"

"The heart," [said Yājñavalkya,] "for through the heart one knows the truth; therefore it is in the heart that the truth finds its support."

"Just so, Yājñavalkya."

**INITIATORY RITE:** The initiated sacrificer purchases the soma creeper and, performing sacrifice with it along with meditation, attains identity with the north, of which the presiding deity is the moon. The moon is named after soma.

## 24

"What deity," [said Śākalya,] "are you identified with in the fixed direction (i.e. overhead)?"

"With the deity fire."

"In what does fire find its support?"

"Speech."

"In what does speech find its support?"

"The heart."

"In what does the heart find its support?"

**FIXED DIRECTION:** The reference is to Meru, the mythical mountain round which the sun and the planets are said to revolve. The directions—such as east, west, north, and south—vary according to the relative position of the dwellers around this mountain, the east being that in which they see the sun rise. But the direction overhead is obviously constant with all of them.

Yājñavalkya, through his heart (mind), extending in all directions, had realized all the quarters as his own self; the quarters, with their deities and supports, are part and parcel of him, and he is now identified with name, form, and action. The universe has no existence apart from name, form, and action. All these are modifications of the mind. So Yājñavalkya's mind now embraced the whole universe. But Śākalya asked in what the heart finds its support.

## 25

“You ghost,” said Yājñavalkya, “that you think that the heart should be elsewhere than in ourselves! If it were elsewhere than in ourselves, dogs would eat this body or birds tear it to pieces.”

GHOST: The Sanskrit word *ahallika* means, literally, that which vanishes in the daytime. It is used here as a term of reproach.

IF IT WERE ETC: When the heart (mind) is not in the body, the body is dead. The body is the support of the heart. The heart, again, is the support of the body, which consists of name, form, and action.

*The body and the heart find in each other their mutual support. Then Śākalya questioned Yājñavalkya again:*

## 26

“In what do the body and the heart find their support?” [asked Śākalya.]

“In the *prāna*.”

“In what does the *prāna* find its support?”

“In the *apāna*.”

“In what does the *apāna* find its support?”

“In the *vyāna*.”

“In what does the *vyāna* find its support?”

“In the *udāna*.”

“In what does the *udāna* find its support?”

“In the *samāna*.”

[Here the Upanishad itself states:]

This self is That which has been described as “Not this, not this.” It is imperceptible, for It is never perceived; undecaying, for It never decays; unattached, for It is never attached; unfettered, for It never feels pain and never suffers injury.

[Yājñavalkya said:] “These are the eight abodes, the eight organs of vision, the eight deities, and the eight beings.

“Now I ask you about that Person who is to be known only from the Upanishads, who definitely projects those beings and [again] withdraws them into Himself, and who is at the same time transcendental.

“If you cannot clearly explain Him to me, your head shall fall off.”

Śākalya did not know Him; his head fell off; and robbers snatched away his bones, mistaking them for something else.

**APĀNA:** The prāna would go out through the mouth and nostrils if it were not held back by the apāna.

**VYĀNA:** The apāna would depart through the lower orifice, and the prāna through the nostrils and mouth, if they were not both held back by the vyāna, which occupies an intermediate position between the prāna and the apāna.

**UDĀNA:** All three forces would go out in all directions if they were not held, as by a post, by the udāna.

**SAMĀNA:** All the other vital breaths find their support in the samāna.

**THIS SELF IS THAT ETC:** The body, the mind, and the vital breaths are interdependent. But they function as an orderly aggregate to serve the purpose of the individual self. This self is, in essence, the Ātman described by the negation of attributes; it is identical with the attributeless Brahman.

**IMPERCEPTIBLE:** Only a differentiated object within the range of the sense-organs can be perceived; but the Self is the opposite of that.

**UNDECAYING:** A gross object such as the body, made of parts, decays; the Self is the opposite of that.

**UNATTACHED:** A gross object, being related to another gross object, is attached to it.

**UNFETTERED:** Only a gross object becomes bound.

**IT DOES NOT . . . INJURY:** Being beyond perception, decay, attachment, and bondage, which are the characteristics of a gross object, the Self never suffers injury; It is not destroyed.

**EIGHT ABODES ETC:** Described in verses 10-17.

**UPANISHADS:** The existence of Brahman can be known from the Upanishads alone.

**THOSE BEINGS:** Those identified with the body etc., divided into eight groups of four items (namely, the abode, the organ of vision, the light, and the deity) each, so as to constitute the phenomenal universe as we see it.

**INTO HIMSELF:** That is to say, into the heart (mind).

**AND ROBBERS ETC:** Śākalya's disciples were carrying home his bones for the funeral rites when robbers fell upon them and snatched away the bones, thinking them to be treasure.

The gist of the story is that one should not be disrespectful to a knower of Brahman. Its purpose is to teach men right conduct towards knowers of Brahman and to extol Self-Knowledge.

*Brahman has been indicated by the negation of attributes. Now the same Brahman will be taught in a positive manner as the root of the universe. The narrative is resumed:*

## 27

Then Yājñavalkya said: "Venerable brāhmins, whosoever among you wishes to question me may now do so, or all of you may. Or whosoever among you desires it, I shall question him, or I shall question all of you."

But the brāhmins did not dare.

Thus Yājñavalkya was entitled to take the cattle away, having defeated the Vedic scholars, who were ignorant of Brahman.

*Seeing the brāhmins silent, Yājñavalkya went on:*

## 28

Yājñavalkya interrogated them with the following verses:

1. As is a mighty tree, so indeed is a man: this is true. His hairs are the leaves and his skin is the outer bark.

2. From his skin blood flows and from the bark, sap. Therefore when a man is wounded blood flows, as sap from a tree that is injured.

3. His flesh is its inner bark and his nerves are its innermost layer of bark, which is tough. His bones lie within, as does the wood of the tree. His marrow resembles the pith.

4. A tree, when it is felled, springs again from its root in a new form; from what root, tell me, does a man spring forth after he is cut off by death?

5. Do not say: From the semen, for that is produced from the living man. A tree springs from the seed as well; after it is dead it certainly springs again.

6. If a tree is pulled up with its root, it will not spring again. From what root, tell me, does a mortal spring forth after he is cut off by death?

7. [If you think] he is indeed born, [I say: No,] he is born again. Now who should again bring him forth?

[The Upanishad states:] It is Brahman, which is [absolute] Knowledge and Bliss, the ultimate goal of him who offers wealth, and also of him who has realized Brahman and stands firm in It.

A TREE, WHEN IT ETC: After the similarities between a man and a tree are shown, the dissimilarities are pointed out. There must be some source from which a man is reborn after he dies.

FROM THE LIVING MAN: Not from the dead man. It is the spirit, or soul, which is in the semen, that fashions the body.

A TREE . . . AS WELL: Not from the trunk alone.

IT CERTAINLY . . . AGAIN: From the seed as well.

IF A TREE . . . ROOT: With its seed also.

[IF YOU THINK] ETC: The naturalist (svabhāva-vādi) observes the fact that a man has been born; he is not interested in finding out where the man has come from. But Yājñavalkya, who believed in rebirth, did not accept the naturalist's position. According to him the soul is immortal; a man has had previous lives and will be born again. If rebirth, governed by the law of karma, is not admitted, then a man must reap the fruit of action he has never done and does not have to reap the fruit of action he has already done. This would nullify the law of cause and effect. Further, the doctrine of rebirth is a necessary corollary of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. That is why Yājñavalkya asked who is the cause of a man's being born again. The Vedic scholars did not know the answer. They did not know Brahman, the ultimate Root of the universe, which is responsible for rebirth and the other phenomena of the relative universe. But Yājñavalkya knew Brahman. Thus he defeated the brāhmins and took away the cows. The story is finished. Now the Upanishad describes the Root of the universe in words which directly apply to Brahman.

KNOWLEDGE: Pure Intelligence, free from the duality of knower and object of knowledge.

BLISS: Unlike the happiness caused by sense perception, this Bliss, which is the same as Knowledge, is not stained by pain.

WHO OFFERS WEALTH: That is to say, the sacrificer who performs rites.

WHO HAS . . . BRAHMAN: Through the renunciation of desires and ritualistic action.

*Here ends Chapter Nine  
of Part Three of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*



## CHAPTER I

### PARTIAL DEFINITIONS OF BRAHMAN

OM. JANAKA, Emperor of Videha, was seated [to give audience] when Yājñavalkya arrived. The Emperor said to him: "Yājñavalkya, for what purpose have you come here? With a desire for cattle, or to hear some subtle questions asked?"

"For both, Your Majesty," said he.

EMPEROR: The word indicates that Janaka must have performed the Vājapeya sacrifice. The epithet also means one who rules over territories through his vassals, who obey his commands; or the word may mean "Ruler of all India."

The Supreme Being has been described in the foregoing chapter as "Not this, not this" (III. ix. 26.), and also as the material cause of the universe, by the words "Knowledge and Bliss" etc. (III. ix. 28 [7]). Further instruction about Him will now be given through a reference to the deities which control the organ of speech, the ear, etc.

#### 2

[Yājñavalkya said:] "Let me hear what anyone among your teachers may have told you."

"Jitvan, the son of Śilina, told me that the organ of speech (fire) is Brahman."

"As anyone who had [the benefit of being taught by a good] mother, father, and teacher should say, so did the son of Śilina say that the organ of speech is Brahman; for what can be attained by a person who cannot speak? But did he tell you about its abode (body) and support?"

"No, he did not."

"This Brahman is only one-footed, Your Majesty."

"Then you tell us, O Yājñavalkya."

"The [physical] organ of speech is its abode and the ākāśa is its support. It should be meditated upon as intelligence."

"What is intelligence, O Yājñavalkya?"

"It is the organ of speech, Your Majesty," said Yājñavalkya. "Through the organ of speech alone, O Emperor, are known the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sāma-Veda, the Atharvāṅgīrasa, history, ancient lore, the arts, the Upanishads, verses, aphorisms, explanations, commentaries, [the results of] sacrifices, [the result of] offering oblations in the fire, [the result of] giving food and drink, this world, the next world, and all beings.

"The organ of speech, Your Majesty, is the Supreme Brahman. The organ of speech never deserts him who, knowing this, meditates upon it; all beings eagerly approach him; and being a god, he attains the gods."

"I give you a thousand cows with a bull as large as an elephant," said Emperor Janaka.

Yājñavalkya replied: "My father was of the opinion that one should not accept gifts from a disciple without fully instructing him."

**WHAT ANYONE ETC:** Evidently Janaka had several teachers.

**ORGAN OF SPEECH:** That is to say, the deity fire. Throughout this and the next six paragraphs the organ refers to its presiding deity, except when it signifies the body, or abode. According to Vedānta, an organ is inert and therefore cannot function unless controlled by Brahman, the all-pervading Consciousness. The consciousness associated with a particular organ is called its presiding or controlling deity. Such consciousness has a name; in the present instance, fire.

**MOTHER, ETC:** The mother instructs the boy during his childhood, the father after that, and the teacher from the time of his investiture with the holy thread to that of the completion of his studies.

**FOR WHAT CAN ETC:** That is to say, a person who cannot speak achieves nothing in this world or the next.

**ONE-FOOTED:** Jitvan's explanation of Brahman is lame or imperfect, because there are four "feet" (pādas) of Brahman. Meditation on one foot does not produce any result.

**ABODE:** Body.

**ĀKĀŚA:** The rudimentary stuff out of which the universe has been produced.

**SUPPORT:** At its origin, during its continuance, and at its dissolution.

**RIG-VEDA, ETC:** For the explanation of these terms, see II. iv. 10.

**APPROACH:** With gifts.

**BEING A GOD:** On earth.

ATTAINS THE GODS: After death.

MY FATHER ETC: Yājñavalkya, too, held this view.

## 3

[Yājñavalkya said:] "Let me hear what anyone among your teachers may have told you."

"Udanka, the son of Śulba, told me that the vital breath (*prāna*) is Brahman."

"As anyone who had [the benefit of being taught by a good] mother, father, and teacher should say, so did the son of Śulba say that the vital breath is Brahman; for what can be attained by a person who does not live? But did he tell you about its abode and support?"

"No, he did not."

"This Brahman is only one-footed, Your Majesty."

"Then you tell us, O Yājñavalkya."

"The vital breath is its abode and the *ākāśa* is its support. It should be meditated upon as dear."

"What is that dearness, O Yājñavalkya?"

"It is the vital breath, Your Majesty," said Yājñavalkya. "For the sake of that vital breath (life), O Emperor, one performs sacrifices for him for whom they should not be performed and accepts gifts from him from whom they should not be accepted; nay, for the sake of the vital breath, O Emperor, one may go to a quarter where one runs the risk of losing one's life."

"The vital breath, O Emperor, is the Supreme Brahman. The vital breath never deserts him who, knowing what has just been said, meditates upon it; all beings eagerly approach him; and being a god, he attains the gods."

"I give you a thousand cows with a bull as large as an elephant," said Emperor Janaka.

Yājñavalkya replied: "My father was of the opinion that one should not accept gifts from a disciple without fully instructing him."

VITAL BREATH: The Sanskrit word *prāna* in the text here signifies the deity Vāyu, as the organ of speech in the foregoing paragraph meant the deity fire.

## 4

[Yājñavalkya said:] "Let me hear what anyone among your teachers may have told you."

"Barku, the son of Vrishna, told me that the eye is Brahman."

"As anyone who had [the benefit of being taught by a good] mother, father, and teacher should say, so did the son of Vrishna say that the eye is Brahman; for what can be attained by a person who cannot see? But did he tell you about its abode and support?"

"No, he did not."

"This Brahman is only one-footed, Your Majesty."

"Then you tell us, O Yājñavalkya."

"The eye is its abode and the ākāśa is its support. It should be meditated upon as truth."

"What is truth, O Yājñavalkya?"

"It is the eye, Your Majesty," said Yājñavalkya. "Verily, Your Majesty, if one asks a person who has seen with his eyes: 'Have you seen?' and he answers: 'Yes, I have,' then it is true."

"The eye, Your Majesty, is the Supreme Brahman. The eye never deserts him who, knowing what has just been said, meditates upon it; all beings eagerly approach him; and being a god, he attains the gods."

"I give you a thousand cows with a bull as large as an elephant," said Emperor Janaka.

Yājñavalkya replied: "My father was of the opinion that one should not accept gifts from a disciple without fully instructing him."

EVṂ: The sun is the deity that governs the eye.

TRUTH: What one hears with the ears may be false, but not what one sees with the eyes. What one sees with the eyes corresponds to fact.

## 5

[Yājñavalkya said:] "Let me hear what anyone among your teachers may have told you."

"Gardabhivipita, a descendant of Bharadvāja, told me that the ear is Brahman."

"As anyone who had [the benefit of being taught by a good] mother, father, and teacher should say, so did the descendant of Bharadvāja say that the ear is Brahman; for what can be attained by a person who cannot hear? But did he tell you about its abode and support?"

"No, he did not."

"This Brahman is only one-footed, Your Majesty."

"Then you tell us, O Yājñavalkya."

"The ear is its abode and the ākāśa is its support. It should be meditated upon as infinite."

"What is infinity, O Yājñavalkya?"

"It is the quarters, Your Majesty," said Yājñavalkya. "Verily, Your Majesty, to whatever quarter (direction) one may go, one never reaches its end. [Hence] the quarters are infinite. The quarters, O Emperor, are the ear, and the ear, O Emperor, is the Supreme Brahman.

"The ear never deserts him who, knowing this, meditates upon it; all beings eagerly approach him; and being a god, he attains the gods."

"I give you a thousand cows with a bull as large as an elephant," said Emperor Janaka.

Yājñavalkya replied: "My father was of the opinion that one should not accept gifts from a disciple without fully instructing him."

EAR: The word *ear* here signifies the quarters, or directions, such as east and west.

## 6

[Yājñavalkya said:] "Let me hear what anyone among your teachers may have told you."

"Satyakāma, the son of Jabālā, told me that the mind is Brahman."

"As anyone who had [the benefit of being taught by a good] mother, father, and teacher should say, so did the son of Jabālā say that the mind is Brahman; for what can be attained by a person who has no mind? But did he tell you about its abode and support?"

"No, he did not."

"This Brahman is only one-footed, Your Majesty."

"Then you tell us, O Yājñavalkya."

"The mind is its abode and the ākāśa is its support. It should be meditated upon as bliss."

"What is bliss, O Yājñavalkya?"

"It is the mind, Your Majesty," said Yājñavalkya. "Verily, Your Majesty, with the mind a man [desires and] woos a woman; [then] a son resembling him is born of her, and he is the cause of bliss. The mind, O Emperor, is the Supreme Brahman.

"The mind never deserts him who, knowing this, meditates upon it; all beings eagerly approach him; and being a god, he attains the gods."

"I give you a thousand cows with a bull as large as an elephant," said Emperor Janaka.

Yājñavalkya replied: "My father was of the opinion that one should not accept gifts from a disciple without fully instructing him."

**MIND:** The moon is the deity that governs the mind.

**HE IS . . . BLISS:** It is the mind that brings the son into being, and therefore the mind is the cause of bliss.

## 7

[Yājñavalkya said:] "Let me hear what anyone among your teachers may have told you."

"Vidagdha, the son of Śakala, told me that the heart is Brahman."

"As anyone who had [the benefit of being taught by a good] mother, father, and teacher should say, so did the son of Śakala say that the heart is Brahman; for what can be attained by a person who is without a heart? But did he tell you about its abode and support?"

"No, he did not."

"This Brahman is only one-footed, Your Majesty."

"Then you tell us, O Yājñavalkya."

"The heart is its abode and the ākāśa is its support. It should be meditated upon as stability."

"What is stability, O Yājñavalkya?"

"It is the heart," said Yājñavalkya. "Verily, Your Majesty, the heart is the abode of all beings, and the heart, Your Majesty, is the support of all beings. The heart, O Emperor, is the Supreme Brahman."

"The heart never deserts him who, knowing this, meditates upon it; all beings eagerly approach him; and being a god, he attains the gods."

"I give you a thousand cows with a bull as large as an elephant," said Emperor Janaka.

Yājñavalkya replied: "My father was of the opinion that one should not accept gifts from a disciple without fully instructing him."

**HEART:** The controlling deity of the heart is Hiranyagarbha. It has already been stated (III. ix. 24.) that all beings consisting of name, form, and action depend on the heart and rest on it.

*Here ends Chapter One  
of Part Four of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER II

### CONCERNING THE SELF

JANAKA, EMPEROR of Videha, rose from his lounge, humbly approached Yājñavalkya, and said: "Salutation to you, O Yājñavalkya. Please instruct me."

Yājñavalkya said: "Your Majesty, as one who wishes to go a long distance would procure a chariot or a ship, even so you have fully equipped your mind with so many secret names of Brahman. You are also honoured and wealthy; you have studied the Vedas and heard the Upanishads. But do you know where you will go when you are released from this body?"

"Venerable Sir, I do not know where I shall go."

"Then I will tell you where you will go."

"Tell me, venerable Sir."

ROSE ETC: Since Yājñavalkya knew all the aspects of Brahman, with their attributes, Janaka gave up his pride of erudition and showed him respect.

SECRET NAMES: Janaka meditated upon Brahman's diverse aspects associated with their respective names.

DO YOU KNOW ETC: That is to say, Do you know what you will attain?

Janaka was a great Vedic scholar and was versed in the theoretical knowledge of the Upanishads. But he was not endowed with Self-Knowledge and therefore could not overcome fear and was far from the realization of the supreme goal of life. Yājñavalkya, in the present section, will instruct Janaka about Brahman through the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep.

*The self that functions in the waking state and is called Vaiśvānara or Viśva, is described. It has already been referred to in IV. i. 4.*

#### 2

"The person who is in the right eye is named Indha. Though he is Indha, people call him by the indirect name Indra; for the gods are fond of indirect names and hate to be addressed directly.

**RIGHT EYE:** The person, or deity, who, from the standpoint of the gods, is identified with the sun is identical with the deity who, from the standpoint of the body, is identified with the right eye. He is called the Vaiśvānara self (*Mā. Up. 9*). The worshipper, by meditating on him, attains identity with him.

**FOR THE GODS ETC:** It is also observed in ordinary life that an honourable person, such as a king, is addressed in an indirect way as *he* instead of *you*.

*The self that functions in the dream state is called Taijasa, and the self that functions in dreamless sleep is called Prājna.*

## 3

“The person who is in the left eye is his wife, Virāj (matter). The ākāśa that lies within the heart is their place of union. Their food is the lump (pinda) of blood in the heart. Their wrap is the net-like structure in the heart. The path on which they move [from sleep to waking] is the nerve that goes upward from the heart; it is like a hair split into a thousand parts. In the body there are nerves called hitā, which are placed in the heart. Through these the essence of our food passes as it moves on. Therefore the subtle body (Taijasa) receives finer food than the gross body (Vaiśvānara).

**THE PERSON ETC:** It is Vaiśvānara which becomes Taijasa in the dream state and Prājna in dreamless sleep. The couple, Virāj (matter) and Indra (Vaiśvānara), become united in dreams. Unlike the experiencer and the object of experience in the waking state, the experiencer and the object of experience in a dream are made of the same mind-stuff; they cannot be separated. For the purpose of meditation, Vaiśvānara itself is now described as Taijasa.

**PLACE OF UNION:** Here Indra and his wife enjoy each other's company.

**LUMP (PINDA) OF BLOOD:** Lit., blood in the form of a lump. The food that is eaten takes two forms: the gross part goes downward and is excreted, and the remainder is metabolized in two ways under the action of the internal heat. That part of the chyle which is of medium fineness passes through the successive stages of blood etc., and nourishes the gross body. The finest part of the chyle is the “lump of blood” which penetrates the fine nerves; it nourishes Indra—identified with the subtle body and called Taijasa—who is united with his wife in the heart.

**THEIR WRAP:** People who sleep after meals use a wrap.

**LIKE A HAIR ETC:** That is to say, the nerve is extremely fine.

**THEREFORE ETC:** The body of Indra (the subtle body) is nourished by this food. The gross body is also nourished by fine food; but it is fine only in comparison with the gross substances that are excreted; the food that sustains the subtle body is finer than it. The idea is that Taijasa is nourished by food finer than that by which Vaiśvānara is nourished.

*The Taijasa Ātman, which functions during the dream state, becomes Prājña during dreamless sleep. The aspirant first realizes his identity with Vaiśvānara, or the waking self, next with Taijasa, or the dream self, and then with Prājña, which functions during deep sleep. Finally he becomes one with Turiya, or Pure Consciousness, which both underlies and transcends the three states.*

## 4

“Of the illumined sage [who is identified with Prājña in deep sleep] the east is the eastern vital breath (prāna), the south is the southern vital breath, the west is the western vital breath, the north is the northern vital breath, the upper direction is the upper vital breath, the direction below is the nether vital breath, and all the directions are all the vital breaths.

“This self is That which has been described as ‘Not this, not this.’ It is imperceptible, for It is never perceived; undecaying, for It never decays; unattached, for It is never attached; unfettered, for It never feels pain and never suffers injury.

“Verily, O Janaka, you have attained That which is free from fear,” said Yājñavalkya.

“Venerable Yājñavalkya,” said Emperor Janaka, “may that fearless Brahman be yours [too], for you have made known to us the fearless Brahman. Salutations to you! Here is the Empire of Videha and also myself at your service.”

**OF THE ILLUMINED ETC:** The phrase refers to the sage who has realized the Prājña Ātman. In deep sleep, Ātman, limited by the prāna, or vital breath, is called Prājña.

**THE EAST ETC:** The sage identifies himself, by stages, with the vital breath (prāna) that comprises everything. Finally, withdrawing the prāna into the Supreme Self, he attains the state of Turiya, which is his real nature and is described as “Not this, not this.”

**IT IS IMPERCEPTIBLE ETC:** See III. ix. 26.

**THAT . . . FEAR:** That is to say, the Supreme Brahman.

The Knowledge of Brahman was attained by Janaka through the removal of the veil of ignorance which projects the limiting adjuncts.

*Here ends Chapter Two  
of Part Four of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER III

### INVESTIGATION OF THE THREE STATES

YĀJNAVALKYA called on Janaka, Emperor of Videha. He said to himself: "I will not say anything."

But once upon a time Janaka, Emperor of Videha, and Yājñavalkya had had a talk about the Agnihotra sacrifice, and Yājñavalkya had offered him a boon. Janaka had chosen the right to ask him any questions he wished, and Yājñavalkya had granted him the boon.

So it was the Emperor who first questioned him.

**YĀJNAVALKYA HAD OFFERED ETC:** Because he was pleased with Janaka's knowledge on the subject.

The aim of this chapter, like that of the previous ones, is to describe the identity of the individual self and the Supreme Self. It has been stated in the foregoing chapter that the self who is called Indha (Vaiśvānara) enjoys fine food in the waking state; beyond it, in the heart, is the self identified with the subtle body, which experiences, in dreams, finer food; higher still is the self functioning in deep sleep, identified with the universe, which has the vital breath as its upādhi and is called Prājña. The aspirant merges this self in the Supreme Self and thus realizes the transcendent Brahman called Turiya, which has been described by the negative method of "Not this, not this." Through the knowledge of Turiya, Janaka attained to fearlessness. All this has been stated on the basis of the scriptures, with reference to the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. Now the same identity of the individual self and Brahman will be established through valid reasoning. (It is a favourite method of Śankarācārya's first to describe the Great Identity on the basis of the scriptures and then to demonstrate It through reasoning.) The existence of the Self will be established by the removal of doubts raised against It, and It will be proved to be different from the body, pure, and self-effulgent. This is the purpose of the present chapter. The story is meant to indicate the method of imparting and receiving the instruction; it is especially a eulogy of the Knowledge of Brahman, since Janaka chose this boon in preference to any other.

## 2

"Yājñavalkya, what serves as light for a man?"

"The light of the sun, O Emperor," said Yājñavalkya, "for with the sun as light he sits, goes out, works, and returns."

"Just so, Yājñavalkya."

**WHAT SERVES . . . MAN:** That is to say, What serves as the light which a man uses in his everyday life? The question seems to imply this: Does a man use a light extraneous to his body, which is made of parts, or does some light within this aggregate of parts serve the purpose of a light for him?

**LIGHT OF THE SUN:** The word *of* is used here to show an apposition; the phrase means "the light that is the sun." The light of the sun is outside a man's body.

**HE SITS ETC:** The use of several specifications is to indicate that the light is essentially different from the body.

## 3

"When the sun has set, Yājñavalkya, what serves as light for a man?"

"The moon serves as his light, for with the moon as light he sits, goes out, works, and returns."

"Just so, Yājñavalkya."

## 4

"When the sun has set and the moon has set, Yājñavalkya, what serves as light for a man?"

"Fire serves as his light, for with fire as light he sits, goes out, works, and returns."

"Just so, Yājñavalkya."

