

Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati is the illustrious disciple of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, Swami Pranavananda of Gudiwada and Parama Pujya Swami Tarananda of Rishikesh. He is a teacher *par excellence* and has been unfolding, in English, the vision of Vedānta in its pristine glory to the modern mind for over fifty years in India and abroad. He has revived the *paramparā* by designing and teaching long-term residential course in Vedānta and Sanskrit, which equips the student to become the teacher. His Gita Home Study Program and the texts prepared under his guidance for teaching children vedic heritage have succeeded in bringing the wisdom of Veda within the access of everyone. He is also taking effective steps to protect the *Sanātana Dharma* and the indigenous traditions of the world and has launched the movement for caring under the aegis of the All India Movement for Seva.

Swami Paramarthananda is the distinguished disciple of Pujya Swamiji. He is a walking encyclopedia of Vedānta. He has been teaching Vedānta in different localities of Chennai from 1978. His classes are renowned for their appealing simplicity and astounding clarity.

D. Venugopal is a student of Swami Paramarthananda and has also studied at Pujya Swamiji's gurukulam at Anaikatti from 2002 to 2005. He is the author of the well received book, "Pujya Swamiji Dayananda Saraswati: his Uniqueness in the Vedanta Sampradaya".

About the Book

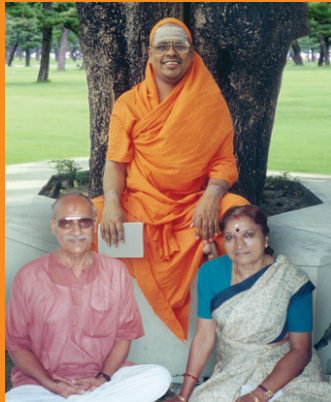
Pujya Swamiji: Sri Venugopal is able to present the subject matter in all its details and subtlety. His unfolding of the vision is thorough and deft. He not only unfolds but analyzes with precision. His successful use of scholarship brings depth to his work. He makes the vision and all the related topics, immediate to the careful reader. I am sure that this book will be well received.

Swami Paramarthananda:

I congratulate Shri Venugopal for bringing out this excellent manual, covering all important topics. I recommend this book to all spiritual seekers who want to study Vedanta in a systematic way.

Swami Siddhabodhananda:

This is an admirable piece of authentic work, which is true to the *sampradāya*. I recommend that all may make the best use of it.



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VEDĀNTA

the solution to our fundamental problem

◆ D. Venugopal



BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

VEDĀNTA

the solution to our fundamental problem

D. Venugopal

*on the lines of the unfolding
according to the sampradāya by*

**Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati &
Swami Paramarthananda Saraswati**



Bharatiya Vidya
Bhavan

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

ā no bhadrāḥ kratavao yantu viśvataḥ

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

- R̥g Veda I - 89-i

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

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the solution to our fundamental problem

by

D. VENUGOPAL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PUJYA SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI

his uniqueness in the vedānta sampradāya

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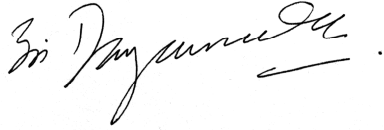


SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI

Sri Venugopal is offering another book as a compendium to his well-received book, *Swami Dayananda Saraswati: His Uniqueness in the Vedanta Sampradaya*. He discussed in that book in detail the status of Vedanta, and the methods employed in unfolding the non-dual truth. In this new book, he is presenting in detail what is Vedanta. An avid student of Vedanta for years, he is able to present the subject matter in all its details and subtlety. Vedanta, being not a system, consists of different *prakriyās*, methods to unfold what defies words, through words. It is a method employed to shift one's own scale of vision - from the error of separateness to the reality of oneness. To capture this in a book, without committing the blunder of making it a system, is no easy task. The author is able to bring to his writing the clarity gained in writing the previous book, while handling the various *prakriyās*. His unfolding of the vision through these *prakriyās*, is thorough and deft. Positioning himself as a companion on a journey of discovery, Sri Venugopal makes the vision, and all the related topics, immediate to the careful reader. His successful use of scholarship as a tool while avoiding the trap of scholasticism brings depth to his work. He not only unfolds, but analyzes the subject matter with precision, and provides abundant, pertinent references to *śruti* and *smṛti*. Thus, this book not only makes the subject matter accessible to the new student, but is a valuable

work for those who have had some exposure to the teaching.

