

**COMMENTARY
ON THE
MUNDAKA UPANISHAD**

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SWAMI KRISHNANANDA



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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

We are delighted to bring our new publication 'Commentary on the Mundaka Upanishad' by Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj.

Saunaka, the great householder, questioned Rishi Angiras. *Kasmin Bhagavo vijnaate sarvamidam vijnaatam bhavati iti*: O Bhagavan, what is that which being known, all this—the entire phenomena, experienced through the mind and the senses—becomes known or really understood?

The Mundaka Upanishad presents an elaborate answer to this important philosophical question, and also to all possible questions implied in the one original essential question.

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj gave a verse-by-verse commentary on this most significant and sacred Upanishad in August 1989. The insightful analysis of each verse in Sri Swamiji Maharaj's inimitable style makes the book a precious treasure for all spiritual seekers.

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CHAPTER 1

SECTION 1

Brahmā devānām prathamah sambabhūva viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptā, sa brahma-vidyām sarva-vidyā-pratiṣṭhām arthavāya jyeṣṭha-putrāya prāha; artharvaṇe yām pravadeta brahmātharvā tām purovācāngire brahma-vidyām, sa bhāradvājāya satyavāhāya prāha bhāradvājo'ṅgirase parāvarām (1.1.1-2). Brahma, the Creator, who was the first born among all evolutes in the process of the manifestation of God Almighty, the Creator of this world and the Protector of all beings, taught Brahma Vidya—the science of Brahman, which is the origin, the support and the foundation of every other learning, every other *vidya* or science or art—to his eldest son Atharvan, a great sage. Atharvan taught this knowledge that he received from Brahma to another sage, called Angi. This great sage Angi, who received it from Atharvan, who received it from Brahma, gave this knowledge to Bharadvaja, another great sage. This is the line of the descent of this knowledge. Bharadvaja, also known as Satyavaha, taught this wisdom, the wisdom of Paravara, the high and the low, once again to Angiras. This knowledge includes everything that is here and also everything that is not here. The highest Reality as it is in itself, and also the Reality manifest in the form

of creation, is Paravara. This Brahma Vidya is a knowledge and a study of this great Reality which appears as *para* and *avara*, the high and the low at the same time.

An assembly of all the sages is reported to have frequently been held in a place called Naimisharanya. These sessions took place many times, and the teachings of the epics and the Puranas, and the great scriptures, were given by great teachers such as Sutapurana, who is the speaker in the Mahabharata as well as in the Puranas.

One of the sages who were assembled there listening to these discourses was Saunaka. We will find that in the Puranas the questioner is always Saunaka. Saunaka was a great sage who performed large sacrifices, and his sacrificial ground was very big. Therefore, he was called Saunaka Mahashala. *Shala* is the sacrificial ground, and *mahashala* means a large ground, even kilometres long. At least hundreds and hundreds of *yajnas* and sacrifices did Saunaka Mahashala perform, and usually these discourses were conducted in the very place where the *yajnas* were held. On one side of the *pandal*, or tent, or the *yajnashala*, the actual *havan*, *yajna*, sacrifice would be performed by the appointed priests, and on the other side there would be a discourse going on. Even the recitation of the Mahabharata by Vaisampayana was done on the sacrificial ground.

Janamejaya performed a Sarpa Yaga, a *yajna* which he undertook to vindicate the death of his father Parikshit, who died on account of a snakebite. Janamejaya's anger over the snakebite was such that, when he heard that his father died in that way, he determined to end the species of snakes completely, and conducted a *yajna* called Sarpa Yaga, which did not succeed in the end on account of some

interference. At that time Vyasa was present, and he told his disciple Vaisampayana to tell the whole story of the Mahabharata to Janamejaya, who was eager to know exactly what happened to his forefathers, the Pandavas, whose progeny was Parikshit, his father. Similarly, the Puranas were recited by Suta, a learned sage in the Naimisha forest, which is near Neemsar, somewhere around Sitapur.

Saunaka, the great sage, the Mahashala, the performer of large sacrifices, stood up in the assembly and queried the great sage Angiras, who received this Brahma Vidya through a descending line of teaching commencing from Brahma, the Creator himself. Humbly, respectfully, in a traditional manner, this great sage Saunaka Mahashala approached Angiras, the great Master, who was in the audience. He put a question. What is the question Saunaka Mahashala put to the sage Angiras?

Śaunako ha vai mahāśālo'ṅgirasam vidhivad upasannah papraccha, kasmin nu bhagavo vijñāte sarvam idam vijñātam bhavati iti (1.1.3): “Great Master, holy Sage, what is that, by knowing which, one can know everything else also?” Is it possible to know something which can lead to the knowledge of all things at the same time? Generally, such a thing is not possible. If you know one thing, you know only that thing. The knowledge of A does not involve the knowledge of B, because A cannot be B. One thing cannot be another thing; it is the law of contradiction in logic. So what is this question? A supernatural question is raised by Saunaka Mahashala: “What is that thing, the knowledge of which will, at the same time, mean the knowledge of all things?” It was a simple question, leading to an answer which is the entire Upanishad.

To the sage Saunaka, who queried in this manner, Angiras, the Master, speaks. *Tasami sa hovāca: dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yad brahmavido vadanti parā caivāparā ca* (1.1.4): Two kinds of knowledge—*dve vidye*—are to be acquired: the higher and the lower. We have to know what higher knowledge is, and we also have to know what lower knowledge is. This is what we hear from Brahmavids, the great knowers of Brahman. This is the instruction we have received from the Brahmavid in regard to how knowledge can be acquired, or obtained.

Knowledge of the lower is important, though lower knowledge is not the same as higher knowledge. Lower knowledge is something like the legs of a human being; and a human being can live even without legs. Legs are not essential to the body, but they are necessary for the body. In a similar manner, lower knowledge is not going to take us to Brahman, but it is necessary as legs are necessary for us, and so its essentials need not be overemphasised with a feeling of their overwhelming importance, giving no credit to that which will lead to that essential knowledge.

All knowledge is a graduated training of the mind in the process of enlightenment. From the perceptible, visible, gross, tangible and acceptable reality, we gradually move the mind to that which is not easily acceptable and cannot be understood as quickly as we can understand that which is seen with the eyes directly. That the Sun is giving light to us, that it is now daytime, and that the Sun rose at a particular hour in the morning, is something acceptable. But that the Sun gives light to all parts of the world at different times, in a very systematic manner, is something that cannot be seen with the eyes directly. It requires a little

imagination and intensive study to know this other fact involved in the illumination given by the Sun on the Earth, as it is not actually physically accessible to vision.

There are degrees of knowledge, and there are as many degrees of knowledge as there are degrees of the psychic setup of a human being. We have to pass through as many stages of education as are the stages which compose our own mind. The mental degree is also the degree of reality that it will encounter in the process of enlightenment and education.

Saunaka put a question regarding what knowledge is, and Angiras said there are two types of knowledge, the lower and the higher. Now we are told what lower knowledge is.

Tatrāparā ṛg-vedo yajur-vedaḥ sāma-vedo'tharva-vedaḥ śikṣā kalpo vyākaraṇam niruktaṁ chando jyotiṣam-iti, atha parā yayā tad akṣaram adhigamyate (1.1.5). Very interesting! It gives a blow at the very root of our imagination that the Vedas are the highest knowledge. The Rigveda Samhitas, and everything connected to the Rigveda, such as the Brahmanas, and the Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda, are all lower knowledge only, my dear friend.

There are four Vedas. The Rigveda consists of hymns, prayers, mantras. The Yajurveda consists of certain invocations necessary for the performance of sacrifice. The Samaveda is Rig-verses set in music. The Atharvaveda contains such material that may be regarded as a sequel or an appendix to the threefold Vedas—the Rigveda, Yajurveda and Samaveda. These four Vedas are not easy to understand. Their language is difficult, their grammar is very hard, and the implications of what they say are so deep that without

proper introductory learning, one cannot know what the Vedas speak at all. This introductory training consists of what is called the Vedanga, a sixfold education. The *anga*, or the limb of the Veda, is sixfold, and we cannot approach the Veda unless we are proficient in these six accessories called the Vedanga. What are these six Vedangas?

Śikṣā kalpo vyākaraṇam niruktaṁ chando jyotiṣam iti. Siksha is the science of phonetics, the art of intonation and modulation of the voice in the recitation of a Veda mantra. You might have heard *panditas* chanting mantras of the Veda. It has a way of pronunciation, an articulation, a modulation, and a raising of the voice or bringing down of the voice, or keeping the voice in a harmonious manner without raising it or bringing it down. This is the science of giving a special meaning to the mantra.

You may be wondering what the great point is in intoning the mantra. “O God, protect me.” I can say that in any way I like. Why should I sing it in a particular tone? The reason is, the Veda mantras are composed in such a way that different intonations give them different suggestions. Even when we speak, our mode of speaking gives a special significance to the words. We can utter a sentence with different voice formations which may mean different things depending on the different ways of expression. Sometimes we gesticulate, and sometimes we change the tone of voice by raising, lowering or modulating it in such a way that conveys different meanings. For instance, when we say something when we are happy or unhappy, or when we are angry or want to abuse somebody, we know how our voice changes. Likewise, a special kind of technique has been adopted by the science of Siksha, attributed to Panini,

the great grammarian, which instructs us in the art of the correct intonation and pronunciation of a Veda mantra, especially the first three Vedas—the Rigveda, Yajurveda and Samaveda.

Kalpa means the performance of a ritual connected with a specific injunction of the Veda, especially of the Brahmanas. We have seen *acharyas*, *purohitas* performing a *havana*. While chanting they put something here, something there, such as *darbha* grass here, water there. They will do *acharanam*, wash their hands, put some rice grains there, and so many other things. These are certain techniques of ritual which are elaborately described in the Kalpa Sutras.

The Kalpa Sutras are of four types: Shrauta Sutras, Grihya Sutras, Dharma Sutras and Shulba Sutras. The Shrauta Sutras describe the manner of the performance of sacrifices according to Vedic injunctions. The Grihya Sutras are connected with sacrifices and performances to be undertaken in one's own house, and not in some big *yajnasala*. The Dharma Sutras give us the rules and regulations of social and ethical life, such as Varnashrama dharma, etc. The Shulba Sutras describes the length, measurement, etc., of certain articles that are to be used in Vedic sacrificial methods. These are the four types of Kalpa Sutras.

Vyakarana is grammar. There are two types of grammar: classical grammar and Vedic grammar. In Panini's method, both types of grammar are found. Vedic grammar is studied only in advanced stages. Students of Sanskrit usually study only classical works and the well-known Vyakarana. Unless we know the technology of the method by which words

are used in the Veda mantras, we will not make any sense out of them, and so Vyakarana, the study of grammar, is necessary.

Nirukta is the etymology of the word—how the word has been formed. Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and so on—what is actually meant by these words? They have a root. As every word in a language has a root from which it is derived, Vedic words also have a root from which they arise. The Nirukta Shastra of Bhaskaracharya is the great textbook which goes into the details of the etymology, or the roots of the words, used in the Veda mantras.

Chandas is the metre. Every verse, every mantra of the Rigveda Samhita particularly, varies in its metre. It is long or short, it is Gayatri Chandas or Tristubh, and so on, and accordingly the intonation also changes.

Jyotisha is the astronomical science which tells us at what particular time of the conjunction of the stars or the planets we have to undertake a particular ritual or a sacrifice. It does not mean that on any day we can do some worship and on any day we can do some *havanam*, and so on. A particular *yajna*, or *havan*, should be done at a particular time, in consonance with the respective conjunction of the planets and the stars. That is Jyotisha, the *shastra* of astronomy.

We cannot go to the Veda directly and understand anything out of it unless we are proficient in these six auxiliary *shastras*, or scriptures, called *śikṣā kalpo vyākaraṇam niruktaṁ chando jyotiṣam*. All these, says the great Master, together with the original Vedas—the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda—should be considered as lower knowledge. They purify our

minds and enlighten us into the mysteries of the whole of creation. They purify our minds because of the power that is embedded in the mantras and the emotional or religious awareness that is stimulated within us on account of the meaning that we see in the mantras, the blessing that we receive from the sages who composed the mantras, and also the special power that is generated by the metre. All these put together create a religious atmosphere in the person who takes to the study of the Veda. It is great and grand, worth studying. It will lift us to the empyrean of a comprehension of values that are not merely physical, but superphysical. Yet, it is not enough. There is a 'but' behind it. What is that greater knowledge, which is higher than this mentioned?

Atha parā yayā tad akṣaram adhigamyate: That is the higher knowledge with which alone can we reach the imperishable Reality. Learning is different from wisdom; scholarship is not the same as insight. One may be a learned Vedic scholar and very proficient in the performance of sacrifices and the invocation of gods in the heavens, but eternity is different from temporality. All these glories of the Veda are in the region of time, and the Eternal is timeless. What is that timeless thing, that which is called Imperishable?

Yat tad adreśyam, agrāhyam, agotram, avarṇam, acakṣuḥ-śrotram tad apāṇi-padām, nityam vibhum sarva-gataṁ susūkṣmaṁ tad avyayam yad bhūta-yonim paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ (1.1.6): That great Reality is to be encountered in direct experience. *Adreśyam:* that Reality which is not capable of perception through the eyes; *agrāhyam:* that which cannot be grasped with the hands; *avarṇam:* which has no origin;

agotram: which has no shape or form; *acakṣuḥ-śrotram*: which has no sense organs like us; *tad apāṇi-padam*: which has no limbs such as feet, hands, etc.; *nityam vibhum sarva-gataṁ susūkṣmaṁ*: which is permanent, eternal, all-pervading, subtler than the subtlest; *tad avyayam*: which is imperishable; *bhūta-yonim*: which is the origin of all beings; *paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ*: heroes on the path of the spirit will behold that great Reality within their own selves.

Yathorṇa-nābhiḥ srijate gr̥hṇate ca, yathā pṛthivyām ośadhayas sambhavanti, yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni tathākṣarāt sambhavatīha viśvam (1.1.7). From this Eternal Being this world, this universe, has emanated. How does the world come from God? We have seen a spider spitting threads from its own body. Threads come out, and it weaves a web around itself. We have seen trees spontaneously growing from under the earth, and we have seen hair growing on the head. In some such way is the manner of the creation of this world.

Tathākṣarāt sambhavatīha viśvam. These analogies have some significance of their own. The spider does not create the web from external material. The *upadana* is the same as the *nimitha*, as they say. The instrumental cause is the same as the material cause in the case of the spider weaving a web. In the case of the potter making a pot, the instrumental cause is not the same as the material cause, and so is the case with the carpenter making furniture. That is to say, the potter does not make the pot out of a substance coming from his body, and so is the case with the carpenter. But in the case of the spider, the creation of the web materially emanates from the very body of the spider, and so here

the material cause is identical with the instrumental cause. They are not two different things. God does not create the world as a carpenter or a potter does; the substance of God is verily present in the creation. That illustration is brought out by this analogy of a spider creating a web.

Yathā pṛthivayām ośadhayas sambhavanti. Here is another analogy. Trees grow from the earth; they draw sustenance from the earth. The original support of all the trees is the substance of the earth. This analogy tells us that the world is sustained by God, and all the values of the world come from God only. God is the soul of all that He creates. There is also the analogy of hair growing. When we behold rocks, stones, inanimate matter existing in this world, we sometimes have difficulty connecting inanimate things with animate consciousness. How can animate, conscious God create inanimate stuff? This analogy brings out the possibility of inanimate things coming from animate consciousness, as hair grows from animate skin and becomes inanimate so that we can shave it off, or dead fingernails projecting themselves forth from animate roots, and the like. From consciousness, apparently unconscious things can also emanate.

These difficulties are solved by analogies of this kind—namely, the spider’s web, trees growing from the earth, and hair growing from the body. Like that, please understand that eternity produces temporality. To put it in modern scientific language, the four-dimensional reality creates the three-dimensional world of length, breath and height.

Tapasā cīyate brahma tato’nnam abhijāyate, annāt prāṇo manaḥ satyaṁ lokāḥ karmasu cāmṛtam (1.1.8). In one verse, the whole of creation is described. Brahman, the Supreme

Absolute, distends, swells—becomes large, as it were—by *tapas*. *Tapas* means concentration. Brahman's concentration is the will to create. It becomes extended in the form of the contemplated shape of creation, as it were. When we think something, the mind takes the form of that thing which we think. Now, the Supreme Absolute thinks, wills, concentrates itself on the shape which creation has to take, and that is the swelling, or the extending, or the becoming large of Brahman in *tapas*. The swelling, or the extension of being in *tapas*, also means the increase in the potentiality of the one that concentrates. In the case of Brahman, it would mean the contemplation of the form of the world which has to be created in the future. In the case of people like us, *tapas* would mean the intensity of heat generated inside by the concentration of the mind and the *prana*.

Tapasā cīyate brahma tato'nnam abhijāyate. Very mystical are these words. The meanings of these terms in the Upanishads are not to be taken in a dictionary sense. They are highly connotative. Here it is mentioned that when Brahman concentrates itself in *tapas*, *anna* is created. From the point of view of ordinary linguistic exposition, *anna* means food, anything that is eaten. But in the Upanishads, *anna* does not mean just what we eat. It is something more than that. The material content of consciousness is called *anna*. The content of the consciousness which takes the shape of the content in the act of concentration creates an *anna* for it. The object of thought is the food of thought. Anything that we think is the diet of the psychic process. And here, in the case of Brahman, the potential material, the matrix of all creation, is called Mula Prakriti in the language of Sankhya and Vedanta, etc. There must be some

stuff which has to manifest itself in the form of creation. The concretisation of the will itself is the stuff; or rather, *anna* may be taken in the sense of the substantiation of the will of God. It has to take effect. The implementation of the ideation of the Absolute is the food, the content, the shape or the form of this *tapas*. *Anna* is produced in this manner. Cosmic potentiality is created by the concentrating act of Brahman as *tapas*. That is the meaning of *tapasā cīyate brahma tato'nnam abhijāyate*. When this potential in the form of a concrete substantiality of will wields itself, it immediately vibrates into the form of the future shape in a more distinct form: the creation of space.

In the Panchadasi we have a very clear-cut description of how this kind of manifestation takes place. Brahman is like a canvas on which somebody paints a picture. It is the background of everything. If we invoke some consciousness into a canvas, we may imagine that in order to paint on it, the canvas has to concentrate itself on the thickening process that has to take place by applying starch on it, because painting cannot be done on ordinary cloth. There should not be pores in the canvas. So in order to paint a picture, the cloth of the canvas is stiffened with starch. This stiffening is the process of the will, and it is the *anna* that is spoken of here.