## 5

"When the sun has set, Yājñavalkya, and the moon has set and the fire has gone out, what serves as light for a man?"

"Speech (sound) serves as his light, for with speech as light he sits, goes out, works, and returns. Therefore, Your Majesty, when one cannot see even one's own hand, yet when a sound is uttered, one can go there."

"Just so, Yājñavalkya."

**SPEECH:** The word here means *sound*. Sound stimulates the organ of hearing, gives rise to discrimination in the mind, and thus enables a man to engage in outward action.

**WHEN ONE ETC:** As on a rainy night, owing to the darkness created by clouds, which frequently blot out all light.

**ONE CAN ETC:** The sound acts as light. The word *speech* also implies odour, touch, and other objects of the sense-organs.

## 6

“When the sun has set, Yājñavalkya, and the moon has set and the fire has gone out and speech has stopped, what serves as light for a man?”

“The self, indeed, is his light, for with the self as light he sits, goes out, works, and returns.”

In the waking state a man is helped in his movements by such lights as the sun, the moon, etc. Without light the body and senses cannot perform their functions. And this light is outside his body, which is an aggregate of different parts. But what serves as light for a man in dreams and in deep sleep? One cannot see dream objects without light. While dreaming, too, one meets friends, parts with them, and goes to different places—all with the help of some sort of light. From deep sleep, again, one awakes with the remembrance that one slept happily and knew nothing; this shows that some kind of light functions in deep sleep too. Therefore Janaka asked about the light which serves a man when the sun, the moon, etc. do not help him, that is to say, when he is asleep. Yājñavalkya's answer is that the self (ātman) is the light that serves a man in all his activities, whether he is awake or dreaming or experiencing deep sleep. The self is different from the body and organs, and its light illumines all things, like the external light of the sun, moon, and so on; but the self itself is not illumined by anything else. The self is inside the body, though separate from it and from the organs. External lights such as the sun, moon, and fire are illumined by the light of the self. The self, being non-material, is not perceived by the eye and the other organs.

*A certain difficulty arises: It is generally seen that things belonging to the same category reveal each other. Thus the sun or a lamp, which are material entities, can reveal another material object. Is, then, the self which reveals the material world also a material entity? There is another difficulty: The self is said to be other than the body and intelligent in nature. The sense-organs, too, appear to be intelligent. As the*

*self is intelligent, it may be one of the sense-organs. Therefore the drift of the question is as follows: Among the intelligent sense-organs, which one is the self?*

## 7

“Which is the self?”

“This purusha, which is identified with the intellect (vijñānamaya) and is in the midst of the organs, the [self-effulgent] light within the heart (intellect). Assuming the likeness [of the intellect], it wanders between the two worlds; it thinks, as it were, and moves, as it were. Being identified with dreams, it transcends this [waking] world, which represents the forms of death (ignorance and its effects).

**WHICH IS . . . SELF:** This is the question, and the rest of the verse is the answer.

**THIS PURUSHA:** The word *this* is used with reference to the self because the self is directly known to us. The word *purusha* signifies an infinite entity, because it is all-pervading, like the ākāśa.

**IDENTIFIED WITH THE INTELLECT:** The self is said to be identified with the intellect because an ordinary person cannot distinguish it from the intellect, which is a limiting adjunct of the self. For such a person the self is always perceived in association with the intellect. The intellect is the instrument that helps us in understanding everything. Objects are perceived only through the light of the intellect, as objects in the dark are lighted up by a lamp placed in front of them; the other organs are but the channels of the intellect. But though the intellect appears to reveal objects, since it is a material entity its power of illumining them is derived from the self.

**IN . . . ORGANS:** This indicates that the self is different from the organs, as a rock “in the midst of the trees” is separate from the trees.

**WITHIN THE HEART:** The heart primarily indicates the familiar lump of flesh, which looks like a lotus bud. Here it means the intellect (vijñāna or buddhi), which has its seat in the heart. The word *within* indicates that the self is different from the modifications of the intellect. The self is called “light” because it is self-effulgent; through this light the aggregate of body and organs (called a man) goes out and works, as if it were conscious. The intellect, being transparent and nearest to the self, easily catches the reflection of the intelligence of the self. Therefore it is the first entity with which the self is identified. The self successively illumines the mind, organs, body, and external objects, just as a light within a globe of glass illumines the globe and all the things which are inside and outside it. Com-

pare: "He shining, everything shines after Him; by His light all this is lighted." (*Ka. Up. II. ii. 15.*)

**ASSUMING THE LIKENESS ETC:** The intellect is what is illumined, and the light of the self is its illuminer; it is well known that we can seldom distinguish between the two. Light assumes the likeness of what it illumines. When it illumines an object of red, green, or blue colour, it assumes the likeness of that object. Similarly, the self assumes the likeness of everything it illumines. "It is for this reason that the whole world; to its utter delusion, superimposes upon the self all the activities peculiar to name and form, and upon name and form all the attributes of the self. Thus it superimposes name and form on the luminous self and thinks: 'This is the self or this is not the self; it has such and such attributes; it is the agent or it is not the agent; it is pure or it is impure; it is bound or it is free; it is fixed or it goes or it comes; it exists or it does not exist,' and so on." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**IT WANDERS . . . WORLDS:** That is to say, between this world and the next. The self transmigrates by successively discarding the body and organs already possessed, and taking new ones, hundreds of them, in an unbroken series. The transmigration of the self is attributable to its identification with name and form, created by avidyā. It is not the natural state of the self. According to Vedānta, the self reflected in the buddhi, or intellect, is called the jīva, or phenomenal being, which is subject to birth and death.

**IT THINKS, AS IT WERE, ETC:** It is the intellect that does the thinking. The self assumes the likeness of the intellect and appears to think, just as light looks coloured when it is reflected in a coloured object. Likewise, when the organs and the body move, the self, identified with them, appears to move.

**BEING IDENTIFIED WITH DREAMS, ETC:** How are we to know that the self moves between the two worlds and performs other activities on account of its assuming the likeness of the intellect, and not by itself? This question is answered as follows: The self seems to become whatever the intellect, which it resembles, becomes. Therefore when the intellect assumes the modification called a dream, the self also assumes the form of that dream; when the intellect awakes, the self too awakes. Waking, dreaming, and deep sleep are different modifications of the intellect. The light of the self makes the modifications possible.

**IT TRANSCENDS THIS WORLD:** That is to say, it transcends the body and organs functioning in the waking state, around which our phenomenal activities are centred. It is only identification with the intellect, on account of avidyā, that gives rise to the delusion that the self moves between the two worlds and performs other activities. In its own nature, the self is

effulgent, pure, and free from the notion of agency, action, and the enjoyment of the fruit of action.

**FORMS OF DEATH:** That is to say, ignorance, action, etc. Death has no form of its own; the body and organs created by ignorance are its forms. Hence, in the dream state, the self transcends the body and organs of the waking world, which are its forms and upon which actions and their results in the waking state depend.

## 8

“That person (the individual self), when he is born, that is to say, when he assumes a body, is joined with evils, and when he dies, that is to say, leaves the body, he discards those evils.

**THAT PERSON ETC:** It is well known that a person, while identified with dreams, transcends the gross body and organs of the waking state and lives in the light that is his own self. A man’s birth and death are similar to the states of waking and dreaming. At the time of death, as when entering the dream state, the self discards the gross body, and when it is reborn, as when awaking, the self again takes up the gross body. Therefore the self is quite separate from the body and organs.

**ASSUMES A BODY:** That is to say, becomes identified with the body and organs.

**EVILS:** Refers to the body and organs, by means of which a man is engaged in all phenomenal activities, good or bad. From the standpoint of the Supreme Self all phenomenal activities are evil.

Just as, in the present body, a man identifying himself with the intellect constantly moves between the waking and dream states by alternately taking and giving up the body and organs, so does he constantly move between this and the next world by alternately taking and giving up the body and organs, through birth and death, until he attains Liberation. Therefore it is evident from this conjunction and disjunction that the self is distinct from these evils, the body and organs.

## 9

“And there are only two states for that person: the one here in this world and the other in the next world. The third, the intermediate, is the dream state. When he is in that intermediate state, he surveys both states: the one here in this world and the other in the next world. Now, whatever support he may have for the next world, he provides himself with that and sees both evils (sufferings) and joys.

“And when he dreams, he takes away a little of [the impressions of] this all-embracing world (the waking state), himself makes the body unconscious, and creates [a dream body in its place], revealing his own brightness by his own light—and he dreams. In this state the person becomes self-illuminated.

**THE ONE HERE:** The present life, consisting of body, organs, objects, and their impressions, which we perceive.

**THE NEXT ETC:** What is experienced after death.

**INTERMEDIATE:** The dream state is the junction of the two states and does not constitute a third state.

**THE ONE . . . WORLD:** Over and above the waking and dream states, there are the two worlds between which the individual self, identified with the intellect, moves in an unbroken succession of births and deaths.

**HĒ SURVEYS ETC:** In dreams he feels both pleasure and pain, consisting of the impressions of experiences of both this and previous lives. Dreams generally correspond to the experiences of the waking state. But sometimes one dreams of things never experienced in this life; and since dreams are not original experiences, they must be the result of the experiences of another, past life.

**SUPPORT:** That is to say, knowledge, work, and previous experience.

**THIS ALL-EMBRACING WORLD:** The world we experience in the waking state.

**MAKES UNCONSCIOUS:** Lit., kills the body.

**HIMSELF CREATES ETC:** This creation, too, is the result of past action.

**REVEALING HIS ETC:** The word *brightness* (*dyotih*) refers to the sense-objects perceived in dreams. The mind itself is modified into the form of the diverse impressions of sense-objects one sees there. When one dreams, it is the self that is revealed through the modifications of the mind. Thus it is said in the text that, while dreaming, the purusha reveals its own brightness.

**SELF-ILLUMINED:** While dreaming, a man actually has no contact with the outer world and the light that illumines its objects. In that state the man himself becomes the light.

*In dreams one experiences all the diverse phenomena of the waking state and also the subject-object relationship. While dreaming, a man sees the functioning of the sense-organs and also such external lights as the sun and moon, which illumine objects just as in the waking state. How then can it be said that in this state the man himself becomes the light? The answer is given:*

## 10

“There are no [real] chariots in that state, nor animals to be yoked to them, nor roads there, but he creates the chariots, animals, and roads. There are no pleasures in that state, no joys, no rejoicings, but he creates the pleasures, joys, and rejoicings. There are no pools in that state, no reservoirs, no rivers, but he creates the pools, reservoirs, and rivers. He indeed is the agent.

**HE CREATES ETC:** How does he create the chariots etc. seen in a dream, since there are none of the physical accessories from which they are made? He creates all these objects from the modifications of his mind, stimulated by his previous action. This is why it is said that he himself creates the objects seen in a dream. Though there is no external light nor any activity of the senses in sleep, the self-luminous ātman reveals the dream objects by his light; he is called the agent.

**PLEASURES:** Such as one experiences while in contact with an agreeable object.

**JOYS:** Such as one experiences when a son is born.

**REJOICINGS:** Intense joy.

**HE . . . AGENT:** The self is called the agent in a figurative sense. The light of the self, which is Pure Intelligence, illumines the body and organs through the mind, and thus they perform their functions in the waking state. Therefore the self is figuratively called the agent of waking activities. The impressions of waking activities are transformed into modifications of the mind in sleep and are called dream-objects. The light of the self has no direct agency, except that it is the illuminer of everything in the waking and dream states. Therefore it has been stated: “It thinks, as it were, and moves, as it were (IV. iii. 7). The light of the self is like the light of a lamp with the help of which a person performs a good or bad deed. The lamp may be called the agent only in an indirect sense.

## 11

“Regarding this there are the following verses:

“The effulgent infinite being (purusha), who travels alone, makes the body insensible in sleep but himself remains awake, and taking with him the luminous particles of the organs, watches those which lie dormant. Again he comes to the waking state.

**THIS:** That is to say, the self-luminosity of the ātman.

**EFFULGENT:** Lit., golden (hīranmaya); the light that is Pure Intelligence.

**WHO TRAVELS ETC:** Between this life and the next, the waking and the dream state, etc.

**IN SLEEP:** That is to say, while dreaming.

**HIMSELF . . . AWAKE:** The light of the self is immutable.

**LUMINOUS . . . ORGANS:** The organs illumine objects. The phrase "particles of the organs" refers to the impressions created by external objects and changed into modifications of the mind.

**WATCHES THEM:** That is to say, reveals them, as the light of a lamp reveals objects.

**DORMANT:** The impressions are called dormant because they are devoid of their ordinary forms, or because they are not as clearly perceived as the physical objects in the waking state.

**AGAIN ETC:** For the purpose of further activity.

## 12

"The effulgent infinite being (purusha), who is immortal and travels alone, guards the unclean nest (body) with the help of the vital breath (prāna) and himself moves out of the nest. That immortal entity wanders wherever he likes.

**GUARDS ETC:** Otherwise it would be considered dead.

**MOVES OUT ETC:** Though while dreaming the self stays in the body, yet, like the ākāśa in the body, it has no real connexion with it. Hence the self is spoken of as going outside.

**THAT . . . LIKES:** Whatever objects he desires, he enjoys in the form of impressions.

## 13

"In the dream world, the luminous one attains higher and lower states and creates many forms—now, as it were, enjoying himself in the company of women, now laughing, now even beholding frightful sights.

**HIGHER:** Such as the state of a god.

**LOWER:** The state of an animal, for instance.

**LAUGHING:** With friends.

**FRIGHTFUL SIGHTS:** Lions and tigers, for instance.

## 14

"Everyone sees his sport but him no one sees.' They say: 'Do not wake him suddenly.' If he does not find the right organ, the body becomes difficult to doctor.

"Others, however, say that the dream state of a man is the same as the waking state, because what he sees while awake, that only he sees when asleep. [This is wrong.] In the dream state the self (purusha) itself becomes the light."

Janaka said: "I give you a thousand cows, revered Sir. Please instruct me further about Liberation itself."

**SPORT:** Consisting of modifications of the mind in the form of villages, cities, women, and other objects seen in the waking state, conjured up by the self.

**BUT HIM ETC:** "What a pity that although the ātman is totally distinct from the body and organs and is self-evident, people are not fortunate enough to see it, notwithstanding the fact that it can easily be seen . . . The idea is that in dreams the self becomes altogether distinct and is itself the light." (*Śaṅkarāchārya.*)

**THEY SAY, ETC:** There is also a popular belief which supports this view that the self, while dreaming, is distinct from the body and organs. People say that a sleeping person should not be suddenly awakened; for the self, while dreaming, goes out of the body through the channels of the organs and remains outside. If the sleeping man is violently roused, his self may not suddenly find the organs to enter the body. Blindness, deafness, or other physical ailments may be the result of such confusion. Therefore through this popular belief one can understand the self-luminosity of the ātman in dreams.

**OTHERS, HOWEVER, ETC:** They deny that the dream state is a distinct state, and say that it is the same as the waking state. If that be so, then the self is not dissociated from the body and organs, but is confused with them, as in the waking state. Therefore the self-luminosity of the ātman is denied. But this view is wrong. One dreams only when the organs have ceased to function. Therefore no other light than the self can exist in that state. Thus it has been said: "There are no chariots" etc. (IV. iii. 10.)

**I GIVE YOU ETC:** By the illustration of dreams, Yājñavalkya proved that there is a self-luminous ātman which transcends the forms of death. Since it alternately moves between this world and the next, it is distinct from them. Likewise, it is distinct from the waking state and the dream state. As a reward for this knowledge Janaka offered him a thousand cows.

**PLEASE INSTRUCT ETC:** Janaka was eager to learn the secret of Liberation. What he had learnt was certainly helpful, but it was only a part of what he wanted to know. Now he asked how he could be liberated from the entire relative existence.

*The self, in dreams, is no doubt separated from the body and organs, but in that state it experiences joy, sorrow, fear, etc., which belong to*

*the phenomenal realm. Therefore it does not, in dreams, transcend the effects of death or ignorance; it does not enjoy Liberation. Now Yājñavalkya will demonstrate that death, or ignorance, is not the natural characteristic of the self and that therefore the self can attain Liberation.*

## 15

[Yājñavalkya said:] "That entity (purusha), after enjoying himself and roaming [in the dream state] and merely witnessing [the results of] good and evil, remains in a state of profound sleep and [then] hastens back in the reverse way to his former condition, the dream state. He remains unaffected by whatever he sees in that [dream] state, for this infinite being is unattached."

[Janaka said:] "Just so, Yājñavalkya. I give you, Sir, a thousand cows. Please instruct me further about Liberation itself."

**THAT ENTITY:** The self, which is the topic under discussion.

**HAVING ENJOYED ETC:** Just before passing into the state of deep sleep, the self, in the dream state, enjoys itself in the company of friends etc. Then it feels tired and seeks rest in dreamless sleep.

**MERELY WITNESSING ETC:** The self does not participate in any real action, good or evil, in dreams; it merely witnesses the results of previous actions. Action does not belong to the nature of the self.

**PROFOUND SLEEP:** The word *samprasāda* in the text means the state of highest serenity. In the waking state a man is affected by impurities due to the commingling of the innumerable activities of the body and organs. He experiences a certain amount of joy by not participating in those activities in the dream state. But in dreamless sleep he enjoys the highest serenity. The state of dreamless sleep will later be described as being beyond all the woes of the heart (IV. iii. 22).

**HASTENS BACK ETC:** It was out of the dream state that he passed into the state of profound sleep; now he returns to it.

**HE REMAINS UNATTACHED ETC:** In dreams the self is detached from the body and organs and is devoid of activity; thus it acquires neither merit nor demerit from dream experiences. If a man actually participated in dream action, he would be bound by it, and the action would pursue him even after he awoke. But nobody considers himself a sinner on account of sins committed in a dream. Society does not hold a man responsible for evil dreams. Therefore he is untouched by dream experiences.

"We see that an action is caused by the contact of the body and organs, which have form, with something else which also has form. We never see a formless entity being active. The self is formless; hence it is non-active

and unattached. And because it is unattached, it is untouched by what it sees in dreams. Therefore we cannot by any means attribute activity to the self." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

## 16

[Yājñavalkya said:] "That entity (*puruṣa*), after enjoying himself and roaming in the dream state and merely witnessing [the results of] good and evil, hastens back in the reverse way to his former condition, the waking state. He remains unaffected by whatever he sees in that state, for this infinite being is unattached."

[Janaka said:] "Just so, Yājñavalkya. I give you, Sir, a thousand cows. Please instruct me further about Liberation itself."

UNATTACHED: If the self were attached or smitten by desire in the dream state, then, on its return to the waking state, it would be affected by the evils due to that attachment. But it is not. This shows that it remains unattached in dreams.

*Just as, being unattached in the dream state, the self is not affected, on its return to the waking state, by the evils due to attachment in the dream state, so it is not affected by them in the waking state either. This is expressed by the following verse:*

## 17

[Yājñavalkya said:] "That entity (*puruṣa*), after enjoying himself and roaming in the waking state and merely witnessing [the results of] good and evil, hastens back in the reverse way to its former condition, the dream state [or that of dreamless sleep].

Even in the waking state the self is really free from the notion of agency. The activities in that state are performed by the body and organs, the self serving as a mere light. It is due to ignorance that agency is attributed to the self. Sometimes the self is described as the agent in a figurative sense. But in reality the self is free from any notion of agency. Compare: "Having no beginning and possessing no *gunas*, this supreme and imperishable Self, O son of Kunti, neither acts nor is stained by action, even while dwelling in the body." (B.G. XIII. 31.)

*The idea has been established by the preceding three verses that the self is in itself the light, and distinct from the body and organs, and also that it is free from the notions of desire, work, and agency; for*

*the self is non-attached. It moves by turns from the waking to the dream state, from the dream state to that of profound sleep, from that again back to the dream state, then to the waking state, from that again to the dream state, and so on. This proves that the self is distinct from the three states. In order to elucidate this view further, an illustration is given:*

## 18

“As a large fish swims alternately to both banks [of a river]—the east and the west—so does the infinite being move to both these states: dreaming and waking.

SWIMS: That is to say, moves freely, never being swayed by the currents of the river, but rather stemming them.

“The point of the illustration is that the body and organs, which are forms of death, together with their stimulating causes, desire and work, are the attributes of the non-self, and that the self is distinct from them.”  
(Śankarāchārya.)

*In the preceding verses the self-luminous ātman, which is different from the body and organs, has been described as distinct from desire and work, for it moves alternately between the three states. These relative attributes do not belong to the self as it is, but are superimposed upon it through ignorance. Now, the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep have been spoken of separately—not shown together as a group. For instance, it has been shown that in the waking state the self appears, through ignorance, to be connected with attachment, death (work), and the body and organs; that in the dream state it appears to be connected with desire but free from the forms of death; and that in the state of deep sleep it is perfectly serene and unattached, this non-attachment being the additional feature. If we consider all these passages together, the resulting sense is that the self is by nature eternal, free, enlightened, and pure. This comprehensive view is shown in the following verse. It will be said later that the self attains the state of purity only in the state of deep sleep. As this state is unique, the self desires to enter into it. The following verse explains this:*

## 19

“As a hawk or a falcon roaming in the sky becomes tired, folds its wings, and makes for its nest, so does this infinite entity (purusha)

hasten for this state, where, falling asleep, he cherishes no more desires and dreams no more dreams.

**NEST:** The word *samlaya*, in the text, means, literally, a place of perfect rest.

**CHERISHES . . . DESIRES:** This phrase eliminates all the desires of the dream and waking states.

**DREAMS . . . DREAMS:** The experiences of the waking state are regarded as dreams since both states are characterized by the non-apprehension and the wrong apprehension of reality.

As the bird in the illustration goes to its nest to remove the fatigue due to flying, so the jiva (living being), tired of action and its results experienced during the waking and dream states, enters his own nest or abode, his own self, which is free from all relative attributes and devoid of all exertion caused by action.

*If freedom from all relative attributes is the nature of the jiva, and his phenomenal character is the result of ignorance, is the ignorance natural to him, or is it adventitious, like desire, work, etc.? If it is the latter, then Liberation is possible. But why should ignorance be regarded as foreign to the self and not its natural characteristic?*

## 20

"There are in his body nerves (nadis) called hitā, which are as fine as a hair divided into a thousand parts and are filled with white, blue, brown, green, and red [fluids]. [They are the seat of the subtle body, which is the storehouse of impressions.] Now, when he feels as if he were being killed or overpowered, or being chased by an elephant, or falling into a pit, [in short,] when he fancies at that time, through ignorance, whatever frightful thing he has experienced in the waking state, [that is the dream state]. So also, when he thinks he is a god, as it were, or a king, as it were, or thinks: "This [universe] is myself and I am all," that is his highest state.

**SUBTLE BODY:** It consists of seventeen parts: the five elements, the ten organs, the vital breath, and the mind. Transparent, like a crystal, because of its fineness, the subtle body, owing to its contact with the fluids in the nerves, undergoes modifications under the influence of past merit and demerit and manifests itself as dream experiences.

Now, **WHEN ETC:** It is on account of ignorance that a man, during the

waking state, thinks of others as robbers, enemies, or animals. These impressions manifest themselves as dream experiences through the subtle body.

AS IF . . . KILLED: Nobody really kills him. The idea that he is being killed is a mistake due to his past impressions, created by ignorance.

FANCIES ETC: These frightful dreams are created by his past iniquities, as is evident from their painful nature.

SO ALSO ETC: A man who has attained sufficient purity of mind through meditation to feel identity with the gods etc., in the waking state, also feels it in the dream state.

THIS UNIVERSE ETC: When, in the waking state, his ignorance is extremely attenuated and the knowledge that he comprises all arises, then, in the dream state, he feels that he has become everything.

HIGHEST STATE: That is to say, the natural state of the ātman. The result of the knowledge is directly perceived in the dream state also.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

The results of knowledge and ignorance are identity with all and identity with finite things, respectively. Through knowledge a man is identified with all, and through ignorance he is identified with finite things or separated from something else. He is in conflict with that from which he is separated, and because of this conflict he is killed, overpowered, etc. All this takes place because a man, on account of ignorance, regards himself as separate from others. But if he is all, there is nothing from which he may be separated; thus there will be no conflict, and in the absence of conflict there will be no idea of being killed, overpowered, etc. Hence the nature of ignorance is that it represents the infinite self as the finite, the unlimited self as a limited entity. Thus arises the desire for that from which a man is separated; and desire prompts him to action, which produces its corresponding result. This ignorance is not the natural characteristic of the self, since it automatically decreases as knowledge increases; and when the latter is at its highest, with the result that the self realizes its identity with all, ignorance vanishes altogether, like the false notion of a snake in a rope when the truth is known. Compare: "But when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should he see and through what?" etc. (IV. v. 15). Therefore ignorance is not a natural characteristic of the self; for that which is natural to a thing can never be eliminated, as the heat and light cannot be eliminated from the sun. Thus liberation from ignorance is possible.

*The nature of Liberation has already been indicated in the passage: "Where, falling asleep, he cherishes no desires and dreams no dreams"*

(IV. iii. 19). *Now the same Liberation, consisting in identity with all—which is the result of Knowledge and is free from action with its factors and results, and in which there is no trace of ignorance, desire, or work—is directly pointed out:*

## 21

“That indeed is his form—free from desires, free from evils, free from fear. As a man fully embraced by his beloved wife knows nothing that is without, nothing that is within, so does this infinite being (the self), when fully embraced by the Supreme Self, know nothing that is without, nothing that is within.

“That indeed is his form, in which all his desires are fulfilled, in which all desires become the self, and which is free from desires and devoid of grief.

**THAT:** That is to say, the identity with all experienced in deep sleep.

**EVILS:** The word includes both merits and demerits.

**FEAR:** Fear is an effect of ignorance. It is through ignorance that one conjures up terrifying things. In deep sleep the self is fearless because at that time it is free from all relative attributes.

**THAT INDEED . . . FEAR:** The true nature of the self, characterized by freedom from desires, evils, and fear, is experienced in deep sleep. But during that state, in the unilluminated, ignorance persists in a very subtle form.

**AS A MAN ETC:** If in deep sleep the luminous self realizes its true form, why then does it not know itself as “I am this,” and why does it not know external things as they are, as it does in the waking and dream states? The reason is that it experiences unity. Only in an experience of duality does one know another, see another, etc. This is explained by the illustration of the husband and wife in intimate embrace.

**KNOWS . . . WITHOUT:** That is to say, other than himself.

**KNOWS . . . WITHIN:** Such consciousness as “I am this” or “I am happy” or “I am miserable.”

**INFINITE BEING:** The individual self, which is separated from the Supreme Self through association with the body and organs, and has entered the body and organs as the moon is reflected in water—all of which is the result of ignorance.