I am sure this book will be well received by those who are in the spiritual pursuit of Brahmavidyā.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Swami Dayananda', with a horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Swami Dayananda

Swami Paramarthananda

Sriram Apartments,
60, St. Mary's Road,
Chennai – 600018.

26 - 6 - 2011

The final part of the Vedas is known as Vedanta. It is known by the name Upanisad also. Vedanta reveals the Truth behind the individual, world and God. Ignorance of this Truth and the consequent misconceptions regarding the individual, world and God are the cause of all human problems. By knowing this Truth, all the problems will either be solved or will never be seen as problems. This will bring about a big change in the quality of one's life.

The Vedantic scriptures will yield this meaning only when they are studied in an appropriate manner as unfolded by a traditional Guru.

“Vedanta, the solution to our fundamental problem” is a book, which presents the Vedantic teaching as unfolded traditionally.

The author of this book, Sri. D. Venugopal, has been a committed student of Vedanta under me for several years. Also, he participated in the traditional residential course at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Coimbatore under the guidance of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati. He has brought out this book with the sole intention of making the traditional Vedantic teaching available to a lay person.

I congratulate Sri Venugopal for bringing out this excellent manual, covering all important Vedantic topics.

I recommend this book to all spiritual seekers who want to study Vedanta in a systematic way.

With Narayanasmitis,

Swami Paramarthananda

Swami Paramarthananda

Swami Siddhabodhananda

Tapasalayam,

Aham Road, Girivalam,

Tiruvannamalai, 606604.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad, speaking of *ātma-jñāna* (self-knowledge), says, “Many do not even hear of *ātmā*. Many though hearing of him, do not comprehend. Wonderful is the expounder and rare the hearer.” (1.2.7) Such is the nature of the subject matter of Vedānta. Writing a comprehensive text of Vedānta is thus a formidable task. That Shri D. Venugopal, who has been my student in the three year and three months course in Vedanta and Sanskrit in the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam from May 2002 - July 2005 has accomplished this is a matter of great gratification to me.

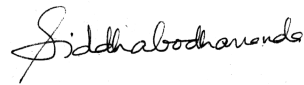
I have gone through the book in full. It is written in simple and clear language. There is smooth flow of the text and it is not impeded by quotations, as such of those that are the most relevant are given in the footnote. The theme is developed in its logical sequence in accordance with the *sampradāya*. We have the choice of approaching the subject either from the standpoint of *ātmā* or of Brahman. The author has chosen *ātmā* among them, obviously because it is easier to understand.

What impressed me is the detailed treatment he has given to all the *prakriyās* (teaching methods). He has devoted an entire chapter to the relationship between the *kāraṇa* (cause) and *kārya* (effect), which is the bread and butter of

Vedānta. He has also dealt with in detail the *mahāvākyam*, "tattvamasi". He has gone into the conflicting views on the subject to the extent that is necessary. He has also shown his concern for the utility of the book for the seeker by detailing the methods for preparing the mind for self-knowledge. He has done well by stressing that acquiring of the requisite qualifications cannot be by-passed and by reiterating that *nididhyāsanam* (contemplation on *ātmā*) cannot be done without them. While going through the text, we can feel the presence of the compassionate *guru* teaching them.

This is an admirable piece of authentic work, which is true to the *sampradāya*. We have been missing a book of this nature, which would serve as a textbook for the students attending Vedānta classes. With this book, this gap is effectively filled. It would also be of great use to those who are seriously interested in Vedānta. Therefore, I warmly welcome this book and recommend that all may make the best use of it.

I heartily congratulate Sri D. Venugopal. May he and the book be blessed.



Swami Siddhabodhananda

Key to Transliteration and Pronunciation

<i>English</i>	<i>Sanskrit</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
a	अ	<u>b</u> ut
ä	आ	m <u>o</u> m
ai	ऐ	<u>a</u> isle
au	औ	<u>l</u> oud
b	ब	<u>b</u> in 5
bh	भ	ab <u>h</u> or * 5
c	च	<u>ch</u> unk 2
ch	छ	cat <u>ch</u> him * 2
d	द	<u>th</u> at * 4
ò	ढ	<u>d</u> art * 3
dh	ध	breath <u>e</u> * 4
òh	ह	god <u>d</u> head * 3
e	ए	pl <u>a</u> y
g	ग	g <u>e</u> t 1
gh	घ	log <u>h</u> ut * 1
h	ह	<u>h</u> um
ù	ः	aspiration of preceding vowel
i	इ	<u>i</u> t
é	ई	<u>be</u> et
j	ज	ju <u>m</u> p 2
jh	झ	hedg <u>e</u> hog * 2
k	क	sk <u>a</u> te 1
kh	ख	block <u>h</u> ead * 1
l	ल	<u>l</u> uck
m	म्	<u>m</u> uch 5 n
à	ं	nasalisation of preceding vowel