Then there is *prana*, the vibration. The painter's mind vibrates in the form of the outline of the picture that he is intending to draw. But we do not bring the question of the painter in the case of Brahman, because Brahman itself is the painter here. Brahman itself visualises, in the form of the vibratory process of its will, the outline of the creation that is to take place. After the outline is drawn, it is filled

with ink. Then the creation is complete. Likewise, there is, first of all, a will or an idea wherein the painter—or Brahman, in the case of this verse—has the idea of what it has to become, and then it stiffens itself into the will by *tapas*, concentration, as a painter would concentrate on the painting that has to be done, and then there is a vibratory force of *prana*. Here the word '*prana*' indicates the cosmic *prana*, or Hiranyagarbha *tattva*. Hiranyagarbha is *prana*, the cosmic vibration of the energy of Brahman through the manifested stuff called *anna*, or potentiality. Then there is a further diversification of this concentrated universal *prana* in the form of thinking. We may compare this *manas*, or thinking of Brahman, to the Virat Svarupa, which has emanated from the outline of the creative process available in Hiranyagarbha. In the cosmic mind, which is Virat, everything is clear. It is the ink-filled picture, as it were.

Satyam—the words are all very intricate. Their meanings cannot be understood superficially. We have to go deep into the subject with the help of commentaries. *Satya* is the order and law of the universe that comes together with the manifestation of Hiranyagarbha and Virat. The law and order of the universe is also created simultaneously. The unified integration of the cosmic *prana*, Hiranyagarbha or Virat, is the principle behind the law and order that has to operate in the manifested universe, just as in a constitution of a government it is an integrated thought of the central law authority that manifests itself as diversified forms in various departments, until it goes to the lowest level of administration. Then the world is created—*lokāḥ*: the fourteen worlds, which are

made up of the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether. *Karmasu cāmṛtam*: Then action proceeds. That is to say, individuals emerge from this cosmic manifestation of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. Then comes *āmṛta*, the fruit of actions.

Thus, how many things are there? Firstly, there is the Supreme Absolute. Secondly, there is *anna*, or the potential for the future manifestation in the form of *tapas*. Thirdly, there is Hiranyagarbha, the vibratory cosmic *prana*. Fourthly, there is thinking, which is the cosmic thought identifiable with Virat. Fifthly, there is law and order. Sixthly, there is the manifestation of the fourteen worlds. Seventhly, there is individuality, the individuals or *jivas*, who are propelled towards action, karma. Eighthly, there is the fruit of action. So there are eight degrees: Brahman, *anna*, *prana*, *manas*, *satya*, *loka*, *karma*, *amrita*. Look at this wonderful verse. It is like a *sutra*, one thirty-two lettered verse giving us the whole scheme of creation from Brahman to dust. Look at the power of the composer of this mantra. Great thing indeed! *Tapasā cīyate brahma tato'nnam abhijāyate, annāt prāṇo manaḥ satyaṁ lokāḥ karmasu cāmṛtam*—a very difficult verse.

Yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarva-vid yasya jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ; tasmād etad brahma nāma-rūpam annaṁ ca jāyate (1.1.9). That Great Being is *sarvajñaḥ* and *sarva-vid*. According to the commentator, *sarvajñaḥ* and *sarva-vid* mean two different things. Though the literal meaning of both words is 'all-knowing', the connotative meaning is that Being which knows everything in general and also in particular. This is Acharya Sankara's interpretation. God knows everything in general and also in particular. Somebody asked me

a question: “Does God know that a cat is moving in the kitchen?” I said, “God not only knows the movement of the cat, but He also knows how many hairs the cat has.” This is the direct knowledge of the minutest details of even an atom.

But God does not just dissipate Himself in the knowledge of particulars. There is a general control over the whole of creation, and there He has a cosmic generality of knowledge. The great cosmic order is in His mind. This is the *sarvajñah*, or the generality of the knowledge of God. But the particularity is every little detail, even to counting the number of hairs of a person or the breaths that he breathes. That also is known to Him. Can we imagine what kind of knowledge God must have? How many creatures are there in this creation: gods, demons, human beings, subhuman creatures, insects, and so on? How many leaves on the tree? He will count them. Unimaginable power of comprehension! So God knows everything in general as well as in particular. That is the meaning of being *sarvajñah* and *sarva-vid*.

Yasya jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ. We are told that God concentrated Himself. He was doing *tapas*. What kind of *tapas* did He do? Did He perform austerity by starving? God’s knowledge is His *tapas*. His wisdom, His knowledge, His consciousness, His intention, His purpose, His awareness—that is *tapas*. The knowledge of God is also the action of God. The awareness of God is also the concentration of God. The existence of God is the same as His work. So God’s *tapas* is knowledge. The greatest *tapas* is the concentration of knowledge, and every other *tapas* is secondary—*yasya jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ*.

Tasmād etad brahma nāma-rūpam annam ca jāyate. From this Great Being, Brahman, the Absolute, emanates the secondary Brahman. In the language of scholastic philosophers, it is *prakriti*. *Mama yonir mahad brahma* (B.G. 14.3) is mentioned in the Bhagavadgita. Here Brahma does not mean Supreme Brahman but *prakriti*, the matrix of things. Then name and form manifest themselves—*nāma-rūpam*. The inward characteristic of an object is called *nama*, and its outward characteristic is called *rupa*. The indication—the determining factor of a particular shape that an individual has to take—is called *linga sharira* in our case, and the subtle body is called the *sukshma sharira*. Here, *nama* does not simply mean a name such as Rama, Krishna and Govinda; it is the indicative *linga*, or the specific character, of the would-be individual in the form of a body. *Rupa* is the actual physical form. Thus, the subtle and the physical shapes emanate as *nama* and *rupa* from this original Brahma, Mula Prakriti.

Annam ca jāyate: The field of action is created. Here, *anna* means actual matter is the field of particular individual action for the *jivas* to reap their fruits according to their deeds. This is also a great verse. In one verse so many things are there.

These nine verses constitute one section of the Upanishad. Very concentrated is the teaching. The verses are only nine, but so much has been said in these nine verses that we may say that these nine verses themselves are a kind of Upanishad. You can commit the whole thing to memory and meditate on the implication, the suggestive meanings of these verses, and it will form a complete meditation for you.

Now we go to the Second Section.

SECTION 2

Tad etat satyam: manreṣu karmāṇi kavayo yāny apaśyaṃs tāni tretāyām bahudhā santatāni, tāny ācaratha niyatam, satyakāmā, eṣa vaḥ panthāḥ sukṛtasya loke (1.2.1.). This is a different subject altogether. A mantra in the earlier verses told us that there are two types of knowledge, the lower and the higher. *Rg-vedo yajur-vedaḥ sāma-vedo'tharva-vedaḥ śikṣā kalpo vyākaraṇam* (1.1.5): The Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda are all lower knowledge. Higher knowledge is that great spiritual insight by which we come into direct contact with the Imperishable. This was told to us in earlier verses. Now some details are given as to what lower knowledge is.

The mantras of the Veda are utilised in the performance of sacrifices, or *yajnas*. This is the secondary character of the Veda mantras. Veda mantras can be used as prayers to the Almighty God or as prayers to the divinities inhabiting heaven. That is one form of the utilisation of the mantras. But the major aspect of the mantras is their utility in the performance of *yajnas*.

This is true: *tad etat satyam*. Whatever suggestion for the performance of action as sacrifice, or *yajna*, was visualised by the great sages in the mantras of the Veda, that vision has to be considered as true. That is to say, the Vedic sacrifices are not just concoctions of the mind or someone's whim and fancy. There is a truth in it. The rituals that we perform in our religious worships are not unnecessary things, as some modern intellectuals may sometimes tell us. The entire body and mind gesticulates. It is not merely the body; even the mind puts on a gesture, an attitude,

when a ritual is performed. This point is missed by critics. When the mind and the body are in a state of unison in the performance of a ritual, the prayer assumes a physical shape. The mantras are prayers. The Vedic mantras are hymns offered to God, and the implementation, or actual practice of this prayer, is the ritual thereof. The ritual can be worship as we do in temples, for instance, or it can be an actual *homa* or *yajna*, sacrifice. These suggestions of actual action proceeding from the mantras in the form of ritual are true. It is not untrue, says the mantra: *tad etat satyam*.

Mantreṣu karmāṇi kavayo yāny apaśyaṃs tāni tretāyāṃ bahudhā santatāni. Treta means the three Vedas. In the three Vedas—Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda—we will find every mantra is a potential for action. The Mimamsa Shastra is very vigorous in the affirmation of mantras being just instruments in the performance of external sacrifice. Knowledge is the medium for action. After we know something, we do something. We do not merely know something and keep quiet. So *shodhana*, or incentive for action, is the potential of every mantra. This is the Mimamsa Shastra, and we are mentioning it in this particular verse. Therefore, the three Vedas are incentives for the performance of further action in the form of ritual and *yajna*. *Treta* means three Vedas, and it also means the Treta Yuga. There are four *yugas*: Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. We are in Kali Yuga, the last of the *yugas*.

Eka eva purā vedāḥ praṇavaḥ sarva-vāṅgmāyaḥ (S.B. 9.14.48). In the Krita Yuga there was no Veda, no *yajna* or sacrifice, no worship, no governmental system, no ruler, no necessity for law and order, etc. It is called the *hamsa*

condition—pure Eternity living on Earth, the Golden Age, the millennium come, as some religions tell us. The Treta Yuga was a descent in the moral order of creation; and then *yajnas* started, and also the Vedas. Otherwise Om, or Pranava, alone was the Veda. The three Vedas were not there. Hence, we can take this word ‘*treta*’ to mean both things: either the commencement of *yajnas* in the Treta Yuga, or it may mean the three Vedas being the incentive for the performance of *yajnas*.

Tāny ācaratha: Please do it. The Mimamsa tells us: Please do this. *Niyatam*: Regularly perform these *yajnas*. *Satyakāmāḥ*: If you want the fruit of your good deeds in the form of heavenly experiences, if you want Indra’s glory and to rejoice in heaven, here it is. Come, perform *yajnas* by the recitation of mantras of the three Vedas.

Eṣa vaḥ panthāḥ sukṛtasya loke: This is the blessedness for you. Here the Mimamsa speaks to you: It is the path of blessedness open to you. All people come. If you recite the Veda mantras properly, perform *yajna* and offer oblations to the gods, the flames of the sacrifice uniting themselves with the rays of the Sun will take you, by your subtle body, to the glorious realm of Indra’s heaven. So here is an invitation to the heaven of Indra.

Yathā lelāyate hy arcis samiddhe havya-vāhane, tad ājya- bhāgāv antareṇāhutiḥ pratipādayec (1.2.2). When we perform a *havanam*, a *yajnam*, the flames should shoot forth. The fire should not be smouldering, and it should not be smoking. If that is the case, then the *yajna* is not done properly. *Savita* is the flaming forth of the heated fire. When the flames move like tongues of fire, lapping hither and thither with a roaring sound, into those tongues of fire

coming up from the vigorous burning of the *yajna agni* we must offer the holy *ghee*, the clarified butter, between the flames. The offerings are to be poured between the lapping flames. *Pratipādayec*: This is an instruction as to how we have to conduct *yajna*.

Yasyāgnihotram adarśam apaurṇamāsam acāturmāsyam anāgrayaṇam atithivarjitaṁ ca, ahutam avaiśvadevam avidhinā hutam ā-saptamāṁs tasya lokān hinasti (1.2.3). Here we have a tremendous instruction from the Mimamsa Shastra—Karmakanda gone to its extreme, we may say. It is not enough if we just perform one *havan* and keep quiet, as an *agnihotra*, for instance. The mantra here says that if a person does not, at the same time, together with the performance of *agnihotra*, also perform the special sacrifices called *darsha* and *paurṇamasa* during the new moon and the full moon, and does not also perform the special offerings required to be done during the four months of the rainy season, and does not also perform the special *havan* intended to be done during the spring season, and if the *havan* is performed without guests being fed at the same time during the *yajna*, and if the flames do not come forth properly and are only smouldering and smoking, and if the feeding of animals, etc., is also not taken care of at the same time, and if the mantras in the *yajna* are not chanted with the proper intonation and recitation, what will happen? Seven generations of theirs will be destroyed: *ā-saptamāṁs tasya lokān hinasti*. It is a very terrible curse. It also means that for them, the seven worlds will be destroyed. Bhuloka, Bhuvārloka, Svarloka, Mahaloka, Janaloka, Tapaloka and Satyaloka will expel them and not allow them to enter. Therefore, imagine how

difficult it is to perform a sacrifice, a *yajna*. If we make a little mistake—a little wrong intonation, a little fumbling, it will break the *yajna*. Karmakanda is very difficult. If we do it, wonderful; but if we do not do it properly, to hell we go.

Kālī karalī ca mano-javā ca sulohitā yā ca sudhūmravarṇā, sphuliṅginī viśva-rūpī ca devī lelāyamānā iti sapta-jihvāḥ (1.2.4). In a properly performed sacrifice, seven flames of the fire are supposed to shoot up, not just one or two. The hungry fire will lap up in seven tongues. The seven tongues have their own names—*kālī*: the black one; *karalī*: the blacker one; *mano-javā*: rapid like the movement of the mind; *sulohitā*: reddish in colour; *sudhūmravarṇā*: brownish in colour; *sphuliṅginī*: sparking forth; *viśva-rūpī*: radiant. *Devī*: divine are the flames. The god Agni himself rises up to receive our offering and take us to the gods so that, in their satisfaction, they lift us up to the abode of the gods. *Lelāyamānā iti sapta-jihvāḥ*: Oscillating flames of the *agni*, to which we offer the oblations, are designated in this manner. These names are to be remembered.

Eteṣu yaś carate bhrājamāneṣu yathā-kālaṁ cā hutayo hy ādadāyan, taṁ nayanty etās sūryasya raśmayo yatra devānām patir eko'dhivāsaḥ (1.2.5). If we are in a position to perform these sacrifices meticulously without committing mistakes, as we calculate a mathematical problem right from the beginning to the end without making any error, if we can perform the *yajnas* as mentioned in these verses in the holy fire which is radiating with its power, if offerings are made in this way, then what happens? The fire assumes a very subtle form as soundless ethereal shapes, into which it enters when it becomes inaudible; and its colour also

becomes invisible and merges into the subtle rays of the Sun. The flames of the fire transmute themselves into fine forces of light converging into the intensity of the rays of the Sun.

Tam nayanty etās sūryasya raśmayo yatra devānām patir eko'dhivāsaḥ. The soul, the subtle body of the performer of the *yajna*, is drawn out when the body is shed, and by the gravitational pull of the rays of the Sun and the propulsion given by the flames of fire into which the performer has offered the *yajna*, the soul that departs from the body of the *jiva* rises up. Where do we go? We go to the Sun, the solar orb. From there we are transported. *Yatra devānām patir eko'dhivāsaḥ:* We are very graciously, lovingly escorted to the great heaven of Indra, who rules the whole heaven. So be prepared for the great blessedness of going to heaven, and do *yajnas* every day.

In order to tell us that mere ritualistic performance in the form of sacrifices, etc., will not suffice for the salvation of the soul, the Upanishad first of all tells us some aspects of the manner in which the ritualists lay emphasis on the need for the performance of sacrifices. It is something like investigating the strength of the opposition in order that one may have to face it one day. The Upanishad tries to counter the stand taken by the ritualists. For that purpose, it describes what is the strength and attraction of the ritualists themselves. We notice that there are great restrictions and limitations laid down in regard to the performance of *homa*, *yajna*, or sacrifice: the manner of raising an altar, its length and breadth, its shape, and the various initial ceremonies before starting the fire. The mantras are not here in this book; they can be found in the

Karmakanda. The mantras to be recited for invoking Agni, or the god of fire, or at the outset the Ganesha *puja*, and the many other appurtenances, are so complicated a process that only a great expert will be able to undertake such kind of sacrifice. Actually, large performances like Rajasuya, Vajapeya, Ashvamedha, etc., are carried on for days and days together, even for months, inasmuch as they are very elaborate and only great masters in the art of memory and the technique of performance would be able to actually undertake such a task. Only great rishis used to be invited for such a purpose, by kings especially.

The Mimamsa doctrine of the efficacy of the performance of *yajna*, or sacrifice, tells us that attainment of heaven, ruled by Indra, is the great glory that is to be expected as the consequence of the performance of these *yajnas*. The soul of the performer, after shedding the physical body, is led along the rays of the Sun to the glorious regions of heaven.

Ehy ehīti tam āhutayas suvarcasah sūryasya raśmibhir yajamānaṃ vahanti, priyāṃ vācam abhivadantyo'rcayantya, eṣa vaḥ puṇyas sukṛto brahma-lokaḥ (1.2.6). The Sun's rays, as the flames of fire, are not dead things; they are consciousness. They speak to you: "Come. Glorious man, here are the flames. Come, come." The oblations, when offered properly with the recitation of the mantras correctly pronounced, create a situation wherein the oblations start assuming life. We have heard that, in ancient days, divinities used to rise up from the fire, bringing some offering. The nectarine pudding which was brought by a divinity in the sacrifice performed by Dasharatha is one of many instances. The living voice of the flames of fire in the sacrifice, and

the glorious rays of the Sun, join together and speak very delightful words. *Priyām vācam abhivadantyo'rcayantya:* “How blessed you are. How good it is of you to have done the sacrifice. Glory is awaiting you. Indra is wanting to see you. Blessedness shall be your future. We are here at your service. Come on, sit in this chariot of the rays of the Sun. Rise up and be eternally blessed.” These flames and the rays speak gloriously in a melodious, loving voice to the *yajamana*, the performer of the sacrifice, who has succeeded in conducting it systematically, perfectly.

Eṣa vaḥ puṇyas sukṛto brahma-lokaḥ: “We shall take you to Brahmaloaka.” The glory of spiritual experience is supposed to reach its upper limits in a realm that is described in the scriptures as Brahmaloaka. This is a word we have heard many a time. Literally it means the *loka*, or the world of Brahman. It is not the Absolute Brahman that is referred to here, but the Creative Principle. Brahma in Sanskrit is in the masculine form. It is a state of affairs where the world melts into a state of intermingling activity of waves of consciousness.

There are some mystics who have gone into ecstasy over the description of what this so-called penultimate state of the liberation of the soul actually is, where the sea of radiance billows, as it were, with its ripples and waves dashing one over the other, where every wave is like every other wave, where each reflects the other, each is mirrored in the other, and everything is found everywhere. Each one is everything else also, and everything else is also each one. The general is the particular, the particular is the general.