**KNOW NOTHING ETC:** The absence of consciousness is due to the realization of oneness. In deep sleep there is an absence of specific consciousness. It is not that the self in deep sleep is unconscious; for it is consciousness itself.

**ALL . . . FULFILLED:** Because the self comprises all things. If a person believes that the objects of desire are different from him, he hankers after them.

**FREE FROM DESIRES:** Because there is nothing to be desired. In the waking and dream states objects are believed to be separate from the self; hence they are coveted. But in deep sleep that difference is not perceived; hence there is no desire.

**DEVOID OF GRIEF:** It is well known that a person waking from deep sleep remarks that he slept happily.

*The form of the self which is directly perceived in the state of dreamless sleep is free from ignorance, desire, and work; it is beyond all relations and all social and scriptural obligations:*

## 22

"In this state a father is no more a father, a mother is no more a mother, the worlds are no more the worlds, the gods are no more the gods, the Vedas are no more the Vedas. In this state a thief is no more a thief, the killer of a noble brāhmin is no more a killer, a chandāla is no more a chandāla, a paulkasa is no more a paulkasa, a monk is no more a monk, an ascetic is no more an ascetic.

"This form [of his] is untouched by good deeds and untouched by evil deeds, for he is then beyond all the woes of his heart.

**FATHER ETC:** Fatherhood and motherhood are based upon actions from which the self is dissociated in deep sleep.

**WORLDS ETC:** Certain worlds are attained through rites. In deep sleep the self is dissociated from these rites.

**GODS:** Who are a part of the rites.

**VEDAS:** The Vedas lay down certain goals for a man and also the means to attain them. In deep sleep the self is dissociated from both ends and means.

**A THIEF ETC:** In deep sleep the self is detached not only from good actions but from evil ones also.

**KILLER ETC:** The word *bhrunahā* in the text also signifies the destroyer of an embryo.

**CHANDĀLA:** A person born of a śudra father and a brāhmin mother. The Hindu scriptures assign a low position to such an offspring.

**PAULKASA:** A person born of a śudra father and a kshatriya mother.

**A MONK ETC:** In deep sleep the self is detached from the disciplines and obligations of the monastic and ascetic life.

GOOD DEEDS: Deeds enjoined by the scriptures.

EVIL DEEDS: Deeds forbidden by the scriptures.

WOES: That is to say, desires. If desires are not fulfilled they turn into woes. If one is attached to objects of desire, one also suffers from woes. Woe, attachment, and desire are synonymous.

HEART: That is to say, the intellect, which is associated with the heart. Compare: "Desire, determination . . . all this is truly the mind." (I. v. 3.)

The state of deep sleep is beyond all empirical distinctions.

*It has been said that in the state of dreamless sleep, on account of the absence of duality, the ātman does not see any object, and also that the ātman is self-effulgent. Now the question is: If intelligence is the very nature of the self, as heat is of fire, how should it, then, give up its nature in deep sleep and fail to know? If the ātman does not give up its nature, how is it that it does not see in deep sleep? It is self-contradictory to say that intelligence is the nature of the ātman, and at the same time that it does not know. The answer is that there is no self-contradiction and that both are possible. How so?*

23

"And when [it appears that] in deep sleep it does not see, yet it is seeing though it does not see; for there is no cessation of the vision of the seer, because the seer is imperishable. There is then, however, no second thing separate from the seer that it could see.

WHEN . . . SEE: The ignorant may think that the self does not see in deep sleep; but this is not so. It sees at that time. The true seer is the self and not the eye. Although, therefore, it might be said that in the state of deep sleep, when the eye and the other senses do not function, the self does not see, yet it is seeing all the time, though it does not see with the eye.

THERE IS NO . . . IMPERISHABLE: Fire cannot lose its character of burning so long as it is fire, nor can the sun lose its character of revealing objects so long as it is the sun; likewise the self can never lose its power of seeing. The seer is imperishable; therefore its ability to see is also imperishable. The apparent act of seeing or not seeing takes place only in the relative state, because in that state duality manifests itself under the influence of nescience. "Just as the sun and the like are naturally always luminous and reveal things through their natural, constant light, and when we speak of them as revealing things, we do not mean that they are naturally non-luminous and only reveal things by a fresh act each time, but that they

do so through their natural, constant light, so is the self called the seer on account of its imperishable, eternal vision." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

THERE IS THEN, ETC: Those factors that cause the particular visions in the waking and dream states—namely, the mind, the eyes, and forms—were all presented by ignorance as something different from the self. But in deep sleep they become unified, since at that time the individual self lies in the embrace of the Supreme Self. Hence the organs and objects do not remain as different entities. And because the organs and objects are absent as such, there is no particular experience, for such experience is the product of the organs etc., not of the self, and only *appears* to be the product of the self.

## 24

"And when [it appears that] in deep sleep it does not smell, yet it is smelling though it does not smell; for there is no cessation of the smelling of the smeller, because the smeller is imperishable. There is then, however, no second thing separate from the smeller that it could smell.

## 25

"And when [it appears that] in deep sleep it does not taste, yet it is tasting though it does not taste; for there is no cessation of the tasting of the taster, because the taster is imperishable. There is then, however, no second thing separate from the taster that it could taste.

## 26

"And when [it appears that] in deep sleep it does not speak, yet it is speaking though it does not speak; for there is no cessation of the speaking of the speaker, because the speaker is imperishable. There is then, however, no second thing separate from the speaker that it could speak about.

## 27

"And when [it appears that] in deep sleep it does not hear, yet it is hearing though it does not hear; for there is no cessation of the hearing of the hearer, because the hearer is imperishable. There is then, however, no second thing separate from the hearer that it could hear.

## 28

“And when [it appears that] in deep sleep it does not think, yet it is thinking though it does not think; for there is no cessation of the thinking of the thinker, because the thinker is imperishable. There is then, however, no second thing separate from the thinker that it could think of.

## 29

“And when [it appears that] in deep sleep it does not touch, yet it is touching though it does not touch; for there is no cessation of the touching of the toucher, because the toucher is imperishable. There is then, however, no second thing separate from the toucher that it could touch.

## 30

“And when [it appears that] in deep sleep it does not know, yet it is knowing though it does not know; for there is no cessation of the knowing of the knower, because the knower is imperishable. There is then, however, no second thing separate from the knower that it could know.

The statement of the text that in deep sleep the self does not know etc. does not imply that seeing, hearing, etc. are attributes of the self, different from it and from each other, as in ordinary experience, but aims to answer the following possible objection: If the ātman is self-luminous intelligence, how is it that it does not know anything in the state of deep sleep? For then the ātman would not be self-luminous. This contention is answered thus: The natural, self-luminous intelligence of the ātman manifests itself in the waking and dream states through many limiting adjuncts, such as the eyes and ears, and comes to be designated as seeing, hearing, etc. But in the state of deep sleep, owing to the cessation of the various activities of the mind and organs, these latter do not appear, and therefore the nature of the self cannot be perceived as being differentiated by them. Yet the natural luminosity of the self is spoken of as being present in deep sleep—through the statement “yet it is knowing”—in a way that is a mere recapitulation of normal experience.

The text does not present the attributes of seeing, hearing, etc. as being different from the self and from each other. Such a position would contradict the scriptural statement that the self is homogeneous Pure Intelli-

gence, like a lump of salt. Secondly, we use such expressions as: "One *knows* colour through the eyes," "One *knows* sound through the ears," "One *knows* the taste of food through the tongue," etc., which show that the objects denoted by seeing, hearing, etc. can be designated as knowledge alone. Thirdly, there are examples in our common experience to support our view. For instance, a crystal is naturally transparent, and only for that reason assumes different colours by coming in contact with different limiting adjuncts, such as green, blue, or red colours. Likewise, the different attributes of seeing, hearing, etc. are observed in the luminous self, which is by nature Pure Intelligence, simply owing to its contact with limiting adjuncts such as the eyes, ears, etc., because Pure Intelligence, like the crystal, is naturally transparent. Further, just as the light of the sun, coming in contact with things to be illumined, appears green, blue, yellow, etc., though in reality the light cannot be thus differentiated, so does the light which is the self, revealing the whole universe as well as the eyes etc., assume their form. Lastly, the self has no parts, and there is no example to prove that a substance that has no parts can possess attributes.

*It has been said that in the state of deep sleep the self does not, as in the waking and dream states, see a second object different from itself which it can know; hence it knows no particulars in deep sleep. If this is the nature of the self, it may be asked, why does it ever give up that nature and have knowledge of particulars? If, on the other hand, it is the nature of the self to have knowledge of particulars, why does it not know them in deep sleep? The answer follows:*

## 31

"When [in the waking and dream states] there is, as it were, another, then one can see the other, then one can smell the other, then one can speak to the other, then one can hear the other, then one can think of the other, then one can touch the other, then one can know the other.

AS IT WERE: The idea of the other presented in the dream and waking states is projected by ignorance. The non-dual Ātman alone exists in the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep.

THEN ONE ETC: One can see something else when one thinks of oneself as different from that thing. But there is nothing apart from the self, nor is there a self apart from anything.

*When, however, that ignorance which presents things other than the self is removed in the state of deep sleep, there being nothing apart*

*from the self, what should one see or smell or know, and through what? Therefore, being embraced by the self-luminous Supreme Ātman, the jiva becomes infinite and perfectly serene, with all his objects of desire fully attained.*

## 32

"In deep sleep it becomes [transparent] like water, the witness, one and without a second. This is the World of Brahman, Your Majesty. This is its supreme attainment, this is its supreme glory, this is its highest world, this is its supreme bliss. On a particle of this bliss other creatures live."

Thus did Yājñavalkya teach Janaka.

**WITNESS:** Because the vision that is identical with the light of the self is never absent.

**THIS . . . BRAHMAN:** In dreamless sleep the self, bereft of its limiting adjuncts of the body and organs, remains in its own supreme light, free from all relations.

**SUPREME ATTAINMENT:** Other attainments, characterized by the consciousness of duality, are created by ignorance and therefore inferior to it.

**SUPREME GLORY:** The highest of all splendours, being natural to it; other glories are impermanent.

**HIGHEST WORLD:** The other worlds, which are achieved as a result of past actions, are impermanent and therefore inferior to it. This is its natural state.

**SUPREME BLISS:** Other joys, being the result of the contact of the senses with their objects, are momentary; but this bliss, being its natural state, is permanent.

**PARTICLE . . . BLISS:** Relative bliss is conjured up by ignorance and is experienced only during the contact of the organs with their objects.

**OTHER CREATURES:** Refers to those who are separated from the supreme bliss by ignorance and who regard themselves as different from Brahman.

**THUS DID ETC:** This is the statement of the Upanishad.

*In order to convey an idea of the supreme bliss as a whole, through its parts, as a rock of salt through some of its grains, the following text is introduced:*

## 33

"If a person is perfect of body and is prosperous, lord of others, and most lavishly supplied with all human enjoyments, he represents the

highest blessing among men. This human bliss multiplied a hundred times makes one measure of the bliss of the Manes who have won their own world. The bliss of these Manes who have won their world, multiplied a hundred times, makes one measure of bliss in the world of the gandharvas. The bliss of the gandharvas, multiplied a hundred times, makes one measure of the bliss of the gods by action (those who attain godhood through sacrificial rites). The bliss of the gods by action, multiplied a hundred times, makes one measure of the bliss of the gods by birth, as also of one who is versed in the Vedas, sinless, and free from desire. The bliss of the gods by birth, multiplied a hundred times, makes one measure of bliss in the World of Prajāpati (Virāj), as also of one who is versed in the Vedas, sinless, and free from desire. The bliss in the World of Prajāpati, multiplied a hundred times, makes one measure of bliss in the World of Brahmā (Hiranyagarbha), as also of one who is versed in the Vedas, sinless, and free from desire. This, indeed, is the supreme bliss. This is the state of Brahman, O Emperor," said Yājñavalkya.

Janaka said: "I give you a thousand cows, venerable Sir. Please instruct me further about Liberation itself."

At this Yājñavalkya was afraid that the intelligent emperor was driving him to give the solution [of all his questions].

**PROSPEROUS:** Provided with luxuries.

**HUMAN ENJOYMENT:** The adjective *human* precludes the factors of enjoyment in heaven.

**THE MANES WHO ETC:** Refers to those who have pleased the Manes by the performance of obsequial rites etc. and have won their way to their world.

**GANDHARVAS:** The celestial minstrels.

**THIS IS THE SUPREME BLISS:** Here the mathematical calculations come to a stop. This has been called the supreme bliss, of which other forms of bliss are but particles, like drops of water compared to the ocean. That in which other forms of bliss, increasing step by step in multiples of a hundred, merge, and which is experienced by one versed in the Vedas, is indeed, the supreme bliss called *samprasāda* (which is experienced in deep sleep); for in it one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, and so on. Hence it is infinite, and for that reason it is immortal; other forms of bliss are the opposite of that. Although the three epithets of Vedic erudition, sinlessness, and absence of desire are repeated, it is to be understood that the degree of absence of desire, that is to say, the degree of renunciation, determines the elevation to the experience of the higher bliss.

WAS AFRAID ETC: Not because of his lack of ability to teach. He was afraid because the king, having the right to ask him any question he liked, might squeeze all his knowledge out of him.

*It has been indicated in IV. iii. 7., through illustration of the waking and dream states, that the self moves between this and the next world. It moves unattached, as a large fish moves between the two banks of a river. At death it is disconnected from the body and organs, and at birth it is again connected with them. The body and organs are forms of death. That movement between this world and the next world, which was merely indicated in IV. iii. 7., will now be described at length. In IV. iii. 17. the self has been described as going from the waking to the dream state, and thence to the state of deep sleep, which is the illustration of Liberation. Passing from the waking to the dream state, and thence to the state of deep sleep, the self stays there for a while; then it comes down, step by step, to the waking state.*

## 34

“That entity (the self), after enjoying himself and roaming in the dream state and merely witnessing [the results of] merits and demerits, hastens back in the reverse way to its former condition, the waking state.

DREAM STATE: To which it has returned from the state of deep sleep.

*Now the rebirth of the soul will be described. An example is given to show that just as the self wanders from the dream to the waking state, so it passes from the present body to the next body.*

## 35

“Just as a heavily loaded cart moves along, creaking, even so the self identified with the body, being presided over by the Self which is all consciousness (the Supreme Self), moves along, groaning, when breathing becomes difficult [at the approach of death].

HEAVILY LOADED: With such household articles as utensils, a mortar and pestle, a winnowing fan, cooking vessels, etc.

CREAKING: That is to say, under the load, being driven by the carter.

THE SELF . . . BODY: Refers to the phenomenal self, limited by the subtle body, which moves between this and the next world, as between the waking

and dream states. Birth and death, consisting of association with and dissociation from the body and organs, belong to the phenomenal self and not to the real Self.

**SELF . . . CONSCIOUSNESS:** The phenomenal self is a reflection of the Supreme Self and is created by avidyā. Strictly speaking, the self, which is in essence one with the Supreme Self, cannot go anywhere. But on account of its association with the body, the self becomes individualized. Thus birth and death are falsely attributed to it. The leaving of the gross body by the subtle body together with the vital breath (prāna) at the time of death is described as the self's moving from one body to another.

**GROANING:** Refers to the death rattle, when a man gasps for breath.

The Upanishad, out of compassion for men, vividly describes this commonly observed occurrence in order to create a spirit of renunciation. So miserable is earthly existence! A wise person, while still alive, should practise spiritual disciplines in order to put an end to birth and death and attain Immortality.

*When, why, and how does the difficulty in breathing take place?*

36

“When this [body] grows thin—becomes emaciated through old age or disease—then, as a mango or a fig or a fruit of the peepul tree becomes detached from its stalk, so does this infinite being (the self), completely detaching himself from the parts of the body, again move on, in the same way that he came, to another body for the remanifestation of his vital breath (prāna).

**THIS [BODY]:** The human body, which is a product of ignorance.

**BECOMES EMACIATED ETC:** Afflicted with disease, the body, owing to impaired digestion, cannot assimilate the food that is eaten, and not being nourished by its essence, grows thin.

**AS A MANGO ETC:** The embodied self separates itself from the gross body as a fruit separates itself from its stalk. It assumes a new body in the same way that it assumed the present one. Thus it begins a new life. The citing of many and dissimilar examples is for the purpose of stating that death may come from any cause, since the causes of death are indefinite and innumerable. The purpose of the scriptures is to stimulate disgust for earthly life.

**STALK:** The word *bandhana* in the text may mean the sap that binds a fruit to the stalk or it may mean the stalk to which the fruit is attached.

**INFINITE BEING:** The self identified with the subtle body.

**PARTS OF THE BODY:** Such as the eye, nose, etc. In deep sleep the gross body and organs, though left by the subtle body, are preserved by the prāna. But this does not happen at the time of death, when the subtle body, together with the prāna, leaves the gross body.

**AGAIN:** The word suggests that the self has many a time gone from one body to another, just as it frequently moves between the dream and waking states.

**ANOTHER BODY:** The nature of the body the self assumes is determined by its past work, knowledge, etc.

**REMANIFESTATION ETC:** The mere existence of the vital breath does not enable the self to be reborn in a new body. This vital breath must be unfolded in a new body so that the self may reap the fruits of its past action.

*When a person leaves his present body, how does he reincarnate? Where does he find the materials for his future body? In answer it is said that there is the whole universe to help him realize the fruit of his past action. It awaits him with all the material ingredients for his future body and also for the enjoyment of the results of his past work. From these ingredients he chooses what will be helpful for his next embodiment.*

## 37

“Just as, when a king comes, the ugras appointed to deal with crimes, the sutas, and the leaders of the village await him with food and drink and lodgings ready, saying: ‘Here he comes, here he comes,’ even so, for the person who knows [about the fruits of his own work], there wait all the elements, saying: ‘Here comes Brahman, here he comes.’”

**JUST AS, ETC:** That is to say, when the king arrives at a certain place in his kingdom.

**UGRAS:** People of a particular caste, born of a kshatriya father and a śūdra mother. The word may also refer to a man of fierce deeds.

**APPOINTED ETC:** The phrase perhaps refers to policemen.

**SUTAS:** The word refers to those born of a kshatriya father and a brāhmin mother.

**FOR THE PERSON ETC:** Refers to the individual soul, which transmigrates.

**WAIT:** With the means by which the fruits of his action will be enjoyed. His past action impels these elements, as it were, to await his coming.

**ELEMENTS:** The material particles that will build up his body, together with their presiding deities.

BRĀHMAN: That is to say, the director and enjoyer. The individual soul is addressed as Brahman because it is, in essence, identical with the Absolute.

*Who accompany the self as it departs from this life?*

38

“Just as, when the king wishes to depart, the ugras appointed to deal with crimes, the sutas, and the leaders of the village gather around him, even so do all the organs gather around the self, at the time of death, when it struggles for breath.”

GATHER . . . SELF: Under the influence of the past actions of the departing soul.

*Here ends Chapter Three  
of Part Four of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER IV

### DEATH AND THE HEREAFTER

[YĀJNAVALKYA continued:] "Now, when that self becomes weak and unconscious, as it were, the organs gather around it. Having wholly seized these particles of light, the self comes to the heart. When the presiding deity of the eye turns back from all sides, the dying man fails to notice colour.

**SELF . . . WERE:** It is really the body that becomes weak and unconscious at the time of death. The soul is formless and self-luminous; therefore weakness and unconsciousness cannot be attributed to it. Hence the expression "as it were," to express the view of ignorant people.

**HAVING WHOLLY ETC:** The phrase "particles of light" is used with reference to the organs, such as the eye, because, like light, they reveal colour, etc. The adverb *wholly* shows the difference between this state and the dream state, when the organs are merely drawn in and not wholly withdrawn.

**PRESIDING DEITY:** The sun in its microcosmic aspect is the presiding or controlling deity of the eye. This deity helps the eye to function as long as a person lives, as determined by his past action. At the time of death the deity stops his help and goes back to the sun. He again returns to the eye when the man takes another body. This is also true of the other organs. An aspect of *vāyu* is the presiding deity of the *prāna*, and an aspect of fire is the presiding deity of the organ of speech.

**FAILS ETC:** Because the self completely withdraws the organs.

The topic of rebirth, already introduced (IV. iii. 36.), will now be discussed in detail. When and how the self becomes detached from the body is stated.

*All the organs of the dying man become united with his subtle body.*

2

"[The eye] becomes united [with the subtle body]; then people say: 'He does not see.' [The nose] becomes united [with the subtle body];

then they say: 'He does not smell.' [The tongue] becomes united [with the subtle body]; then they say: 'He does not taste.' [The vocal organ] becomes united [with the subtle body]; then they say: 'He does not speak.' [The ear] becomes united [with the subtle body]; then they say: 'He does not hear.' [The mind] becomes united [with the subtle body]; then they say: 'He does not think.' [The skin] becomes united [with the subtle body]; then they say: 'He does not touch.' [The intellect] becomes united [with the subtle body]; then they say: 'He does not know.'

"The upper end of the heart lights up, and by that light the self departs, either through the eye or through the head or through any other part (aperture) of the body.

"And when the self departs, the vital breath follows, and when the vital breath departs, all the organs follow.

"Then the self becomes endowed with a particular consciousness and passes on to the body to be attained by that consciousness.

"Knowledge, work, and past experience follow the self.

[THE EYE] BECOMES ETC: At the time of death the presiding deities cease to function and the organs are united with the heart, that is to say, the subtle body, with its seat in the heart.

THE UPPER . . . HEART: The orifice of the heart, through which the self makes its exit.

LIGHTS UP: It has been stated (IV. iii. 9.) that in dreams the self reveals the subtle impressions of the desires of the waking state, which are transformed into mental states; likewise, at the time of death the light of the self, when the organs are united in the heart, reveals the impressions of the kind of future body which will be suitable for the experience of the results of the self's past actions. The phrase "lights up" refers to the knowledge of the impressions, which latter are effects of past actions and not inherent in the self.

THE SELF DEPARTS: Refers to the individual self with the subtle body as its limiting adjunct. Compare: "The Purusha reflected: 'What is it by whose departure I shall depart, and by whose staying I shall stay?' He created *prāna*." (*Pr. Up.* VI. 3-4.)

EITHER THROUGH ETC: The way of exit is determined by past action. The self, departing through the eye, goes to the sun; departing through the head, to Hiranagarbha; and so on.

VITAL . . . FOLLOWS: Like the Prime Minister of a king.

ORGANS . . . FOLLOW: Actually no sequence is meant. At the time of death the subtle body, consisting of the vital breath, the organs, etc., goes out.

**PARTICULAR CONSCIOUSNESS:** That is to say, the particular consciousness which determines the next body to be assumed by the self. This consciousness is determined by one's past actions. Compare: "For whatever object a man thinks of at the final moment, when he leaves his body—that alone does he attain, O son of Kunti, being ever absorbed in the thought thereof." (B. G. VIII. 6.)

**PASSES ON . . . CONSCIOUSNESS:** One should therefore be careful to do good and avoid evil, and to practise spiritual disciplines, so that only good thoughts may arise at the moment of death.

**KNOWLEDGE . . . EXPERIENCE:** Knowledge, work, and past experience are the assets of the man journeying to the next life. The word *knowledge* refers to knowledge of all sorts, righteous or unrighteous, as well as of trivial things. The same applies to work.

**PAST EXPERIENCE:** That is to say, the impressions of experience gained from the results of past actions. These impressions help in initiating new actions as well as in bringing past work to fruition. "Without these impressions no action can be done; for the organs are not skilful in unaccustomed work. But when the organs are prompted to work by impressions of past experience, they can attain skill even without experience in this life. It is frequently observed that some are clever in certain kinds of work, such as painting, from their very birth, even without practice in the present life, while others are unskilful even in some very easy task. Similarly, in the enjoyment of sense-objects some are observed to be skilful and some dull. All this is due to the revival or non-revival of past experience. Without past experience we cannot understand how anyone can proceed to accomplish any work or to enjoy the fruit of past actions. One should therefore be endowed with good knowledge, good work, and good experience, so that one may obtain a desirable body and desirable enjoyments. This is the purport of the whole passage." (*Śankarāchārya*.)

*How does the self move from one body to another? The impressions called past experience, under the control of the person's knowledge and work, stretch out, like a leech, from the body, retaining their seat in the heart, as in the dream state, and build another body in accordance with his past work. They leave their seat, the old body, when a new body is made. Into this body the organs enter, together with their presiding deities.*

"And just as a leech moving on a blade of grass reaches its end, takes hold of another, and draws itself together towards it, so does the

self, after throwing off this body, that is to say, after making it unconscious, take hold of another support and draw itself together towards it.

**THROWING OFF ETC:** As it does when going into the dream state.

**TAKE HOLD ETC:** By stretching out its impressions.

**MAKING . . . UNCONSCIOUS:** That is to say, the self gives up its identification with the old body.

In the new body, the organs, under the control of the person's past karma, become active and are co-ordinated. The physical body also is formed. When the organs have been arranged, the presiding deities come to the body to help the organs. This is the process of formation of the new body.

*How is the new body formed? This is explained with the help of an illustration:*

## 4

"And just as a goldsmith takes a small quantity of gold and fashions [out of it] another—a newer and better—form, so does the self, after throwing off this body, that is to say, after making it unconscious, fashion another—a newer and better—form, suited to the Manes, or the gandharvas, or the gods, or Virāj, or Hiranyagarbha, or other beings.

**SURROD TO ETC:** Fit for the enjoyment of objects in different planes of existence.

The individual self, after leaving its present body, is surrounded by fine particles of the five gross elements, which serve as the material for building the new body.

*All the various limiting adjuncts identified with which the soul becomes bound to the phenomenal world are pointed out in a group:*

## 5

"That self is indeed Brahman; it is also identified with the intellect, the mind, and the vital breath, with the eyes and ears, with earth, water, air, and ākāśa, with fire and with what is other than fire, with desire and with absence of desire, with anger and with absence of anger, with righteousness and unrighteousness, with all—it is identified, as

is well known, with this (i.e. what is perceived) and with that (i.e. what is inferred). According as it acts and according as it behaves, so it becomes: by doing good it becomes good, and by doing evil it becomes evil. It becomes virtuous through virtuous action, and evil through evil action.

"Others, however, say that the self is identified with desire alone. As is its desire, so is its resolution; and as is its resolution, so is its deed; and whatever deed it does, that it reaps.

**SELF:** The embodied self, which is reborn.

**BRAHMAN:** The Supreme Self, which is beyond birth and death.

**IT . . . INTELLECT:** The self is said to be identified with the intellect because it appears to be endowed with the attributes of the intellect.

**MIND:** Because of its proximity to the mind, the self is said to be identified with the mind.

**VITAL BREATH:** On account of this identification the individual self appears to move.

**EYES ETC:** The individual self sees forms when identified with the eyes, and hears sounds when identified with the ears.