n	न्	<u>n</u> umber * 4 n
i	ज	bun <u>n</u> ch 2 n
i	ङ	si <u>n</u> g 1 n
ë	ण्	un <u>d</u> er * 3 n
o	ओ	<u>t</u> oe
p	प्	sp <u>i</u> n 5
ph	फ्	loo <u>p</u> hole * 5
r	र्	dr <u>a</u> ma
å	ऋ	<u>r</u> hythm
s	स्	<u>s</u> o
ç	श्	<u>s</u> ure
ñ	ष्	<u>sh</u> un
t	त्	pa <u>th</u> * 4
th	थ्	<u>th</u> under * 4
ö	ट्	sta <u>r</u> t * 3
öh	ठ्	an <u>th</u> ill * 3
u	उ	<u>fu</u> ll
ü	ऊ	<u>po</u> ol
v	व्	<u>av</u> ert
y	य्	<u>y</u> oung

- 1 guttural, pronounced from the throat
- 2 palatal, pronounced from the palate
- 3 lingual, pronounced from the cerebrum
- 4 dental, pronounced from the teeth
- 5 labial, pronounced, from the lips
- n pronounced nasally
- * Not the exact equivalent

PREFACE

Pūjya Swamiji had approved and blessed the two writing projects that I had proposed to do on the completion of the residential course in Vedānta and Sanskrit conducted at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti from 2002 to 2005. The first is about the unique place that Pujya Swamiji occupies in the *sampradāya*. This project was fulfilled through the writing of the book, “Pujya Swamiji Dayananda Saraswati: his uniqueness in the *Vedānta Sampradāya*”. Pujya Swamiji released it during the Anniversary celebrations of the Gurukulam in November, 2008. It is being reprinted.

The second assignment has been to write a comprehensive text on Vedānta for the use of the students attending Vedānta classes as also to provide a clear and authentic account for those who have a serious interest in it. The present book “Vedānta: the solution to our fundamental problem” is the outcome of this commitment.

Already, the book “Introduction to Vedānta (The Vedic View and Way of Life) by Swami Paramarthananda provides an ideal guide for the beginner. What this book seeks, is to be the next level of reading. Nevertheless, the book does not assume any knowledge of Vedānta on the part of the reader and deals with the subject right from the beginning. Care has been taken to make the narrative as easy and smooth as possible. Citations from the original source have been given in the footnote. The book closely

follows the method of unfolding of the vision by Pujya Swamiji and his illustrious disciple, Swami Paramarthananda.

Being a disciple of Pujya Swamiji, Swami Paramarthananda, Swami Siddhabodhananda and Swamini Pramananda has been a great blessing. They teach with great love. I owe to them whatever knowledge I have of Vedānta. But for them, this book would never have been written. I am ever indebted to them.

I am especially beholden to Swami Siddhabodhananda. He has been kind enough to go through the entire typescript and make the necessary corrections.

I must express my gratitude to Shri D. Natarajan, my brother, Mrs. Lakshmi Muthusamy, my *gurubehan* and Shri V. Sunderam of Bangalore for willingly rendering me the help that I sought of them. Along with my batch mates, I am indebted to Shri Kesav, Shri Michael and Shri Kayesh for making available to us the audio recording of the classes of our *gurus*. I am also grateful to my friend, Shri J. Veeraraghavan for enabling the book to reach a wider audience.

Finally, the person who has been and continues to be a source of emotional and intellectual sustenance is Shrimati Vijayalakshmi, my wife. Having attended the long-term course, she has also contributed to the writing of this

book. She has been keen that the book should be readable and be easy to understand.

In conclusion, I seek the blessings of *Īśvara* and our *gurus* so that the book may be of some benefit to its readers.

D.Venugopal









Prayer
maṅgalācaraṇa

*Sadāśivasamārambhāṁśaṅkarācāryamadhyamām
Asmadācāryaparyantāṁ vande guruparamparām*

Auspiciously beginning with *Īśvara*, with the teacher Śaṅkara in the middle, I worship the progression of teachers extending up to my teacher.