Some of the touching and most eloquently described passages on subjects of this kind can be found in the

writings of Plotinus, a great mystic of Alexandria, who wrote a masterly treatise called the *Enneads*, which means 'the book of nine sections', just as the name of the book Panchadasi is the number of the chapters of the book. *Panchadasa* means fifteen. A book that has fifteen chapters is called Panchadasi. A book that has nine chapters is called *Enneads*. Similarly, there are some German mystics like Eckhart, and Indian mystics such as the Alvaras, who wrote the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*. They are all astounding proclamations of the rapture of the soul in an experience which should be considered as entry into Brahmaloaka itself. They were all masters of language who used words in order to break through the words and find the very soul in the essence of language itself. Mystical literature is actually the voice of the soul expressed in human tongue. Such is called Brahmaloaka. It will simply shake your soul even to imagine what that experience could be. Anyway, the solar rays tell the *yajamana*, the performer of the sacrifice, "Come. We shall take you to the glorious realm of Indra, and to Brahmaloaka itself."

But the Upanishad now turns the table around, like a clever advocate. He argues on behalf of somebody, and suddenly changes the whole argument against that person on whose behalf he was appearing to be arguing. It appeared as if up to this time the Upanishad was arguing on behalf of the Mimamsa ritualists, or the performers of the sacrifice, glorifying the end and the result of the sacrifices as Brahmaloaka, Indraloka, etc. Now, suddenly, a bolt from the blue comes.

*Plavā hy ete adṛḍhā yajña-rūpā aṣṭādaśoktam avaram
yeṣu karmā etac chreyo ye'bhinandanti mūḍhāḥ jarā-mṛtyum*

te punar evāpiyanti (1.2.7). Unreliable boats are these on which you try to cross the ocean of *samsara* in the form of *yajna*, or sacrifice. These boats in the form of *yajnas*, or sacrifices, are like bubbles. They will burst one day, and you cannot entirely rely on them forever because these forces, called *apurva* in the language of the Mimamsa Shastra, which are responsible for lifting you up to the region of Indra, or to even higher regions, lose their potency one day. It is like sitting in a rocket going up by using fuel, and the fuel will be exhausted in the middle, and you know what will happen. Such is the case with these performers of *yajna* who rely on the force generated by the performance of *yajnas*. They are reliable up to the extent of the momentum they carry, and are reliable indeed for some distance; but in the middle they will leave you in the lurch, and you will fall. All those who go to Indraloka rejoice, but then they will fall headlong, as many fell.

You see, when a person has some substance and stuff, and he is considered as a worthwhile individual, he is received with an affection and an impunity which one can mistake for an eternal attitude of the person who so manifests this affection. But once the worthwhileness of the person is not to be seen any more—he becomes a pauper, suppose—the way in which he will be repelled will be more forceful than the force which was at the back of the affection that was shown earlier. Hatred is more forceful than love. A person will simply crush you in one second when hatred manifests itself, because you are not wanted, and the way in which this unwantedness will be shown and thrown on your face will be such that you will not like to live in the world one day more. So do not

rely on these friends such as *yajnas*, etc. They will throw you down.

Aṣṭādaśoktam avaram yeṣu karma: Poor indeed are these so-called *yajnas* which are performed by eighteen ingredients of persons. Sixteen priests, and the *yajnamana* and his wife, constitute eighteen in number in large sacrifices like the Ashvamedha, Rajasuya, etc.

Etac chreyo ye'bhinandanti mūḍhāḥ: Fools who cannot exercise their understanding properly, *mūḍhāḥ*, as they are called, who imagine that this is real blessedness, who think they will go to Indraloka and be happy there, what happens to them? *Jarā-mṛtyuṃ te punar evāpiyanti:* They come back to this Earth. Once again they are born, and they will die as creatures that are plenty in this world. That is, you will be reduced to the same condition in which you were before commencing the *yajna*. Therefore, relying on them will be the height of unintelligence of a person. Ignorance is at the back of the imagination that blessedness will be in Indraloka, or any kind of *loka* whatsoever. You do not want to go to any *loka* at all. What you experienced in this world is only magnified in these *lokas*, which are conditioned by space and time in the same manner as this world of physical experience is conditioned by space and time, etc.

Avidyāyām antare vartamānāḥ svayaṃ dhīrāḥ paṇḍitam manyamānāḥ, janghanyamānāḥ pariyanti mūḍhāḥ, andhenaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ (1.2.8). Sunk in ignorance of the true values of life, imagining that they are very intelligent, wise, they are really wiseacres. *Dhīrāḥ paṇḍitam manyamānāḥ:* These ritualists imagine that they know everything in the world, that they are omniscient, that they know what is good and that others do not know anything.

Such is the astounding profundity of human ignorance. *Janghanyamānāḥ*: They suffer afterwards as a consequence of this ignorance. *Pariyanti mūḍhāḥ*: They go on circling round and round in metempsychosis. *Andhenaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ*: As a blind man can be led by a blind man, leading to no destination whatsoever, so these arguments of ritual and the promise of heaven in a world which is not going to be permanent, are based on ignorance. Beware! This is the word of caution exercised to Upanishadic students of true spirit.

Avidyāyām bahudhā vartamānā vyaṁ kṛtārthā ity abhi-manyanti bālāḥ, yat karṁiṇo na pravedayanti rāgāt tenāturāḥ kṣiṇalokāś cyavante (1.2.9): Children with no understanding imagine that they have achieved everything that they can achieve. “I am a king. I have performed so many Rajasuyas and Ashvamedhas. There is no opposition before me. I have conquered the whole world. I have annexed my kingdom.” So are the vainglorious words and imaginations of a potentate. Tomorrow he shall not be there. “Sceptre and Crown must tumble down, and in the dust be equal made.” There is a poem called *Death the Leveller* by James Shirley. Sceptre and crown will tumble down, and the beggar and the king will be on the same bed. Such state of affairs will be ready to receive those people who imagine that they are greater than the law because they have got a lot of land and money and they are well received by the public. Public acclamation is no criterion of the greatness of a person.

Yat karṁiṇo na pravedayanti rāgāt tenāturāḥ kṣiṇalokāś cyavante: Engrossed in the ways of the ignorant, these people childishly think that they have gained the aims of life. Being subject to desires and attachments, they never

attain to true knowledge. They sink down immeasurably when the fruits of their good deeds get exhausted. Anything that has a beginning must also have an end. Inasmuch as your virtues did have a beginning, they should end one day. You cannot have endlessness of a thing that once began. So do not be under the impression that you can be permanently in the heaven of Indra, inasmuch as that which is permanent was not the origin of the actions that you performed. Impermanence was the beginning, and impermanence shall also be the end. Therefore, impermanent shall be the joys that are apparently there, hung before your nose as a carrot before a donkey. You will not get it.

Iṣṭapūrtam manyamānā variṣṭham nānyac chreyo vedayante pramūḍhāḥ, nāksaya pṛṣṭhe te sukṛte'nubhūtvemaṁ lokam hīnataram vā viśanti (1.2.10). Many of these verses sound like the verses of the Bhagavadgita, in the Ninth Chapter, where it is said that after enjoying the glories of heaven you come back due to the exhaustion of the merits accumulated by good deeds. *Ishta* and *purta* are two types of good deeds that people do in this world. Sacrifices along the lines of the Vedic injunctions are called *ishta*. Other philanthropic deeds such as distributing wealth, planting trees, giving charity, constructing rest houses, all these are called *purta*. These are the two types of charity that one can think of. One is heavenly; the other is earthly. But people may imagine that this is the be-all and end-all of all things. Just because you please the divinities in heaven, such as Indra, etc., and the people in this world, it does not mean you have pleased the realities of life. They are quite different things.

Nānyac chreyo vedayante pramūdhāḥ: Very ignorant people imagine not that this is futile in the end. Having reached the peak of the blissful experience of heavenly worlds on account of the consequences of their good deeds, they come back to this world, or they may go to even worse worlds—*lokaṁ hīnataraṁ vā viśanti*. The karmas of an individual work in inscrutable ways. When a person like a king has the facility to perform *yajnas* like the Ashvamedha, it only means that some aspect of his *prarabdha* karma which is conducive to his progress in the world has manifested itself, subjugating certain other aspects of his karmas which are there in store as *sanchita* karma, which also have to germinate one day or the other. So when, due to the pressure exerted by the onrush of the good karmas which have led him to this body of a king and permit him to perform sacrifices of this kind, enabling him to go to the heavenly world, are exhausted when they get used up, what happens? The force exerted by these good karmas constituting this present *prarabdha* will vanish completely like mist before the sun. Then suddenly he falls. He will fall into a condition which would be the area of action of another set of *prarabdha* which is waiting to be experienced and to come forward in due course of time. That remnant of *prarabdha* which would be the cause of his future birth may not be equivalent to that earlier one which made him king. It may be another thing altogether. He may be born as a poor man. He may be born on this very Earth, or he may have such *prarabdha* which may have been suppressed earlier on account of the overwhelming power of the other *prarabdhas*, which may bring him down to a lower level, lower than even the human species.

So it is very, very unsafe to rely on certain temporary experiences through which you are passing in this world. You may be a king, of course, but you shall not be a king always, because kings can be beggars the next day. It does not take much time for them to fall, and all the kings have fallen. Empires are broken. Therefore, nothing can be relied upon in this world finally, so beware. Not only will you be born into this world as a human being, but the caution is that you may be born as something even worse on account of some other karmas that may be embedded in your *sanchita* storehouse, of which you have no knowledge just now.

Therefore, no action can break the chain of birth and death caused by action itself. Action cannot destroy actions. There must be some super-active force that has to be employed for the purpose of breaking down the chain of metempsychosis, the series of births and deaths. A prisoner cannot release another prisoner. The prisoner has to become free first. People who are bound by karmas, and are involved in the experience of the fruits of karmas, cannot destroy further fruits of karma of a similar nature. That karma cannot destroy karma is repeatedly hammered on our ears by Acharya Sankara, the meaning of which very few people can understand. Only those can be regarded as really blessed who restrain themselves and do not go for the imagined joys of the temporal, heavenly world, and who internally restrain themselves by *tapas* and intense concentration of the mind.

Tapah śraddhe ye hy upavasanty aranye śāntā vidvāṃso bhaikṣācaryām carantaḥ, sūrya-dvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti yatrāmṛtaḥ sa puruṣo hy avyayātmā (1.2.11). Those blessed

souls, seekers of Truth, who lead a life of simplicity, austerity, *tapas* and internal devotion, live in seclusion, and do not want to live in large cities. They feel happier to be alone to themselves than to be in the midst of families and large crowds of people. The progress in the spiritual path can be gauged by the extent of satisfaction and joy that you feel in your own self when you are alone. The more are you alone, the more are you happy. But if you feel miserable when you are alone, and want to open your doors and run out of the house to find some friends on the street, or go to a shop or a club so that you may have a distraction and a diversion—you are miserable when you are alone, and you are happy in the midst of people—if that is the case, far, far are you from the true goal of life.

But it is difficult to appreciate how it is possible for a person to be happy when he is alone. Is he not a social outcast? He is a person with nothing to call his own. He has nothing of his own. He has no friends. He is sitting alone somewhere in a corner, under a tree in a forest or in his own house, wanting to speak to none, doing his study and meditation. What kind of person is he?

It will be difficult for a socially oriented mind to understand how aloneness can be a spiritual condition, and how social relations are the contrary of it, because a spiritual outlook is actually a manifestation of the intentions of the soul of man. The indivisibility of the soul is contrary to the relationship one psychologically establishes with the outer world. The soul is not related to anything. It is totally unrelated. Therefore, the desire to be related, the desire to be in the midst of people—that is, to be externally conditioned in one's own life—is to limit the longings of

the soul and to manifest an unspiritual outlook rather than a purely religious one, whereas the desire to be alone is a manifestation of the inner longings of the soul, which is alone by itself. The soul has no friends, it has no family, it has no father and mother, it has nothing whatsoever. It is poor in spirit. As the great statement of Christ says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." The poorest in spirit is the soul of man. It wants to be alone because it cannot be anything more than what it is in itself. The soul cannot be other than what it is. But we want to be other than what we are by running about here and there in search of things and people, by contacting them artificially in relations that will break one day. These are the unsafe boats which the Upanishad referred to earlier.

Those people who, by an austere life and devotional worship, live in seclusion, wanting nothing from the world, are calm and quiet in their minds, very learned, intelligent, discriminating and wise in themselves, live on meagre sustenance, even on alms. As we say, simple living and high thinking. The thinking is very lofty and high, but the living is very simple. Such people, when they depart from this body, are received by the solar orb. The role that the Sun plays in the movement of the soul after death has been variously described in spiritual scriptures, especially in mystical texts, implying perhaps that the Sun, astronomically considered as the centre of the solar system, is somehow or other connected with the soul of the individual. Astrologers tell us that the Moon conditions the mind, and the Sun conditions the soul. Surya, the Sun, is considered as Atmakaraka. The first verse of the great astrological work known as *Brihat Jataka* by Varahamihira

is a touching invocation of the Sun as the passage of the soul to immortality.

The externality of the Sun is a misnomer. We are not outside the Sun, and the solar system is not standing outside us so that we may gaze at it with our physical eyes. It is a big circle, inside which we also are. If the nose had consciousness, or if it had eyes to see, it would look at this body as an outside object. But actually the nose, notwithstanding the fact that it can behold the body as an outside object, is not outside the body. It is a part and parcel, integrally related to the entire organism of which it is a limb. We are wrongly imagining that the Sun above us is outside. Soul-like, the Sun controls the destiny of all things in the world, not only of human beings but everything that is living and even non-living and, therefore, cosmically the Sun is supposed to represent the Atman, or the soul of man. *Surya atma jagats tathasthuscha* is a mantra in the Rigveda: Of all things moving and non-moving, living and non-living, the very soul and substance is Surya. Through him we pass through the gates of immortality. *Sūrya-dvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti*: Free from passion, greed and anger, and all the dross of the mind, these great souls, who are devoted to the highest call of spiritual experience, pierce through the Sun, as it were, and the Sun opens the gates. *Yatrāmṛtaḥ sa puruṣo hy avyayātmā*: Through the passage of the Sun, the blessed soul reaches the realm which is the abode of the Immortal Being.

Parīkṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo nirvedam āyān nāsty akṛtaḥ kṛtena, tad vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet samit-pāṇiḥ śrotṛiyam brahma-niṣṭham (1.2.12). Having given us an idea of the prospects of the performer of *yaṅnas*, or

sacrifices, and having told us that karmas, actions, sacrifices are unreliable boats in one's effort to cross the ocean of life, and hinting that only those who are austere and who live in seclusion, living a simple life and having a lofty goal before them as their final destination, reach Brahmaloaka, the abode of blessedness, through the rays of the Sun, now the Upanishad tells us that the way to Brahman, the path of spirituality, the *sadhana marga*, is through a Guru or a spiritual preceptor.

Having seen this world properly, having investigated the futility of expressing permanent happiness through works which are perishable in nature because every work has a beginning and an end—that which has an origin will also have a cessation one day or the other—therefore, it is understood that works which are essentially of an impermanent nature will not be an adequate means to carry the soul to that which is absolutely permanent. *Parīkṣya lokān*: Properly investigating into the transient character of all things in the world which are attained by the performance of *yajnas*, sacrifices, etc., a Brahmana, a learned one, should become fed up with this world. Having enjoyed everything in the world, he will finally not like to have anything from this world. The end of this world enjoyment is retirement from any kind of contact with it. Satiety of desires is unknown. The more we pamper our longings, the more do they become vigorous and the more will they go on asking for things endlessly, which the world cannot grant.

One should finally feel satiated with all things that the world can give. As when we have had a full meal and cannot eat anything further, so should be the satiety we

feel in this world. Renunciation of the world is possible only by such a person who has seen the world thoroughly, through and through, who has not left any part of the world uninvestigated, and who has everything that this world can give. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say that only those who were kings in the previous birth can become Sannyasins. If you are really dispassionate, a true Sannyasin wanting nothing in this world, you must have been an emperor in the previous birth, because one who has not tasted the world cannot reject the world. Hence, everything has to be seen properly, and going deep into the structure of the possibilities of pleasures that the world can give—or whatever the world can give, pleasures or otherwise—one should finally detach oneself from all things that the world appears to promise. Why?

Nāsty akṛtah kṛtena: That which is not the product of any kind of action cannot be reached by actions, which are products. Actions are emanations of personality, and are not self-existent. Actions cannot hang in the air. They have to emanate, or rise, from some personality. Therefore, they are in the form of an effect. An effect is that which is produced by a cause; it is a product. That which is a product cannot become the cause of the attainment of that which is not a product. The Purusha Supreme is not created by anybody. It is a non-created eternal. Temporal things cannot take us to the eternal. Time has no connection with eternity. The three-dimensional world is a shadow, as it were, cast by an eternity which is supposed to be multi-dimensional, or infinite-dimensional. Let a person get disgusted with this world and want nothing from it, realising that this world cannot actually fulfil its promises. Its promises are empty.

Knowing the futility of life in this world, one should humbly approach a great Master for the sake of the knowledge of that which shall make the soul immortal one day or the other. What kind of teacher, what kind of Master? One who has two qualities. *Śrotriyam brahma-niṣṭham*: He must be immensely learned, and also spiritually established. If a person is spiritually established but does not feel competent to expound the scriptures, he will not be able to speak to you. But if a person is learned but is not established in Brahman, then his speeches will be empty. So the two qualifications are mentioned here: internally established in God, Brahman-consciousness, and outwardly capable of expounding the meaning of the scriptures in a highly learned manner which carries conviction in the mind of a student.

Humbly you should approach. *Samit-pāṇiḥ* is the word used here. In ancient days, disciples used to live with the Gurus in forests, in retreats, etc., far from cities and available means of transport and the minimum needs of life, so that even firewood was a difficult thing for them to obtain. So firewood was carried by disciples, especially for the *yajnas*, or sacrifices. Every householder has to perform an *agnihotra* sacrifice. Most of the great Masters those days were householders, and so they had to carry on the *agnihotra* sacrifices every day, for which firewood is necessary. Hence, the first thing that the disciple would offer to the Guru was firewood, and every day he would go to the forest to collect it which, in those days, was a very important duty of disciples. It is in this context that it is mentioned to approach the Guru humbly, with holy firewood in one's hand, or it may simply be an offering

that is the need of the Guru. In those days firewood was a necessity, but in other cases it may be something else. So, whatever is a requirement of the Guru is that which has to be offered by a disciple. With such offering, humbly let a seeker of Brahman approach that Master who is learned in sacred lore and established in Brahman—*śrotriyam brahma-niṣṭham*.

Tasmai sa vidvān upasannāya samyak praśānta-cittāya śamānvitāya, yenākṣaram puruṣaṁ veda satyam provāca tāṁ tattvato brahma-vidyam (1.2.13). To such a sincere disciple who humbly approaches the Master with restrained mind, with no desires whatsoever, endowed with *sama*, *dama* and such qualities—*sama* is internal restraint, the restraint of the inner organs, and *dama* is external restraint, the restraint of the outer organs—and who is calm and quiet, composed in mind, when such a person approaches the Guru for the sake of that imperishable Purusha who is to be known, the Truth of all truths, the Guru speaks. What does he speak? He speaks the essentials of Brahma-Vidya: *tattvato brahma-vidyam*.