**EARTH ETC:** The self is said to be identified with earth when it desires to assume a physical body, which is preponderantly of earth. Likewise, it is said to be identified with water, air, or ākāśa when it desires to assume a body consisting preponderantly of one of those elements.

**FIRE:** Refers to the bodies of gods, which preponderate in the element fire.

**WHAT IS OTHER THAN FIRE:** Refers to the bodies of animals, ghosts, etc.

**DESIRE:** When the self sees something and desires to attain it, it sets its heart on that thing and becomes identified with desire.

**ABSENCE OF DESIRE:** When the self discovers evil in an object, its longing for that object ceases and the mind becomes serene; then it is said to be identified with absence of desire.

**ANGER:** When a desire is somehow frustrated, the self becomes identified with anger.

**ABSENCE OF ANGER:** When the anger is appeased, the mind becomes peaceful; then the self is said to be identified with absence of anger.

**RIGHTHOUSNESS ETC:** Everything in this universe of multiplicity is the result of righteousness and unrighteousness.

**WITH . . . THAT:** The word *this* refers to objects that are perceived, and the word *that* to imperceptible objects. The mind can cherish an infinite number of thoughts which cannot be definitely specified; they are known at particular moments through their effects, which lead one to infer that this or that particular thought is in one's mind.

**AS IT ACTS:** Refers to conduct, for instance, as indicated by the injunctions and prohibitions of the scriptures.

**AS IT BEHAVES:** Refers to matters neither enjoined nor forbidden by the scriptures.

**VIRTUOUS ETC:** Refers to even casual performance of a good or an evil deed. Repetition or habitual performance intensifies the identification. In short, the performance of good and evil deeds under the impulse of desire, anger, etc. is the cause of the ātman's identification and of its undergoing the process of rebirth. Impelled by this identification, the self takes one body after another. Therefore good and bad deeds are the causes of its rebirth.

**OTHERS:** That is to say, other authorities on bondage and Liberation.

**SELF . . . ALONE:** It is true that good and bad deeds prompted by desire etc. are the causes of rebirth; still it is under the influence of desire that a man engages in these deeds. When desire is absent, a deed does not lead to the accumulation of merit or demerit. Even though a man who is free of desires goes on doing good or bad deeds, he does not reap any result from them. Thus desire alone is the root of transmigration.

**AS IS ITS DESIRE ETC:** Desire manifests itself as the longing, however slight, for a particular object, and if unchecked, takes a more definite shape and becomes determination, which is followed by action.

**AND WHATEVER ETC:** Therefore desire is the only cause of the ātman's identification, as also of its undergoing the series of birth and death.

## 6

“Regarding this there is the following verse:

“Because of attachment, the [transmigrating] self, together with its work, attains that result to which its subtle body or mind clings. Having exhausted [in the other world] the results of whatever work it did in this life, it returns from that world to this world for [fresh] work.”

“Thus does the man who desires [transmigrate]. But as to the man who does not desire—who is without desire, who is freed from desire, whose desire is satisfied, whose only object of desire is the Self—his organs do not depart. Being Brahman, he merges in Brahman.

**REGARDING THIS:** Regarding the view that desire is the root of transmigration.

**TOGETHER WITH ETC:** Refers only to deeds performed with attachment to the result.

**SUBTLE ETC:** The mind is called the subtle body (lingam) because it is the principal part of the latter.

**CLINGS:** Only because of the attachment of a man's mind to the fruit of action is he reborn. Thus desire is the root of transmigration. Hence though a knower of Brahman, who has rooted out all desires, may work, he does not reap any baneful result.

**HAVING EXHAUSTED:** Through experiencing them.

**THIS WORLD . . . WORK:** Work holds the foremost place in this world. Hence the text says: "For [fresh] work," that is to say, to work again. After working here, a man goes, owing to his attachment to results, to the next world.

**THUS DOES ETC:** Since it is the man who desires that transmigrates, the man who does not desire does not transmigrate at all. The latter does not desire because he is without desire; he is without desire because he is freed from desire; he is freed from desire because his desire is satisfied; his desire is satisfied because the only object of his desire is Brahman, which he has attained—there exists nothing apart from Brahman which he can desire. What else should a person desire who has realized Brahman and to whom everything has become the Self? A thing that is regarded as other than oneself may become an object of one's desire; but such a thing does not exist for a knower of Brahman. It cannot be contended that a knower of Brahman should perform religious rites in order to ward off evil, because in that case one would admit the existence of evil as other than oneself. The knower of Brahman does not fight evil because for him evil does not exist; he sees Ātman alone everywhere. But one who is not a knower of Brahman and who consequently sees evil should perform religious rites to ward off evil.

**HIS ORGANS . . . DEPART:** That is to say, in order to go to another world. In this very life he becomes Brahman. He does not have to wait till death in order to realize that he is none other than Brahman.

**BEING BRAHMAN ETC:** A man who has realized himself as Brahman does not, after death, undergo any change of condition. Liberation is a state of homogeneous consciousness; hence no change can be imagined in it. The Self is always Brahman. Liberation is not the result of any action; otherwise it would be non-eternal. Nothing that is produced as the result of an action can be eternal. Further, nothing but the inherent nature of a thing can be regarded as eternal. Liberation is the very nature of the Self, as heat is of fire; it is not the consequence of any action. Liberation is not merely something negative, the cessation of bondage; for the Supreme Self is the only entity that exists. There is no other entity in bondage whose freedom from bondage could be called Liberation. Therefore the cessation of ignorance, the cause of the illusory notion of bondage, is commonly called Liberation; it is like the disappearance of the snake from the rope when the erroneous notion about its existence has been dispelled. From the stand-

point of the Self there is neither bondage nor Liberation; but from the relative standpoint, created by ignorance, the reality of bondage is admitted: therefore the effort to remove bondage is perfectly reasonable. The gist of the passage is this: Brahman is the only reality that exists; It is always the same, homogeneous, one and without a second, unchanging, birthless, undecaying, immortal, deathless, and fearless. Ignorance, which in an inscrutable manner inheres in Brahman, creates a veil which hides the true nature of Brahman but cannot change It. Thus a phenomenal being appears, like a mirage in the desert or an illusory snake in a rope. This phenomenal being, by following the disciplines laid down in the scriptures, casts off ignorance and rediscovers its true nature. This is called merging in Brahman. Therefore the statement: "He merges in Brahman" is but a figurative one, indicating the cessation, as a result of Knowledge, of the continuous chain of bodies for one who has held the view that he is other than Brahman.

*It has been stated that desire is the cause of rebirth, that the man who does not desire is not reborn, that Liberation consists in the realization of identity with everything, that it is achieved when one obtains all objects of desire by becoming the Self through the Knowledge of Brahman, and that ignorance is the obstacle to this Knowledge and the cause of bondage. Therefore Liberation is achieved only through the destruction of ignorance and its offshoot, desire.*

## 7

"Regarding this there is the following verse:

"When all the desires that dwell in his heart are got rid of, then does the mortal [man] become immortal and attain Brahman in this very body.'

"Just as the slough of a snake lies, dead and cast away, on an ant-hill, even so lies this body. Then the self becomes disembodied and immortal Spirit, the Supreme Self (Prāna), Brahman, the Light."

Janaka, Emperor of Videha, said: "I give you, venerable Sir, a thousand cows."

**ALL THE DESIRES:** The various forms of yearning for enjoyments in this and the next life—namely, the desire for children, wealth, and the heavenly world—that abide in the mind of the ordinary man.

**GOT RID OF:** Together with their root, that is to say, ignorance.

**DOES . . . IMMORTAL:** Desires concerning things other than the Self fall under the category of ignorance and are but forms of death. Therefore by getting rid of death the mortal man becomes immortal.

**BRAHMAN:** That is to say, Liberation.

**THIS VERY BODY:** It is not necessary to go to some other plane of existence in order to obtain Liberation. Therefore the organs of a man who has attained Brahman do not depart; they merge in their cause, the Self.

**EVEN SO ETC:** The slough cast off by the snake is no longer part of the snake; likewise, the body discarded as non-Self by the liberated man is no longer part of him.

**BECOMES DISEMBODIED:** The liberated man is not connected with the body. He is like the kernel of a dry fruit—an almond, for instance—which is completely separate from the shell. Prior to his liberation he was embodied and mortal because of his identification with the body, under the influence of desire and past action.

**I GIVE YOU ETC:** As a requital for the instruction received.

## 8

“Regarding this there are the following verses:

“The subtle, ancient path stretching far away has been touched (reached) by me; nay, I have realized it myself. By this path the wise, the knowers of Brahman, move on to the celestial sphere (Liberation) after the fall of this body, having been freed [even while living].’

**REGARDING THIS:** Regarding the statement that Liberation is attained by knowers of Brahman.

**ANCIENT:** Eternal, revealed by the eternal Vedas. It is not a modern doctrine formulated by the intellects of logicians.

**PATH:** The path of knowledge that leads to Liberation.

**REALIZED IT:** Realization (anubhava) is that attainment which, as knowledge ripens, culminates in the ultimate result of Liberation, just as eating culminates in satiety.

**BY THIS PATH ETC:** This statement shows that the Knowledge of Brahman is accessible to all.

**CELESTIAL SPHERE:** In this particular context the phrase signifies Liberation.

*There are divergent views regarding the way to Liberation:*

## 9

“Some speak of it as white, [others as] blue, grey, green, or red. This path is realized by a knower of Brahman and is trod by whoever knows Brahman, has done good deeds, and is identified with the Supreme Light.’

**IT:** The way to Liberation.

**AS WHITE ETC:** That is to say, according to their experience. These colours denote the finite experience of the seekers. But the path itself is Knowledge and free from any colour. These colours belong to the *Su-shumnā* and the other nerves, which are filled with liquids of various colours. (IV. iii. 20.) Or those who speak of the path's having various colours may be thinking of the sun and its rays of various colours. (*Chh. Up.* VIII. vi. 1.) The white and other paths designated by the yogis as the paths to Liberation belong to the world of empirical existence. They lead to the Plane of *Hiranyagarbha* etc., for they relate to the exit of the soul through particular parts of the body. (IV. iv. 2.)

**WHOEVER KNOWS BRAHMAN:** By the relinquishment of desires.

**DONE GOOD DEEDS:** For the purification of the mind prior to the renunciation of the world.

*Śankarāchārya* is opposed to the view that an action done at the impulsion of good desire is compatible with the Knowledge of Brahman. But a doer of good is a fortunate soul.

## 10

“Into blinding darkness enter those who worship ignorance; into a greater darkness than that, as it were, enter those who are devoted to knowledge.’

**BLINDING DARKNESS:** That is to say, *avidyā* or nescience, which causes the rebirth of the soul.

**IGNORANCE:** That which is the opposite of knowledge, that is to say, work consisting of ends and means.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The ceremonial portion of the Vedas, dealing with various injunctions and prohibitions. The passage refers to those who deny the primacy of the Upanishads, which alone show the way to Liberation.

This verse also occurs in the *Īśa Upanishad* as verse 9.

*What is the harm if they enter into the realm of darkness?*

## 11

“Cheerless indeed are those worlds covered with blinding darkness. To them after death go those people who are ignorant and unwise.’

**UNWISE:** Devoid of the Knowledge of the Self.

## 12

“If a man knows the Self as *I am this*, then desiring what and for whose sake will he suffer in the wake of the body?’

**IF A MAN ETC:** Such a person is a rarity, one in a thousand.

**THE SELF:** The Supreme Self, which is in essence his own self.

**AS I AM THIS:** That is to say, as the Supreme Self, “the Witness of perception, described as ‘Not this, not this’; than which there is no other seer, hearer, thinker, or knower; which is always the same and is in all beings; and which is by nature pure, eternal, enlightened, and free.” (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**FOR WHOSE SAKE ETC:** That is to say: For the need of what other person distinct from himself should a man suffer? He is the same as the Supreme Self and therefore has nothing to wish for; there is none other than himself for whose sake he may wish it, since he is the Self of all.

**WILL HE SUFFER ETC:** That is to say, deviate from his nature and become miserable, following the misery suffered by the body. For this is possible only for the person who, being identified with the body, does not see the Self and consequently desires things other than It. Such a person struggles, desiring something for himself, something else for his son, a third thing for his wife, and so on; he goes the rounds of birth and death; and he feels he is ailing when the body is ailing. But all this is impossible for the man who sees everything as the Self.

*Furthermore:*

## 13

“Whoever has realized and intimately known the Self, which has entered this perilous and perplexing place (the body), is the maker of the universe; for he is the maker of all. [All] is his Self, and he, again, is indeed the Self of all.’

**KNOWN THE SELF:** That is to say, as “I am the Supreme Brahman.”

**PERILOUS:** Beset with numerous dangers.

**PERPLEXING:** Because of innumerable obstacles to enlightenment.

**MAKER OF THE UNIVERSE:** That is to say, completely blessed.

“This innermost self, which has entered the body beset with various dangers, and which the knower of Brahman realizes through direct perception, is not the individual self, but the Supreme Self, because it is the maker of the universe, the Self of all, and all is Its Self. One should

meditate on one's identity with the Supreme Self, the One only without a second." (*Śāṅkarāchārya.*)

*The bliss of the realization of Brahman is self-evident.*

## 14

"Dwelling in this very body, we have somehow realized Brahman; otherwise we should have remained ignorant and great destruction would have overtaken us. Those who know Brahman become immortal, while others only suffer misery.'

**VERY BODY:** Which is full of limitations and which functions under the spell of ignorance.

**WE . . . BRAHMAN:** Oh, how blessed we are!—this is the idea.

**DESTRUCTION:** Consisting of repeated births and deaths.

**MISERY:** Rebirth in the phenomenal world.

The ignorant, who regard the body as the Self, never escape from the misery of repeated births and deaths.

## 15

"When a person following [the instructions of a teacher] directly beholds the effulgent Self, the Lord of all that has been and will be, he no longer wishes to hide himself from It.'

**LORD . . . WILL BE:** That is to say, of the past, present, and future.

**HIDE ETC:** That is to say, from the Lord. He who sees diversity wishes to hide himself from the Lord. But the illumined person sees oneness; hence he is not afraid of anything. Or the passage may mean that when he directly realizes the Lord as identical with his own self, he no longer finds fault with anyone, for he sees all as his self.

## 16

"That under which the year with its days rolls on—upon that immortal Light of all lights the gods meditate as longevity.'

**YEAR:** The symbol of time, which puts limitations on all created things.

**ROLLS ON:** The purport of the phrase is that time cannot limit the Lord and occupies a lower position in His creation.

**LIGHT OF ALL LIGHTS:** Which reveals such luminous objects as the sun, moon, etc.

**LONGEVITY:** Things other than the Self perish. Because the Self is imperishable, longevity is one of Its attributes. The gods meditate upon the Self through Its attribute of longevity and thus are long-lived. Hence one who desires longevity should meditate upon Brahman through Its attribute of longevity.

*Brahman is immortal because It is the substratum of all things.*

## 17

“That in which the five groups of five and the ākāśa rest, that very Ātman I regard as the Immortal Brahman. Knowing that Brahman, I am immortal.’

**FIVE GROUPS OF FIVE:** Namely, the celestial minstrels, the Manes, the gods, the demons, and the rākshasas (monsters); or the four castes and the untouchables as the fifth; or the vital breath, eye, ear, food (or light), and mind.

**ĀKĀŚA:** Called the Undifferentiated, which pervades Hiranyagarbha (the Sutra). (See III. viii. 11.)

**KNOWING THAT ETC:** One becomes mortal only through ignorance. Since his ignorance has been destroyed, the rishi (seer) describes himself as immortal.

## 18

“They who know the Vital Breath (Prāna) of the vital breath (prāna), the Eye of the eye, the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, have realized the ancient, primordial Brahman.’

**VITAL BREATH ETC:** It is by the power of Ātman, which is Pure Intelligence, that the vital breath functions. By itself, divested of the power of Ātman, it is like a piece of wood or a clod of earth.

**THEY HAVE ETC:** Because the self is identical with Brahman.

From the functioning of the vital breath, the eye, and the other organs, the existence of Ātman can be inferred.

*The means by which Brahman is realized:*

## 19

“Through the mind alone is Brahman to be realized. There is in It no diversity. He goes from death to death who sees in It, as it were, diversity.’

**MIND:** Purified by the knowledge of the Supreme Truth, following the instructions of a teacher versed in the scriptures.

**NO DIVERSITY:** One sees diversity owing to ignorance.

**AS IT WERE:** There is really no diversity. It is only under the spell of ignorance that one sees it.

## 20

“Unknowable and constant, It should be realized in one form only. The Self is free from taint, beyond the ākāśa, birthless, infinite, and unchanging.’

**UNKNOWABLE:** Ordinary knowledge implies the duality of subject and object. As Brahman forms the unity of all things, It is unknowable.

**IN . . . ONLY:** That is to say, as homogeneous Pure Intelligence without any break, like space.

**FREE FROM TAINT:** Free from good and evil.

**BEYOND:** Subtler than.

**BIRTHLESS:** The negation of birth denotes absence of all changes, such as growth, transformation, maturity, decay, and death.

It may be contended that there is a contradiction in the two statements, namely, that Brahman is unknowable and that It should be known. The contention is not valid. When it is said that Brahman is unknowable, the statement means that Brahman cannot be known as an object by the ordinary means of knowledge. Again, when it is said that Brahman should be known, the statement means that Brahman can be known only through scriptural evidence. The scriptures, too, describe Brahman by the denial of such attributes as that It is the subject or the object of knowledge. They do not speak of Brahman as an object. The Knowledge of Brahman really means the cessation of Its identification with extraneous objects, such as the body and organs. It is the knowledge of identity with Ātman. Such identity is not to be attained; it always exists but remains hidden because of the false identification with the body, organs, etc. When the false identity is destroyed, the natural identification of the Self with Brahman is revealed. This is expressed by the statement that the Self is known.

## 21

“The intelligent seeker of Brahman, learning about the Self alone, should practise wisdom (prajñā). Let him not think of too many words, for that is exhausting to the organ of speech.’

**LEARNING ETC:** From the instruction of a teacher and from the scriptures.

**SHOULD PRACTISE ETC:** He should practise the disciplines for the attain-

ment of Knowledge, namely, renunciation, calmness, withdrawal of the senses, fortitude, concentration, etc.

LET HIM NOT ETC: The restriction concerning words implies that a few words dealing exclusively with the unity of the Self are permissible. "Meditate on Ātman as Om" (*Mu. Up. II. ii. 6*); "Give up all other talk" (*Mu. Up. II. ii. 5*).

*The whole of the Vedas, except that portion treating of the rituals having material ends, is devoted to Self-Knowledge.*

## 22

"That great, unborn Self, which is identified with the intellect (*vijnānamaya*) and which dwells in the midst of the organs, lies in the *ākāśa* within the heart. It is the controller of all, the lord of all, the ruler of all. It does not become greater through good deeds or smaller through evil deeds. It is the lord of all, the ruler of all beings, the protector of all beings. It is the dam that serves as the boundary to keep the different worlds apart. The *brāhmins* seek to realize It through the study of the Vedas, through sacrifices, through gifts, and through austerity which does not lead to annihilation. Knowing It alone one becomes a sage (*muni*). Wishing for this World (i.e. the Self) alone, monks renounce their homes.

"The knowers of Brahman of olden times, it is said, did not wish for offspring [because they thought]: 'What shall we do with offspring—we who have attained this Self, this World?' They gave up, it is said, their desire for sons, for wealth, and for the worlds, and led the life of [religious] mendicants. That which is the desire for sons is the desire for wealth, and that which is the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds; for both these, indeed, are but desires.

"This Self is That which has been described as *Not this, not this*. It is imperceptible, for It is not perceived; undecaying, for It never decays; unattached, for It is never attached; unfettered, for It never feels pain and never suffers injury.

"Him [who knows this] these two thoughts do not overcome: *For this I did an evil deed*, and *For this I did a good deed*. He overcomes both. Things done or not done do not afflict him.'

THAT GREAT, UNBORN SELF: Previously referred to (IV. iii. 7.) as the infinite entity. Janaka had asked: "Which is the self?"

ĀKĀŚA WITHIN THE HEART: The heart is the seat of the intellect (*vi-*

jnāna). The soul, while lying in the ākāśa within the heart, is designated as the vijnānamaya puruṣa. Or the passage may mean that the individual soul in the state of dreamless sleep dwells in the unconditioned Supreme Self, called Ākāśa, which is its very nature.

**CONTROLLER OF ALL:** That is to say, of Hiranyagarbha, Indra, and the other deities. Compare: "Under the mighty rule of this Imperishable . . ." (III. viii. 9.)

**RULER OF ALL:** That is to say, the independent ruler, not swayed by ministers and other officials, as an ordinary earthly ruler may be.

**BECOME GREATER:** That is to say, improve from the previous state by the acquisition of certain attributes.

**GOOD DEEDS:** Enjoined by the scriptures. The Self is not attached to any work, good or evil, and therefore acquires no merit or demerit by its performance.

**LORD OF ALL:** That is to say, of all works.

**IT IS THE DAM . . . APART:** The four castes and the four stages of life laid down in the Vedas have been ordained by the Lord. Through them society is saved from moral confusion. Likewise, the different worlds where living beings reap the fruit of their actions do not become confused, because they are kept separate by the divine law.

**BRĀHMINS:** The term also includes the kshatriyas and the vaiśyas, who are entitled to study the Vedas.

**STUDY OF THE VEDAS ETC:** Daily recital of the Vedas, consisting of the Mantra and Brāhmaṇa. The study of the Vedas, the performance of sacrifices, and the practice of charity and austerities purify the heart. The pure in heart can realize Brahman, as revealed by the Upanishads. These disciplines should be performed without seeking any material result from them.

**AUSTERITY ETC:** The spiritual seeker should enjoy helpful sense-objects, being free from attachment and aversion. Indiscriminate austerity—starving oneself, for example—leads to death and not to Self-Knowledge.

**SAGE:** A man of reflection, a yogi. There is no other way to become a yogi than through Self-Knowledge.

**MONKS . . . HOMES:** That is to say, they relinquish all the rites which are the support of a householder's life. Those who are still attached to the three phenomenal worlds, namely, the earth, the world of the Manes, and Hiranyagarbha, must not become monks; they should procreate children, perform Vedic rites, and meditate on the conditioned Brahman in order to attain their cherished desires. Compare: "The world of men can be gained through a son only," etc. (I. v. 16). The attainment of the World of the Self means living in one's own Self after the cessation of ignorance. Those who desire to attain the World of the Self must renounce their

homes, that is to say, must abstain from all rites. For them monastic life, consisting of the cessation of all desires, is enjoined.

**DID . . . OFFSPRING:** The passage also means that they did not perform rites and did not meditate on the Saguna Brahman.

**WHAT SHALL . . . WORLD:** Children, rites, etc. are the means to enjoy happiness in the phenomenal world. But to the knower of the Self, everything, including the phenomenal world, is the Self; he is the Self of everything. He who sees the Truth, the World of the Self, does not run after the things to be achieved through children, rites, etc.—things which are unreal, like a mirage. The renunciation of the world for the attainment of Brahman is an injunction.

**NOT THIS, NOT THIS:** The Self, desiring which the aspirant should renounce his home, is not connected, either as means or as end, with any kind of work. Therefore It is described in negative terms. The Self is “free from all relative attributes, beyond hunger etc., devoid of grossness etc., birthless, undecaying, immortal, undying, beyond fear, homogeneous by nature like a lump of salt, self-effulgent, one only without a second, without antecedent or consequent, and without interior or exterior. Therefore after this Self is known as one’s own self, no more work can be done.” (*Śankarāchārya.*)

**FOR THIS . . . EVIL DEED:** For example, for the preservation of the body. The sinful deed will lead the doer to hell. Repentance for having done a sinful deed does not overcome the sage who has become identified with the Self, described as “Not this, not this.”

**THINGS DONE ETC:** Refers to the performance of prescribed rites or their omission. It is the man who is ignorant of the Self that is troubled by things done (on account of having to reap their results) or things not done (on account of having to reap adverse consequences). But this does not apply to one endowed with Self-Knowledge. As to those actions that have caused the present body, they are exhausted through actual experience. Hence the knower of Brahman has no connexion with work.

## 23

“This has been expressed by the following Rig verse:

“This is the eternal glory of Brahman: It neither increases nor decreases through work. [Therefore] one should know the nature of That alone. Knowing It one is not touched by evil action.’

“Therefore he who knows It as such becomes self-controlled, calm, withdrawn into himself, patient, and collected; he sees the Self in his own self (body); he sees all as the Self. Evil does not overcome him, but he overcomes all evil. Evil does not afflict him, but he consumes

all evil. He becomes sinless, taintless, free from doubts, and a true Brāhmana (knower of Brahman). This is the World of Brahman, O Emperor, and you have attained It." Thus said Yājñavalkya.

Janaka said: "Venerable Sir, I give you the empire of Videha and myself, too, with it, to wait upon you."

**THIS:** What is expressed in the sentence in the preceding verse: "This Self is that etc."

**ETERNAL GLORY:** This glory is the very nature of Brahman, and is not acquired through work. Anything that is acquired is again lost; it is not permanent.

**IT NEITHER . . . WORK:** It does not undergo the change called growth through good work, nor does It undergo the change called decay through evil work. Since all changes are due to growth or decay, they are all negated by the present statement. Hence the glory of Brahman is changeless and eternal.

**EVIL ACTION:** This includes good action also; for both good and evil belong to the phenomenal world, and the knower of Brahman is not attached to it.

**SELF-CONTROLLED:** Stopping the activities of the external organs.

**CALM:** Averse to the cravings of the internal organ, or mind.

**WITHDRAWN ETC:** Free from all desires. The phrase refers to a monk.

**PATIENT:** Indifferent to the pairs of opposites.

**COLLECTED:** Attaining one-pointedness of the mind through dissociation from the movements of the organs and mind.

**SEES THE SELF:** That is to say, sees the inner Intelligence.

**IN HIS OWN SELF:** In his body and organs.

**HE . . . AS THE SELF:** He sees that there is nothing different, even by a hair's breadth, from the Self.

**EVIL:** Which comprises both righteousness and unrighteousness, since both belong to the phenomenal world.

**OVERCOMES ALL EVIL:** Because he realizes evil, too, to be his Self.

**SINLESS:** Devoid of both merit and demerit.

**TAINTLESS:** Free from desires.

**BRĀHMANA:** The word generally denotes a member of the brāhmin caste; but its true meaning is "knower of Brahman." Prior to the realization of Brahman, a man belonging to the highest caste is called a Brāhmana only in a figurative sense.

**You . . . It:** Through the help of Yājñavalkya, Janaka had realized his oneness with Brahman.

The topic of the Knowledge of Brahman, together with its results and disciplines, is concluded, as well as that of renunciation. This much is to

be attained by a man; this is the culmination of his efforts; this is the Highest Good. Attaining this, one achieves all that has to be achieved and becomes a knower of Brahman. Such is the teaching of the whole of the Vedas.