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and Swamini Pramananda Saraswati
4. Photograph of Medha Dakshinamurti.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The title, “Vedānta, the solution to our fundamental problem”, will immediately raise the following questions in the mind of the readers. The first is, “What exactly is Vedānta? The others are, “What is considered to be our basic problem and how does Vedānta solve it?” While the entire book addresses these questions, they can also be briefly answered. Veda is a body of revealed knowledge handed down by teaching through countless generations to us. The latter portion of Veda is singled out as Vedānta owing to the uniqueness of its subject matter, which is self-knowledge. What self-knowledge can solve is self-ignorance and self-ignorance is the cause of our primary problem of insecurity and unhappiness.

The fact that all of us are only occasionally happy indicates that we have a problem that is basic in nature. Generally, we handle the specific difficulties that we encounter to the best of our understanding and ability with different degrees of success. It is only when we are deeply affected that we want to go into the root of the entire matter impersonally. Arjuna, the celebrated vanquisher of enemies in the epic Mahābhārata, is the typical example. He goes to Kurukṣetra all set to win the battle within the clan. But, in the middle of the battlefield,

he develops serious doubts as to whether it is the solution and forthwith converts his friend Kṛṣṇa who is driving his war-chariot into a *guru* and seeks knowledge from him then and there. What Kṛṣṇa teaches him is essentially Vedānta. Arjuna is lucky since he stumbles upon the most competent *guru* for getting the right knowledge to solve his problem. But, when we are similarly affected, it is very difficult for us to know that Vedānta is the correct pursuit, as many alternatives seem to be available to reach the basic truth. Not many of us also know about Vedānta and only very few of us are aware of its astounding usefulness here and now.

Vedānta is entirely different from the various schools of thought and philosophy. It is revealed knowledge, which states that we have converted our life into a constant struggle for gaining security and happiness only because we have erroneously judged ourselves as individuals with limitations. It reveals that we are already without limitations, which is what we want to be. The seeker is the sought. The problem is one of self-disowning self-ignorance. Therefore, the solution can only be self-knowledge. No other tradition tells us this. They say that we will be saved if we follow their prescribed methods. Vedānta, on the other hand, says that our true nature does not leave anything to be desired and that all that we require to be free is to know this recognizable fact without an iota of doubt and abide in it. No mysticism is involved in knowing it. It is the instant solution like switching on

the light to be free from darkness. It affirms that sorrow has no legitimate existence. This is the reason why Kṛṣṇa begins his teaching to Arjuna with the statement that his grief is unwarranted.

This body of revealed knowledge has always been existing as a living tradition handed down through teaching from one generation to the next in India. It has survived many centuries of suppression only because of its intrinsic worth. Being knowledge, it belongs to no one group of people. If any other tradition says, "You are the whole," it is also Vedānta, regardless of what it is called and in which language it is. As knowledge, it is communicable by anyone who has correctly learnt it in full from a competent *guru*. So, it is not necessary that only an Indian should teach it. Again, as knowledge, it is available to anyone who is a qualified seeker. Its wisdom belongs to humanity. It is Indian only in the sense that India happens to enjoy the privilege of nurturing it.

Along with the knowledge, the method of communicating the fact, "You are the whole", for our recognition has also been handed down by the tradition. This teaching tradition is called *sampradāya*. The *guru* who imparts the knowledge would himself have been taught by his *guru* by using this evolved method. In this lineage of *gurus*, Śaṅkarācārya occupies a special place since he is totally identified with the *sampradāya* and has left behind this legacy in the written form. His commentaries are not only

the earliest that are available but are also extremely thorough in providing the teaching in full. In our times, Pujya Swamiji Dayananda Saraswati of Rishikesh has been unfolding this very vision in English. He has also created a number of teachers by formulating a course strictly according to the *sampradāya* and establishing *gurukulams* and teaching it to the resident disciples. He is a teacher *par excellence* and is unique¹. Among his disciples, Swami Paramarthananda is very illustrious. So, for fulfilling its purpose, this book attempts to present the traditional teaching of Vedānta as maintained by these great *gurus*.

¹ His uniqueness forms the subject matter of the book titled “Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati: his uniqueness in the Vedānta *sampradāya*” by the present author.