Now we are given some indication as to what this Brahma-Vidya is. Up to this point, it is some kind of introduction. We have been introduced into the essence of the Upanishad in all these passages that we have gone through up to this time. Now comes the real import of the Upanishad, which is supposed to be the teaching of the Guru to the sincere disciple.

CHAPTER 2

SECTION 1

Tad etat satyam: yathā sudīptāt pāvakād visphuliṅgāḥ sahasraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ, tathākṣarād vividhāḥ, saumya, bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivāpi yanti (2.1.1): “O Master, how has this world come?” The disciple raises the question.

There are various ways of answering this question of how this world has come. In the beginning the answer will depend on the ability of the mind of the student to understand, because the student imagines that the world has come from something. Even without seeing the world coming from something, we put questions such as: “Who created this world?” Why should the world be created by anybody? We imagine that this world must have been created by someone, and as this assumption is already in the mind, one has to take the stand of the disciple in assuming that there is a cause for this world; so initially, by a kind of illustration and analogy, the cause of the world, and the manner of its coming from the cause, are described in this verse.

Here is the truth, the answer to your question. From a large conflagration of fire, thousands of sparks emanate in all directions. In a similar manner, varieties

of individualities—species of beings and things—emerge from this Imperishable Reality and return to it, as sparks of fire that rise from the conflagration shoot up and then go back to their source, which is the fire itself. Thus is the world coming from its cause, which is the Imperishable Brahman. It comes, it is sustained, and it returns. There is a beginning, and a middle, and an end for this world. Therefore, the world is not real, merely because of this simple fact that it has a beginning and an end, and a tentative middle.

The illustration of the fire and sparks is to indicate for the student's comprehension that there is some quality in us which will enable us to reach God. If the effect is totally disconnected from the cause—if there is nothing in the effect which can be called similar to the essence of the cause—there will be no relationship between them. This is to indicate that in spite of our separation from God, our fall from Brahman, as it were, we are still endowed with that potential for returning to Brahman, because the feet of Brahman are planted in our own heart. The Atman that we are is an indication of the Universal that Brahman is, just as the character of the spark is, in essence, the same as the character of fire. This illustration makes out that basically we are verily that which we are seeking. If we are entirely dissociated from that, there will be no possibility of our returning to it. The Atman is Brahman basically.

Divyo hy amūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ sa bāhyābhyantaro hy ajaḥ aprāṇo hy amanāḥ śubhro akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ (2.1.2). It was said that from that Imperishable Being, everything proceeds; the world is created by That. That Supreme Imperishable is the divine, formless Puruṣa. Here,

Purusha is to be understood in the sense of essential Consciousness. The origin of all things is Consciousness. It presupposes all thoughts, all actions, and all types of awareness of objects. Even to think, there must be consciousness behind the thought. Even when we assert or deny a thing, consciousness is behind the act of affirmation and denial. If we totally doubt and become a confirmed agnostic or atheist, even in that act of our agnosticism or atheism there is a consciousness of our being such a thing. Even if we say nothing exists, there is a consciousness that affirms that nothing exists; therefore, something exists. That something is the consciousness of even the denial of all things. Such is the Purusha, which is the Supreme Consciousness.

Sa bāhyābhyantaro hy ajaḥ: Inside and outside, it is there. Consciousness cannot be divided into parts. It has no fractions. There is no division in Consciousness. It is indivisible. Because of the fact that it is indivisible, it is all-pervading. If it is only in one place, it can be divided. If it is only in one place, there should be a place where it is not. Now, to know that Consciousness is not in some place, Consciousness has to be there already, because the absence of Consciousness cannot be known except by Consciousness itself, and so even the location of the absence of Consciousness is Consciousness itself. We cannot negate it in any manner whatsoever. The denial of Consciousness is an act of Consciousness only; therefore, it is to be considered as pervading all things, and not located somewhere. It is not only in one place, it is everywhere.

Ajaḥ: It is unborn; it has no beginning. To conceive the beginning of Consciousness is impossible, because there

must be somebody to conceive that Consciousness as the beginning. If we imagine that Consciousness was created at some time, we must imagine that there was something prior to Consciousness which created Consciousness. Then there will be what is called an infinite regression of argument: Who created that which causes the coming of Consciousness? Then we can ask another question: Who caused that second one? and so on. Finally, we will find that we will land on the lap of Consciousness. It cannot be created by anybody, because the very question of the creation of Consciousness is raised by Consciousness itself. Hence, finally we have to accept that Consciousness is the Ultimate Reality; it is unborn in its nature.

Aprānaḥ: It is not individual *prana* consciousness—breathing, etc. It has no mind, because there is no necessity for it to think anything. As there are no objects in front of it, why should there be a mind? As it is not an individual with a body, therefore there is also no *prana*. *Śubhraḥ*: Pure, simple radiance. *Akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ*: Even the so-called imperishable *prakṛiti* is perishable in the light of a still higher imperishability that is beyond *prakṛiti*—*parataḥ paraḥ*.

Etasmā jāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca, kham vāyur jyotir āpaḥ pṛthivī viśvasya dhāriṇī (2.1.3): From this great Purusha, everything comes. The Cosmic Prana, Hiranyagarbha, emanates from this Supreme Brahman. The Virat, which is called here the *manas*, also emanates from that Brahman. All the *indriyas*, or the sense organs, also emanate from That. They are actually the feeders, the tentacles of Consciousness. *Kham vāyur jyotir āpaḥ pṛthivī viśvasya dhāriṇī*: The five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—the very Earth that sustains us, the

basis of all, emanate from That. The whole Brahmanda, the fourteen worlds, seven above and seven below, which are the permutations and combinations, modifications of gross forms or subtle forms, or the real forms of the five elements, all these come from one breath, as it were, of this one Supreme Being.

Agnir mūrdhā cakṣuṣī candra-sūryau diśaḥ: śrotre vāg vivṛtās ca vedāḥ: vāyuh: prāṇo hṛdayam viśvam, asaya padbhyām pṛthivī hy eṣa sarva-bhūtāntarātmā (2.1.4): This Cosmic Being is described here as something like the Vishvarupa Darshana of the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. *Agnir mūrdhā*: Agni here represents heaven. The radiant heavens are the head of the Supreme Being. *Cakṣuṣī candra-sūryau*: The Sun and the Moon are the eyes of that Supreme Being. *Diśaḥ śrotre*: The entire quarters of space are the ears, as it were, of that Being. *Vāg vivṛtās ca vedāḥ*: The Vedas are its words, or the speech it utters. *Vāyuh prāṇaḥ*: The entire cosmic breath, the entire air, the wind, the universal *prana*, is its breath. *Hṛdayam viśvam, asaya*: The whole universe is its heart. *Padbhyām pṛthivī*: The gross form of physical manifestation in the form of this Earth may be regarded as its footstool. *Eṣa sarva-bhūtāntarātmā*: This is a picture before you of the all-pervading Soul of all beings.

This illustration is to point out that all things that we can conceive in our mind or see with our eyes are part of this Great Being, limbs of the Virat Purusha. That something is the eye, something is the head, something is the foot is only illustrative of everything being somehow or other organically connected with this Being. The whole universe is its body: *eṣa sarva-bhūtāntarātmā*.

Tasmād agnis samidho yasya sūryaḥ somāt parjanya oṣadhayaḥ pṛthivyām, putmān retas siñcati yoṣitāyām bahvīḥ prajāḥ puruṣāt samprasūtāḥ (2.1.5). The creation process is described here in terms of the Panchagni Vidya, which is described in more detail in the Chhandogya Upanishad. This is a very interesting concept that we have in the Upanishads—the Panchagni Vidya, the fivefold descent through which any event in the world can be imagined to take place. Events do not take place merely on Earth; they take place in heaven first. A vibration takes place in the highest heaven, and here this heavenly vibration is called Agni, or the supreme fire of the original cosmic activity.

The Sun may be regarded as a representative of heaven. The heat and light of the Sun are responsible for everything that happens on all the planets, including Earth. Any event that takes place in the world is caused by the Sun. You must have heard that sunspots sometimes occur and create catastrophes in the world, and their positions cause a sudden rise or fall in the cost of materials. It depends upon the manner in which the sunspot affects the Earth.

There are also indications of the Moon acting in the same way. If we observe the Moon two or three days after the new moon, *amavasya*, we will find a crescent visible on the horizon. This crescent is sometimes slanting, and not straight like a cup. Either it is slanting to the left side or it is slanting to the right side, but very rarely is it straight. The belief is, astronomically, that if it is slanting to the left, prices of commodities will fall in the direction where it is slanting, and where it is rising up—north or south, as the case may be—the prices of commodities will rise.

Can we imagine this mystery, how the Sun and the Moon can control us? Someone has written a beautiful book called *Super Nature*. Moonlight does not penetrate deep into the waters of the ocean, but there are little molluscs living deep in the ocean that arrange their activities according to the movement of the moonlight, though the moonlight does not reach them. They must be great mystical astronomers indeed! The effect that is produced by the Sun and the Moon, and even by the interstellar cosmic rays that impinge upon the Earth and affect us in multifarious ways, is a wonder.

This heavenly vibration, therefore, is the cause of everything that is taking place here. The vibrations created by the solar orb produce such an impact upon the atmosphere that the heat of the Sun sucks the water of the oceans and converts it into vapour which forms clouds, and by the action of wind blowing in various directions according to the circumstances of nature, rain falls. *Somāt parjanya*: Rain falls.

Oṣadhayaḥ pṛthivyām: When rain falls, plants grow. There is harvest in the fields, and vegetables and all edibles in the world become available to us. But how does rain fall? A great activity is taking place in the sky, over which we have no control. We cannot create rain, and we will all perish if there is no rain. These vegetables and foodstuffs are eaten by man and are finally converted into the bloodstream, and then into the essences which are responsible for the production of children while living a married life.

Putmān retas siñcati yoṣitāyām bahviḥ prajāḥ puruṣāt samprasūtāḥ: In this manner, the heavenly Purusha is causing, by his own vibration of will, the creation of every

little thing in this world. Even the little crawling insects are created by the Supreme Purusha. Creation takes place in a variety of ways, which is only one illustration of the manner of the relation of cause and effect, highlighting how we, in our crude form of understanding, imagine how something could have come from something else. Why should anything come from something else? If something is not there which is causeless, and if the ultimate cause also has a cause, there would be a logical regression and the argument will break. A meaningful argument should have an end. Endless arguments are no arguments. And so, the argument in respect of the effect coming from a cause should lead to a cause which itself has no further cause.

This causeless cause must also be an intelligent cause. Therefore, this ultimate cause is, firstly, without any cause behind it; there is no other cause for it. Secondly, it is intelligent because it is purposive and knows what to create. And thirdly, it is all-pervading because if it is located in one place only, it will be a perishable object. Thus, the Supreme Purusha is indivisible consciousness, all-pervading, and causative of everything in this world.

This is one answer of the Guru in reply to the disciple's question of how things have come at all. Generally, when disciples go to Gurus, this is the first question they put. Why was this world created, and who created it? They have many other questions, no doubt, but the first question that generally arises in the mind of a student is how this world has come. And here is a tentative answer, according to the understanding of the disciple for the time being.

These passages of the Mundaka Upanishad that we are presently studying deal with the creative process of the

universe—the cause producing the effect, and the cause persisting to have influence over the effect continuously until the very end. The verse concerning the Panchagni Vidya is an astounding doctrine of not only there being causes behind causes, an endless series of connections and concatenations, but also one thing influencing the other. The Upanishad is a knowledge that cuts off all attachments. It is the secret wisdom that severs the tree of bondage. One of the ways it adopts is to instil into the minds of the students the nature of the world, so that when it is properly understood, or investigated into, it will no more be a source of attraction and repulsion, love and hatred.

The occurrences in the world, the events taking place in space and time, the very historical process of mankind—all these are certain occurrences first taking place in the worlds that are above this Earth, just as the manifestation of our own physical body is not a sudden occurrence or an abrupt manifestation from nowhere but a gradual concretisation of impulses and intentions coming from within.

For instance, in order that the physical body may shape itself into this particular form that we see, it has first of all to be vitalised by the *prana* which is within. The within-ness of the *prana* is the reason why there appears to be life and vitality in the physical body. In a similar way, activities in this world, all the processes of human history, have a cause behind the physical realm. There is a superphysical cause for all that happens in the physical world.

The way in which the *prana* operates in the body determines the condition of its health. The *prana* decides

whether we are healthy or sick. It is very important to know that life and *prana* are identical. If *prana* is harmoniously distributed in the body, there is a pacified state of mind also, at the same time, and there is lightness of body, buoyancy of spirit, and quickness in the ability to grasp things mentally. Therefore, internal to the body there is a *prana* that causes the so-called activities of the body. If the hands and the feet move, it is because the *prana* moves inside. The *prana* exerts pressure on a limb in a particular direction, and then it starts moving.

But inside the *prana* there is the thought which causes the *prana* to operate in that particular manner. When we walk, the *prana* will not impel the legs to move unless there is thought behind it. The mind wants the *prana* to work in such a way that it moves the legs. Within the mind there is reason, which says that it is necessary to move the legs. The mind is only a connecting link between the reason on one side and the *prana* on the other side. But there is something behind reason—namely, the very fact of our being individuals in this world. Why should there be a necessity to move the limbs? It arises on account of a certain kind of finitude in which we are involved. The *jivatatva* is the cause; and the *jiva* is nothing but a concentrated point of the Atman consciousness. Thus, the *tapas* of Brahman created the world, says the Upanishad in one of its passages: *tapasā cīyate brahma tato'nnam abhijāyate* (1.1.8).

Anna is the product of this concentration of the will of Brahman. All that is produced can be regarded as *anna* and, in this sense, the finitude itself is a product. It is *anna* for the concentrated will of the Atman to manifest itself as an individual. And the finitude causes another product

which is its *anna*—namely, the reason or the intellect. The mind is the *anna*, or the product of the reason; the *prana* is the *anna*, or the product of the mind; the physical body is the *anna*, or the product of the *prana*. As it happens in this manner in an individual case, so is it that everything happens in the world. The Panchagni Vidya of the Chhandogya Upanishad is a cosmological iteration of the very same process that takes place in our own individuality, through which it is that we are what we are in this body.

The causes behind the causes is the story of creation, especially the Panchagni Vidya Tattva. There is a cause for the body, which is the *prana*. There is a cause for the *prana*, which is the mind. There is a cause for the mind, which is the reason. There is a cause for the reason, which is the *jivatatva*, or finitude. And there is a cause for that, which is the will of the Atman. So is this production of things and events in this world, which are occasioned by certain vibrations. The vibrations are one behind the other. In the beginning, originally there is the *tattva*, or the *tapas* concentration of Brahman itself, which gyrates and produces Hiranyagarbha *tattva*, Virat *tattva*, space-time. After that there are the *tanmatras*—*shabdha*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*—then the five elements, and all things down to the very earth from where there is the harvest of diet, food, which when eaten produces vitality in the system, causing further enlargement of the species.

Tasmād rcaḥ sāma yajūṃṣi dīkṣā yajñāś ca sarve kratavo dakṣiṇāś ca, saṁvatsaraś ca yajamānaś ca lokāḥ somo yatra pavate yara sūryaḥ (2.1.6): From this Being, everything proceeds, it is said. The Vedic verses, mantras, are also emanations of this Being, which means the truths contained

in the Veda mantras are eternally there as projections of certain aspects in the manifestation of Brahman *tattva*. The chants, the Yajurveda mantras and the formulae that are employed in the performance of sacrifices, the rites connected with these *yajnas*, the ceremonies of various types, the gifts and so on, even the time chosen for the sacrifice, and the worlds purified by the Sun and the Moon which the soul will attain after the departure from this body, all these are conditioned by that original *tapas* of Brahman. Our past, our present, as well as our future are in the hands of God. This is what is actually meant by this passage. The condition into which we are born in this world, the community in which we find ourselves, the length of life for which we will be living in this world, and the experiences which we will pass through are all written down while we are still in our mother's womb.

Sati mūle tadvipākaḥ jāti āyuh bhogāḥ (Y.S. 2.13) is a *sutra* of Patanjali. *Jati*, *ayuh*, *bhoga* are already predetermined even before we come out of the womb of our mother. We cannot change one inch of it. *Jati* is the category of life into which we will be born—the community, so-called. *Ayuh* is the length of life. *Bhoga* is the joy or the sorrow that we have to reap in this world. In a similar manner are all these things mentioned here, the total concept of events taking place in all the worlds.

Not only the visible, tangible objects of sense, but also the processes of perception and the motive force that causes this perceptual process, are also to be regarded as conditioned by this original *tapas* of Brahman. And there is then nothing left for the *jiva* to contemplate individually. The individual remains merely as an instrument of action

in the hands of that great *tapas* of Brahma-shakti. Here creation is considered in a total sense, not merely in a linear descending series, and is taking place from all sides, like winds sometimes blow from all sides and not only in one direction. It is not a single direction that the will of Brahman has taken in the production of effects from causes, but everywhere there is a spread-out series of causes, infinite in number, producing infinite products, or effects, from these countless causes everywhere, just as we have countless cells in the body, and they do not move only in one direction. They do not move in just a linear vertical, horizontal or whatever direction. There is a rounding-up of activity through the harmonious action of the cells from all directions.

Creation, therefore, is a multidirectional activity. It is not a single direction that is taken as we walk on the road, for instance. We walk only in one direction, but the will of Brahman does not act in that manner. It acts from all directions, and it is as infinite as Brahman itself is. This is why it is said that the creation of Brahman is infinite. The Infinite produces the infinite, limitlessness comes from Limitlessness, and Eternity produces eternity, as it were, we may say, in a most remarkable sense.

Tasmāc ca devā bahudhā samprasūtāḥ sādhyā manuṣyāḥ paśavo vayāmsi, prāṇāpānau vrīhi-yavau tapaś ca śraddhā satyam brahma-caryam vidhiś ca (2.1.7): These passages connected with the creation of the universe occurring in the Mundaka Upanishad have some connection with the Purusha Sukta of the Veda, which also says that all the gods, all the sacrifices that are performed by the gods and also performed for the gods, and every animal conceivable,

every little thing—birds, insects, even the grains in the fields, the very breathing process, and activities such as religious and philosophical considerations, faith and truth, self-restraint, law and order—all these are the will of Brahman. The author of the Upanishad has, as much as possible, tried to conceive everything. There is nothing left unsaid by these verses, which are very few in number but abundant in their meaning.