*A eulogy of the Knowledge of Brahman:*

24

That great, unborn Self is the eater of food and the giver of wealth. He who knows this obtains wealth.

**THAT GREAT ETC:** That which has been explained in the story of Janaka and Yājñavalkya.

**EATER OF FOOD:** The Self dwells in all beings and eats all the food that they eat.

**GIVER OF WEALTH:** Giver of the fruit of actions. It is He who connects all beings with the results of their respective actions; otherwise a man may reap the fruit of action which he has not done.

**HE WHO ETC:** He obtains the fruit of the actions performed by all beings, because he is their very Self. Or the passage may mean that the Self is to be meditated upon as endowed with the two attributes mentioned in the text, even by a man who wants visible results. By means of that meditation he becomes an eater of food and a receiver of wealth.

*Now the import of the whole Upanishad is summed up:*

25

That great, unborn Self is undecaying, immortal, undying, fearless; It is Brahman (infinite). Brahman is indeed fearless. He who knows It as such becomes the fearless Brahman.

**UNDECAYING:** It does not wear away.

**IMMORTAL:** Because Brahman is undecaying. That which is born and decays also dies.

**UNDYING:** Because It is free from the three changes of birth, decay, and death.

**FEARLESS:** Because It is free from ignorance, which is the cause of birth, decay, and death.

**IT IS BRAHMAN:** Here the word *Brahman* means vast or infinite.

The gist of the Upanishad has been given in this verse: the non-duality and immortality of the Self and Its identity with Brahman. In order to

establish this truth, Vedānta discusses illusory superimposition (adhyāropa) and its refutation (apavāda). The ideas of creation, preservation, and destruction, as well as those of action, actor, instruments of action, and result, are superimposed upon the non-dual Self through ignorance. Again, these are refuted through the process of "Neti, neti." Thus in the end the Self is realized as Pure Intelligence, one with Brahman. Creation, preservation, etc. are never real from the standpoint of the Supreme Brahman. As, in order to teach the alphabet, the instructor uses paper, ink, lines, etc., and through them explains the nature of the letters, but never says that the letters are the paper, ink, or lines, similarly, in this exposition the non-dual Brahman has been explained through such means as creation, preservation, etc. Again, to eliminate the apparent diversity created by these hypothetical means, the truth has been summed up as "Not this, not this."

*Here ends Chapter Four  
of Part Four of the  
Brihadāraṇyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER V

### YĀJNAVALKYA AND MAITREYI (II)

YĀJNAVALKYA had two wives: Maitreyi and Kātyāyani. Of these, Maitreyi was conversant with the Knowledge of Brahman, while Kātyāyani had an essentially feminine outlook. One day Yājñavalkya, when he wished to embrace another mode of life,

ANOTHER . . . LIFE: He was about to renounce the householder's life and become a monk.

The present section is virtually a repetition of II. iv. The Knowledge of Brahman has been discussed there on the basis of scriptural authority, the chapter forming, as it were, the statement of a proposition. In part three, the same Knowledge of Brahman has been demonstrated through reason. In part four, it has again been discussed by means of questions and answers between a teacher and his disciple, and a conclusion has been arrived at. The present chapter repeats the proposition stated in part two, to denote that the topic is concluded. This is a familiar method of Indian logic.

#### 2

Said: "Maitreyi, my dear, I am going to renounce this life [to become a monk]. Let me make a final settlement between you and Kātyāyani."

See II. iv. 1.

#### 3

Maitreyi said: "Venerable Sir, if indeed the whole earth full of wealth belonged to me, would I be immortal through that or not?" "No," replied Yājñavalkya, "your life would be just like that of people who have plenty. Of Immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth."

See II. iv. 2.

## 4

Then Maitreyi said: "What should I do with that which would not make me immortal? Tell me, venerable Sir, of that alone which you know [to be the only means of attaining Immortality]."

## 5

Yājñavalkya replied: "My dear, you have been my beloved [even before], and [now] you have resolved [to know] what is after my heart. If you wish, my dear, I shall explain it to you. As I explain it, meditate [on what I say]."

See II. iv. 4.

## 6

And he said: "Verily, not for the sake of the husband, my dear, is the husband loved, but he is loved for the sake of the self [which, in its true nature, is one with the Supreme Self].

"Verily, not for the sake of the wife, my dear, is the wife loved, but she is loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the sons, my dear, are the sons loved, but they are loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of wealth, my dear, is wealth loved, but it is loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the animals, my dear, are the animals loved, but they are loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the brāhmin, my dear, is the brāhmin loved, but he is loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the kshatriya, my dear, is the kshatriya loved, but he is loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the worlds, my dear, are the worlds loved, but they are loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the gods, my dear, are the gods loved, but they are loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the Vedas, my dear, are the Vedas loved, but they are loved for the sake of the self.

"Verily, not for the sake of the beings, my dear, are the beings loved, but they are loved for the sake of the self.

“Verily, not for the sake of the All, my dear, is the All loved, but it is loved for the sake of the self.

“Verily, my dear Maitreyi, it is the Self that should be realized—should be heard of, reflected on, and meditated upon. By the realization of the Self, my dear, through hearing, reflection, and meditation, all this is known.

See II. iv. 5.

## 7

“The brāhmin rejects one who knows him as different from the Self. The kshatriya rejects one who knows him as different from the Self. The worlds reject one who knows them as different from the Self. The gods reject one who knows them as different from the Self. The Vedas reject one who knows them as different from the Self. The beings reject one who knows them as different from the Self. The All rejects one who knows it as different from the Self. This brāhmin, this kshatriya, these worlds, these gods, these Vedas, these beings, and this All—are that Self.

See II. iv. 6.

## 8-10

“As the various particular [kinds of] notes of a drum, when it is beaten, cannot be grasped by themselves, but are grasped only when the general note of the drum or the general sound produced by different kinds of strokes is grasped;

“And as the various particular notes of a conch, when it is blown, cannot be grasped by themselves, but are grasped only when the general note of the conch or the general sound produced by different kinds of blowing is grasped;

“And as the various particular notes of a vinā, when it is played, cannot be grasped by themselves, but are grasped only when the general note of the vinā or the general sound produced by the different kinds of playing is grasped;

See II. iv. 7-9.

## 11

“As from a fire kindled with wet fuel various [kinds of] smoke issue forth, even so, my dear, the Rīg-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sāma-Veda,

the Atharvāngirasa, history (itihāsa), mythology (purāna), the arts (vidyā), Upanishads, verses (ślokas), aphorisms (sutras), elucidations (anuvyākhyānas), explanations (vyākhyānas), sacrifices, oblations in the fire, food, drink, this world, the next world, and all beings are all [like] the breath of this infinite Reality. From this [Supreme Self] are all these, indeed, breathed forth.

See II. iv. 10.

## 12

“As the ocean is the one goal of all waters (the place where they merge), so the skin is the one goal of all kinds of touch, the nostrils are the one goal of all smells, the tongue is the one goal of all savours, the ear is the one goal of all sounds, the mind is the one goal of all deliberations, the intellect is the one goal of all [forms of] knowledge, the hands are the one goal of all actions, the organ of generation is the one goal of all [kinds of] enjoyment, the excretory organ is the one goal of all excretions, the feet are the one goal of all [kinds of] walking, the organ of speech is the one goal of all the Vedas.

See II. iv. 11.

*How the Self exists when, with the awakening of Knowledge, all the effects merge in their causes is explained by means of the illustration of a lump of salt:*

## 13

“As a lump of salt has neither inside nor outside and is altogether a homogeneous mass of taste, even so this Self, my dear, has neither inside nor outside and is altogether a homogeneous mass of Intelligence. [This Self] comes out [as a separate entity] from the elements, and with their destruction [this separate existence] is also destroyed. After attaining [this oneness] it has no more consciousness. This is what I say, my dear.”

So said Yājñavalkya.

AFTER ATTAINING ETC: Formerly it possessed particular forms of consciousness owing to particular combinations with elements. When the combination with particular elements that is the cause is dissolved through Knowledge, and the soul attains oneness with all, it has no more particular consciousness.

See II. iv. 12.

## 14

Then Maitreyi said: "Just here you have completely bewildered me, venerable Sir. Indeed, I do not at all understand this."

He replied: "Certainly I am not saying anything bewildering, my dear. Verily, this Self is immutable and indestructible.

**JUST HERE ETC:** By saying that the Self, which is homogeneous consciousness, has no consciousness.

**VERILY, ETC:** There is no cessation of the Self through change or extinction.

See II. iv. 13.

*It is shown that this chapter and the three previous ones are devoted to the Knowledge of the Self alone.*

## 15

"For when there is duality, as it were, then one sees another, one smells another, one tastes another, one speaks to another, one hears another, one thinks of another, one touches another, one knows another. But when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should he see and through what, what should he smell and through what, what should he taste and through what, what should he speak and through what, what should he hear and through what, what should he think and through what, what should he touch and through what, what should he know and through what? Through what should one know That owing to which all this is known?

"This Self is That which has been described as 'Not this, not this.' It is imperceptible, for It is never perceived; undecaying, for It never decays; unattached, for It never attaches Itself; unfettered, for It never feels pain and never suffers injury. Through what, O Maitreyi, should one know the Knower?

"Thus you have the instruction given to you. This much, indeed, is [the means to] Immortality."

Having said this, Yājñavalkya renounced home.

**NOT THIS, NOT THIS:** The Self is the last word of truth and is arrived at through the process of "Not this, not this." Nothing more can be demonstrated either through reasoning or through scriptural authority. Hence

Self-Knowledge and renunciation are the only means of attaining Immortality.

**THIS MUCH ETC:** That is to say, the realization of the Self by the process of elimination known as "Not this, not this."

**HAVING SAID THIS:** Having described Self-Knowledge.

**RENOUNCED HOME:** That is to say, became a monk. "This much is the instruction; this is the teaching of the Vedas; this is the ultimate goal; this is the final step a man should take in order to achieve his highest good." (*Śankarāchārya.*)

See II. iv. 14.

*Here ends Chapter Five  
of Part Four of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LINE OF TEACHERS

NOW THE LINE [of teachers]:

[We received the knowledge from Pautimāshya.] Pautimāshya [received it] from Gaupavana. Gaupavana from [another] Pautimāshya. [This] Pautimāshya from [another] Gaupavana. [This] Gaupavana from Kauśika. Kauśika from Kaundinya. Kaundinya from Śāndilya. Śāndilya from Kauśika and Gautama. Gautama

See II. vi.

2

From Āgniveśya. Āgniveśya from Gārgya. Gārgya from [another] Gārgya. [This] Gārgya from Gautama. Gautama from Saitava. Saitava from Pārāśaryāyana. Pārāśaryāyana from Gārgyāyana. Gārgyāyana from Uddālakāyana. Uddālakāyana from Jābālāyana. Jābālāyana from Mādhyandināyana. Mādhyandināyana from Saukarāyana. Saukarāyana from Kāshāyana. Kāshāyana from Sāyakāyana. Sāyakāyana from Kauśikāyani. Kauśikāyani

3

From Ghritakauśika. Ghritakauśika from Pārāśaryāyana. Pārāśaryāyana from Pārāśarya. Pārāśarya from Jātukarnya. Jātukarnya from Āsurāyana and Yāska. Āsurāyana from Traivani. Traivani from Aupajandhani. Aupajandhani from Āsuri. Āsuri from Bhāradvāja. Bhāradvāja from Ātreya. Ātreya from Mānti. Mānti from Gautama. Gautama from [another] Gautama. [This] Gautama from Vātsya. Vātsya from Śāndilya. Śāndilya from Kaiśorya Kāpya. Kaiśorya Kāpya from Kumārahārita. Kumārahārita from Gālava. Gālava from Vidarbhikaundinya. Vidarbhikaundinya from Vatsanapāt Bābhava. Vatsanapāt Bābhava from Pathin Saubhara. Pathin Saubhara from Ayāśya Āngirasa. Ayāśya Āngirasa from Ābhuti Tvāshtra. Ābhuti Tvāshtra from Viśvarupa Tvāshtra.

Viśvarupa Tvāshtra from the two Aśvins. The two Aśvins from Dadhyach Ātharvana. Dadhyach Ātharvana from Atharvana Daiva. Atharvana Daiva from Mrityu Prādhvamsana. Mrityu Prādhvamsana from Pradhvamsana. Pradhvamsana from Ekarshi. Ekarshi from Viprachitti. Viprachitti from Vyashti. Vyashti from Sanāru. Sanāru from Sanātana. Sanātana from Sanaga. Sanaga from Parameshthin (Virāj). Parameshthin from Brahman (Hiranyagarbha). Brahman is self-born (eternal). Salutation to Brahman.

*Here ends Chapter Six  
of Part Four of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*



## CHAPTER I

### THE INFINITY OF BRAHMAN

OM. INFINITE is That [Brahman], infinite in this [manifested universe]. From the Infinite [Brahman] proceeds the infinite. [After the realization of the Great Identity or after the cosmic dissolution], when the infinity of the infinite [universe] merges [in the Infinite Brahman], there remains the Infinite [Brahman] alone.

Om is the Ākāśa Brahman—the primeval ākāśa. [It is] the ākāśa containing air, says the son of Kauravāyani. It (Om) is the Veda—thus the knowers of Brahman know; [for] through it one knows what is to be known.

**INFINITE IS THAT:** Refers to the Absolute, the Pure Spirit, the Supreme Brahman.

**INFINITE IS THIS:** Refers to the conditioned Brahman, or the visible universe.

**FROM THE INFINITE:** That is to say, from the Supreme Brahman.

**PROCEEDS:** Through Its inscrutable power called māyā.

**THE INFINITE:** The manifested universe, which is the effect of Brahman. Although the Supreme Brahman projects the universe, It does not thereby give up Its nature as Supreme Brahman. Even while projecting the mirage, the desert does not give up its true nature. The whole idea of projection is māyā.

**WHEN THE INFINITY ETC:** When the individual self or the manifested universe attains perfect unity with the Supreme Brahman, through the destruction of its apparent otherness created by ignorance, there remains the Supreme Brahman alone. This merging of the self or the universe in Brahman does not cause any change in It. When the true nature of the rope is known and the snake disappears, the rope alone remains. The whole idea of the snake is unreal. Compare: "What is here, the same is there, and what is there, the same is here" (*Ka. Up. II. i. 10*). The visible universe, that is to say, Brahman manifest as effect, is associated with the limiting

adjuncts of name and form; this association is the result of ignorance, which makes the universe appear different from Brahman, its true nature. But when the universe is realized as the Supreme Brahman through the removal of its limitations created by ignorance, it again appears as the unconditioned Infinite alone.

OM . . . ĀKĀŚA BRAHMAN: The word *Brahman*, without any qualifying term, may mean any vast object. The word *Ākāśa* makes it specific. Om is the most effective symbol for meditation on Brahman. Compare: "He who meditates on the Highest Person through this syllable Om [or Aum] consisting of three letters, becomes united with the effulgent sun" (*Pr. Up. V. 5.*), and "This (Om) is the best support [for the realization of Brahman]; this is the highest support" (*Ka. Up. I. ii. 17*).

PRIMEVAL ĀKĀŚA: Lest the word *ākāśa* should be taken to mean the material *ākāśa*, it is described as the primeval *ākāśa*, that is to say, the Supreme Self. The primeval *ākāśa* cannot be meditated upon without an external help; therefore the seeker is asked to contemplate it through the symbol *Om*, with faith and devotion.

ĀKĀŚA . . . ATR: The reference is to the ordinary *ākāśa*. Whether the word *ākāśa* signifies the Supreme Brahman or the ordinary *ākāśa*, the effective symbol is Om. Compare: "The syllable Om is the Supreme Brahman and also the other Brahman." (*Pr. Up. V. 2.*)

VEDA: The whole of the Vedas is but Om. Further, through Om one knows what is to be known; hence Om is the Veda. Thus the importance of Om is emphasized.

The commentator Bhartrihari explains the passage in a different manner. According to him, the infinite cause has produced the infinite effect. The effect, or the visible universe, is infinite or real even in its dualistic form. Again, at the time of dissolution, when the infinite universe merges in the infinite Brahman, there remains the infinite Reality as the Great Cause. The one Infinite is described as divided into both cause and effect. Thus the same Brahman is both non-dual and dual. Take, for example, the ocean and the waves, foam, bubbles, etc., which latter appear and disappear, but are part and parcel of the ocean itself. Like the waves, the world of diversity is also real, while the Supreme Brahman may be compared to the ocean. If the universe is real, then the ceremonial part of the Vedas, which applies to the universe, is also real. If the world of duality is unreal, then the ceremonial part loses its meaning and becomes unreal. This would only create a conflict; for one part, namely, the Upanishads, which deal with the non-dual Reality, would be valid, and the other, namely, the ceremonial part, would be invalid, since it deals with duality. To avoid this conflict the present verse, according to Bhartrihari, speaks of

both the cause and the effect as real and gives the illustration of the ocean and the waves.

Śankarāchārya opposes this position. Brahman is described as one and without a second, and no exception or option can be made with regard to this general proposition. One cannot make the exception that a part of Brahman produces a real universe. Nor is the option admissible that Brahman may be considered both non-dual and dual. To admit that an entity can be, in actuality, both one and many involves a contradiction.

Secondly, the opponent's contention contradicts the scriptural passages which describe Brahman as Pure Intelligence, homogeneous like a lump of salt, without break, devoid of such differences as antecedent or consequent, interior or exterior, birthless, fearless, immortal, etc. These passages are definite in their import and leave no room for doubt or error.

Thirdly, an entity possessing parts is made of many things and therefore transitory. If the Self were transitory, the ceremonial portion of the Vedas would be useless, since in that case a man would obtain the reward for something he has not done and would be deprived of the reward for what he has actually done. This would contradict the position of Bhartrihari, who upholds the validity of the ceremonial part of the Vedas.

The notion of unity and diversity, expressed through the example of the ocean and the waves, can only be applied to the visible universe and not to the Supreme Brahman. A Brahman teeming with differences, comprising such evils as births, deaths, and disease—like an ocean with parts, and heterogeneous in nature—cannot be an object of meditation for the attainment of Immortality. The Upanishads condemn duality. Compare: "It should be realized in one form only" (IV. iv. 20.), and "He goes from death to death who sees any difference here" (*Ka. Up. II. i. 10*).

It cannot be contended that the part of the Vedas dealing with ceremonials becomes invalid if duality is denied. For the scriptures teach according to existing circumstances; they do not teach a man, as soon as he is born, either the duality or the non-duality of existence. To be sure, duality does not need to be taught; it is understood by everyone as soon as he is born. No one thinks, at the very outset, that duality is a mistake. For those who are endowed with natural ignorance and swayed by attachment and aversion, the Vedas concede the reality of the dualistic world and advise the performance of rites to achieve desired material ends. But afterwards, when the same individuals have understood the limitations and evils of action and wish to attain the state of aloofness (*kaivalyam*), the scriptures teach them, as a means thereto, the Knowledge of Brahman, consisting in the realization of Brahman's unity with the Self. When they have attained the Knowledge of the non-dual Brahman, their interest in the validity of the scriptures ceases. In the absence of such interest the scriptures cease to be

scriptures. Thus the mission of the scriptures is fulfilled: the dualistic differences between scripture, disciple, and disciplines terminate with the Knowledge of Non-duality. Scripture, disciple, and disciplines are interdependent: if one of them is absent, the other two also disappear. When all duality is done away with, and Non-duality, the Highest Good, alone remains, can there be any "other" with whom conflict might be apprehended?

Part five of the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* is called the khila, or supplementary part, and treats of the various auxiliary means of arriving at Brahman. It teaches meditations that do not clash with rites, that lead to great prosperity, and that take one to Liberation through gradual stages. The most effective meditation is associated with Om; after that will be described the disciplines of self-control, charity, and compassion.

This verse has been used as an invocation in the present Upanishad and several others, and has been translated in a slightly different manner, without, however, changing the meaning.

*Here ends Chapter One  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER II

### THE THREE GREAT DISCIPLINES

PRAJĀPATI had three kinds of offspring: gods, men, and demons (asuras). They lived with Prajāpati, practising the vows of brahmachārins. After finishing their term, the gods said to him: "Please instruct us, Sir." To them he uttered the syllable *da* [and asked]: "Have you understood?" They replied: "We have. You said to us, 'Control yourselves (dāmyata).'" He said: "Yes, you have understood."

**BRAHMACHĀRINS:** The word *brahmachārīn* means a religious student who lives with his teacher practising continence, humility, self-control, and other spiritual disciplines. Continence is the most important of spiritual disciplines.

**DA:** This is the first syllable of the word *dāmyata*, which signifies self-control.

**CONTROL YOURSELVES:** The gods, in spite of possessing many virtues, are naturally unruly.

The present section is introduced in order to prescribe the three disciplines of self-control, charity, and compassion.

#### 2

Then the men said to him: "Please instruct us, Sir." To them he uttered the same syllable *da* [and asked]: "Have you understood?" They replied: "We have. You said to us, 'Give (datta).'" He said: "Yes, you have understood."

**GIVE:** The Sanskrit word *datta* begins with the syllable *da*. Men are naturally avaricious; so they are asked to distribute their wealth to the best of their power.

#### 3

Then the demons said to him: "Please instruct us, Sir." To them he uttered the same syllable *da* [and asked]: "Have you understood?"

They replied: "We have. You said to us: 'Be compassionate (dayadhvam).'" He said: "Yes, you have understood."

That very thing is repeated [even today] by the heavenly voice, in the form of thunder, as "Da," "Da," "Da," which means: "Control yourselves," "Give," and "Have compassion." Therefore one should learn these three: self-control, giving, and mercy.

**BE COMPASSIONATE:** Prajāpati asked the demons to show kindness to all; for the demons are naturally cruel and given to injuring others.

**THAT VERY ETC:** Prajāpati, who formerly taught the gods, men, and demons, teaches us even today through the sound of the thunder-clap.

**THEREFORE ONE ETC:** Compare: "Three are the gateways of this hell leading to the ruin of the self—lust, wrath, and greed." (B. G. XVI. 21.)

Gods and demons (asuras) may be found among men. Those human beings who are wanting in self-control, but otherwise endowed with many good qualities, are the gods; those who are particularly greedy are men; while those who are cruel and given to injuring others are the demons. So the same species of human beings, according to their lack of self-control, charity, or mercy, and according to the preponderance of a particular guna (sattva, rajas, or tamas), are distinguished as gods, men, and demons. Hence it is human beings who should be guided by the three instructions mentioned above; for Prajāpati intended his advice for them alone: men are observed to be unrestrained, greedy, and cruel. Though Prajāpati uttered the same syllable *da* in order to teach all his children, yet each one understood the instruction differently, according to his own limitations.

*Here ends Chapter Two  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER III

### BRAHMAN AS THE HEART

PRAJĀPATI is this—the heart (intellect). It (the heart) is Brahman. It is all. Hridayam (the heart) consists of three syllables. One syllable is *hri*; and to him who knows this, his own people and others bring [presents]. One syllable is *da*; and to him who knows this, his own people and others give [their powers]. One syllable is *yam*; and he who knows this goes to heaven.

PRAJĀPATI: Prajāpati has been described in the preceding section as the instructor. Now, who is this Prajāpati? The answer is given in the present section.

HEART: That is to say, the intellect. The heart is the seat of the intelligence. It has been declared (III. ix. 20-24.) that in the heart merge name, form, and work and that the heart is identified with all beings. This heart is called Prajāpati, the projector of all beings.

IT IS BRAHMAN: Because it is vast and identified with all.

HRI: The meaning of the word is "to bring," "to gather."

TO HIM . . . [PRESENTS]: The organs are parts of the intellect and are designated as "his own people," and the objects, such as sound etc., which are not so related, are designated as "others." The organs and the objects, through the performance of their respective functions, bring offerings to the intellect, which, in its turn, passes them to the self. Therefore he who knows *hri* also receives presents.

DA: The word means "to give."

TO HIM . . . [POWERS]: The organs and the objects give their respective powers to the intellect, which, too, gives its own power to the self.

YAM: The word means "to go."

If one obtains such conspicuous results from meditation on the syllables of its name, how much more effective must be the reward if one meditates on the heart itself!

The topic of the realization of the unconditioned Brahman was concluded

with the third and fourth parts. The present part deals with meditation on Its conditioned aspect, which brings prosperity to the worshipper.

*Here ends Chapter Three  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER IV

### MEDITATION ON SATYA BRAHMAN

THAT [intellect Brahman] was verily this—Satya alone. And whosoever knows this great, glorious first-born one as the Satya Brahman conquers these worlds. And his [enemy] is thus conquered and becomes non-existent—yes, whosoever knows this great, glorious first-born one as the Satya Brahman; for Satya indeed is that Brahman.

SATYA ALONE: That is to say, Satya Brahman, or the Brahman that is both sat and tyat, both in the gross and the subtle elements. Brahman as the five elements has been described in I. vi. 3. See also V. v. 1.

CONQUERS THESE WORLDS: Just as Satya Brahman has conquered the universe.

YES, WHOSOEVER ETC: The purpose of the repetition is to clinch the point.

Meditation on the Intellect Brahman as Satya is enjoined in this chapter.

*Here ends Chapter Four  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER V

### IN PRAISE OF SATYA BRAHMAN

IN THE BEGINNING this universe was water alone. That water produced Satya. Satya is Brahman. Brahman produced Prajāpati, and Prajāpati the gods. Those gods meditate on Satya. This [name] *Satya* consists of three syllables. *Sa* is one syllable, *ti* is one syllable, and *ya* is one syllable. The first and last syllables are the truth. In the middle is untruth. This untruth is enclosed on both sides by truth; thus truth preponderates. Untruth does not hurt him who knows this.

**IN THE BEGINNING:** When there was no other manifested object.

**WATER:** Here the word *water* means the liquid offerings used in the Agnihotra and other sacrifices. Though the offerings contain all the five elements, yet they are mainly watery. After the rites are over, this water remains in a subtle form, maintains its connexion with the five subtle elements, and later forms the universe.

**SATYA:** The word means "the true" and here connotes the manifested universe, whose symbol is Hiranyagarbha. Satya is called the first-born because He was created first. He is Brahman because he is vast. He is vast because He is the creator of all. He is adorable because the gods meditate on Him in particular. In the preceding verse, the word *Satya* was analysed as meaning *sat* and *tyat*. Here it is analysed in a different way. These analyses are intended to assist meditation.

**PRAJĀPATI:** The Lord of all beings, of whom the sun etc. are the organs.

**THE FIRST . . . TRUTH:** Here one sees a mere play on words. The middle syllable, *ti*, is untruth (*anrita*); untruth is *mṛityu* (death) because the letter *t* is common to both words. *Sa* and *ya*, being free from the form of death, are truth.