CHAPTER TWO

OUR FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM

I

We feel helpless as individuals

Even as we enter this world, we are held upside down and are given a smart slap on our back and we squeal! Until then, we had a cozy time within our mother with total care and protection. We have now become separated from our mother and are totally exposed to the world that we have never experienced before. Our physical and mental abilities are still to develop to face this situation. We are not like the turtle, which on emerging from the egg on the shore, immediately rushes to the sea and looks after itself. Our eyes are yet to open and we can only lie on our back and move our hands and feet. Even when we are lifted to our feeding source, we cannot even place our mouth on it. Starting from a state of total care and security, we begin our life in this world in a state of complete helplessness!

We are, however, not without some abilities. When we feel uncomfortable, we cry. When we get the feel of compassionate touch, we place absolute trust in it. When our need is taken care of, we are quite at ease until the

next discomfort arises. We have no sense of time and are not concerned as to what would happen next or whether the next feed would come or not. As we are adequately taken care of, we keep growing physically and mentally.

Initially, our world is small but we do not think that things are outside us.² After two months, we start becoming aware of our main caretaker and are able to make eye contact with her and smile. We start developing attachment to that person. This is the earliest sign of our awareness becoming personal. Gradually, in our functioning, there is a shift from the initial physical mode to an increasingly psychological mode. By seven or eight months, we clearly differentiate all our caretakers from other persons and feel distanced from the latter. When they pick us up, we become anxious and begin to cry. We start identifying ourselves with the name that others call us. But our I-sense associated with it is yet to develop fully.

Our cognitive capacities keep increasing and we become fully aware of our mind. Our I-sense is becoming well defined. We experience varieties of emotion and want to communicate. We try to do so by body language and by babbling. When we are two years old, we learn to use the

² See Swamini Pramananda and Sri Dhira Chaitanya, *Pūrṇa Vidyā, Part 10, Human Development and Spiritual Growth*.

Also, see Swami Dayananda, *The Fundamental Problem, and Freedom*.

language and are able to articulate. At this stage, we recognise the I-notion only with reference to ourselves and do not yet know that others also have a similar I-notion about themselves. So, we insist that whatever we want should happen and are considered “terrible”. Only when we start playing with others, we come to know that they are also “I” to themselves. This revelation disturbs us, as we begin looking upon ourselves as one “I” amidst the numerous “I”s. Our insecurity is further heightened when our mother gets a new baby and diverts her attention to it.

We now become very keen on gaining acceptance from our parents who look after us. We are attached to them more than before. We think that they are the very best and are infallible and we want to be liked by them. With them, we feel comfortable and secure. We do what we think would please them and desist from actions that would be disliked by them. If they are pleased, we are happy; if not, we are disappointed.

When we are sent to the school, we feel uprooted and are frightened of the new faces and surroundings. While being there, we try to make good the absence of the support of our mother by developing attachment to our class teacher. We think that she is dependable like our mother and trust her completely. We accept her words more implicitly than even of our parents. By our conduct,

we try to please her and feel comfortable as long as she is happy with us.

II

We miss the infallible support that we seek

Unfortunately, as we grow, we keep discovering deficiencies in them and our trust in them steadily diminishes. We find that our mother is not always available when we need her. We are also not sure what would please her. With the same action, sometimes she is pleased while at others she is upset. She is not answering our questions completely and sometimes she brushes them aside or wants us to approach our father. She is as much afraid of the cockroach as we are of it and wants father to deal with it. Sometimes she becomes ill and has to be taken care of. As for our father, we find that he is generally not available for us. When he comes back from office, sometimes he is very happy with our company while at others he does not even take note of us and when approached wants us not to disturb him. He does not also keep his promise. At the school also, we have similar experience with our teacher. Often, we find her to be partial in her behaviour. She does not also effectively protect us from the bullies in the class.

Even though we initially blame ourselves for discovering their limitations, our trust in them gets undermined. We have similar experience in regard to others also when we

seek their support. We soon realize that there is no one whom we can readily approach when problems arise and be sure that they would be taken care of. While we had a sense of security earlier, we now feel wary. We are distrustful and feel helpless. We become stressed whenever a problem arises and hanker for the constant availability of unfailing support and care.

Even when we become adults and keep advancing in age, the seeking of support continues. The safe world is as small as it was in our childhood. We find that in the competitive society everyone seems to be out for the kill. We always run the risk of being taken advantage of and of being exploited. We feel quite vulnerable and are on the guard all the time. We are ready to defend ourselves and fight. And, we are still to find the support on which we can depend with full assurance. The net result is that the deeply felt poor child's sense of helplessness stays with us. We continue to want to be cuddled. We continue to want to be worried about and taken care of. And, we continue to seek the substitute for the loving mom and the big dad for regaining the assured security and happiness of our innocent childhood.