From Him, from that great plenum of felicity, these seven senses manifest themselves. *Sapta-prāṇāḥ prabhavanti tasmāt saptārciṣas samidhas sapta-homāḥ, sapta ime lokā yeṣu caranti prāṇā guhāśayā nihitās sapta sapta* (2.1.8). Seven orifices above the neck are referred to here as seven senses—the two nostrils, the two eyes, the two ears, and the mouth. These are the seven apertures which act like senses, performing their respective functions. These senses, and their powers of cognition—not only the location of the eyes, nose, ears, etc., but also the capacity involved in them to perform their function, and the particular objects to which they are directed, as also the knowledge that such objects are the requisites for the function of a specific sense organ, and the physical locations of these senses—are what is meant by these cryptic words *prana*, *arcisas*, *samidhas* and *homa*. The terminology of sacrifice is used here to describe an otherwise vital function that is taking place in us.

Seven *pranas* are the seven functions of the sense organs mentioned, and the flaming anguish of these senses to grab their particular food, or object, is known as *saptārciṣas*, seven flames. Our desires are like flames. They rush forth like burning heat in the direction of their objects. And

the objects themselves are called *samit*, which are offered into the sacrifice. The sacrifice—the word *homa* is used here—is the consumption of the object. This is a kind of *prana-agnihotra*, otherwise described in the Chhandogya Upanishad. As we have an external sacrifice which we perform on altars with physical fire, and oblations such as ghee, etc., are poured over them, we have an internal sacrifice taking place; that is called *agnihotra* inside the body. Only householders perform external sacrifice. Vanaprasthas, who are retired from household life, perform the very same sacrifice inwardly—that is, internal *prana-agnihotra*.

When we take our meals, we are actually offering an oblation into the fire of Vaishvanara, which operates in the stomach as the *samana prana*. It is the duty of any educated person in the field of spirituality not to eat food with greed like an animal, but to pay some attention to the process that is taking place in the very act of taking food. We just do not lap up, or grab like an animal, the diet that is offered. A prayer is involved in the very process of eating.

Life is a prayer. The sense organs, in their greed for their objects, are actually praying for relief from the agony, or the involvement, in this grizzly action of their longings for things. There is a deity operating inside the ear as a point of consciousness at the back of the nervous system and the eardrum, etc., that appear to be the causes of the sounds that we hear. So is the case with all the other sense organs. If we ignore the presence of these consciousness points called divinities, we would be paying disrespect to them, and the *agnihotra* sacrifice would not then be performed. Those who eat without offering to the gods first as a sacrament are actually thieves, says the Bhagavadgita.

In the Panchagni Vidya we have been told in a very dramatic fashion, picturesquely, that the diet that we take is actually something produced by the earth, which happens on account of the rainfall coming from the skies. And the rain is nothing but an effect produced by certain vibrations of the rays of the Sun in respect of the water element in the world. And even there, the final cause is not reached. Why should the Sun act in this manner? Who has empowered the Sun to project heating rays so that the water vapour may be absorbed, become clouds, and move about by the action of the wind that simultaneously cooperates in this process? Why should all this take place? Let the Sun convert water into vapour, but why should the wind also blow simultaneously? Who is the reason, who is the cause behind this cooperative activity? There is something beyond the Sun also. That is the heavenly Spirit willing that things should take place in this particular fashion.

Thus, this kind of Panchagni Vidya is taking place inside the body as well as outside the body. All occurrences in world history, inwardly as well as outwardly, inside us as well as outside us, are manifested by a series of causes and effects of the central will, the concentration, the *tapas* of Brahman: *tapasā cīyate brahma* (1.1.8).

Sapta ime lokā yeṣu caranti prāṇā guhāśayā nihitās sapta sapta: Seven are the worlds which will be reached by the performer of this kind of internal *agnihotra*, Panchagni Vidya Tattva, and any one of these worlds will be our fruit thereof. We know what the seven worlds are, and we may be reborn there in any way, in any fashion, according to the devotion with which the sacrifice has been performed. Both outer sacrifice as well as inner sacrifice have a common

intention of lifting the soul above this physical body and taking it into the heavenly regions, even up to the highest Brahmaloċa.

Atas samudrā girayaś ca sarve asmāt syandante sindhavas sarva-rūpāḥ, ataś ca sarvā ośadhayo rasaś ca yenaīṣa bhūtais tiṣṭhate hy antar-ātmā (2.1.9): This inner Atman, appearing as Brahman outside and the *kutastha tattva* inside us, is the cause of even the mighty oceans and the towering Himalayan mountains. The rivers flow in a particular direction only, and not in another direction. The Sun rises only in one direction, and not elsewhere. The stars scintillate and maintain their positions not in any other manner, only because of terror of the operation of the system of law and order of Brahman *tapas*. All the trees and plants grow only because of the will of that *tapas*. There cannot be a breeze moving, wafting through the leaves of trees in the thick of the forest, unless that *tapas* operates. Do you believe that such a thing is possible, that even an atom cannot vibrate and act in the manner it does unless the Central Will is there operating at the nucleus of that atom?

Atas samudrā: Even the oceans are created by Him. Is it not a picturesque description? *Girayaś ca sarve*: The mountains, oceans and rivers cannot be there but for the will of That—*asmāt syandante sindhavas sarva-rūpāḥ*. The author of this Upanishad must have been a great poet like Kalidasa, who beautifully presents before us the forte of all the values applied as emanating from one single point.

Yenaīṣa bhūtais tiṣṭhate hy antar-ātmā: Through all these manifestations mentioned in various ways, this inner Atman rejoices and glories in itself. It plays in the form

of this universe. *Lokavattu lilakaivalyam* (2.1.33), says the Brahma Sutra. Why does the Supreme Brahman manifest itself? Why does it do *tapas* and concentrate, and become all these things in this way? Why do children play? Why do they create mud houses, and then in the evening kick them apart and return home? Why to they skip and dance? There is no reason for that. So is the reasonless sport of Brahman in the form of this picturesque manifestation.

Puruṣa evedaṁ viśvaṁ karma tapo brahma parāṁṛtam, etad yo veda nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ so'vidyā-granthiṁ vikiratīha, saumya (2.1.10): The whole cosmos is this Purusha only. We are seeing nothing but that in front of us. *Karma tapo brahma parāṁṛtam*: Our actions, our austerities, our studies, and the fruits of our actions are all included in this vast manifestation. *Puruṣa evedaṁ sarvam* (P.S. 2). It is the Purusha Sukta speaking through the Upanishad, as it were.

Etad yo veda nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ so'vidyā-granthiṁ vikiratīha, saumya: The Guru speaks, “My dear disciple, listen! Whoever knows this secret that I have been telling you all the while, in connection with the Atman which is the deepest reality of every individual and the deepest reality of the cosmos, whoever knows this correctly and lives it, such a person breaks the knot of ignorance.” *Avidyā-granthiṁ vikiratī*: It tears it apart and scatters it into pieces. It scatters the knot of the ignorance which has caused us to believe that we are here as isolated individuals and the world is outside.

SECTION 2

Āviḥ samñihitaṁ guhācaram nāma mahat padam atraitat samarpitam, ejaṭ praṇan nimiṣac ca yad etat jānatha sad asad vareṇyam param vijñānād yad variṣṭham prajānām (2.2.1). Manifest outside is this very thing that is the deepest source of our aspirations. Verily, in front of our eyes is manifest that very thing which is otherwise inconceivable. The deepest within is also there as the perceivable form before the senses. It is deepest in the heart, no doubt, but it is also capable of appearing before our very eyes as the thing that we see. This Brahman is the great manifested support of all beings. It is the cause of all our experiences. It is very close to us, nearer than our neck, yet it is inside in the cavity of the heart. Everything that breathes, everything that is alive, all beings whether moving or not moving, anything that winks, all these are rooted in this one single Being as spokes are fixed in the hub of a wheel. It is the cause of both the gross and the subtle. It is the most adorable of all beings.

Tadd ha tad-vanam nāma, tad-vanam ity upāsitavyam (Kena 4.6) says the Kenopanishad. How do you adore Brahman as the most lovable of all beings, the dearest of objects? *Vareṇyam*: *Vareṇya* is the adorable. It is adorable because it is great and grand, and adorable because it is lovable and dear. It has two aesthetic characteristics, sublimity and beauty, and both are to be seen in God. This is the great Brahman *tattva*, the Atma *tattva*.

Might and attraction, both qualities are in God. Very few things combine these characteristics. There is great strength in a bulldozer; it can crush us if we go near it, but it has no beauty. It does not attract us, and we do not want

to go on looking at it. It has a great force, a crushing force, a great power, but no beauty. But certain beautiful things have no power, such as a flower in the garden. A rose, a jasmine, a lotus are very beautiful, but they are not strong and powerful like an elephant. God is power and beauty combined.

In the Kenopanishad, the student asks the Guru, “How do we adore Brahman?” We should adore Brahman as lovable. Actually, the mind will not concentrate on God unless He is beautiful, attractive and lovable. If He terrible and fearsome, the mind will not concentrate on Him. We cannot work by fear; we can work only by love. This applies not only to factories and offices, but also to the work called meditation in the spiritual field. God cannot threaten us so that we may worship Him. God can only attract us.

It is Aristotle who mentioned in his metaphysics that God pulls the world towards Himself as the beloved pulls the lover. These are examples and illustrations which defy logical considerations and mathematical calculations. Love is not logic and it is not mathematics, but it is something more than that. It is more precise than mathematics and more exact than any kind of calculation that we can think of, and greater than logic. Logic and mathematics are the greatest of sciences, so to say, but love is a greater science; and in the spiritual field especially, it is this that acts. The love of God, called *mumukshutva*, is the source of the success of the student in this field of yoga.

Yad arcimad yad aṅubhyo'ṅu ca, yasmin lokā nihitā lokinas ca, tad etad akṣaram brahma sa prāṅas tad u vāṅ manah, tad etat satyam, tad amṛtam, tad veddhavyam, saumya, vidधि (2.2.2): That great Reality, which has been described in

cosmological terms in the earlier mantras, is manifesting its radiance, its flames, in the form of this creation. The world, as an emanation from God, is actually the rays of this Supreme Being manifesting themselves, as it were. It is the light of Brahman that is visible here as the world of perception, light getting condensed into solid matter, but it is nevertheless more subtle than even the subtlest atomic particles of life. It is *arcimad*, and also *anubhyo'nu*, meaning radiance, and subtler than the subtle. It is subtle because of its not being an object of perception. All things that can be conceived, thought of, spoken about or perceived are gross in their form. But this one, which is the knower and the seer of things, and cannot in any way be equated with objectivity of any kind, should naturally be very subtle. It cannot be known at all, inasmuch as it is the knower of things. Inasmuch as it is the knower of things, it cannot be known; therefore, it is *anu*, subtle.

Yasmin lokā nihitā lokinas ca: All this weighty mass of physical manifestation, this physical cosmos, as large as it is, together with all the inhabitants of this world, is rooted, fixed in this subtlest of realities. The subtler a thing is, the more powerful it is. A strong electric current, which is not a physical object like tangible bricks or stones, etc., may break a mountain and reduce it to powder if its voltage is sufficiently intense. Where is this subtlety, the invisibility of this energy called electric power? We cannot even see it with our eyes, but it can damage everything and dismantle huge structures. The subtlest of things is also the strongest of things, and therefore the weighty mass of the physical manifestation of the world is nowhere in comparison with this subtlest invisible reality on which everything is fixed.

Invisible things control visible objects. The visible world is not the real; the real is that which cannot be seen. The invisible is the real. The more invisible and subtle a thing becomes, the more real it is.

Tad etad akṣaram brahma: This it is that they call the Imperishable Brahman. *Sa prāṇaḥ:* That also is the vitality of the cosmos, as well as the individual. *Tad u vāṇ:* That also is the reason why we speak. The energy that is necessary for the modulation of the vocal cords in the articulation of sounds is itself manifested in one form. *Tad u vāṇ manaḥ:* That is the mind that thinks. *Tad etat satyam:* It is the law, it is the rule, it is the regulation, it is the system, it is the order that maintains this cosmos—*satyam*. *Satyameva jayathe:* This great order is the Truth of truths. It is the will of the Absolute. It reigns supreme, triumphs always, and anything other than that cannot triumph.

Tad amṛtam: It is immortal nectar, sweet as delicious honey. Immortal experience does not mean just existing for a long time, doing nothing. That is not immortality. It is a durationless experience where the concept of individual existence is completely abolished and transcended. For us who are living in a world of space and time, for us who are physical bodies, to be immortal would seem like living for a long time in some place, without dying. This is a crude, childish idea of deathlessness. That which is deathless is also not physical. That which is not physical is also not in space and time; therefore, it is not in some place that it may endure for a long time. The very idea or notion of immortality has to be re-evaluated.

Tad veddhavyam: This Great Being is our aim. We have to hit it as we hit an object with an arrow. “O dear brother,

disciple, friend, student, whoever you are, *saumya*. O blessed soul, seeker of Truth, listen to me. Hit this object by the power of concentration as an archer hits a target with an arrow that he discharges from a bent bow.” In the third mantra, the practice of spirituality, or *sadhana*, is compared to an archer employing an arrow shot through a bow for the purpose of hitting a target. Now, what is this arrow? What is this target? What is the bow in the case of this *sadhana*, the spiritual practice? Upanishadic knowledge is the bow. With the help of the knowledge that you have gained by study of the Upanishads, and by deep contemplation on the Upanishads, consider that as the great weapon. The Upanishad is a great weapon.

Dhanur grhītvā aupaniṣadam mahāstram śaram hy upāsāniṣitam saṁdadhīta, āyamyā tad-bhāvagatena cetasā lakṣyam tad evākṣaram, saumya viddhi (2.2.3). *Mahāstram*: It is the bow. Hold it in your hand and bend it, strike the string by the power of the concentration of your mind through analysis of the meaning of the teachings of the Upanishads, and delve into their true significance. With the power of intense devotion to it, bend the bow and pitch the arrow, which is the act of concentration. The mind is the arrow here, which is to be fixed on the bow of the knowledge of the Upanishad gained by deep thought and study. And the bow has to be bent by intense longing.

Tad-bhāvagatena cetasā lakṣyam tad evākṣaram, saumya viddhi: That Imperishable Being is the target which you have to hit with this arrow of your mind, struck and discharged by the bow of Upanishadic knowledge, and bent with tremendous strength arisen from your longing for liberation. This is the meaning of the third mantra. The

Upanishad is the knowledge which gives you the strength to embark on this great adventure of spiritual experience. That knowledge of the Upanishad is compared here to a bow, the mind is the arrow, the longing for the liberation of the soul is the power with which you bend the bow and strike the string, and the target is the Imperishable Reality. Thus is the analogy of the bow and the arrow in the case of sadhana, or yoga practice. It is again briefly repeated in the next verse.

Praṇavo dhanuḥ, śaro hy ātmā, brahma tal lakṣyam ucyate, apramattena veddhavyam, śaravat tanmayo bhavet (2.2.4): Pranava, Omkara is the bow. It was said earlier that Upanishadic knowledge is the bow. Now it is said that Pranava is the bow. The idea is that the Pranava, or Om, is the essence of Upanishadic knowledge. The Mandukya Upanishad is supposed to be the quintessence of all the Upanishads. *Mandukyam ekam evalam mumukshunam vimuktaye* (Muktika 1.27): For the sake of the liberation of the spirit, the Mandukya Upanishad alone is sufficient. This is a statement made in the Muktika Upanishad. Now, the Mandukya Upanishad is nothing but an exposition of Pranava. So in a sense it means the quintessence of Upanishadic teachings is Omkara, and so there is a pertinence here. It is appropriate that this verse says that Pranava, or Omkara, is the bow, equal to saying that Upanishadic knowledge is the bow.

Ātmā: The individual soul which seeks liberation is the arrow. Brahman is the target. With great concentration, with unwavering attention, you must aim this arrow on that object. As the arrow merges in the object by striking it directly, the Atman, this individual, this mind, has to get

dissolved in that object. The concentration of the archer in respect of a target is well known. He does not know what is happening to him on either side. His ability to concentrate on one point is such that he will not see anything other than the object.

There is an illustration in the Mahabharata. During the tournament in which Drona tested the archery of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, he hung a little wooden bird on a branch of a tree. The image had all the features of a bird, such as eyes, beak, etc. The idea was that the archer should hit only the eye, not any other part of the bird, and he should see only that. The eye of the archer should concentrate itself on only the eye of the bird, and he should not go on thinking varieties of things.

Drona called Yudhishtira. "Come on. What do you see there?"

"I see a bird on the tree," replied Yudhishtira.

"No. You are no good. Go to that side," said Drona.

Then he called Bhima. "What do you see?"

"I see a bird tied to a branch of a tree."

"No good. Go that side."

Then he tested the other two brothers, and they also failed.

Then Arjuna was called and asked, "What do you see?"

"I see a black spot, and I see nothing else," he replied.

That is the concentration that is expected in meditation on Brahman. It has already been mentioned that it is very subtle. How can the gross mind, which is accustomed to thinking of objects, succeed in thinking of subtle things? Brahman is subtle because of its universality on one hand and its inwardness on the other hand. The combination of

these two aspects is very difficult to consider in the mind. Either we think of an expanse or we think something inside us. It is not merely an expanse outside, and it is also not something sitting inside us. It is a blend of the inwardness of subjectivity together with the expanse of objectivity, the infinity. As these two thoughts cannot combine easily, it is hard for the mind to concentrate on Brahman. It can concentrate on a form—on idols, on concepts, on an image that it places before itself—because it is outside. But Brahman is not outside. How will you concentrate on it? *Apramattena veddhavyam*: Very cautious you have to be, very careful. Do not be in a hurry. Then your mind will unite itself with the object of your meditation as the arrow merges into the object.

Yasmin dyauḥ pṛthivī cāntarikṣam otam manaḥ saha prāṇaiś ca sarvaiḥ, tam evaikam jānatha ātmānam, anya vāco vimuñcatha, amṛtasyaiṣa setuḥ (2.2.5): It is that on which space itself is fixed, which is the foundation of the whole Earth. The entire space is an object in front of that subtler, larger-than-space Reality. And all things, including the mind and the *pranas*, are fixed on that Reality. That alone should be the goal of your life. *Tam evaikam jānatha ātmānam*: Know it as the deepest reality of your own heart, the Atman.

Do not speak too much. *Anyā vāco vimuñcatha*: When you speak, speak only about the Atman. Do not speak about anything else. All other words are weariness of speech. Therefore, concentrate yourself on this great ideal of your life, and mind your business, as they say. Do not engage yourself in other kinds of business in this world. This should be your only business, your only aim, and

nothing else should attract your attention. *Amṛtasyaiṣa setuḥ*: This sadhana, this practice, if it can be carried on successfully, will be the bridge to Immortality.