**UNTRUTH DOES NOT ETC:** That is to say, when one inadvertently utters an untruth. This verse is a eulogy of Satya Brahman.

*Now a meditation on the different parts of the body of Satya Brahman is given:*

## 2

Now, that which is Satya is the sun—the being who dwells in yonder orb and the being who is in the right eye. These two rest on each other. The former (the being in the sun) rests on the latter (the being in the right eye) through his rays, and the latter rests on the former through his organs. When the individual self is about to leave the body, he sees the solar orb clearly (i.e. without rays). Those rays no longer come to him.

**BEING IN THE RIGHT EYE:** Refers to the individual self, which is identified with the eye.

**THOSE . . . OTHER:** Because the being in the sun and the being in the eye are but different forms of Satya Brahman.

**THE FORMER . . . ORGANS:** Since they help each other they are not different.

**ORGANS:** The organs reveal the being in the sun.

**WHEN . . . CLEAR:** The solar being, who is the presiding deity of the eye, withdraws his rays and the sun appears to the dying man shorn of its rays and clear, like the moon. This may be taken as a portent of death.

**THE RAYS . . . IT:** The sun uses the rays as its servants. The servants, in obedience to their master, have been helping the being dwelling in the eye. But considering those duties finished, they no longer come to him. The mutual helpfulness between the solar being and the being in the right eye (i.e. the individual self) shows that they are both parts of Prajāpati.

## 3

Of this being who is in the solar orb, the syllable *Bhuh* is the head, for there is one head and there is this one syllable; the word *Bhuvah* is the arms, for there are two arms and there are these two syllables; the word *Svah* is the legs, for there are two legs and there are these two syllables. His secret name is Ahar. He who knows this destroys evil and leaves it behind.

**OF THIS ETC:** Of the solar being, called Satya, there are three limbs, called *Bhuh*, *Bhuvah*, and *Svah*. These are called *Vyāhritis*.

**SECRET NAME:** When addressed by this name, Satya Brahman turns to the worshipper.

**AHAR:** The word is derived from the root *han* or *hā*, meaning to kill or shun.

*Just as the being in the sun has three limbs, so has the being in the right eye.*

## 4

Of this being who is in the right eye, the syllable *Bhur* is the head, for there is one head and there is this one syllable; the word *Bhuvar* is the arms, for there are two arms and there are these two syllables; the word *Svar* is the legs, for there are two legs and there are these two syllables. His secret name is *Aham*. He who knows this destroys evil and leaves it behind.

**AHAM:** The word means "I"; it is the inner self. If one knows that the word *Aham* is derived from the root *han* or *hā*, one obtains the result described in the preceding verse.

*Here ends Chapter Five  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER VI

### MEDITATION ON BRAHMAN AS THE MIND

THIS BEING identified with the mind and resplendent by nature [is realized by yogis] within the heart as [of the size of] a grain of rice or barley. He is the lord of all, the ruler of all, and governs all this—whatever there is.

THIS BEING . . . MIND: He is identified with the mind because he is perceived in the mind; also he perceives through the mind.

RESPLENDENT: Since the mind reveals everything and since he is identified with the mind, he is called resplendent.

The result of meditation on Brahman identified with the mind is the attainment of identity with him as such; for the scriptures say: "One becomes exactly like him upon whom one meditates." (*Śa. Br. X. v. 2. 20.*)

The present verse describes meditation on Brahman conditioned by the adjunct of the mind.

*Here ends Chapter Six  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER VII

### MEDITATION ON BRAHMAN AS LIGHTNING

THEY SAY that lightning is Brahman. It is called lightning (vidyut) because it scatters (vidānāt) darkness. Whosoever knows this—that lightning is Brahman—scatters the evils [that are ranged against him]; for lightning is indeed Brahman.

LIGHTNING: It cuts through the darkness of the clouds just as Brahman, when known, cuts through the darkness of ignorance.

Another meditation on Satya Brahman, with a particular result, has been given.

*Here ends Chapter Seven  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### MEDITATION ON THE VEDAS AS A COW

ONE SHOULD meditate upon speech (the Vedas) as a cow. She (speech) has four teats: the sounds *Svāhā*, *Vashat*, *Hanta*, and *Svadhā*. The gods live on two of her teats, *Svāhā* and *Vashat*; men, on *Hanta*; and the Manes on *Svadhā*. Her bull is the vital breath (prāna), and her calf, the mind.

AS A COW: One should meditate on speech—here meaning the Vedas—as if it were a cow.

SHE HAS ETC: As a cow gives milk through her four teats for her calf, so does speech (the Vedas) give, through its four teats, food for the gods, men, and the Manes.

SVĀHĀ AND VASHAT: These Vedic words are uttered when oblations are offered to the gods.

HANTA: The Vedic word *Hanta* is uttered when food is offered to men.

SVADHĀ: The Vedic word *Svadhā* is uttered when food is offered to the Manes.

HER BULL ETC: As a cow is made fruitful by a bull, so are the Vedas made fruitful with the help of the vital breath. The Vedas cannot be uttered if the vital breath does not function.

CALF ETC: Just as the flow of milk is stimulated by the calf, so the knowledge of the Vedas can be applied to a subject only after being thought over by the mind.

The result of this meditation is the attainment of identity with the Vedas, which are a symbol of the conditioned Brahman.

*Here ends Chapter Eight  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER IX

### MEDITATION ON THE VAIŚVĀNARA FIRE

THIS FIRE which is within a man and digests food that is eaten is Vaiśvānara. Its sound is that which one hears by stopping the ears. When a man is about to leave the body, he hears this sound no more.

FIRE: Refers to the heat in the stomach, by which food is digested.

WHEN A MAN ETC: An omen of death.

*Here ends Chapter Nine  
of Part Five of the  
Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER X

### THE PATH OF THE DEPARTING SOUL

WHEN A MAN departs from this world, he reaches the air. The air opens there for him as wide as the hole of a chariot wheel. Through this [opening] he ascends and reaches the sun. The sun opens there for him as wide as the hole of a lambara. By this [opening] he ascends and reaches the moon. The moon opens there for him as wide as the hole of a drum. By this [opening] he ascends and reaches a World free from grief and cold. There he dwells for endless years.

**MAN:** Refers to one who knows the meditations described in the foregoing chapters.

**AIR:** Which lies across the sky, motionless and impenetrable.

**LAMBARA:** A kind of musical instrument like a tabor.

**A WORLD ETC:** The World of Hiranyagarbha.

**GRIEF:** Mental suffering.

**COLD:** Physical troubles.

**ENDLESS YEARS:** That is to say, the lifetime of Hiranyagarbha, which comprises many cycles from the human standpoint.

This section describes the goal and the result of all the meditations given before.

*Here ends Chapter Ten  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SUPREME AUSTERITIES

THE SUPREME AUSTERITY is indeed that a man suffers when he is ill. He who knows this wins the highest world.

The supreme austerity is indeed that a man, after death, is carried to the forest. He who knows this wins the highest world.

The supreme austerity is indeed that a man, after death, is laid on the fire. He who knows this wins the highest world.

A MAN . . . ILL: A sick person, while he is suffering pain, should think he is performing a penance; he should not condemn the disease or be dejected over it. This ungrudging endurance of suffering wipes out evils.

CARRIED ETC: By the priests for the funeral ceremony. Retirement to the forest from home is a form of austerity.

LAI'D ON THE FIRE: For cremation.

The acceptance of the threefold suffering as a form of penance destroys past sin and produces the same result as one gains from the practice of austerity.

*Here ends Chapter Eleven  
of Part Five of the  
Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER XII

### MEDITATION ON FOOD AND THE VITAL BREATH AS BRAHMAN

SOME SAY THAT FOOD is Brahman; but this is not so, for food decays without the vital breath (*prāna*). Others say that the vital breath is Brahman; but this is not so, for the vital breath dries up without food. These two deities (food and the vital breath), when they become united, attain the highest state (Brahmanhood). Thus [reflecting,] Prātrida said to his father: "What good, indeed, can I do him who knows this, and what evil can I do him either?"

His father answered, stopping him [with a gesture of his hand]: "Oh, no, Prātrida; for who would attain the highest [merely] by being identified with these two?"

Further, he (the father) said to him this: "[It is] *vi*; food is verily *vi*, for all these creatures rest (*viśanti*) on food. [It is] *ram*; the vital breath is *ram*, for all these creatures delight (*ramantē*) in the vital breath." All creatures rest on him, all creatures delight in him, who knows this.

DECAYS: Brahman is undecaying.

VITAL BREATH DRIES UP ETC: Prāna is the eater; hence it cannot live without food. It dries up without food.

THESE TWO ETC: The mutual dependence of life and matter is implied.

PRĀTRIDA: The name of a rishi.

WHAT GOOD ETC: That is to say, since he has achieved the goal of life, he cannot be injured by evil done to him, nor can he be glorified by honours done to him.

OH, NO, ETC: No aspirant would attain perfection by realizing Brahman in this way. Prātrida did not point out that either food or the vital breath, by itself, is endowed with any power. If by nature they are devoid of power, their combination cannot produce any power.

FURTHER, ETC: Evidently Prātrida asked of his father the means to realization.

FOOD IS ETC: The word *food* here means the body, which is a modification of the food one eats.

ALL THESE . . . VITAL BREATH: The vital breath is the source of strength.

ALL CREATURES . . . THIS: Thus a meditation on Brahman as endowed with the attributes of food and the vital breath is enjoined.

“Food (that is to say, the body) has the virtue of being the abode of all creatures, and the vital breath has the virtue of affording delight to all; for none who is without a body as his abode is pleased, nor is anyone, even if he has a body, pleased if he lacks vitality or strength. When a person has both a body and strength, then only is he pleased, considering himself exceptionally fortunate.” (*Śankarāchārya.*)

*Here ends Chapter Twelve  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER XIII

### MEDITATION ON THE VITAL BREATH

[ONE SHOULD MEDITATE on the vital breath as] the Uktha. The vital breath is the Uktha, for it raises up (utthāpayati) all this [universe]. From him who knows this there is raised a son who is a knower of the vital breath, and he wins union with and abode in the same world as the Uktha.

UKTHA: The most important among the hymns of praise, mainly used in the Mahāvratā sacrifice.

THE VITAL . . . UKTHA: The vital breath (prāna) is the chief among the organs, as the Uktha is among the hymns of praise.

FOR IT . . . THIS: The vital breath is called the Uktha for another reason: it raises up (utthāpayati) the universe. No lifeless entity ever rises.

THERE . . . SON: This is the visible result of this meditation.

HE . . . UKTHA: This is the invisible result. The attainment of union or of abode in the same world depends upon the intensity of the meditation.

The Uktha, the Yajus, the Sāman, and the Kshatra are in this chapter represented as forms under which the prāna and, indirectly, Brahman are to be meditated upon.

#### 2

[One should meditate upon the vital breath as] the Yajus. The vital breath is the Yajus, for all [these] beings are united (yujyantē) with one another if the vital breath is present. All beings are united to give eminence to him who knows this, and he wins union with and abode in the same world as the Yajus (vital breath).

ALL [THESE] . . . BREATH: Without life, that is to say, the vital breath, none has the strength to unite with another; hence the vital breath is called the Yajus.

TO GIVE ETC: That is to say, they try to make him their chief.

## 3

[One should meditate upon the vital breath as] the Sāman. The vital breath is the Sāman, for all [these] beings meet (samyanchi) if the Sāman (vital breath) is present. For the sake of him who knows this all beings are united and they succeed in giving him eminence; and he wins union with and abode in the same world as the Sāman.

**SĀMAN:** The name of one of the Vedas. In this context, however, the word is given a figurative meaning as the vital breath.

## 4

[One should meditate upon the vital breath as] the Kshatra. The vital breath is the Kshatra, for the vital breath protects (trāyate) the body from wounds (khanitoh). He who knows this attains the Kshatra (vital breath) which needs no other protector, and he wins union with and abode in the same world as the Kshatra.

**PROTECTS . . . WOUNDS:** By filling up injuries with new flesh.

**NEEDS . . . PROTECTOR:** That is to say, is able to protect himself.

*Here ends Chapter Thirteen  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SACRED GĀYATRI

THE WORDS *BHUMI* (*earth*), *Antariksha* (*sky*), and *Dyaus* (*heaven*) form eight syllables, and the first foot of the Gāyatri consists of eight syllables. So the three worlds constitute the first foot of the Gāyatri. Whosoever knows this about the [first] foot of the Gāyatri wins all that is in the three worlds.

**GĀYATRI:** The same as Sāvitrī. It is the most sacred verse of the Vedas and reads as follows: *Tat saviturvarenyam, bhargo devasya dhimahi, dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt*—“We meditate on the adorable light of the radiant sun. May he stimulate our intellect.” (*Ri.* III. lxii. 10.) There is also a metre called Gāyatri which has three feet of eight syllables each. It will be seen that the Gāyatri verse is composed in this metre. (The syllable *ya* in the word *varenya* should be divided to make up the eighth syllable.)

The present chapter describes the meditation on Brahman conditioned by the Gāyatri, that is to say, using the Gāyatri as the symbol. The Gāyatri metre is the chief of metres, and the Gāyatri mantra, as will be seen later, protects the organs of those who recite it. The Gāyatri mantra is identical with the vital breath (*prāna*), because the vital breath as the Kshatra protects the body by healing wounds, as described in the foregoing chapter. Hence the meditation on the Gāyatri is particularly enjoined. There is another reason: The brāhmin caste forms the highest caste in Hindu society. Entitled to the study of the Vedas and the performance of the Vedic rituals, a brāhmin is pre-eminently equipped for Self-Knowledge and Liberation. But a brāhmin is regarded, at the time of his birth, as a sudra. It is only when he is invested with the sacred thread that he is considered to have had his second birth (*dvija*) and to have become a real brāhmin. At the time of this second birth he is taught the sacred Gāyatri mantra, which he repeats regularly thereafter. Hence the importance of the Gāyatri.

*Similarly, the three Vedas constitute the second foot of the Gāyatri.*

## 2

*Richah*, *Yajumshi*, and *Sāmāni* form eight syllables, and the second foot of the *Gāyatri* consists of eight syllables. So these [three] Vedas constitute the second foot of the *Gāyatri*. Whosoever thus knows the second foot of the *Gāyatri* wins as much as that treasury of knowledge, the three Vedas, has to confer.

RICHAH, ETC: These three words are the plural forms of the names of the three Vedas.

*Prāna*, *apāna*, and *vyāna* constitute the third foot of the *Gāyatri*.

## 3

*Prāna*, *apāna*, and *vyāna* form eight syllables, and the third foot of the *Gāyatri* consists of eight syllables. So these [three] forms of the vital breath constitute the third foot of the *Gāyatri*. Whosoever knows this about the third foot of the *Gāyatri* wins all the living beings that are in the universe.

Now, its *turiya*, [apparently] visible (*darśata*), and supramundane (*parorajā*) foot is this—the sun that glows yonder. That which is fourth is called *turiya*. He (the being in the solar orb) is [apparently] visible (*darśata*), because he is seen, as it were, [by the yogis]. He is supramundane (*parorajā*), because he shines alone on the whole universe as its overlord. He who thus knows the fourth foot of the *Gāyatri* shines with splendour and glory.

PRĀNA: The vital breath that goes upward.

APĀNA: The vital breath that goes downward.

VYĀNA: The vital breath that spreads all through the body. The word *vyāna* should be read as three syllables (*vi-ā-na*) to make up the eight syllables.

NOW ETC: The *Gāyatri*, as consisting of words, has only three feet. Now its fourth foot, which is subtle, is described. It is the sun.

## 4

That *Gāyatri* rests on that fourth, [apparently] visible, supramundane foot. And that, again, rests on truth. The eye is truth, for the eye is indeed truth. Therefore, even today, if two persons come disputing, one saying: "I saw it," and another: "I heard of it," we should trust the one who says: "I saw it."

That truth rests on strength. The vital breath (prāna) is strength. Hence truth rests on the vital breath. Therefore they say that strength is more powerful than truth.

Thus the Gāyatri is based on the vital breath within the body. That Gāyatri protected the *gayas*. The organs are the *gayas*; therefore the Gāyatri protected (tatrē) the organs. Because it protected the organs, it is called the Gāyatri. The Sāvītri [verse], which the teacher communicates to the pupil, is no other than this. It saves the organs of the pupil to whom it is imparted by the teacher.

**THAT GĀYATRI:** That which has been described in the foregoing verses as comprising the three worlds, the three Vedas, and the three forms of the vital breath, and which consists of three feet.

**SUPRAMUNDANE FOOT:** Refers to the sun, which is the essence of the gross and subtle universes (II. iii. 3). Deprived of this essence things become lifeless. So the three-footed Gāyatri, consisting of the gross and subtle universes, rests on the sun.

**THAT, AGAIN . . . TRUTH:** Because the sun finds its support in the eye (III. ix. 20.), which is truth.

**WE SHOULD TRUST ETC:** What a man hears of may sometimes be false, but not what he sees with his own eyes. Therefore the eye, being the means of demonstrating the truth, is the truth. The fourth foot of the Gāyatri rests, with the other three feet, on the eye.

**THUS . . . ON THE BODY:** There are two manifestations of the vital breath: the prāna within the body and the Sutra, or Hiranyagarbha, which pervades the whole universe (III. vii. 2). The Gāyatri, as the vital breath, is the support of the universe, and in it all the gods, all the Vedas, and all rites together with their results are unified.

**ORGANS:** The primary meaning of the word *gaya* is the vocal organ; but here it denotes all the organs.

**PROTECTED:** The Gāyatri protected the organs of the priests using them.

**SĀVĪTRI:** The hymn to the sun which the teacher teaches the pupil when the latter is brought to him at the age of eight. The teacher makes the pupil repeat first a quarter of the verse, then a half, and finally the whole, till he knows the whole of the Sāvītri. In this manner the pupil is really taught that the prāna, or vital breath, is the World Soul.

## 5

Some impart [to the pupil] the Sāvītri which is in the Anushtubh metre, saying: “[The goddess of] speech is Anushtubh; [so] we shall impart it to him.”

But one should not do that. One should impart only that Sāvītri

which is Gāyatri. Verily, if one who knows this accepts too much as a gift, as it were, it is not enough for even one foot of the Gāyatri.

**SOME:** Refers to the followers of certain recensions of the Vedas.

**SĀVITRI:** The Sāvitrī verse composed in the Anushtubh metre is as follows: *Tat savitur vrinimahe vayam devasya bhojanam. Śreshtham sarvadhātāmam turam bhagasya dhimahi.*—"We supplicate the best food of the radiant sun, which pervades all things. We meditate without delay on the sun." (Ri. V. lxxxii. 1; also quoted in *Chh. Up.* V. ii. 7.) The sun is the presiding deity of this hymn.

**SAYING ETC:** According to this school, since Sarasvati is the goddess of speech, it is proper for the newly initiated to worship Sarasvati and use the Rig verse composed in the Anushtubh metre.

**BUT ETC:** It is said in reply that the Gāyatri is the prāna; therefore if one is taught about the vital force, one will be automatically taught about speech and Sarasvati, and the other organs as well.

**IT IS NOT ETC:** The receiving of gifts is generally condemned by the scriptures. But the knower of the Gāyatri is identified with the whole universe; therefore there is no such thing as too much of a gift for him.

*The acceptance of gifts is not reprehensible for the knower of the Gāyatri.*

## 6

If he (the knower of the Gāyatri) accepts [as a gift] the three worlds full of wealth, he will be receiving [the fruit of knowing] only the first foot of the Gāyatri. If he accepts [as a gift] as much as this treasury of knowledge, the Vedas, [has to confer,] he will be receiving [the fruit of knowing] only the second foot of the Gāyatri. And if he accepts [as a gift] as much as [is covered by] all living creatures in the world, he will be receiving [the fruit of knowing] only the third foot of the Gāyatri. While [the fruit of knowing] its fourth, [apparently] visible, supramundane foot—yonder sun that glows—is not to be counterbalanced by any gift received.

Indeed, how could anyone receive so much as a gift?

**HE . . . FIRST FOOT:** The acceptance of such a gift will counterbalance the results of knowing only the first foot of the Gāyatri.

**HE . . . THIRD FOOT:** There is, of course, no such donor or recipient. The purpose of the statement is to extol the knowledge of the Gāyatri. But even if such a donor or recipient existed, the acceptance of such a gift would

not be considered a fault; for there would still be left the knowledge of the fourth foot of the Gāyatri, which is among the highest achievements of man.

**INDEED, HOW ETC:** It is impossible for anyone to receive as gifts the equivalent of the three worlds, and so on, obtained by knowing the first three feet of the Gāyatri.

## 7

The salutation to the Gāyatri:

“O Gāyatri, thou art one-footed, two-footed, three-footed, and four-footed. And thou art without any feet, for thou art unattainable. Salutation to thee, fourth foot, [apparently] visible and supramundane! May the enemy never attain his object!”

[Should the knower of the Gāyatri] bear hatred towards anyone, [he should] either [use this mantra]: “May his desired object never flourish!”—in which case that object of the person against whom he thus salutes the Gāyatri never flourishes—or [he may say]: “May I attain that [cherished object] of his!”

**SALUTATION:** The Sanskrit word *upasthāna* means “going near and staying,” or “saluting.”

**ONE-FOOTED:** Refers to the three worlds.

**TWO-FOOTED:** Refers to the three Vedas.

**THREE-FOOTED:** Refers to the three forms of the prāna, or vital breath.

**FOUR-FOOTED:** Refers to the sun.

**AND THOU ART WITHOUT ETC:** This refers to the supreme and unconditioned form of the Gāyatri, described as “Not this, not this.”

**FOURTH FOOT:** Which belongs to the relative aspect of the Gāyatri.

**ENEMY:** That is to say, the evil that stands in the way of the realization of the Gāyatri.

**ATTAIN HIS OBJECT:** Obstruct the realization.

**MAY HIS ETC:** The name of the hated person should be mentioned before using the mantra.

Of the three mantras given in the text, any one may be used, according to the intention of the worshipper.

*In order to describe the mouth of the Gāyatri, a eulogistic story is narrated:*

## 8

On this subject Janaka, Emperor of Videha, said to Buḍiḷa, the son of Aśvatarāśva: “Well, how is it that you, who called yourself a

knower of the Gāyatri, have come to be an elephant and are carrying me?"

He replied: "Because, Your Majesty, I did not know its mouth."

Janaka said: "Fire is its mouth. If people put a large quantity of fuel into the fire, it is all burnt up. Similarly, a man who knows this, even if he commits a great many sins, consumes them all and becomes pure, clean, and free from decay and death."

ON THIS SUBJECT: That is to say, the knowledge of the Gāyatri.

BECAUSE ETC: The knowledge of the Gāyatri, being deficient in one part, had been fruitless.

A MAN WHO KNOWS ETC: The knower of the Gāyatri becomes identified with the Gāyatri and has fire for his mouth, which consumes the sins.

A GREAT MANY SINS: Such as those resulting from the acceptance of gifts.

BECOMES ETC: Because he is identified with the Gāyatri.

*Here ends Chapter Fourteen  
of Part Five of the  
Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER XV

### THE PRAYER OF A DYING PERSON

THE DOOR (real nature) of the truth (Satya Brahman) is covered by a golden disc. Open it, O Nourisher! Remove it so that I who have been worshipping the truth may behold it.

O Nourisher! O lone Traveller of the sky! O Controller! O Sun! O Offspring of Prajāpati! Gather your rays. Withdraw your light. I would see [through your grace] that form of yours which is the most benign. I am indeed He, that purusha [who dwells in the sun]. I am immortal.

Now [when my body falls] may my breath return to the all-pervading Prāna! May this body, reduced to ashes, [return to the earth]!

Om. O Fire, who art the symbol Om, O god of deliberations, remember, remember all that I have done.

O Fire, lead us by the good path towards the enjoyment of the fruit of our action. You know, O god, all our deeds. Destroy our sin of deceit. We offer by words repeated salutations to you.

**TRUTH:** Refers to Satya Brahman, the manifestation of Brahman through the sun. The sun in this verse includes earth, heaven, and the interspace and also is known by the name *Vyāhriti*. The sun is conceived as a person having earth, heaven, and the interspace as his head, two arms, and two feet.

**GOLDEN:** Shining.

**NOURISHER:** The sun is so called because it nourishes the world.

**I WHO ETC:** The worshipper is identified with the sun, the object of worship.

**GATHER YOUR ETC:** The worshipper is not able to see the sun as it is, being blinded by its dazzling light.

**PURUSHA:** Brahman manifested through the sun is regarded as a person.

**O FIRE:** Now the dying person is praying to the deity fire, who is identified with his deliberations and presides over his mind.

**REMEMBER:** The dying person attains a desirable goal if the gods controlling his different organs remember his good deeds.

**GOOD PATH:** Refers to the Northern Path. The Southern Path brings one back to the world.

**DEEDS:** Mental states.

**BY WORDS:** Because the dying man is too weak to do anything else.

The man who has combined meditation with rites is praying to the sun in his dying moments. This is appropriate, because the sun is the fourth foot of the Gāyatri and salutation to him is the topic under discussion. (The text is repeated in *Īśa Upanishad* 15-18, where it has been translated in a slightly different manner. For a detailed explanation see *The Upanishads* Vol. I, pp. 213-16.)

*Here ends Chapter Fifteen  
of Part Five of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER I

### THE SUPREMACY OF THE PRĀNA

OM. HE WHO KNOWS what is the oldest and greatest becomes the oldest and greatest among his kinsmen. The vital breath (prāna) is indeed the oldest and greatest. He who knows this becomes the oldest and greatest among his kinsmen and also among those of whom he wishes to be so.

**OLDEST AND GREATEST:** These are the attributes of priority in age and greatness.

**VITAL BREATH ETC:** How is the vital breath (prāna) the oldest and greatest, since at conception all the organs of the embryo are equally connected with the formative elements contributed by the parents? The answer is that the semen, if lifeless, will not develop; which means that the vital breath begins to function earlier than the eye and the other organs. Hence it is said to be the oldest. But one may be the oldest member in a family without being the greatest. But the prāna is both the oldest and the greatest among the organs. The second point will be shown later.

**HE WHO KNOWS THIS:** That is to say, he who meditates upon the vital breath as the oldest and greatest.

It has been stated that the Gāyatri is the vital breath. But why not any other organ? It is because the vital breath is the oldest and greatest. The present section is introduced to establish this point.

#### 2

He who knows what is the most excellent (vasishtha) becomes the most excellent among his kinsmen. The organ of speech is indeed the vasishtha. He who knows this becomes the most excellent among his kinsmen and also among those of whom he wishes to be so.

**MOST EXCELLENT:** The literal meaning of the word *vasishtha* is "that which enables one to dwell," or "that which enables one to overcome another effectively."