Even as a child we have been told of the existence of almighty Bhagavān who is compassionate and that sincere prayers to him do not go unanswered. When we trust him and depend on him, we find that he also lets us down. We are unable to entirely rely on him even though we would

very much like to do so. We try to reinforce ourselves with *gurus* having extraordinary powers and through various other means and discover that all of them have their own limitations. Eventually we find that there is no one, who is sure to rescue us when we are deeply in trouble. We sadly miss the infallible support that we seek in our life.

III

We judge ourselves as wanting in all respects

The cause of our continual craving for support is our self-judgment that we are inadequate. Our self-judgement arises out of our self-consciousness. All living beings are conscious of themselves and have some degree of self-identification. For instance, the dog has species identity. A Great Dane knows that the lap dog is also one of its kind, despite the vast difference between them. But it has no critical awareness of itself as a separate entity. The Great Dane does not consider itself as belonging to a superior breed and does not feel proud on winning in the dog show. But our self-consciousness is complete as a distinct individual. It is also so acute that we keep judging all aspects of ourselves and of others almost all the time.

As a child, we find everyone to be tall, huge, and towering above us and judge ourselves as small and puny. We do not like being so and we want to be like them. So, we wear our father's shirt, and try to walk in his shoes. We keep on

saying that we are now grown up and are no longer a child! In the school also, we are forming opinion about ourselves with reference to our classmates. We have judgement about our size, color, looks, clothes, parents, house, skills etc. When we think that any of them suffer in comparison with others, we are dissatisfied with ourselves. If our classmate possesses something that we do not have, we pester our mother to get us the same thing. Until we acquire them, we feel small when compared to him. When in our judgement we are better, we are satisfied with ourselves and are happy. When we win in a competition, we are delighted.

When we have been assessing ourselves, we have been taking ourselves to be the body with the mind and the organs of perception and action. Even when we grow up, we continue to think that it is these that define what we are, setting us apart from everything else. On the face of it, this appears to be the correct conclusion as each of us are intimately aware of the functioning of only our body, mind and sense-organs, and not of others. Our every day experience also confirms our thinking since all transactions are based on the distinction between each of us and the rest. We, constituted of the body, the mind and the sense-organs, are the subject and all others are objects.

Based on this division, we find that in terms of space, if we are here, we are not elsewhere. In terms of time, there was a time when we were not there and there will be a

time when we will not be there. Physically, we cannot do everything that we want to or protect ourselves while facing stronger adversaries. Emotionally, our mind is subject to varying moods, like being calm or agitated, or being happy or unhappy. Intellectually, we find that certain subjects are beyond our grasp. As regards knowledge, we find that the more we know, we discover that there is a lot more to be known. We conclude that we are wanting in every respect as an individual.³

IV

Becoming free from being a wanting person is our basic concern and our actions flow from it

Owing to the self-judging nature of our mind, our awareness of the sense of lack is constant. In most circumstances, we do not feel truly at home; something further is needed. Our basic notions are that “I am small, insignificant and vulnerable” and “I am displeased with myself”. These conclusions about ourselves make us an insecure and unhappy person. We are unable to accept ourselves in this state, as on a number of occasions we have the experience of the adequate self in which we feel fulfilled, complete and happy. We find that the urge to be free from all limitations and be secure and happy is

³ Our conclusions regarding limitations are of *deśa* (space), *kāla* (time) and *vastu* (material).

natural to us as the urge to breathe or the urge to eat. As a result, we are impelled to do whatever we can to prove to ourselves that we are not wanting in any respect. We soar in the sky to feel limitless like space. We take care of all the indications of ageing and try to overcome time. If we consider ourselves defenseless, we work towards becoming powerful. If we think of ourselves as poor and ignored, we exert to become rich and well known. If we feel that our childhood was deprived and had missed the pleasures, we try to earn lot of money so that we can now enjoy as much as we can and provide our children with what we missed in our childhood. If we get the impression that others find us wanting in any particular way, we exert to gain that and more to prove them wrong. If we consider that a particular personal appearance, qualification, skill, possession or social position would make us a satisfied and secure person, then we make efforts to achieve them. We also try to adjust our setup to suit our ends and attempt to suitably alter the attitude and behaviour of people, with whom we often interact. We also try to change the economic, political, cultural and religious climate of society so that it may become conducive to us. Thus we make efforts on all fronts, since we cannot see ourselves as a wanting person who is not pleased with himself.