Arā iva ratha-nābhau samhatā yatra nāḍyaḥ sa eṣo'ntaś carate bahudhā jāyamānaḥ, aum ity evaṁ dhyāyathātmānam, svasti vaḥ pārāya tamaśaḥ parastāt (2.2.6): All the nerve currents of the body and the divinities of the cosmos are fixed in this universal consciousness, Brahman, as spokes in a wheel are fixed in the hub of the wheel. This One, in which everything is fixed, is moving inside the heart, and it manifests itself in various forms as visualisations by the mind of a variety of conceptualisations of objects—*antaś carate bahudhā jāyamānaḥ*.

It was said you must meditate on Brahman. How do you meditate on Brahman? The prescription is given here. *Aum ity evaṁ dhyāya*: Meditate on Brahman as Om, by recitation of Om. Deeply chant Om like a vibration rising from the naval to the heart, as it were, and moving upwards through the heart and the throat until it becomes an articulated sound through the vocal organs. Inversely, when the sound formation of Om is recited through the vocal organs, it becomes subtler and subtler as the chanting becomes calmer and calmer, more and more inward, and becomes inverted into its original source until it reaches its vibratory condition where sound is absent. This ultimate vibration, which is the final shape of Om, is identical with cosmic power, the very will of God. Therefore, meditate on Brahman as Om. Om is the name of Brahman.

Tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ (Y.S. 1.27), says Patanjali. We want to call God by some name, and we cannot call Him by any other name except Om. This is because all other

names—such as Rama, Krishna, Govinda, tree, stone, water, mountain—are words that we use to name particular objects. Every word in language has a particular object in front of it, located in some place, whereas Brahman is not an object located in some place. Hence, any word that can connote only a located object will not suffice in defining Brahman, which is everywhere. You require a universal name to denote Universal Being. The universal name is Om, according to universal vibrations. Therefore, through Om meditate on Brahman. *Aum it evaṁ dhyāyathātmānam*: Thus, contemplate the Atman through Om.

Svasti vaḥ pārāya tamasaḥ parastāt: The Guru is blessing the disciples. “May good betide you. Godspeed to you for crossing beyond this ocean of *samsara*, beyond this darkness of ignorance.” *Tamasaḥ parastāt*: “May you be blessed.” Here is a blessing from the Guru, as the teacher of this Upanishad. *Svasti vaḥ pārāya tamasaḥ parastāt*: “May you succeed.” Bon voyage!

Yah sarvajñāḥ sarva-vid yasyaiṣa mahimā bhuvī divye brahma-pure hy eṣa vyomny ātmā pratiṣṭhitaḥ (2.2.7): It is all knowing, and aware of all things in detail. These words occurred earlier also. *Sarvajñāḥ* has been interpreted as the knower of everything in generality; *sarva-vid* is one who knows everything in detail. So this Supreme Being, which is cosmically aware of everything in general as well as in detail, has its glory sung in this world in the form of this creation. *Yasyaiṣa mahimā bhuvī*: This Earth, this glory that you see in this world, this very universe is the encomium, the praise of God. The whole universe is praising God in all its forms, in all its shapes, through all its historical processes and every shape that it takes through evolution.

The world as a whole is a total prayer that is offered to God by His own creation. Sometimes it is said that God created the world so that the world may pray to Him—*yasyaiṣa mahimā bhuvi*.

Divye brahma-pure hy eṣa vyomny ātmā pratiṣṭhitah: In the highest heaven, whose representation is within our own hearts as the subtle spiritual lotus—the city of Brahman, as it is called—in this firmament of the spirit, in the lotus of the heart, the highest reality is planted. The forms of the mind, the *prana* and the physical body, all forms are its manifestations.

Mano-mayaḥ prāṇa-sārīra-netā pratiṣṭhito'nne hrdayam sannidhāya (2.2.8): In *anna*, which is the physical body, in *prana*, which is the subtle vibration inside, and in *manas*, which is the mind, it is fixed and it is operating. *Tad vijñānena paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ ānanda-rūpam amṛtam yad vibhāti*: When this glory is beheld within oneself, it manifests itself as bliss. What kind of experience do we have when we contact God? Bliss is the experience. *Ananda* is the joy that accrues by contact with the Supreme Being. This *ananda* is not like the ordinary sense pleasures with which we are accustomed here. Sense pleasure is not a real joy. Even mental contemplation of aesthetic objects cannot be regarded as the highest joy. This world cannot give us the highest joy, because our joys of the world are entangled in the heavy material of objectivity. Thus, Brahman bliss is quite different and inconceivable, and its subtlety and magnitude have been illustrated in that calculus of bliss we have in the Taittiriya Upanishad, where it says that all the kinds of bliss that we can imagine in our mind are lower, and it is all multiplied by hundreds

and hundreds in ascending series until we reach an octillion multiplied state, as it were, where we reach Brahman's quality.

Actually, an octillion is not the end of this calculus. There is no end to it. It is infinity, but because we have to calculate and end somewhere, we end it with some particular statement; but actually, any amount of multiplication of sensory pleasure cannot give us Brahman bliss. Many untruths do not make one truth. Even if we multiply untruth by millions, does it become one truth? Likewise, this untruth of the pleasures of sense that we have in this world will not give us Brahman bliss by any amount of calculus or multiplication. It is *ananda*, pure and simple, Sat-Chit-Ananda combined, pure universal Existence, inseparable Consciousness, and undiluted Bliss. All the knots of the heart are broken at one stroke when this experience supervenes.

Bhidyate hr̥daya-granthiś chidyante sarva-saṁśayāḥ, kṣīyante cāśya karmāṇi tasmin dr̥ṣṭe parāvare (2.2.9): The knots of the heart have already been explained—Brahma-granti, Rudra-granti and Vishnu-granti. They are actually *avidya*, *kama* and karma: ignorance, desire and action. These knots are broken at once by the rise of the knowledge of Brahman. *Chidyante sarva-saṁśayāḥ*: All doubts are dispelled in one second. You will have no doubt in your mind; everything is so clear, as if in the midday sun. *Kṣīyante cāśya karmāṇi*: All the karmas will be destroyed. All the effects of karma that cause rebirth will be burnt into ashes. *Tasmin dr̥ṣṭe parāvare*: When does this happen? This happens only when you behold the Great Being which is high and low combined.

Here the word 'karma' is used in the plural. A controversy has arisen by commentators interpreting the word '*karmāṇi*' as plural. How many karmas are there? Plural implies more than two. In Sanskrit grammar, plural is not dual, it is more than dual. In the English language, more than one is plural. But in Sanskrit, more than one is dual, and more than dual is plural. Here *karmāṇi* is plural, which means more than two. Does it mean that more than two karmas are destroyed, or are only two karmas destroyed? There are three kinds of karma—*sanchita*, *agami* and *prarabdha*. Usually it is said that *prarabdha* cannot be destroyed, and only *sanchita* and *agami* are destroyed, which are the store of karma and also the effects of karma that are performed in the present birth. They are destroyed, but the karma that has given birth to this body cannot be destroyed as long as the body lasts. This is the usual view of philosophers.

Then why is the word 'karma' used in the plural? Some commentators say that *prarabdha* is also destroyed. By saying that, they imply that though the *jivanmukta purusha* actually appears to be living in a body, moving about, speaking, eating, and doing things like anybody else, he is above this body. To others, the body may look like a moving vehicle; but for his own self, his consciousness has spread throughout all bodies. The *jivanmukta* does not see himself in one body only. The consciousness of "I am going", etc., has been transcended by him. The *jivanmukta purusha's* consciousness is in everybody's body, and therefore whether or not the *prarabdha* karma is working is immaterial for him because it is virtually destroyed. So, all the three are destroyed. This is another meaning that is given to this word '*karmāṇi*'. However, it matters little for

us because we have all the three karmas with us. *Tasmin dr̥ṣṭe parāvare*: Having reached that Supreme Being, your karmas are destroyed.

Hiraṇmaye pare kośe virajaṃ brahma niṣkaram, tac chubhram̐ jyotiṣāṃ jyotiḥ tad yad ātma-vido viduḥ (2.2.10): Light of lights is this Brahman. The Sun and the Moon do not shine there. Within the golden sheath of the intellect of the human being, this Pure Consciousness scintillates like a spark which is without smoke and without any kind of limitation or location, the purest of purities, the Light of lights. That is beheld by those people who have known the Atman as identical with the light that they behold in other bodies also. The whole world will look like a mass of radiance to the *jivanmukta purusha*. If we gaze at the Sun for some time, we will see dark spots as if the Sun is everywhere, because of the effect produced by the force of its light on the eye. Likewise is the *jivanmukta purusha's* perception of the Atman. It does not mean that he sees the Atman only within himself, and he sees people moving about outside. It is not like that. He sees himself present and moving in all bodies. It is a cosmic experience, incapable of articulation in ordinary words of language, and the less said about it the better.

Na tatra sūryo bhāti, na candra-tāarakam, nemā vidyuto bhānti, kuto'yam agniḥ, tam eva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam, tasya bhāsā sarvam, idaṃ vibhāti (2.2.11): In that realm of eternal light, there is no radiance of the Sun. This brilliance of the Sun which is so intolerable to our eyes is like a shadow cast by that eternal light. Just as candle flames do not shine before the light of the Sun, so also the Moon, the stars, fire, and all the luminaries of the world do not

shed their light in that eternal radiance. There is no Sun or Moon, no stars, no lightning, no fire or any kind of illumination that we can think of. All these illuminations are external, but this great eternal light is internal, and that is the difference. The internal light is brighter than the external light. Actually, the light of the Sun and the light of anything that illumines objects in this world is a frequency of radiation, and they look like a light that illumines objects only when the frequency of the emanation from the object that sheds the light is equivalent in ratio to the frequency of the structure of our perceptive organs. There are higher frequencies and lower frequencies of radiation, and we do not see them. More intense forms of light cannot be seen with the eyes, and very low frequencies also cannot be seen. We cannot see heaven because it is in a higher frequency, and we cannot see hell because it is in a lower frequency. We are in the middle. Anyway, the objective lights of the Sun, the Moon, and so on, do not play any role in that realm of eternal daylight.

Na tatra sūryo bhāti, na candra-tāarakam, nemā vidyuto bhānti, kuto'yam agniḥ: All the luminaries borrow light from that Eternity, as it were. A fraction of the intense incalculable frequency of the eternal radiance is responsible for the lights that are considered as great lights in this world.

Jyotiṣām jyotih: That is the light of all lights. There are lights in the world, no doubt, but that is the light of even these lights. Due to the light of that Eternal Being, everything shines. We are able to cognise the presence of things on account of the radiance that emanates from within us. We do not know things in the world because of

sunlight. Sunlight cannot create knowledge, because it is inert in its nature. The awareness that there is an object, this world, cannot arise merely by shedding a ray of sunlight on it. Who is responsible for the knowledge, which is the light shed on the objects? It is our Self consciousness. Self consciousness is the greatest light, and it does not require an external light for it to perform its functions. All this world is illumined by this great internal light which is universal light: *tasya bhāsā sarvam, idaṁ vibhāti*.

Brahmaivedam amṛtam purastād brahma, paścād brahma, dakṣinataś cottareṇa, adhaścordhvaṁ ca prasṛtam brahmaivedaṁ viśvam idaṁ variṣṭham (2.2.12): Where is this eternal Brahman? How far is it from us? It is this eternal, immortal Brahman that is shining in front of us. It is this eternal Brahman that is at the back of us. It is this eternal Brahman that is to our right side. It is this eternal Brahman that is to our left side. It is this very Brahman that is above. It is this very Brahman that is below. Everywhere it is spreading itself out, and the whole universe is its radiance.

Brahmaivedaṁ viśvam idaṁ variṣṭham: The plenum of felicity, which is Bhuma, the Absolute, manifests itself as this plenum of this world. All the light, and all the joy, and all the perfection that we apparently see in things in this world are little titbits.

Mātrām upajīvanti (B.U. 4.3.32), says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. We can imagine how many joys there are in this world. We can count them all. We can enumerate all the millions and millions of avenues of joy that can be experienced in this world, and we can enumerate the most intense form of joy that we can experience in this world, but all this put together is only a jot, a spoonful, as it were,

of the Brahman bliss. *Matra*: It is less than a spoonful, and the whole universe of joy is sustained by that little drop of Brahman bliss. It is that bliss that is sustaining us. If joy were not to be in this world, who would be able to live in this world even for a few minutes? If joy were not to be there in breathing, who would breathe? If joy were not to be there in mere existence, who would like to exist? There is joy in this very space itself; otherwise, we will not feel happy by finding accommodation in space.

We will find this Brahman manifest from all directions in various shapes and forms causing us, bringing about before us, sources of joy. There is nothing in this world which cannot give us happiness some time or the other. There are things in this world which are objects of our neglect. We do not consider their existence at all. There are so many trees in the forest. What does it matter to us? Let them be there. There is so much water is flowing in the Ganga, but it does not matter to us. There are so many hills; what does it matter? They do matter. A time will come, a condition will arise in which we will find that even a straw will give us support when we are drowning in the flood of this world. A mouse saved a lion, and a straw can protect us. There is nothing that cannot protect us, cannot sustain us, cannot give us joy and support some time or the other, in one condition or the other, because of the fact that Brahman is spread out in all things.

CHAPTER 3

SECTION 1

Now we go to Section 1 of Chapter 3. The same verse that occurred earlier, of the illustration of two birds perching on a single tree, is before us.

Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte tayor anyañ: pippalaṁ svādv atty anaśnann anyo'bhicakāśīti (3.1.1): There are two birds in this tree of life. This tree of life may be either this body of the individual, or it may be the entire creation itself. Ishvara and *jiva* are present in the world of creation, as well as in the human body. They are friends. God and the individual are like Nara and Narayana of ancient mythology. They are inseparable brothers, one perpetually connected with the other. They are compared to birds living on a single tree, which is this vast creation, and they enjoy their existence on the tree. The only difference is, one of these birds is busy enjoying the delicious fruit of this tree, and the other bird is not interested in eating anything. It is merely looking on, unconcerned and unattached.

This unattached bird is God, Ishvara, seated in our own hearts and everywhere in this world. The bird that is eating the sweet fruit of this tree is the individual soul, the mind-body complex. So there are two phases of experience

going on in one's own body: a consciousness that is totally detached, and a consciousness that is very much involved. The detached consciousness in us is called *kutastha chaitanya*. It stands uncontaminated even in the state of deep sleep, and enables us to regain our consciousness of identity of personality when we awake the next morning and feel that we are there.

This consciousness of our being the same person that we were yesterday is not the action of the mind, not of the sense organs, not of the body. The body cannot know anything because it is unconscious, and the mind and the senses were not functioning in sleep. So who told us that we existed yesterday? There is some minimal awareness, consciousness qua being, as it is called, which is our essence that existed in deep sleep, and which is responsible for our memory of the fact of our having existed yesterday also. That is the uncontaminated, detached consciousness in us. It is not connected with body, mind and sense organs. That is the Ishvara *tattva* that is in us. The *jiva tattva* is our own selves. The very consciousness that is contaminated by the body, mind and sense organs becomes the *jiva*. Consciousness connected with the sense organs, mind and body is the *jiva*—the individual, so-called. The detached consciousness, unconnected with these, is Ishvara himself because the general consciousness we experience in the state of deep sleep, unconnected with the senses, body and mind, is universal in its nature. Because consciousness cannot be located only in one place, cannot be divided into parts, cannot have fractions, it is therefore universal.

Hence, the Universal Being is inside us. In the deep sleep state we land ourselves on it, as it were, and feel the

bliss of it so intensely that we do not like to wake up in the morning. So intense is the joy of sleep that we want to go to sleep again and again. But when we wake up, we are once again the *jiva*, the fruit-eating bird in this world-tree of *samsara*, and are not even conscious that there is another bird sitting there, always uncontaminated. Are we aware that we have a universal background in us? No, never. We always think we are this body, that body, this individual, that individual, performing this work and that work. Does anyone believe that there is a universal ocean at the back of our consciousness? We are floating on the sea of Absolute Being. Do we know that? Has anybody had time to think like this? No. Because we are eating the sweet fruit of life, we are very busy indeed. Let the Universal be there; what does it matter to us? So this bird that is eating the sweet fruit does not even know that another bird is sitting there, as it is so much engrossed in the indulgence of the bliss, joy, pleasure of eating the sweet fruit. These are the two birds.

Samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno'nīśayā śocati muhyamānaḥ, juṣṭam yadā paśyaty anyam īsam asya mahimānam iti, vītaśokaḥ (3.1.2): Helplessly sunk in the apparent joy of the sweetness of the fruit, one of these birds is also, at the same time, sunk in sorrow, because we do not merely suck the fruit, the fruit also sucks us. We do not merely get stuck in the object, the objects sticks to us. The more we try to grab objects, the more will objects try to grab us, like crocodiles. If we try to grab a crocodile with our hands, it will grab us with greater force.

In the Upanishads, the sense organs are called *graha* because they grasp, and the objects are called *atigraha*, the greater grabbers. Our condition may be really pitiable if we

give a long rope to these sense organs and allow them to go on grabbing objects, because the result would be that the objects will grab us with a greater force. The result would be utter helplessness, and one will be reduced to slavery to such an extent that it will be difficult to distinguish between oneself and the object outside. The slave is like an object; he has no subjectivity. He does not think in terms of himself; he always thinks in terms of his master. So we are like slaves thinking in terms of our master, which is this world of objects, and we have no independence ourselves. We are caught and bound in the chain of this helplessness caused by our indulgence in the objects which appear to be our masters. *Samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno'nīśayā śocati muhyamānaḥ*: Deluded is this bird that is indulging itself like this.

Juṣṭam yadā paśyaty anyam īsam: When by chance this indulgent bird has time to look around and see the other bird seated there, the most adorable Being, the moment we behold it, our bondage is snapped. The vision of God is also the end of all sorrow. The consciousness of universality is the cessation of attachment to particularity. But we are not able to maintain an awareness of this Universal in us. We cannot see that there is a bird called the Universal in us. We see only the object in front of us. The moment we become aware of the Universal bird, the consciousness of its existence will redeem us at once.

Juṣṭam yadā paśyaty anyam īsam asya mahimānam iti, vīta-śokah: When the glory of that Universal bird is seen, all the sorrow of indulgence and involvement in things in the world ceases at once, as night departs when the Sun rises. They are simultaneous, and do not come one after the other.

Yadā paśyaḥ paśyate rukma-varṇam kartāram īśam puruṣam brahma-yonim, tadā vidvān puṇya-pāpe vidhūya nirañjanaḥ paramam sāmāyam upaiti (3.1.3): When this seer, the individual soul, beholds this glorious, luminous, radiant, Universal bird nearby—which is really the ruler, the originator, the controller of all things, which is the seat of Brahman itself, the Supreme Puruṣa, Mahapuruṣa, Puruṣottama—then the knower of this Universal bird sheds all the effects of *puṇya* and *pāpa*, merit and demerit. Freed from contact with the effects of good and bad deeds, one attains equality with the Universal. The moment we are conscious of the Universal, we have become one with the Universal.