**THE ORGAN OF SPEECH ETC:** People who have the gift of speech become rich and live in splendour; or they can defeat their opponents through their eloquence. The result is determined by the nature of the object of meditation.

## 3

He who knows what has [the attribute of] steadiness (*pratishtā*) lives steadily in rough as well as smooth places and times. The eye indeed is endowed with steadiness, for with the help of the eye one remains steady in rough as well as smooth places and times. He who knows this lives steadily in rough as well as smooth places and times.

## 4

He who knows prosperity (*sampad*) attains whatever object he desires. The ear indeed is prosperity, for when the ear is intact all the Vedas are acquired. He who knows this attains whatever object he desires.

**WHEN THE EAR ETC:** When one is endowed with the organ of hearing one can study the Vedas and perform the Vedic rites to attain wished-for objects.

## 5

He who knows the abode (*āyatana*) becomes the abode of his kinsmen and also of [other] people. The mind indeed is the abode. He who knows this becomes the abode of his kinsmen as well as of [other] people.

**THE MIND . . . ABODE:** The mind is the abode of the organs and objects. The latter are experienced by the self only when they have found a place in the mind. The organs, too, are guided in their activities by the mind.

## 6

He who knows [what has the attribute of] procreation (*prajāti*) is enriched with children and animals. Semen verily has this attribute. He who knows this is enriched with children and animals.

**SEMEN:** Refers to the organ of generation.

## 7

These organs, disputing about who was superior among them, went to Prajāpati and asked: "Which one among us is the most excellent (vasishtha)?" He said: "That one among you is the most excellent by whose departure this body is considered to suffer most."

**THIS BODY ETC:** The body, being an aggregate of impure materials, is wretched even when all the organs function well; it will be more so after the departure of a particular organ. Prajāpati already knew the answer but did not give it to avoid offending the rest.

*Being thus addressed by Prajāpati, the organs left the body one by one to try their power.*

## 8

The organ of speech departed. After being absent for a whole year it came back and said: "How have you been able to live without me?" The other organs said: "We lived just as dumb people live, without speaking through the tongue, but living through the vital breath, seeing through the eye, hearing through the ear, knowing through the mind, and procreating through the organ of generation." Then the organ of speech entered [the body].

**KNOWING:** Deliberating.

**ENTERED:** The organ of speech realized that it was not the most excellent organ.

## 9

The eye departed. After being absent for a whole year it came back and said: "How have you been able to live without me?" The other organs said: "We lived just as blind people live, without seeing through the eye, but living through the vital breath, speaking through the organ of speech, hearing through the ear, knowing through the mind, and procreating through the organ of generation." Then the eye entered [the body].

## 10

The ear went out. After being absent for a whole year it came back and said: "How have you been able to live without me?" The other

organs said: "We lived just as deaf people live, without hearing through the ear, but living through the vital breath, speaking through the organ of speech, seeing through the eye, knowing through the mind, and procreating through the organ of generation." Then the ear entered [the body].

## 11

The mind went out. After being absent for a whole year it came back and said: "How have you been able to live without me?" The other organs said: "We lived just as idiots live, without knowing through the mind, but living through the vital breath, speaking through the organ of speech, seeing through the eye, hearing through the ear, and procreating through the organ of generation." Then the mind entered [the body].

## 12

Then the organ of generation went out. After being absent for a whole year it came back and said: "How have you been able to live without me?" The other organs said: "We lived just as impotent people live, without procreating children through the organ of generation, but living through the vital breath, speaking through the organ of speech, seeing through the eye, hearing through the ear, and knowing through the mind." Then the organ of generation entered [the body].

## 13

Then as the vital breath was about to depart, it uprooted the organs [from their places] just as a great, noble horse of the Sindhu country tears up the pegs to which his feet are tied. They said: "Venerable Sir, please do not go out. We shall not be able to live without you."

"If I am such, then give me an offering."

"So be it."

This conversation among the organs is a symbolic one devised to teach how a wise man should test the greatness of his peers.

## 14

The organ of speech said: "That attribute of being most excellent which I possess is yours."

The eye said: "That attribute of steadiness which I possess is yours."

The ear said: "That attribute of prosperity which I possess is yours."

The mind said: "That attribute of being an abode which I possess is yours."

The organ of generation said: "That attribute of procreation which I possess is yours."

Then the vital breath said: "If I am such, then what will be my food and what will be my dress?"

They replied: "Whatever food there is—including that of dogs, worms, insects, and moths—will be your food, and water will be your dress."

He who knows the food of the vital breath to be such never happens to eat anything or accept anything that is not food. Wise men who are versed in the Vedas therefore take a sip of water just before and after eating; they think that thereby they remove the nakedness of the vital breath.

**WHATEVER FOOD ETC:** We are here enjoined to look upon everything as the food of the vital breath. But the statement does not mean that the knower of this can eat anything and everything with impunity. He must not eat what is forbidden by the scriptures.

**NEVER HAPPENS ETC:** Even if he eats something which should not be eaten, he is not touched by the blame due to this. The statement should be taken as a eulogy of this meditation, and not as an injunction to eat forbidden food.

The result of this meditation is identification with the vital breath.

*Here ends Chapter One  
of Part Six of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROCESS OF REBIRTH

ŚVETAKETU, the grandson of Aruna, came to the assembly of the Panchālas. He approached Pravāhana, the son of Jivala, who was being waited upon by his courtiers. As soon as the king saw him, he said: "Is it you, boy?" He replied: "Yes, Sir."

Then the king asked: "Have you been taught by your father?" "Yes," he replied.

**CAME TO ETC:** With a view to displaying his learning; the Panchālas were well known for their scholars.

**BOY:** The prolonged accent with which the Sanskrit word was uttered indicates censure. The king had already heard of his arrogance and wanted to teach him a lesson.

**YES, SIR:** This is an angry reply. The boy was a brāhmin and the king, a kshatriya. Usually a kshatriya is not addressed as "Sir" by a brāhmin, but Śvetaketu uses the word in a sarcastic manner.

**YES, ETC:** The idea is that if the king doubted his scholarship, he might question him.

The present section is a supplementary one; what was omitted before is now being stated. It aims to point out the various ways of rebirth due to a man's past action, and also those of rites combined with meditation. Secondly, it will point out which way leads to the world of the Manes and which to the world of the gods. Thirdly, it will suggest that by means of rites one may attain heaven, but not Immortality. In short, the present section will sum up the different ways of rebirth.

#### 2

The king said: "Do you know how people, after departing [from this life], proceed on different paths?" "No," he replied.

"Do you know how they return to this world?" "No," he replied.

"Do you know why the other world is never filled up [even though] so many people go there again and again?" "No," he replied.

"Do you know after how many offerings of oblations the water

(the liquid oblation) becomes endowed with a human voice, rises up, and speaks?" "No," he replied.

"Do you know the means of access to the path leading to the gods or to that leading to the Manes, that is to say, through what deeds men attain the path leading to the gods or that leading to the Manes? We have heard the following words of the Mantra: 'I have heard of the two paths for men, one leading to the Manes and the other to the gods. Going along them they (departed souls) are united [with their destination]. They (the paths) lie between the father (heaven) and the mother (earth).'

Śvetaketu said: "I do not know even one of these."

HOW . . . PATHS: Following the same route, they come to a point where the paths separate; some take the one and some, the other.

BECOMES ENDOWED . . . VOICE: This happens when the offering takes a human form. Or the passage may mean "under the name of a man."

MANTRA: Rig-Veda X. lxxxviii. 15.

GOING ALONG ETC: The routes connect this world with the next world. The souls of the dead travelling along the two paths are joined to the results of their respective actions.

FATHER (HEAVEN) ETC: The earth is the mother and the heaven is the father (Śa. Br. XIII. ii. 9. 7; Tai. Br. III. viii. 9. 1). Heaven and earth are the two halves of the shell of the universe; hence they belong to the relative world and cannot lead one to Immortality.

## 3

Then the king invited him to stay. But the boy, disregarding the invitation, hurried away. He went to his father and said: "Did you not tell me before that you had fully instructed me?"

"What then, my intelligent child?"

"That fellow of a kshatriya asked me five questions, and I did not know one of them."

"What were they?"

"These," said Śvetaketu, and he recited them.

INVITED ETC: The king wanted to show him the hospitality befitting a worthy guest.

## 4

The father said: "My child, believe me, whatever I myself knew, I told you. But come, let us go there and live as religious students (brahmachārins)." "You may go, Sir," the son replied.

Then Gautama went to where King Pravāhana, the son of Jivala, was giving audience. The king offered him a seat, ordered water for him, and made him the reverential offering. Then he said: "Revered Gautama, we will give you a boon."

**YOU MAY . . . SIR:** Evidently the boy did not want to see the king's face again.

**REVERENTIAL OFFERING:** Associated with certain religious rites in which a priest takes part.

## 5

Gautama said: "You have promised me this boon. Now please tell me what you spoke about to my boy."

**WHAT YOU ETC:** This was the boon Gautama asked of the king.

## 6

The king said: "Ah, those are divine boons, Gautama. Please ask a human boon."

## 7

Gautama said: "You know well that I have gold, cows, horses, maidservants, retinue, and apparel. Please do not be ungenerous towards me in regard to that gift which is plentiful, infinite, and inexhaustible."

The king said: "Then, verily, O Gautama, you should ask it in the prescribed way."

Gautama replied: "I approach you as a disciple."

The ancients used to approach a teacher through mere declaration. So Gautama lived [with the king] by merely announcing that he was a student.

**PLEASE DO NOT ETC:** The idea is that since the king was always generous towards others in regard to divine boons, he should not be stingy towards Gautama.

**INEXHAUSTIBLE:** Extending to many generations.

**PRESCRIBED WAY:** Refers to the rules of discipleship as prescribed by the scriptures.

**ANCIENTS:** Refers to the brāhmins who sought instruction from the kshatriyas and vaiśyas, or the kshatriyas who sought instruction from the vaiśyas.

**THROUGH MERE DECLARATION:** That is to say, not actually rendering any menial service, such as touching the teacher's feet.

## 8

The king said: "Please do not be offended with us even as your paternal grandfather was not [offended with ours]. Before now this knowledge never rested with a brāhmin. But I shall teach it to you, for who can refuse you when you speak like this?"

**THE KING SAID:** Thinking that Gautama was offended.

**BEFORE NOW ETC:** This knowledge had all along come down through a line of kshatriya teachers. But now this tradition was to be broken.

*The fourth question is being dealt with first. The solution of the other questions depends upon the answer to this question.*

## 9

"Yonder world is the [sacrificial] fire, the sun is its fuel, the rays its smoke, the day its flame, the four quarters its cinders, and the intermediate quarters its sparks. In this fire the gods offer faith as libation. Out of that offering King Moon is born.

**YONDER WORLD:** Heaven. We are enjoined to look upon heaven, which is not fire, as fire. The same is so with man, woman, etc. in the verses which follow. The points of resemblance are given.

**SUN ETC:** Because of its power of kindling. Heaven is illumined by the sun.

**SMOKE:** Rays emanate from the sun as smoke from fuel.

**DAY ETC:** Because both day and flame are bright.

**QUARTERS ETC:** Because space, like cinders, has neither heat nor lustre.

**INTERMEDIATE ETC:** Because both are scattered.

**GODS:** Indra etc.

**FAITH:** That is to say, liquid oblations in a subtle form.

**KING MOON:** That is, the King of the Manes and of the brāhmins.

Milk and other liquids are offered in the Agnihotra and similar sacrifices; they ascend, in a subtle form, together with the sacrificer, along the Way of the Manes, first to the sky and then to heaven. (In the Agnihotra and other sacrifices the physical sense-organs are the sacrificer; the Self is neither the doer nor the enjoyer. The organs desire certain enjoyments and perform suitable sacrifices to obtain those enjoyments. These senses in their cosmic

forms are called gods, who, in their turn, perform sacrifices in the higher worlds.) The liquids that are offered in the sacrifice, as they rise up, become subtle and are called "faith." (The offerings contain, no doubt, solid materials also, but they are predominantly liquid.) These subtle liquids, when offered as libations in heaven by the gods, produce for the sacrificer an aqueous body which enables him to live in the world of the Moon. Though this body contains other materials, it is mainly aqueous.

## 10

"Parjanya (the god of rain), O Gautama, is the fire, the year is its fuel, the clouds its smoke, lightning its flame, the thunderbolt its cinders, the rumbling its sparks. In this fire the gods offer King Moon as libation. Out of that offering rain is produced.

PARJANYA: The second receptacle of the oblations during the return trip of the soul for rebirth. Here the word denotes the god identifying himself with the materials of rain.

YEAR ETC: Parjanya revolves along with the seasons from autumn to summer, when the rainy season starts.

CLOUDS ETC: Clouds look like smoke.

LIGHTNING ETC: Because both are luminous.

THUNDERBOLT ETC: Because both are hard.

RUMBLING ETC: Because both are scattered about.

IN THIS ETC: In this fire, which is the second, the gods offer as libation King Moon, who was produced out of the offering of faith in the first fire of heaven. Out of this offering rain is produced. The Upanishad gives a spiritual interpretation of the cosmic process and of the soul's rebirth.

Aruni asked King Pravāhana about the path followed by the soul after death and also how it reincarnates in a human body. The king answered him through the symbol of a sacrifice in order to give a spiritual interpretation of life and the universe. This is called the doctrine of the Five Fires, hitherto known only to the kshatriya kings.

## 11

"This world, O Gautama, is the fire, the earth is its fuel, fire its smoke, the night its flame, the moon its cinders, the stars its sparks. In this fire the gods offer rain as libation. Out of that offering food is produced.

THIS WORLD ETC: This is the third fire. The word *world* means the abode where all created beings are born and experience the results of their past work, and which consists of action, its accessories, and its results.

**EARTH ETC:** The earth is furnished with the means of enjoyment for innumerable living creatures. The world and the earth stand to each other in the relation of a person and his body.

**FIRE ETC:** As smoke rises from fuel, so does fire from earthy substances.

**NIGHT ETC:** As flame is produced by the contact of fuel with fire, so is the night by the contact of the fuel of the earth with the fire of this world. The earth's shadow is called the darkness of night; this shadow is caused by a part of the earth's obstructing the sun's rays.

**MOON ETC:** The moon is produced at night, the cinder is produced from the flame.

**STARS ETC:** Because both the stars and the sparks lie scattered about.

**OUT OF ETC:** It is well known that food, such as rice and barley, is produced from rain.

## 12

"Man, O Gautama, is the fire, the open mouth is its fuel, the vital breath its smoke, speech its flame, the eye its cinders, and the ear its sparks. In this fire the gods offer food as libation. Out of that offering semen is produced.

**MAN:** The familiar human being is the fourth fire.

**OPEN MOUTH ETC:** For by means of the open mouth a man shines, as fire by means of its fuel. By opening his mouth a man shows his eloquence, recites the Vedas, etc.

**VITAL BREATH ETC:** Because the vital breath rises from the mouth as smoke from fuel.

**SPEECH ETC:** Both words and flame possess the quality of revealing.

**EYE ETC:** Both the eye and cinders are free from heat, and also both are sources of light.

**EAR ETC:** The ear extends to different directions to catch sounds, as sparks scatter about.

**GODS ETC:** With reference to the body, the forms of the vital breath may be regarded as the gods.

**OUT OF ETC:** Semen is the outcome of food.

*Now is given the answer to the fourth question: After how many oblations does the liquid offering speak with a human voice?*

## 13

"Woman, O Gautama, is the fire, her sexual organ is the fuel, the hairs the smoke, the vulva the flame, sexual intercourse the cinders, enjoyment the sparks. In this fire the gods offer semen as libation. Out

of this offering a man is born. He lives as long as he is to live. Then, when he dies,

WOMAN: The fifth fire.

OUT OF ETC: Water (the liquid offering), designated as "faith," is successively offered in the sacrificial fire of heaven, the rain-god, the world, man, and woman. Out of these offerings are produced, in increasingly gross forms, the moon, rain, food, semen, and the fifth, called man. Thus the fifth oblation (that is to say, water transformed into semen), offered in the fire of woman, assumes a human form and speaks with a human voice.

AS LONG AS ETC: As long as his prārabdha karma, the past action which determines his present body, lasts.

WHEN HE DIES: When the prārabdha karma comes to an end.

According to the Vedic conception, the various stages in the soul's journey are to be regarded as so many sacrifices. The sexual act, which gives the soul physical embodiment on earth, is one of these. When regarded in this light the sexual impulse is sublimated.

*The following three verses deal with the fifth question, concerning the means of attaining the Way of the Gods and the Way of the Manes:*

#### 14

"They carry him to be offered in the fire. The fire becomes his fire, the fuel his fuel, the smoke his smoke, the flame his flame, the cinders his cinders, and the sparks his sparks. In this fire the gods offer the man as libation. Out of this offering the man emerges in radiant splendour.

THEY: The priests who perform the last rites.

THE FIRE BECOMES ETC: The fire of the funeral pyre becomes the receptacle for the sacrifice in which he himself is to be the oblation; there is no need to imagine any new fire.

THE FUEL ETC: Refers to the familiar fuel, smoke, etc.

THE GODS OFFER ETC: As the final oblation.

IN RADIANT ETC: That is to say, exceedingly bright, having been purified by all the religious rites performed from conception to cremation.

*Now the first question is also answered:*

## 15

“Those [even among] householders who know this, as described, and those too who, living in the forest, meditate with faith upon the Satya Brahman (Hiranyagarbha), reach [the deity identified with] flame, from him [the deity of] the day, from him [the deity of] the fortnight in which the moon waxes, from him [the deities of the] six months during which the sun travels northward, from them [the deity identified with] the world of the gods (devaloka), from him the sun, from the sun [the deity of] lightning. [Then] a being created from the mind [of Hiranyagarbha] comes and leads them to the worlds of Brahmā. In those worlds of Brahmā they become exalted and live for many years. They no more return to this world.

**WHO KNOW THIS:** Who know the meditation on the Five Fires. The worshippers of Hiranyagarbha and the religious celibates also attain Brahmāloka.

**LIVING IN THE FOREST:** Refers to the hermits and monks, who constantly live in the forest.

**SATYA BRAHMAN:** See V. i. 1.

**FLAME:** The word does not mean a tongue of fire, but the deity identified with flame (archi) and called by that name, who is stationed in the Northern Path.

**DAY:** Here too, as in all other instances, the deity is meant and not the daytime, since there is no rule that a knower of this meditation must die between sun-up and sun-down. The deities of the different stations conduct the soul from place to place.

**SIX MONTHS:** They are controlled by a group of six deities.

**BEING CREATED ETC:** That is to say, a denizen of Brahmāloka. In that exalted plane everything consists of ideas only.

**WORLDS OF BRAHMĀ:** The plural number indicates that there are higher and lower planes in Brahmāloka, attainable by different grades of meditation.

**MANY YEARS:** That is to say, many cycles, constituting the lifetime of Brahmā, or Hiranyagarbha.

**TO THIS WORLD:** According to the Madhyandina recension, they return to the world in another cycle.

Those householders who do not know the meditation on the Five Fires or on Hiranyagarbha but perform the Agnihotra rites mechanically go, after death, to the world of the Manes. Then they are born again of the fire of woman, again perform rites, and so on, thus rotating constantly in merry-go-round fashion. They move constantly between this world and the next.

But when they perform the rites of the Five Fires with appropriate meditation, they are freed from this rotation.

*Now are also answered the second and third questions:*

16

“But those who conquer the worlds through sacrifices, charity, and austerity reach [the deity of] smoke, from smoke, [the deity of] the night, from night [the deity of] the fortnight in which the moon wanes, from the decreasing half of the moon [the deities of] the six months during which the sun travels southward, from these months [the deity of] the world of the Manes, and from the world of the Manes, the moon. Reaching the moon they become food. There the gods enjoy them, just as [here] the priests drink the shining soma juice—saying [as it were]: “Flourish, dwindle.” And when their past work is exhausted they reach this very ākāśa, from the ākāśa they reach the air, from the air rain, from rain the earth. Reaching the earth they become food. Then they are again offered in the fire of man, and thence in the fire of woman. Out of the fire of woman they are born [and perform rites] with a view to going to other worlds. Thus do they rotate.

“Those, however, who do not know these two ways become insects and moths, and those creatures which often bite (i.e. mosquitoes and gnats).”

**BUT THOSE:** Refers to those householders who do not know the meditation on the Five Fires but are mere ritualists.

**SMOKE:** Here, as in the foregoing verse, the words *smoke*, etc. refer to their respective deities, who act as conductors.

**THEY . . . FOOD:** That is to say, they become like servants of the gods.

**SAYING [AS IT WERE]:** During the sacrifice the priest at intervals fill up and empty their cups of soma juice. They do not actually say: “Flourish, dwindle.” By these words the text indicates that they frequently fill up the cups and empty them. Likewise, the gods enjoy the ritualists who have got new bodies in the moon and have become the materials of their luxury. They reward these ritualists according to their past work by giving them frequent intervals of rest. Their services are utilized by the gods. The intervals of rest are like the filling up of the cups.

**THEY REACH . . . ĀKĀŚA:** The aqueous body of the ritualist obtained when the libation called “faith” is offered in the fire of heaven “melts on

the expiring of the momentum of the past work, like a lump of ice in contact with sunshine. In that state the body becomes subtle and looks like ākāśa." (Śankarāchārya.)

FROM THE ĀKĀŚA . . . AIR: The ritualist, identified with the ākāśa, is blown hither and thither by the wind.

THEY BECOME FOOD: That is to say, they enter with the rain into barley, rice, and other edible cereals.

OFFERED IN THE FIRE OF MAN: When an adult man eats the food out of which his semen is produced. The soul of the ritualist enters the semen.

THENCE IN THE FIRE OF WOMAN: At the time of the sexual act.

THEY ARE BORN: In fresh human bodies.

WITH A VIEW . . . ROTATE: The ritualists move repeatedly between the moon and this world, rotating in a circle. The rotation stops only when they reach Brahmaloaka or attain immediate Liberation on earth.

THOSE, HOWEVER, ETC: The two ways are the Northern and Southern Paths. The passage refers to those who practise neither meditation nor religious rituals.

BECOME INSECTS ETC: This is a very painful existence from which it is extremely difficult to escape. The purport of the passage is that we must try our best to give up our natural pursuit of worldly activity and secular knowledge, and practise meditation or ritualistic worship, enjoined by the scriptures, to attain the Northern or the Southern Path.

Now all the questions have been answered. The fourth question: "After how many oblations etc.," has been answered in VI. ii. 9-13. The fifth question, concerning the means of attaining the Way of the Gods or the Way of the Manes has been answered next (VI. ii. 14-16). This also has answered the first question, concerning how people take different paths after death. Starting with fire, some reach the deity of flame, and some the deity of smoke, and here is the divergence. The answer to the second question, concerning how people return to this world, has been given by the statement that they return, passing successively through the stages of ākāśa, air, etc. And this also has answered the third question by stating that the other world is not filled up for that reason, and also owing to the fact that some become insects, moths, etc.

*Here ends Chapter Two  
of Part Six of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER III

### rites for the attainment of wealth

WHOEVER WISHES to attain greatness (i.e. wealth for performing sacrificial rites) should act as follows: On an auspicious day of the fortnight in which the moon waxes, under a constellation bearing a masculine name, during the northward journey of the sun, he should undertake for twelve days a vow connected with the Upasads, gather in a cup or a bowl made of fig wood all the herbs and their grains, sweep and plaster the ground, lay the fire, spread [the kuśa grass], purify the offering (clarified butter) according to the rules, place [between himself and the fire] the mantha (the paste made of those herbs etc.), and offer oblations with the following mantras:

“O Fire, to all those gods under you who spitefully slay men’s desires, I offer their share. May they be satisfied and satisfy me with all the objects of my desire! Svāhā!

“To that deity who turns out to be spiteful under your protection, thinking that she is the support of all, I offer this stream of clarified butter. Svāhā!”

WHOEVER ETC: Refers to one who desires wealth and is qualified for the sacrificial rites to earn that wealth. According to the Vedic seers, wealth is acquired by the grace of the gods when they have been propitiated by proper rites.

UPASADS: These are the rites connected with the Jyotishtoma sacrifice, in which the sacrificer has to drink cow’s milk according to the yield obtained by increasing or decreasing the number of teats while milking the animals.

ALL THE HERBS: They will be enumerated later.

THEIR GRAINS: As far as available and within one’s means.

SWEEP AND PLASTER: That is to say, clean the ground.

FIRE: Refers to the Āvasathya or household fire.

MANTHA: The paste is prepared by first crushing the herbs and grains, then soaking them in curds, honey, and melted butter, and finally grinding them with a rod.

OFFER OBLATIONS: With a fig-wood ladle, in a part of the fire prescribed for the purpose.

The results of the meditation and rites have been stated in the foregoing chapter. Of these, meditation is independent of all outer accessories, but rites depend upon divine and human wealth. Hence, for the sake of rites, wealth must be acquired, and that according to scriptural injunctions. So for that purpose the Mantha ceremony is being inculcated as a means of attaining greatness. Wealth follows greatness as a matter of course. This and the following chapter show the realistic attitude of the Upanishadic seers. An average person seeks greatness through wealth and qualified offspring. These desires should not be suppressed. They are necessary stages of evolution. If fulfilled in the proper spirit such desires are gradually sublimated.

## 2

“Svāhā to the oldest, svāhā to the greatest!”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste (mantha).

“Svāhā to the vital breath (prāna), svāhā to the vasishtha (the most excellent)!”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste (mantha).

“Svāhā to the organ of speech, svāhā to that which has steadiness!”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste (mantha).

“Svāhā to the eye, svāhā to prosperity!”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste (mantha).

“Svāhā to the ear, svāhā to the abode!”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste (mantha).

“Svāhā to the mind, svāhā to procreation (prajāti)!”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste (mantha).

“Svāhā to the organ of generation!”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste (mantha).

SVĀHĀ ETC: One oblation should be offered with each mantra.

OLDEST . . . GREATEST: The words *oldest* and *greatest*, which are char-

acteristics of the vital breath (prāna), indicate that only the knower of the vital breath is entitled to perform this ceremony.

Compare this verse with VI. i. 1-6.

## 3

“Svāhā to fire”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to the moon”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to the earth”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to the sky”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to heaven”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to earth, sky, and heaven”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to the brāhmin”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to the kshatriya”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to the past”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to the future”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to the universe”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to all”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

“Svāhā to Prajāpati”—[uttering these words,] he offers an oblation in the fire and lets the remainder adhering to the ladle drip into the paste.