V

Fulfilling particular wants does not solve our problem

Despite all our efforts, we are never able to fully achieve our goal. We find that fulfilling particular wants does not end our notion of being wanting. This is clear from the fact that none of us are able to conclude, "Now, I am what I want to be. I am entirely happy with myself. There is nothing at all for me to gain further⁴". When the fulfillment of a given desire takes place, we find that there is hushed silence in the mind and there is peace and joy. We are pleased with ourselves. At that time, we find ourselves to be the one who is not a desirer. But, as we have an all-embracing sense of dissatisfaction, very soon our mind picks up one want after another and the "I want ..., I want ..., I want ..." stream of thoughts continues to flow in our mind and we cease to remain a person who is at peace with himself. What we lack may be different at various points of time. But that we are wanting is constant. This is why we require nothing but ourselves with our thoughts to be uneasy and unhappy.

⁴ A person who has accomplished all that has to be accomplished is called *kṛtakṛtyah*.

VI

We are enslaved by our efforts to be free from being a wanting person

We may look into our problem with the help of the scriptures. They state that the human ends⁵ can be characterized as *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*.

Taking *artha* first, *artha* refers to resource of all kinds sought for providing us with security in any manner, like physical, emotional, economical or social. It may be in the form of food, clothing, shelter, cash, liquid assets, real estate, qualifications, relationships, reputation, recognition, title, influence, or power of any kind. These give us some security as also boost our I-sense.

Once we feel reasonably secure, we seek to enjoy life. This gives rise to pursuit of *kāma*. *Kāma* is anything that satisfies our senses, pleases our mind and touches our heart, evoking certain appreciation in us. It includes gratification through tasting, seeing, touching, smelling and hearing, intellectual like studying, solving riddles and playing certain games and aesthetic like music, dance, painting and other fine arts.

⁵ These are known as *puruṣārthas*, which means *sarvaiḥ puruṣaiḥ arthyate* or what everyone pursues.

Exposure to the *śāstra*⁶ gives us the knowledge to pursue *dharma* and *mokṣa*. *Dharma* has different facets. Here, it means action in accordance with the injunctions of the *śāstra* and in conformity with the universal values like non-injury, truthfulness. Through performance of acts of *dharma*, we derive a deep sense of satisfaction. Besides this visible result, *dharma* gives the invisible result of accrual of merit, called *puṇya*. *Puṇya* brings about a happy and problem free situation in this life and in the life after death. We also follow *dharma* not for getting this result but for refining our mind.

Mokṣa is freedom from bondage. Bondage is caused by our conclusion that we are limited in every sense, which makes us unceasingly exert to become self-adequate and self-satisfied. We come to know through the *śāstra* that this conclusion is erroneous and that it arises because of the ignorance (*ajñāna*)⁷ of the self. So, we pursue knowledge (*jñāna*) of the self for removing self-ignorance⁸

⁶ It means: That which protects through precepts (*Sāsanāt trāyate iti śāstram*!). In this context, it means Veda and other texts based on Veda like *Manusmṛti*, *Patañjalismṛti*, *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, and *sūtras* codifying their contents and clearly indicating the duties, like *dharma-sūtras*, *śrauta-sūtras* (vedic rituals) and *gṛhya-sūtras* (householder rituals).

⁷ *Ajñāna* is also referred to as *avidyā*.

⁸ The person who pursues *mokṣa* as the primary goal is called *mumukṣu* (desirer of freedom).

so that we may become free from our wrong appraisal of self-inadequacy, which results in bondage.

After classifying the human goals in this manner, *śāstra* significantly adds that our unhappiness arises out of the defects inherent in our pursuit of *artha*, *kāma* and *dharma* for *punya*.⁹ As for *dharma* for refinement of the mind and *mokṣa*, they are defect free goals.

The first defect is the pain involved in making the effort and in accepting its result. Effort involves physical and mental strain and diversion of the available material resources and time. As for the results, they are unpredictable owing to impediments arising from oneself, the world and the natural and supernatural forces¹⁰. As a result, we may achieve less than what we intended or something entirely different from what we sought or even the opposite of what we wanted. Even in respect of what is achieved, we have to exert towards its preservation.

⁹The defects of the first three goals are *dukkhamiśritatvam*, admixture with pain, *aṭṭptikaratvam*, dissatisfaction and *bandhakatvam*, dependence or bondage.