Here, in this case, knowledge is the same as being. In ordinary life, knowledge is not being. If we know there is a lot of money in a bank, it does not follow that we possess that money. In ordinary life, knowledge is not power, and it is also not being. But here, knowledge is at the same time power and being. The being of the object is, at once, the being of the knowledge of that object. The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman. Universal equality is attained by the consciousness of there being such a thing called Universality. Therefore, we have to awaken ourselves to the consciousness of our true nature, which is Universal existence, and not this body-mind complex.

Prāṇo hy eṣa yaḥ sarva-bhūtair vibhāti vijānan vidvān bhavate nātivādī, ātma-krīḍa ātma-ratiḥ kriyāvān eṣa brahma-vidām viriṣṭhaḥ (3.1.4): This great Hiranyagarbha Prana, the Universal life principle, is visible in the form of the life of every little creature in this world. Having known this, our mouths are shut and we will not speak afterwards. Like a

drowning person whose mouth is filled with water, Eternity will fill us to such an extent that we will have no occasion to open our mouths, and we will not speak. Silence is golden. Not merely is it a policy, but it is a result that follows from the highest vision. The more we know, the less we speak. As it is said, it is only half-filled pots that make a lot of noise. One who is filled with this knowledge of the Universal Prana operating through all life in this world is the true knower, and he does not speak afterwards. What does he do then?

Ātma-kṛīḍa ātma-ratiḥ kriyāvān eṣa brahma-vidāṁ viriṣṭhah: He is the Knower supreme. He is the best of the knowers of Brahman. He rejoices not with things outside; he rejoices with himself—*ātma-kṛīḍa*. He plays with himself, he rejoices with himself, he works through himself, not with instruments outside. God does not have instruments like a pickaxe, a fountain pen, etc. By His very existence, He works. So is this knower of Brahman capable of working miracles in this world by his very existence. The words used here are *brahma-vidāṁ viriṣṭhah*, which means the best of the knowers of Brahman.

There are four stages of Brahman knowledge described in the Yoga Vasishtha, and these stages are called *brahmavid*, *brahmavidvara*, *brahmavidvariya* and *brahmavidvarishta*. There are seven stages of knowledge in the ascent of the spirit to God—*shubhecha*, *vicharana*, *tanumanasi*, *sattvapatti*, *asamsakti*, *padartha-bhavana* and *turiya*. The fourth stage is called *sattvapatti*, where light flashes from Brahman, and that condition of the awareness of the flash of light from Brahman is called the state of *brahmavid*. Then the next stage comes. When we are totally detached from everything

on account of the perception of this light everywhere, that is *brahmavidvara*. When we see consciousness illuminating through every brick, every stone and every atom, that stage is *brahmavidvariya*. Then we feel that the light is scintillating within us also, and we become indistinguishable from this mass of light everywhere; that is *turiya*. Such a stage is called *brahmavidvarishta*. He plays with himself, he rejoices with himself, he is satisfied with himself, and he works through the soul, and not by any kind of external instruments. Such a great soul, a true knower of Brahman the Supreme, is called *brahmavidvarishta*—*eṣa brahma-vidām viriṣṭhah*.

Satyena labhyas tapasā hy eṣa ātmā samyag-jñānena brahmacharyeṇa nityam, antaḥ-śarīre jyotir-mayo hi śubhro yam paśyanti yatayaḥ kṣīṇadoṣāḥ (3.1.5): The Atman is attained through truth, penance, correct knowledge, and *brahmacharya* (self-control), observed continuously without break. The Atman is beheld within in the form of light and purity by the austere ones who are freed from all kinds of sins.

Truth is adherence to fact, whether absolute or relative. It is proceeding along the way of the unity of existence. Relatively, it takes the form of acting in conformity with facts that are experienced through the process of individual knowledge. Absolutely, it is living in the light of the fact that Existence is absolute and indivisible. Falsehood is the opposite of truth, and is the result of clinging to the falsehood of individuality. Truth is the way of disintegrating the individual personality through presentation of the good and not the pleasant. Truth is that which is universally good; but falsehood, when it is deliberately resorted to for the fulfilment of a definite

purpose, appears pleasant only to an individual or certain individuals. Falsehood, therefore, fattens the individuality, whereas truth breaks open the individuality and enables one to realise the Atman.

Tapas, or penance, in its true sense, consists in the withdrawal of the senses and the concentration of the mind. Austerity, or penance, is only a means to the end, and not the end itself. It is a means inasmuch as it disciplines the individual functions and directs them to meditation, which leads to wisdom and realisation. By *tapas*, what is meant is not merely bodily mortification, because bondage does not consist in the body, but in the mind that animates the body. The cause of bondage is the mind alone, and therefore the discipline of the mind is *tapas*.

Proper knowledge is equal vision, or perception of the one Atman in all. This is a function deeper than that of speaking truth or practising *tapas*. It is a function of the spirit which realises itself in every form of existence.

Brahmacharya is the method of the abstraction of sense-energy from the externals, and the conservation of the same for the sake of steadying the mind and giving it the energy necessary for the practice of concentration and meditation. Though the popular meaning of *brahmacharya* is continence, it really means leading a life befitting the nature of Brahman. It is, in other words, *charya*, or moving or acting or conducting oneself in accordance with the law of Brahman, which is the unity of existence. Such control is not merely the abandonment of objects, but is the absence of the taste for objects. Bondage is not caused by the existence of objects, but by the connection of the mind with those objects. In short, self-control is absence of

sense-experience, giving rise to mental equilibrium, light, consciousness and joy.

These observances should be practised continuously without exceptions to the rules, and not practised for some time alone and with certain exceptions. These should be practised until the realisation of the Self, because the stoppage of such practices may lead to the assertion of individuality and impede the process of Self-realisation. The Upanishad says that the Atman is attained by those in whom there is no crookedness, no falsehood and no play of tricks.

This Atman is realised within oneself, and not outside oneself. Though the process of realisation is an inward one, the goal that is attained includes the outward also. Sadhana starts with an introversion of the mind, but in the end, the result achieved is not simply internal but is infinite. From the point of view of the individual, it is said that this Atman is realised in one's own heart in the form of a splendid effulgence, perfectly pure and limitless in its nature, which is realised only by those who are free from attachments, sins, desires, and all kinds of greed. This realisation is effected through the practice of virtues such as truth, enumerated above. Sankara was of the opinion that only a Sannyasin—that is, a person of complete renunciation—will be able to achieve this Supreme End which requires of the aspirant a total transcendence of the universe.

Satyam eva jayate nāṅṛtam, satyena panthā vitato deva-yānaḥ, yenākramanty ṛṣayo hy āpta-kāmā yatra tat satyasya paramam nidhānam (3.1.6). Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood. Through truth the divine path is spread out, by which the sages whose desires have been completely

fulfilled reach to where that supreme treasure of Truth is. Truth is more than truth-speaking. Truth is the symbol of perfection, a representation of the Divine Being. Adherence to truth means embracing the universal nature of Reality. Therefore, truth wins victory everywhere. Truth is the essence of the Universal movement consisting of evolution and involution. Untruth is negative, whereas truth is positive. Through truth the consciousness blossoms into more expanded experience, but untruth attempts to stifle consciousness altogether and disallows the expansion of consciousness causing, at the same time, the hardening of individuality.

It is Truth through which the divine way, or the life of spiritual striving, is spread before the aspiring individuals. The universe, as a spiritual organism to be striven for, is brought into the consciousness of the individual through the practice of Truth. Truth is, in fact, the eye of the individual aspiring for the realisation of its Absolute nature. The sages got a vision of this Truth because they were absolutely free from defects such as deceit, delusion, fraud, pride, vanity and falsehood. They found the consummation of their desires and aspirations in this Absolute Truth. They became first desireless, and then sought the Truth. Desire breeds falsehood, and desirelessness gives rise to Truth. Truth enables one to attain the Supreme Treasure, which is the Absolute Truth.

Bṛhac ca tad divyam acintya-rūpaṁ sūkṣmāc ca tat sūkṣma-taraṁ vibhāti, dūrāt sudūre tad ihāntike ca paśyatsv ihaiva nihitam guhāyām (3.1.7): *Bṛhac* is this Brahman, larger than space is its size; *divyam*: divinity supreme; *acintya-rūpaṁ*: unthinkable is its form; *sūkṣmāc ca tat sūkṣma-taraṁ*

vibhati: subtler than the subtle is its inner subjectivity. First it was said it is larger than the largest. Now we are told it is subtler than the subtlest, smaller than the smallest.

Dūrāt sudūre tad ihāntike ca: Most remote it is, and also very near it is. It is as far from us as the horizon. We cannot touch it; we cannot know where it is. The horizon recedes further and further the more we move in its direction, and we will never touch it. The end of space cannot be seen. Space is so far, but this is even further. That is the distance between us and God. But it is so near because it is our very Self, the Atman.

Paśyatsv ihaiva nihitam guhāyām: It is in the cave of the heart of the individual, and also in the cave of the heart of the universe. It is the soul of the universe, and is also the soul of every individual being. The question of distance does not arise here in Consciousness. The ideas of remoteness and nearness, etc., arise from our living in space, time and objectivity. As there is no distance or measuring of separation of one thing from another, and there is no duration of time, and there is nothing external—neither space nor time, nor objectivity—the statement that it is farther than the farthest and nearer than the nearest has to be taken in the sense of a metaphor explaining that Brahman is everywhere and all things. It is the deepest root of our heart.

Na cakṣuṣā grhyate nāpi vācā nānyair devaiḥ tapasā karmaṇā vā, jñāna-prasādena viśuddha-sattvas tatas tu taṁ pasyate niṣkalaṁ dhyāyamānaḥ (3.1.8): Not with the eyes is it to be seen, not with the speech is it to be described. No god can help us in reaching it. We can worship any god, but we will reach only that god, and nothing beyond. All the gods were created after the manifestation of space and

time. As they are effects, how can they know the cause? Brahman exists prior to all these gods, and so we cannot know it by worship of these divinities. We also cannot know it merely by intense *tapas* of the body and the mind without concentration of consciousness. Actions, which produce perishable fruit, also cannot take us there because, as already mentioned in earlier verses, the perishable results of karma cannot take us to the Imperishable. Not by eyes, not by speech, not by worship of divinities, not by sheer austerity, not by actions of any kind is this Brahman to be known. Not by work, not by progeny, not by wealth can this world of Brahman be attained. Only by true renunciation can it be attained.

Jñāna-prasādena viśuddha-sattvas tatas tu taṁ pasyate niṣkalaṁ dhyāyamānaḥ: By knowledge alone is this Brahman realised. How is this knowledge attained? It is attained by the dispersal of the clouds that are covering consciousness in the form of ignorance, desire, and impulsion to action. As already mentioned, they are called *avidya*, *kama* and *karma*, the three *grantis*, three knots.

There were three cities of three demons, called Tripuras, as is elaborately described in the Siva Puranas and also in the Drona Parva of the Mahabharata. One city was built of iron, another of silver, the third of gold, and they were all suspended in space. The power of the demons occupying these cities was such that nobody could face them; they controlled even the gods. Lord Siva struck down these three cities with one arrow. These demons had great powers obtained by drinking from a nectarine pot in their house every day. As long as they drank the nectar, nobody could face them. So Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra

joined together and hatched some plan to see that these three cities were destroyed, which could not easily be done. Brahma became a cow with a calf, and drank the nectar in their house, and when the demons returned they found the pot empty. Vishnu became the arrow to ensure that it would hit the target, and Rudra used his bow to shoot the arrow of Vishnu, which went straight to the three cities and destroyed them at one stroke, just as Rama cut down seven trees suddenly, abruptly, with the force of the single arrow that he discharged, as told in the Kishkinda Kanda of the Ramayana.

In a similar manner, we have to break this fortress of *avidya*, *kama* and *karma* in our hearts. They are not easy of overcoming. The profundity of our ignorance is known very well. We can never have even an inkling of the existence of God anywhere in this world. We have to scratch our heads day in and day out to bring into our minds the little faith that God must be existing. Otherwise, for all practical purposes, He does not exist. Who is going to think of God day in and day out? We have other works, and therefore this idea never arises. Such is the depth of our ignorance, and the impulsion of our desires. This must be done, that must be done, this project, that project, this industry, and so on. We set up plants to increase industry. We have so many desires, so many desires, because the idea of God has gone and action immediately rises like a whirlwind. We are busy with what we are doing every day due to our desires, created by the ignorance of the existence of God. *Avidya*, *kama* and *karma* cannot easily be broken. We require Rudra's power and Vishnu's arrow, and the nectar, which is the joy of the sense objects, should be cut by the discriminating faculty

of the intellect, which is the seat of Brahma. Knowledge alone is the source of this dispelling of ignorance: *jñāna-prasādena viśuddha-sattvas*.

Tatas tu taṁ pasyate niṣkalaṁ dhyāyamānaḥ: Then with deep meditation we will thus know that radiance which is within us and that radiance which is spreading itself around. The whole world is the radiance of Brahman.

Eṣo'ṅur ātmā cetasā veditavyo yasmin prāṇaḥ pañcadhā saṁviveśa, prāṇaiś cittam sarvaṁ otam prajānām, yasmin viśuddhe vibhavaty eṣa ātmā (3.1.9): This subtle Atman is to be known only through intuition, in which the mind, the intellect and the sense organs stand together as if they melt into a single faculty. The mind thinks, the intellect understands, the eyes see, the ears hear, and so on, but intuition, or insight, is a single faculty which operates as sight, hearing, thinking, understanding, and everything that the other functions are capable of reporting to us. Intuition is actually the soul operating from inside. The soul has no eyes and ears; therefore, the knowledge which the soul manifests from itself is not seeing, hearing, etc. It is direct, immediate apprehension. Here the word '*chetas*' is used to signify the deepest intuition possible.

Yasmin prāṇaḥ pañcadhā saṁviveśa: The fivefold *pranas* and the mind are all located in this central function. The five *pranas* are *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udhana* and *samana*. *Prāṇaiś cittam sarvaṁ otam prajānām*: The mind is enveloped by the powers of the sense organs, and amidst these functions there is the Atman shining independently of these separated functions, and yet causing the functions to take place independently. As the Sun who has no colour may appear as sevenfold in colour when its light is

passed through a prism, for instance, the single faculty of intuitional apprehension may look like sensory operations, mental thinking, intellectual understanding, etc., because of the prism-like action taking place in the psyche of the individual through which the integral light of the Atman passes. This integral light is called intuition, insight, direct experience, etc. Subtle is this Atman, capable of being known only through inward intuition in which all the *pranas* and the sense organs are located, and in which the mind, together with sense organs, is fixed, in the midst of which this Atman shines.

Yam yaṁ lokam manasā saṁvibhātivi śuddha-sattvaḥ kāmayate yāś ca kāmān, taṁ taṁ lokam jāyate tāś ca kāmāns tasmād ātmajñam hy arcayed bhūti-kāmaḥ (3.1.10): When we apprehend this Self in direct experience, whatever we wish to have will be in our hand. Whatever world we want to reach will be reached by us instantaneously. It may be the highest heaven, and we shall be there instantly. Ancient rishis were of this power. Narada can traverse through all the worlds as we can move through all the countries in this world with a vehicle. They have the capacity to adjust their spiritual personality to the conditions, laws and regulations of the different worlds. When they descend into the gross world, they adjust their personality into the gross conditions necessary; when they go to the heavenly world, they make their whole personality subtle, and they can even reach Brahmaloaka as well. Narada is the son of Brahma himself. He can go to Vaikuntha and accost Narayana. So is the case with the knower of Brahman: *yam yaṁ lokam manasā saṁvibhāti*.

Tam tam lokam jāyate: All regions come under the control of this knower of Brahman. And all the visualisations through the mind as objects of desire also get fulfilled in an instant. There is no time process. The objects of desire do not come tomorrow, they come just now; and we do not reach a place after some time, but immediately. A spaceless movement and a timeless achievement of purpose follows from the realisation of the Atman, which is eternity and space-like identity.

Therefore, it is proper for all people to worship the knower of Brahman. Because of the power of that person, the glory and greatness of that person who has known the Self, his blessing is wonderful. His blessing itself is a great virtuous benefit that accrues to us, because even to come in contact with a great soul should be regarded as the result of some meritorious deeds of the past. We shall not come in contact with anything worthwhile if our karmas do not permit.

Thus, the verse says that whatever world we contemplate in our mind, that we shall reach immediately, and whatever we think in our mind, that also will be materialised at once because of the power of the knowledge of the Atman. Hence, the knower of the Atman should be worshipped by everybody who is intent on their own welfare.

SECTION 2

Sa vedaitat paramam brahma dhāma yatra viśvaṁ nihitam bhāti śubhram, upāsate puruṣam ye hy akāmās te śukram etad ativartanti dhīrāḥ (3.2.1): Whoever knows this Brahman in which the universe in all its vastness is fixed, and which shines more radiantly than the Sun, and those people who are devoted to such a person without any kind of earthly desire, go beyond the chances of coming back to this world by rebirth. The possibility of rebirth is severed completely because the causes of rebirth, which are the remainder of the *sanchita* karmas, are burnt and become like a burnt seed.

The karma of the *jivanmukta purusha* is compared to a burnt seed or a burnt cloth. A burnt cloth may look like a cloth, but if we touch it, it is ashes. A burnt seed cannot germinate into a plant, though it may look like a seed to all outside perception. So is the condition of the knower of Brahman in this world. He transcends the causes of rebirth—*śukram etad ativartanti*; therefore, people adore these great beings. By the vibration that automatically arises around this person, a kind of purifying atmosphere is created. There is an aura around the knower of Brahman which reaches some distance according to the intensity of the realisation. It may be some feet, some kilometres, or even longer distances. The light of the Atman emanating from within into longer distances outside the body is called the aura of a person. The radiance cannot be seen with the eyes, but those effects can be felt.

There was a great saint and sage called Raghavendra Swami, and his Samadhi is in Mantralaya, which is now in

Andhra Pradesh. It seems that three astrologers met him and saw his horoscope to find out how long he would live. One of the astrologers said 100 years, another astrologer said 300 years, and the third astrologer said 700 years. How is it possible that three great astrologers said that he would live for 100, 300 and 700 years? The saint, who was present while this discussion was taking place, said that all three astrologers were correct. For 100 years his body will last, for 300 years people will read the works written by him, and for 700 years his aura will be felt around his Samadhi. This is the great proclamation of the saint himself, and they say that whoever goes to Mantralaya and sleeps there for 3 nights expressing some wish, that wish will be fulfilled because of the greatness of the aura that continues to operate at that place for 700 years after his passing. I think 700 years are not over yet, so you can go and see what happens. Such is the power of the knower of Brahman.