## 4

Then he touches the paste, uttering [the mantra]: “You move [as the vital breath]; you burn [as fire]; you are infinite [as Brahman]; you are unshaken [as the sky]. You are the meeting-place [of all]. You are the sound *hing* and are uttered as *hing* [in the sacrifice by the *prastoti*]. You are the *Udgitha* and are chanted [by the *udgātri*]. You are recited [by the *adhvaryu*] and recited back [by the *agnidhra*]. You are fully ablaze in the moist cloud. You are omnipresent and the ruler. You are food [as the moon] and light [as fire]. You are death and you are that in which all things merge.”

**THEN HE TOUCHES ETC:** The paste is identified with its deity, *Prāna* (the cosmic vital breath); hence epithets applicable to *Prāna* are used in the text with reference to the paste.

**YOU MOVE:** The paste is identified with the vital breath, whose nature is to move.

**YOU BURN:** The paste is regarded as the fire.

**FULLY ABLAZE ETC:** As lightning.

## 5

Then he raises the paste, saying: “[As the vital breath] you know all; we too are aware of your greatness [as the vital breath]. The vital breath is the king, the ruler, the sovereign. May it make me king, ruler, and sovereign.”

## 6

Then he eats the paste, saying: “‘*Tat saviturvarenyam*’ (‘That adorable light’)—‘The winds blow sweetly (*madhu*), the rivers pour forth sweetness (*madhu*); may the herbs be sweet (*madhu*) unto us!’ ‘*Svāhā to the earth (Bhuh)*.’

“‘*Bhargo devasya dhimahi*’—(‘Of the radiant sun, we meditate upon’)—‘May the nights and days be sweet (*madhu*), may the dust of the earth be sweet (*madhu*), may heaven, our father, be sweet (*madhu*)!’ ‘*Svāhā to the sky (Bhuvah)*.’

“‘*Dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt*’ (‘May He stimulate our intellect’)—

'May the soma creeper be sweet (madhu) unto us, may the sun be sweet (madhu), may the quarters be filled with sweetness (madhu) for us!' 'Svāhā to heaven (Svah).'

Then he repeats the whole Gāyatri and all the verses about sweetness (madhumati), and says at the end: "May I be all this! Svāhā to earth, sky, and heaven."

Then he eats all that is left of the paste, washes his hands, and lies down behind the fire with his head to the east.

In the morning he salutes the sun saying: "You are the one [non-dual and best] lotus of the quarters; may I be the one lotus among men."

Then he returns the way he went, sits behind the fire, and repeats the line of teachers.

**THEN HE EATS THE PASTE ETC:** The whole of the paste is to be taken in four portions, each with the utterance of a mantra. He takes the first portion, repeating the first foot of the Gāyatri, one part of the madhu hymn (madhumati), and the first Vyāhriti. (The Vyāhritis consist of three syllables: *Bhuh*, *Bhuvah*, and *Svah*, meaning respectively earth, sky, and heaven.) Similarly with the next two portions. For the meaning of the Gāyatri verse, see V. xiv. 1.

It should be noted that the purpose of all these rituals is the attainment of oneness with Prāna, or all.

## 7

Uddālaka, the son of Aruna, taught this to his pupil Vājasaneya Yājñavalkya and said: "Should one pour it (the paste) even on a dry stump, branches would grow and leaves spring forth."

**VĀJASANEYA:** A devotee of Vājasani (the sun), the revealer of the White Yajur-Veda.

**SHOULD ONE ETC:** This is a eulogy of the rite. The implication is that the rite fulfills one's desires without fail.

## 8

Then Vājasaneya Yājñavalkya taught this to his pupil Madhuka, the son of Paingī, and said: "Should one pour it even on a dry stump, branches would grow and leaves spring forth."

## 9

Then Madhuka, the son of Paingi, taught this to his pupil Chula, the son of Bhagavitta, and said: "Should one pour it even on a dry stump, branches would grow and leaves spring forth."

## 10

Then Chula, the son of Bhagavitta, taught this to his disciple Jānaki, the son of Ayasthuna, and said: "Should one pour it even on a dry stump, branches would grow and leaves spring forth."

## 11

Then Jānaki, the son of Ayasthuna, taught this to his pupil Satyakāma, the son of Jabālā, and said: "Should one pour it even on a dry stump, branches would grow and leaves spring forth."

## 12

And Satyakāma, the son of Jabālā, taught this to his pupils and said: "Should one pour it even on a dry stump, branches would grow and leaves spring forth."

One must not teach this to anyone but a son or a pupil.

**SHOULD ONE POUR IT:** That is to say, the paste, purified for the purpose of drinking.

**LEAVES SPRING FORTH:** As on a living tree.

**ONE MUST NOT ETC:** There are six qualified recipients of learning: a pupil, a knower of the Vedas, an intelligent person, one who makes a payment, a beloved son, and one who exchanges another branch of knowledge. Of these only two, namely, the son and the pupil, are declared as eligible for the doctrine of the paste (mantha) together with meditation on the vital breath. The purpose of repeating the line of teachers is to show respect to the transmitters of the Vedic knowledge, who kept it alive.

The doctrine of the mantha was handed down through a single line of teachers, beginning with Uddālaka.

## 13

Four articles are made of fig wood: the sacrificial ladle, the bowl, the fuel, and the two mixing-rods.

The cultivated grains are ten in number: Rice, barley, sesamum, beans, millet (anu), panic seeds (priyangu), wheat, lentils, pulse, and vetch.

They should be crushed and soaked in curds, honey, and clarified butter, and offered as an oblation.

RICE ETC: In addition to these, other herbs and their grains should be procured, so far as possible, barring only those which are not prescribed for sacrificial purposes.

*Here ends Chapter Three  
of Part Six of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCEPTION AND BIRTH AS RELIGIOUS RITES

THE EARTH is verily the essence of all these beings, water is the essence of the earth, herbs of water, flowers of herbs, fruits of flowers, man of fruits, and semen is the essence of man.

THE EARTH . . . BEINGS: See II. v. 1.

WATER . . . EARTH: Because the earth is pervaded by water.

SEMEN . . . MAN: Semen derives from all parts of the body. (Ai. Br. IV. 1.)

Chapter four prescribes the methods by which one can obtain the right kind of son, who will win the higher world both for himself and for his father. The birth of such a son depends upon the performance of the sexual act according to certain religious rites. Only a person who knows the meditation on the vital breath and has performed the rite of the paste (mantha) is entitled to perform the ceremony described in this chapter. The qualified person, after performing the ceremony, should wait for his wife's proper time.

This chapter contains passages which are supposedly repugnant to some modern minds; certain translators of the Upanishad have omitted them and others have not. But Śankarāchārya has written a commentary on the whole chapter. It appears to the present translator that this chapter should be respected as forming a part of the Vedic knowledge, which shows the way to the attainment of both worldly prosperity and Liberation. The chapter throws light upon an important subject related to a basic human urge, without which the creative process comes to an end. The sturdy thinkers of the Vedas did not altogether repudiate the physical world, the experience of which is imperative for the realization of the Highest Good. Therefore, according to them, procreation is neither reprehensible nor sinful for those who, on account of ignorance (avidyā), accept the phenomenal world as real and seek happiness here through wealth and offspring. Children assure the continuity of the race and the perpetuation of the culture. Marriage is extolled because it is a discipline for self-control, enabling men to give up the animal life of promiscuity. Thus for the purpose of marriage is not

the satisfaction of lust, but the creation of a healthy society through righteous children. Only those born of lust are a liability to society. Taking a realistic view of life, the Hindu philosophers accept a man as he is and help him towards higher evolution. Though illumined persons, realizing the transitory nature of earthly things, give up all longing for children, wealth, and the heavenly world, the average man is not yet ready to do so. He should pursue dharma (ethical conduct), earn money (artha), and enjoy legitimate sense pleasures (kāma), thus qualifying himself for the life of absolute renunciation leading to Liberation (moksha). Natural physical desires are quelled, in due course, through the enjoyment of their fruits. But this quelling can be hastened if enjoyment is accompanied by certain religious rites. According to the Hindu mystics, rituals and words (mantras) are efficacious in helping men to sublimate their worldly desires. The philosophy of Purva-mīmāṃsā, the system of Tantra, and the Yoga system of Patanjali advocate their use.

In the present chapter of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, one is asked to treat the sexual act as the Vājapeya sacrifice. Different parts of a woman's body are identified with the different factors of the sacrifice. Sexual intercourse, if performed keeping this in mind, does not debase a person but enables him to win a higher world, just as a religious rite does. There is nothing sinful about the sexual act if the householder cultivates the proper attitude towards it. On the contrary, the Upanishad holds that through it he attains, in due course, an exalted state in which no trace of sex or of duality remains.

## 2

Prajāpati said to Himself: "Well, let Me make a firm basis for it (semen)." So He created woman. Having created her, He placed her below and worshipped her. Therefore one should worship a woman, placing her below. He (Prajāpati) extended His organ that projects and with it impregnated her.

**PRAJĀPATI:** The first created being.

**FIRM BASIS:** Fit receptacle.

**WORSHIPPED HER:** That is to say, performed the sexual act. Since Prajāpati, who occupies the most exalted place among created beings, performed the sexual act for the purpose of creation, there cannot be anything inherently sinful about it for those who take the world to be real and seek its continuation.

**THEREFORE ETC:** A common man should always follow the example of the leader.

**ORGAN ETC:** This is compared to the stone pestle (grāvānam) with which the soma creeper is crushed in the Vājapeya sacrifice.

*The similarity of different parts of the woman's body to the corresponding factors of the Vājapeya sacrifice is pointed out:*

## 3

Her lap is the [sacrificial] altar, her hair the [sacrificial] grass, her skin [within the organ] the lighted fire; the two labia of the vulva are the two stones of the soma-press.

He who, knowing this, practises sexual intercourse wins as great a world as is won through the Vājapeya sacrifice; he acquires for himself [the fruit of] the good deeds of the woman. But he who, without knowing this, practises sexual intercourse turns over to the woman his own good deeds.

**HE WHO . . . SACRIFICE:** From the analogy of the Vājapeya sacrifice it is clear that one should not condemn sexual intercourse if it is performed in the spirit of a religious ritual.

**BUT HE WHO, ETC:** Refers to one who has sexual intercourse only to satisfy carnal desire.

*Sexual intercourse debases a man who does not practise it as a religious rite.*

## 4

Having known this, Uddālaka the son of Aruna, Nāka the son of Mudgala, and Kumāra-hārīta said: "Many mortals, brāhmins only in name, perform the sexual act without knowledge of what has been said and depart from this world impotent and without merit."

Even if this much semen—of one asleep or of one awake—is spilled,

**HAVING KNOWN THIS:** That is to say, what has been described above concerning sexual intercourse as a religious rite.

**MANY MORTALS ETC:** Refers to those who are attached to the sexual act in order to satisfy carnal desire alone.

**BRĀHMINS ETC:** That is to say, those who proclaim their brāhminhood in order to earn a living.

**EVEN IF ETC:** After performing the mantha rite, a man should wait for his wife's proper time. If, however, he should lose semen in sleep or, on

account of his passionate nature, when he is awake, he should do what is mentioned in the following verse.

## 5

He should touch it and repeat the following mantra:

“Whatever semen of mine has spilt on earth, whatever has flowed to plants, whatever to water, I reclaim it.”

With these words he should take the semen with his ring finger and thumb and rub it between his breasts or eyebrows, repeating the following mantra:

“Let the semen return to me, let vigour come to me again, let glow and good fortune come to me again. May the deities who dwell in the [sacrificial] fire put the semen back in its proper place.”

It has already been pointed out that semen is the essence of a man. It is the source of his virility, glow, and good fortune or knowledge. One must not lose it; one should use it only for the right purpose.

*The means to ward off the evil effects of the waste of semen have been described. Now are laid down remedies for other evils:*

## 6

Now, if a man sees himself (his reflection) in water, he should recite the following mantra:

“May the gods bestow on me vigour, manhood, fame, wealth, and merit.”

[In praise of the wife who will bear him a son:]

She (his wife) has put on the soiled clothes [of impurity]; she is, verily, loveliness among women. Therefore when she has removed the clothes of impurity and appears beautiful, he should approach her and speak to her.

**THEREFORE ETC:** There should be no sexual intercourse during the wife's monthly period.

## 7

If she does not [willingly] yield [her body] to him, he should buy her [with presents]. If she is still unyielding, he should strike her with a stick or with his hand and overcome her, repeating the following mantra:

"With power and glory I take away your glory."

Thus she becomes discredited.

**BUY HER:** That is to say, demonstrate his love for her and thus bring her under his control.

**THUS SHE ETC:** As a result of the curse she becomes barren and inglorious.

## 8

If she grants [his desire], he should repeat the following mantra:

"With power and glory I give you glory."

Thus they both become glorious.

## 9

If a man desires his wife with the thought: "May she enjoy love with me," then, after inserting the member in her, joining mouth to mouth, and stroking her organ, he should utter the following mantra:

"O semen, you have been produced from my every limb, [especially] from my heart [through the essence of food]; you are the essence of the limbs. Bring this woman under my control, like a deer pierced by a poisoned arrow."

## 10

Now, the wife whom he desires [with the thought]: "May she not conceive"—after inserting the member in her and joining mouth to mouth, he should inhale and then exhale, repeating the following mantra:

"With power, with semen, I reclaim the semen from you."

Thus she comes to be without semen.

## 11

Now, the wife whom he desires [with the thought]: "May she conceive"—after inserting the member in her and joining mouth to mouth, he should inhale and then exhale, repeating the following mantra:

"With power, with semen, I deposit semen in you."

Thus she verily becomes pregnant.

## 12

Now, if a man's wife has a paramour whom he detests, [he should perform the following rite in order to cast an evil spell upon him]:

Let him put fire in an unbaked earthen vessel, spread stalks of reed and kuśa grass inversely, and offer [in the sacrificial fire] the reed tips, soaked in clarified butter, inversely, repeating the following mantra:

"You have made a libation in my kindled fire! I take away your prāna and apāna, you, ——! [Here the name of the evil-doer should be uttered.] You have made a libation in my kindled fire! I take away your sons and cattle, you, ——! You have made a libation in my kindled fire! I take away your Vedic rites and those done according to the Smritis, you, ——! You have made a libation in my kindled fire! I take away your hopes and expectations, you, ——!"

He whom a brāhmin who knows this [rite] curses, departs from this world impotent and shorn of merit. Therefore let no one even joke with the wife of a Vedic scholar who knows this rite; for he who has this knowledge is a dangerous enemy.

**DETESTS:** And therefore wishes to harm by means of an incantation.

**YOU HAVE . . . FIRE:** As stated above, sexual intercourse is regarded as a religious rite.

**YOU, ——:** The name of the evil-doer should be uttered in each instance.

**EVEN JOKE:** Much less give any more serious offence.

Passages like the above, describing how to prevent conception or bring it about when desired, or how to use an incantation, show the intimate relationship between this Upanishad and the Atharva-Veda.

## 13

If a man's wife has the monthly sickness, she should for three days drink water from a cup [made of bell metal]. Let no śudra man or woman touch her. After three nights she should bathe, put on a new cloth, and her husband should make her thresh rice.

**HUSBAND ETC:** In order to prepare the food mentioned in verses 14-18. This verse should precede verse 6 for the sake of consistency.

## 14

If a man wishes that a son with a fair complexion should be born to him, that he should study one Veda, and that he should attain a

full term of life, then they (husband and wife) should have rice cooked in milk and eat it with clarified butter. Thus they should be able to beget such a son.

**FULL . . . LIFE:** That is to say, one hundred years.

## 15

If a man wishes that a son with a tawny or brown complexion should be born to him, that he should study two Vedas, and that he should attain a full term of life, then they should have rice cooked in curds and eat it with clarified butter. Thus they should be able to beget such a son.

## 16

If a man wishes that a son with a dark complexion and red eyes should be born to him, that he should study three Vedas, and that he should attain a full term of life, then they should have rice cooked in water and eat it with clarified butter. Thus they should be able to beget such a son.

## 17

If a man wishes that a daughter should be born to him who will be a scholar and attain a full term of life, then they should have rice cooked with sesamum and eat it with clarified butter. Thus they should be able to beget such a daughter.

## 18

If a man wishes that a son should be born to him who will be a famous scholar, frequenting assemblies and speaking delightful words, a student of all the Vedas, and an enjoyer of the full term of life, he should have rice cooked with the meat of a young bull or of one more advanced in years, and he and his wife should eat it with clarified butter. Then they should be able to beget such a son.

**DELIGHTFUL WORDS:** Words that are chaste and pregnant with meaning.

## 19

Now, towards morning he purifies the clarified butter according to the rules of Sthālipāka and offers Sthālipāka oblations repeatedly, saying:

“Svāhā to fire! Svāhā to Anumati! Svāhā to the radiant sun, who produces infallible results!”

Having made the offering, he takes up the remnant of the cooked food, eats part of it, and gives the rest to his wife. Then he washes his hands, fills the water-vessel, and sprinkles her thrice with water, uttering [once] this mantra:

“Get up from here, O Viśvāvasu! Seek another young woman, a wife with her husband.”

**STHĀLIPĀKA:** Lit., food cooked in an earthen pot. The name of a ceremony prescribed in the *Grihya Sūtras*.

**ANUMATI:** The feminine personification of Divine Favour.

**VIŚVĀVASU:** A celestial minstrel (gandharva) who is the lord of maidens.

*Then he purifies his wife with mantras, and both eat the rice cooked in milk or other materials, according to the kind of child desired.*

## 20

Then he embraces her, repeating the following mantra:

“I am the vital breath and you are speech. You are speech and I am the vital breath. I am Sāman and you are Rīg; I am heaven and you are earth. Come, let us strive together so that we may have a male child.”

**YOU ARE SPEECH:** Speech is dependent upon breath, as is the wife upon the husband.

**HEAVEN ETC:** Heaven is called father, and earth mother.

**RĪG:** Sāman rests on Rīg while it is uttered.

## 21

Then he spreads apart her thighs, repeating the following mantra:

“Spread yourselves apart, Heaven and Earth.”

Inserting the member in her and joining mouth to mouth, he strokes her three times [from head to foot], repeating the following mantra:

“Let Vishnu make the womb capable of bearing a son! Let Tvashtṛā shape the various limbs [of the child]! Let Prajāpati pour in [the semen]! Let Dhātṛā support the embryo! O Sinivāli, make her conceive; O goddess [whose glory is widespread], make her conceive! May the two Aśvins, garlanded with lotuses, support the embryo!

VIṢṆU: The All-pervading Spirit.

TVASHTRĀ: The sun.

PRAJĀPATI: That is to say, Virāj, who dwells in the husband.

DHĀTRĀ: Hiranyagarbha.

SINIVĀLI: That presiding goddess of the day preceding that of the new moon.

AŚVINS: Here the reference is to the sun and moon.

GARLANDED ETC: That is to say, illumined by their own light.

This may be said to be a spiritual interpretation of conception, the human father and mother being only the instrumental cause.

## 22

“Let the [two] Aśvins churn the womb with the [two] golden arani sticks! I am placing a seed in your womb to be delivered in the tenth month. As the earth has fire in its womb, as heaven is pregnant with the sun, as the quarters are impregnated by air, so I am impregnating you by placing this seed in your womb.”

[After the reciting of the mantra, he utters his own name and that of his wife and places the seed.]

ARANI: A piece of wood of the sami tree, used for kindling the sacrificial fire by attrition.

The foregoing mantras (verses 21-22) are a loose quotation from a hymn of the Rig-Veda (X. 184.), and also from the Atharva-Veda (V. xxv. 3, 5).

## 23

When she is about to deliver the child, he sprinkles her with water, repeating the following mantra:

“As the wind agitates a pond on every side, even so let your foetus stir and come out along with the chorion. Indra (prāna) made a path [when the seed entered the womb]. O Indra, follow that path and come out with the foetus and the covering, and cause also the after birth to come forth with the babe.”

*Now the post-natal ceremony is described:*

## 24

When [the son] is born, he should light a fire, take the child on his lap, put a mixture of curds and clarified butter in a bell-metal cup, and offer oblations in the fire repeatedly, uttering the mantra:

"May I increase [as the son] in my own home and support a thousand people! May [the Goddess of Fortune] never depart, with children and cattle, from his line! Svāhā! The vital breath that is in me, I mentally offer to you. Svāhā! If I have done anything too much or too little in this ceremony, may the all-knowing and highly beneficent fire make it just right and proper for me. Svāha!"

## 25

Then, putting [his mouth] to the child's right ear, he should say thrice: "Speech! Speech!" Next he should mix together curds, honey, and clarified butter and feed the child with a golden stick which is not placed inside [the mouth], saying [these mantras]:

"I put the earth (Bhuh) into you; I put the sky (Bhuvah) into you; I put heaven (Svah) into you. The whole of earth, sky, and heaven I put into you."

**THRICE:** Refers to the three major Vedas.

**SPRECH:** Wishing that the Vedas may enter into him.

## 26

Then he (the father) gives him (the son) a name: "You are the Veda (knowledge)." That is his secret name.

## 27

Then he presents him to the mother to give him her breast, uttering the mantra:

"O Sarasvati, that breast of thine which is fruitful, the sustainer of all, full of milk, the bestower of wealth, and generous, and by which thou nourishest all who are worthy—transfer that [breast] here [to my wife, for my child] to suck.

**WEALTH:** That is to say, what one deserves as the fruit of one's karma.

## 28

Then he addresses the mother [of the child] thus:

"You are the adorable Arundhati, the wife of Vasishtha, and with me, who am a man, as your partner you have brought forth a male child. Be the mother of many male children, for you have given us a son."

And people say to the son who is born as the child of a brāhmin endowed with this particular knowledge:

“You have surpassed your father and you have surpassed your grandfather. Oh, truly you have reached the extreme limit of attainment through your splendour, fame, and brāhminical power.”

A noble son born of noble parents in a noble manner is extolled by the Vedic seers.

*Here ends Chapter Four  
of Part Six of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER V

### THE LINE OF TEACHERS

NOW THE LINE of teachers:

The son of Pautimāshi [received this knowledge] from the son of Kātyāyani. The son of Kātyāyani from the son of Gautami. The son of Gautami from the son of Bhāradvāji. The son of Bhāradvāji from the son of Pārāśari. The son of Pārāśari from the son of Aupasvasti. The son of Aupasvasti from the son of [another] Pārāśari. The son of [this] Pārāśari from the son of Kātyāyani. The son of Kātyāyani from the son of Kauśiki. The son of Kauśiki from the son of Ālambi and the son of Vaiyāghrapadi. The son of Vaiyāghrapadi from the son of Kānvi and the son of Kāpi. The son of Kāpi

2

From the son of Ātreyi. The son of Ātreyi from the son of Gautami. The son of Gautami from the son of Bhāradvāji. The son of Bhāradvāji from the son of Pārāśari. The son of Pārāśari from the son of Vātsi. The son of Vātsi from the son of [another] Pārāśari. The son of [this] Pārāśari from the son of Vārkāruni. The son of Vārkāruni from the son of [another] Vārkāruni. [The] son of [this] Vārkāruni from the son of Ārtabhāgi. The son of Ārtabhāgi from the son of Śaungi. The son of Śaungi from the son of Sānkriti. The son of Sānkriti from the son of Ālambāyani. The son of Ālambāyani from the son of Ālambi. The son of Ālambi from the son of Jāyanti. The son of Jāyanti from the son of Māndukāyani. The son of Māndukāyani from the son of Mānduki. The son of Mānduki from the son of Śāndili. The son of Śāndili from the son of Rāthitari. The son of Rāthitari from the son of Bhāluki. The son of Bhāluki from the two sons of Kraunchiki. The two sons of Kraunchiki from the son of Vaidabhriti. The son of Vaidabhriti from the son of Kārśakeyi. The son of Kārśakeyi from the son of Prāchinayogi. The son of Prāchinayogi from the son of Sānjivi. The son of Sānjivi from Āsurivasin, who was the son of Prāśni. The son of Prāśni from Āsurāyana. Āsurāyana from Āsuri. Āsuri

## 3

From Yājñavalkya. Yājñavalkya from Uddālaka. Uddālaka from Aruna. Aruna from Upaveśi. Upaveśi from Kuśri. Kuśri from Vājaśravas. Vājaśravas from Jihvāvat, the son of Badhyoga. Jihvāvat, the son of Badhyoga, from Asita, the son of Varshagana. Asita, the son of Varshagana, from Harita Kaśyapa. Harita Kaśyapa from Śilpa Kaśyapa. Śilpa Kaśyapa from Kaśyapa, the son of Nidhruva. Kaśyapa, the son of Nidhruva, from Vāch. Vāch from Ambhini. Ambhini from the sun. These white Yajuses (sacrificial formulas not vitiated by human blemishes) are explained by Yājñavalkya, belonging to the Vājasaneyi school.

## 4

[The line of teachers is] the same up to the son of Sānjivi. The son of Sānjivi [received this knowledge] from Māndukāyani. Māndukāyani from Māndavya. Māndavya from Kautsa. Kautsa from Māhitthi. Māhitthi from Vāmakakshāyana. Vāmakakshāyana from Śāndilya. Śāndilya from Vātsya. Vātsya from Kuśri. Kuśri from Yajnavachas, the son of Rājastamba. Yajnavachas, the son of Rājastamba, from Tura, the son of Kavashi. Tura, the son of Kavashi, from Prajāpati (Hiranyagarbha). Prajāpati [received this knowledge] from his relationship to Brahman (the Vedas). Brahman is self-existent. Salutation to Brahman.

[The notes for the whole chapter are given below.]

**NOW THE LINE ETC:** The line of teachers of the whole Upanishad is given. They are named after their mothers because the wife holds the most important place in the rite just described: it is she who, being purified, produces a worthy son.

**AMBHINI FROM THE SUN:** The sun is identical with Prajāpati, or Hiran-yagarbha.

**THE SAME UP TO ETC:** It will be seen from the line of teachers given in verse 3 that the first teacher of this Upanishad was the sun, who is the same as Prajāpati. The knowledge transmitted through the line of teachers given in this verse was received by the son of Sānjivi (verse 2). The same knowledge was transmitted by Prajāpati through another line of teachers, as given in verse 4, and was likewise received by the son of Sānjivi. Evidently the son of Sānjivi had two teachers. From the son of Sānjivi the knowledge was transmitted through a single line of teachers, as given in verses 2 and

1, and if the names are read in the inverse order, the line stops at the son of Pautimāshi. The line of teachers is thus the same up to the son of Sānjivi, after whom it bifurcates, to merge again at Prajāpati, described as the sun in verse 3.

PRAJĀPATI ETC: The Vedas have come down the line of teachers from Prajāpati and variously branched off. They are without beginning or end.

SALUTATION ETC: The salutation is also made to the teachers through whom the knowledge has been transmitted.

*Here ends Chapter Five  
of Part Six of the  
Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

*Here ends the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.*

## THE PEACE CHANT

**Om. That is full; this is full. This fullness has been projected from that fullness. When this fullness merges in that fullness, all that remains is fullness.**

**Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!**