Kāmān yah kāmāyate manyamānaḥ sa kāmabhir jāyate tatra tatra, paryāpta-kāmasya kṛtātmanas tu ihaiva sarve praviliyanti kāmāḥ (3.2.2): If we desire anything, we will be born according to the nature of the desire. Inasmuch as every day we accumulate desires and go on piling them one over the other, and the duration of our lifespan is not long enough to permit us to enjoy all those desires, we die before the desires are fulfilled. Some of them are of course fulfilled, but many of them are not, and our unfulfilled desires will decide where we will be reborn. Therefore, it is up to each person to go on investigating into their own mind and probe into what kind of desires are inside—whether subtle or gross, visible or invisible, covert or

overt. It is proper and good for everyone to make a list of all their desires if desires are there, though it is better if they are not there. If desires are there, we must fulfil them in this birth itself in some manner, or we must sublimate them by a higher means. One way or the other, desires should not be there at the time of passing; otherwise, the *jiva*, the *sushma sarira*, the mind and the senses will directly gravitate in the direction of that location where it is possible for the mind to fulfil its desires. So rebirth is unavoidable for those who entertain desires in the mind.

Kāmān yah kāmayate manyamānaḥ sa kāmabhir jāyate tatra tatra: Whatever be the desire, accordingly one will be reborn in that particular place corresponding to the nature of the desire; but if the desires are all dissolved here—*paryāpta-kāmasya kṛtāmtanas tu*—if we have done whatever is to be done and there is nothing more for us to do in this world, if we have known whatever is to be known in this world and there is nothing more to be known, and if we have seen and enjoyed things enough in this world and there is nothing more to be enjoyed, the desires melt instantaneously here at this very spot. All the desires melt into liquefied form, and they shall not cause any solidification of our mind in the form of rebirth: *ihaiva sarve pravilīyanti kāmāḥ*. Because of the fact that all the desires are fulfilled, we are what is called *kratakṛitya*, *praptaprapya* and *jnatajneya*. *Kratakṛitya* is one who has done what is to be done, *praptaprapya* is one who has obtained what is to be obtained, and *jnatajneya* is one who has known what is to be known, and nothing more is left. Hence, the mind cannot have any occasion to desire another body for fulfilling itself, because the mind itself

will not be there when the desires go. It is good, therefore, to see that these desires melt. If there are desires, fulfil them and somehow or the other see that they are not there.

Nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā, na bahunā śrutena: yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām (3.2.3): This verse also occurs in the Kathopanishad. It means that logical disquisitions are not the means of knowing the Atman. Not by intellection, not by academic knowledge, and not by scriptural study—it shall be known only by that person who is chosen by the Atman. If God wills that we should know Him, we shall know Him. It is the grace of God. *Dhātu-prasādān mahimānam ātmanaḥ* (Katha 2.20) is mentioned in the Kathopanishad. The grace of God is operating everywhere as events in this world, cosmic history, and the fate of people. The past, present and future of every individual are written in the firmament of the cosmos; therefore, it is up to us to devote ourselves to the Supreme Atman, the Soul of the universe, God Almighty, that we shall be in His good books.

Nāyam ātmā bala-hīnena labhyo na ca pramādāt tapaso vāpy alingāt, etair upāyair yatate yas tu vidvāms tasyaiṣa ātmā viśate brahma-dhāma (3.2.4): A weakling cannot attain the Atman. The word ‘*bala-hīnena*’ has been used here in a different sense. It does not mean that elephants will reach God, and human beings will not, because elephants have greater strength than humans. Here, strength means toughness of the inner spirit. Of course it also means physical health, which is very necessary; but more than that, it means inner toughness of spiritual aspiration and the power of *tapas*, the strength of freedom from desire.

All these are implied here by energy, strength, *bala*; and whoever has not this *bala*, or strength, cannot attain the Atman. The Atman is great energy, power and potency; and that can be reached only by a powerful person, spiritually great in energy. Therefore, weaklings cannot reach the most powerful. Neither should we be physically weak, nor mentally, nor intellectually, nor spiritually, nor ethically. We should be strong in every field. *Na ca pramādāt*: A heedless, careless and slipshod attitude towards the Atman will not take us there. How concentrated our mind has to be is mentioned here. Today I think of the Atman, tomorrow I think of the *anatman*; today I sleep away, tomorrow I shall do work; the day after tomorrow I shall eat, and go for a walk, then go on tour, and do every blessed thing distractedly, in a perfunctory manner. This is called *pramada*, or careless behaviour. A person who is careless in his attitude towards the Atman will not reach it.

Tapaso vāpy aliṅgāt: By any kind of ostentation, pretension, vainglorious appearance in public life, this is not to be attained. A great person in society need not be really great in the eye of God. And austerities which are just physically oriented, and even torturous mental restraints, may not be adequate for the sake of the Atman, because the highest *tapas* is love of God. *Mumukshutva*, and all austerity, converge in this intense longing, devotion; and any kind of *tapas* or austerity, minus devotion or longing, ends only in a kind of mortification of the spirit, and will not lead us to the Atman.

Etair upāyair yatate yas tu vidvāṁs tasyaiṣa ātmā viśate brahma-dhāma: All these methods that have been

described earlier in this Upanishad have to be adopted. And we know what these methods are. *Satyena labhyas tapasā hy eṣa ātmā* (2.2.5), and so on, is mentioned in earlier verses. *Satya, ahimsa, brahmacharya, aparigraha, asteya* are one's powers. And the method of meditation has also been mentioned. By drawing the bow of the Pranava of the Upanishad and discharging the arrow of the Atman on the target of Brahman with the force of devotion, you shall find yourself merged in Brahman as an arrow merges in the object or the target.

Unless intense meditation is carried on day in and day out for a protracted period, the knots of the heart cannot be broken, *avidya, kama, karma* cannot go, and the body may leave you at any time. Life is very short, and even in this short span of life, you do not know the length of life that is actually granted to you. It may end tomorrow, the day after, or two days after. A little grain of rice stuck in the throat will see you in heaven in one minute. So do not be proud of your glory, power, wealth, and the imaginary length of time in this world. Frail is this body, uncertain is life; therefore, gird up your loins just now, and not tomorrow. There is a saying in Hindi. *Kal kare to aaj kar, aaj kare to aab*: If there is something which you can do tomorrow, it is better you do it today itself, and if there is something which you can do today, it is better to do it just now. Why postpone it until tomorrow? Tomorrow may not come at all.

Now the following verses, with which we will conclude the Upanishad, speak of the final attainment of the soul, unity with Brahman, the attainment of the final goal. How do we attain that? Some examples and illustrations

are given here to make it clear as to how we unite ourselves with Brahman.

Samprāpyainam ṛṣayo jñāna-tṛptāḥ kṛtātmāno vīta-rāgāḥ praśāntāḥ, te sarvagaṃ sarvataḥ prāpya dhīrā yuktātmānas sarvam evāviśanti (3.2.5): Those who are calm and quiet in their minds, free from internal desires and external constraints of the senses, wanting nothing—those who have done everything that is to be done in this world and are ready to leave, bag and baggage, satisfied with knowledge only and wanting nothing else through knowledge, knowing knowledge as the final end in itself, realising that knowledge is being, and it is not an instrument for the acquisition of something outside—having attained the Atman by these means, the blessed souls enter into that which is everywhere, from all sides, and become all themselves. The soul, when it enters Brahman, enters into that which is everywhere; and it enters not only from one direction or from one passage, it enters from all sides. When we enter a house, we enter through one door only, and not through all the doors. But the soul, inasmuch as it has expanded its dimension to infinity, enters Brahman, which is everywhere, from every side. From all ten directions, the soul will enter Brahman; and having entered it, the Atman becomes all things.

What is meant by ‘all things’? This is a question of interpretation according to the school of thought. It may mean becoming all things; it may mean becoming the Supreme Absolute, which is all things. This is a simple and plain answer. Or it may mean becoming all the fourteen worlds at one stroke so that, in our very personality, we will see the fourteen worlds scintillating as the Virat

Svarupa itself. Or it may mean that we are able to see ourselves in every little creature in this world, in every tree, leaf, stone and atom. The Sun, the Moon, the stars and the firmament—we will find ourselves spread out everywhere. Whatever be the manner in which we understand this state of affairs, the final significance is that the soul, having become infinite on account of total freedom from all desire, enters the Infinite. It is the Infinite entering the Infinite. Therefore, it enters in an infinite manner and becomes the Infinite itself. So the Infinite enters the Infinite in infinite ways, and becomes the Infinite. That is the meaning of this half verse: *te sarvagam sarvatah prāpya dhīrā yuktātmānas sarvam evāviśanti*. It is a great blessedness to listen to these words. Even listening to these words, and bestowing a little thought on what this means, will purge us of all our sins and past karmas.

Vedānta-vijñāna-suniścitarthāḥ samnyāsa-yogād yatayaḥ śuddhasattvāḥ, te brahma-lokeṣu parāntakāle parāmṛtāḥ parimucyanti sarve (3.2.6): Those seekers, knowers, whose internal nature has been purified by a life of intense quest and renunciation, and those who are well established in the Atman and who have been illumined by the knowledge of the Vedānta Śāstra, whose mind has been fixed forever in one given direction, who have attained a conviction which is forever certain and no shaking of that conviction is ever possible, such great souls reach Brahmāloka.

There are two kinds of *mukti* mentioned here. The previous verse describes *sadyomukti*. What we are reading just now describes *kramamukti*. *Sadhyomukti* is immediate liberation, just here. Wherever we depart, whichever be

the place where we die or cast off the body, at that very spot we merge into Brahman. If a drop in the ocean is to unite itself with the ocean, it need not have to travel some hundreds of kilometres to reach the ocean; it is just there. It dives into the very bosom of its own source, the ocean. In a similar manner, the soul need not have to travel in some direction—to go to the Sun, the Moon, stars, etc. It dissolves here itself because that which it has to reach is at the very spot where it is. That is called *sadyomukti*, immediate liberation, which is very rarely obtained. It is attained with great difficulty by those most blessed ones who have no desires at all of any kind.

Otherwise, the lesser ones reach Brahmaloaka gradually through the Devayana Marga, through the rays of the Sun, through the Sun, and then through lightning, and through a Mahapurusha who comes and takes the soul by the hand to Brahmaloaka. It is said that this soul will remain in Brahmaloaka for as long as this universe lasts, which means to say, for such length of time as Brahma himself rules the cosmos. At the end of the universe—the *pralaya*, or the ultimate dissolution of the cosmos—the universe is dissolved, and together with it, Brahma is also dissolved. And when Brahma and the universe are dissolved in ultimate *pralaya*, the souls abiding there will also dissolve, and will attain Absolute Brahman. Until that time, they will be in the region of the Creator for as long as the universe lasts. This is called *kramamukti*, the graduated system of attainment of liberation in the case of those who have *sattvic* desires, who have done great *sattvic upasanas* and have worshipped God with devotion, but *sattvic* karma is still persisting, and therefore they will

not immediately merge with Brahman. They will reach up through the graduated scale prepared by *prakriti* through the *sattva guna*, and having reached Brahamaloka at the end of time, they merge with Brahman. Either way it is good; there is no harm. Let us go through Brahamaloka if we cannot have immediate liberation: *te brahma-lokeṣu parāntakāle parāmṛtāḥ parimucyanti sarve*.

Gatāḥ kalāḥ pañcadaśa pratiṣṭhā devās ca sarve prati-devatāsu, karmāṇi vijñānamayaś ca ātmā pare'vyaye sarve ekī-bhavanti (3.2.7): All the faculties get dissolved. There are various faculties in us. There are five senses of knowledge, five senses of action, five *pranas*, and there is *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahankara*, *chitta*. These are the *kalas*, or the faculties. They suddenly melt like snow before the heat of the Sun.

Gatāḥ kalāḥ pañcadaśa pratiṣṭhā: Here fifteen faculties are mentioned, which are actually the five *pranas*, the five senses of knowledge, and the five senses of action. With the mind included, it becomes sixteen. But here fifteen are mentioned, and these fifteen *kalas*, or we may say sixteen *kalas*—all the perceptive and cognitive faculties—dissolve. Together with that dissolution, individuality itself dissolves.

Devās ca sarve prati-devatāsu: All the divinities superintending over the sense organs withdraw themselves. They also get dissolved because the locations of these gods are dissolved. When one's seat is gone, one has to quit that place. So the gods who were controlling our sense organs, our faculties—Brahma was ruling the intellect, the Moon was ruling the mind, Rudra was ruling the ego, Vishnu was ruling the *chitta*, the Sun

was ruling the eye, and so on—these gods will no longer have a function to perform. They return to their original sources, and the faculties merge.

Karmāñi vijñānamayaś ca ātmā pare'vyaye sarve ekī-bhavanti: Even our karmas are dissolved. We need not pay a penalty for what we have done, because the fire of knowledge has burnt all actions to ashes. The fire of knowledge can reduce to ashes even a mountain of sins. And the intellect, which is the seat of the ego, also goes with it. What happens? This individual soul, with all these appurtenances mentioned, with all its properties and belongings, psychically in their nature, go and settle themselves in that Imperishable Being and get united with it. This is the state of moksha—*pare'vyaye sarve ekī-bhavanti*.

Yathā nadyas syandamānās samudre astam gacchanti nāma-rūpe vihāya, tathā vidvān nāma-rūpād vimuktaḥ parātparam puruṣam upaiti divyam (3.2.8): We attain to that Supreme Eternal Purusha and merge into that Purusha, uniting ourselves with that Supreme Being. As rivers flowing in different directions commingle with the ocean and we cannot know where what river is, all the *jivas* who have been liberated will melt into this great Atman, the Universal Being, as rivers melt in the ocean. As *nama* and *rupa*, names and forms, are dissolved in the ocean—Ganga is no more Ganga, Yamuna is no more Yamuna, and no river is there as its name and form because it is one mass of equality and merger—so this person, that person, this thing and that thing, whatever we see in this world, casts aside name and form. It is lifted above the encasement of names and forms in that big sea, and made

to identify itself only with the vast ocean of Imperishable Being. *Tathā vidvān nāma-rūpād vimuktaḥ*: The knower of Brahman, having cast aside all names and forms, attains to that Supreme Being above all conceivable divinities in the cosmos. That Supreme Purusha becomes our whole—*parāt-param puruṣam upaiti divyam*.

The Upanishad is over. You have attained the Supreme Brahman. What else do you want to hear now?

Sa yo ha vai tat paramam brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati, nāsyābrahma-vit kule bhavati, tarati śokam tarati pāpmānam guhā-granthibhyo vimukto'mṛto bhavati (3.2.9): If you know this Brahman, you shall become Brahman. Whatever you think you are, that you really are. If you know that your existence is inseparable from that Universal Brahman, you shall become That. Whoever knows Brahman becomes Brahman.

Nāsyābrahma-vit kule bhavati: In case the knower of Brahman is a householder, no non-knower will be born in his family for seven generations, because of the power of the Realisation of this person. It is said that if one person in a family attains God, seven generations behind and seven generations ahead also will attain liberation by the power of this one person attaining Brahman. So parents should not cry if one son attains God. *Tarati śokam tarati pāpmānam guhā-granthibhyo vimukto'mṛto bhavati*: You cross over sorrow, cross over all sins, and break all the knots of the heart. Immortal nectar do you become.

Tad etat ṛcābhyuktam: kriyāvantas śrotriyā brahmaniṣṭhās svayam juhvata ekaṛṣim śraddhayantaḥ, teṣam evaitām brahma-vidyām vadeta śirovrataṁ vidhivad yais tu cīrṇam (3.2.10): This Upanishad is not to be taught to

everybody. This is what this mantra says. We should not go on blabbering it in public, unless they are sufficiently purified in their minds to receive its import and meaning. *Kriyāvantaḥ*: Only those people who have performed their duties well in this life should listen to it. Otherwise, they will have a wrong notion of there being no duty in this world and will be like a half-baked pot or a raw vegetable, which is of no utility. They will be neither here nor there.

Attainment of God does not mean violating duties and rules that bind us to the conditions in which we are. The duties that we are expected to discharge in this world are the automatic consequence of the location of our personality in society. We must find out where we are actually seated. Our physical body, our mind, and our very existence are conditioned by certain external atmospheres. We know very well what the requirements of our existence in the world are, and the sources which fulfil the requirements are those to which we owe some obligation. Somebody serves us, somebody protects us, somebody is taking care of us, somebody sees that we are secure. We know very well how our life in this world is made possible by the operation of various social and natural factors. To those things, we owe an obligation. Therefore, *kriyāvantaḥ*: Those who have fulfilled their duties and discharged their obligations; *śrotriyāḥ*: who know very well the import of the scriptures and do not have any kind of misunderstanding about them; *brahmaniṣṭhāḥ*: whose mind is fixed in Brahman and who have no desire at all apart from that; *svayam juhvata ekaṣim śraddhayantaḥ*: who have performed those sacrifices that are expected to be performed through the stages of life that they have passed—Brahmacharya,

Grihastha, Vanaprastha, Sannyasa, etc.; *teṣam evaitāṃ brahma-vidyāṃ vadeta*: you shall speak this Brahma-Vidya, the knowledge of this Upanishad, only to these people, and do not speak it to other people.

Śirovrataṃ vidhivad yais tu cīrṇam: You should speak this Upanishad only to those who have performed *shirovrata*. The word ‘*shirovrata*’ has been explained in various ways. It is said to mean the vow of the head. Some commentators say it is Sannyasa, as shaving the head or carrying fire on the head is also one form of sacrifice that is performed before one enters into the Sannyasa order. It is also called the Mundaka Upanishad. Mundaka means shaving, *mund*, and so the word ‘*mundaka*’, as well as the word ‘*shirovrata*’, seem to imply that this Upanishad is intended only for Sannyasins. Those who have not discharged their duties as householders, Brahmacharis, or whatever they are in the world under the conditions they are placed in life, cannot become Sannyasins, and those who have desires in their mind also cannot become Sannyasins. But those who have fulfilled this condition, to them this Upanishad may be taught, and only then this instruction will become properly fructified.

Tad etat satyam ṛṣir āṅgirāḥ purovāca, naitad a-cīrṇa-vrato’dhīte, namaḥ parama-ṛṣibhyo namaḥ parma-ṛṣibhyaḥ (3.2.11). At the very beginning of this Upanishad, Saunaka put a question to Angiras: “What is that, by knowing which, everything can be known?” The whole Upanishad is an answer to that question, what is that by which we can know all things. Thus is the answer which Angiras gave to Saunaka and all the rishis who were there in the audience. And this was told in early days.

Naitad a-cīrṇa-vrato'dhīte: One who has not fulfilled his duties, one who has not undergone the necessary discipline for this purpose, will not read this Upanishad.

Namaḥ parama-ṛṣibhyo namaḥ parma-ṛṣibhyaḥ: Prostrations be to the great sages, prostrations be to the great sages who have given us this great knowledge of the Upanishad.