¹⁰ The three kinds of afflictions that the human beings are subject to are called *tāpatrayam*. They are *ādhyātmika*, those arising from oneself, *ādhibhautika*, those arising from our surroundings including the people and other living beings and *ādhidaivika*, those arising from divine or supernatural agencies.

What we gain is also not permanent as everything deteriorates and becomes unusable eventually.¹¹

The basic shortcoming is that the sense of adequacy, security and happiness that we get through our efforts is limited and temporary. In our activities seeking pleasure, we also discover that it is not easily obtained. The gain of pleasure depends on the convergence of three constantly changing factors of availability of the object, availability of appropriate means of enjoying it and presence of proper frame of mind for enjoyment. Even when it is fulfilled and we derive enjoyment, the mind discovers monotony in objects and we get tired of the very thing that we considered pleasurable and seek fresh avenues of gratification. We also soon find the aids for our comfort to be inadequate and we keep on increasing them. As for security, we feel that any amount of money and possessions that we accumulate is deficient and continue to seek them not only for ourselves but also for our future generations. Despite all our efforts to safeguard ourselves, we become apprehensive even when we encounter a small setback or an unexpected development.

The most detrimental defect is that we lose our freedom. When we engage ourselves in some activity but feel free

¹¹The pain associated are: *āṛjane duḥkham*, pain involved in acquisition, *rakṣaṇe duḥkham*, pain involved in protection and maintenance of the acquisition and *nāśane duḥkham*, pain due to loss of the acquisition.

to desist from it as and when we want, we enjoy the freedom of either doing it or of not doing it. But, if we feel obliged to have recourse to it and cannot stop doing it, then we are bound by it. For example, the hard drinker cannot stop taking liquor even when his health and finances do not permit it. In his case, he has lost his independence as far as liquor is concerned. In the case of all of us, our effort to become free from our sense of want is what the liquor is to the addict. We have the same disposition as the liquor addict that “without these, my life is empty”. We always have a long list of items to be accomplished based on our conclusions about ourselves. We do not feel comfortable unless we are attending to them. What more, like the liquor addict, even when what we gain through our actions does not make us a satisfied person for long, we cannot desist from this activity and enquire into our problem for arriving at a proper solution. Our natural tendency is only to immediately try to be free from what we cannot accept by making fresh effort. Our urge to be adequate is as natural as the urge to be free from hunger. Thus, even when we come back to square one in this game of self-fulfillment, we invariably start it all over again. In the process, we become bound to the unavailing effort and our life becomes an endless struggle for attaining constant security and happiness¹².

¹² This never-ending state of activity arising out of our sense of want is called *saṁsāra*. The person in *saṁsāra* is called a *saṁsārī*. The *saṁsārī* seeks that which does not end the seeking.

Śaṅkarācārya compares us with the silkworm that spins a cocoon around itself for its safety not knowing that it will be trapped in that very cocoon.¹³ And for generations after generations, it keeps doing the same thing, as it does not have the mind with discriminating ability. We, on the other hand, possess the mind having the capacity to analyze, discriminate and determine. Nevertheless, we do the same thing as the silkworm, as the immediate urge to succeed in our effort to be the secure and happy person overwhelms our discrimination and obstructs objective thinking. By this process, we lose our freedom and perpetuate unhappiness.

The root cause of our problem is our self-damaging self-judgment, which is made on the basis that we are what the body-mind-sense-complex is. This erroneous conclusion about ourselves is natural as we are born ignorant. That is why it is fundamental. Therefore, the fundamental problem is our inborn self-ignorance due to which we convert our life into a ceaseless struggle to overcome the sense of inadequacy, insecurity, and unhappiness caused by it.

¹³ Śaṅkarācārya, *Vivekachudamani*, verse 139.

VII

The usual alternative solutions do not solve our problem

Some of us realize that we cannot achieve everything that we want and try to come to terms with our situation through positive thinking. While it provides some relief to us, it does not solve our problem. For instance, a person who had a very poor self-image and was quite unhappy sought the help of a counselor. The counselor listened to him patiently and then advised him: "Let us look at your situation in this way. You are healthy and active; so many are weak and cannot strain themselves; you are quick to understand; many cannot properly grasp even uncomplicated things. So, you are fully fit, physically and mentally. In addition, you have professional qualification, are employed and have a flat of your own. Thus, you are quite secure. In fact, you are better placed than most others. The fact of life is that no one gets all that he desires. But you look only at the negative side of your situation, think low of yourselves and become unhappy. Instead, you can look at the bright side and be happy. So, be positive in your outlook and work hard. You will be a very happy man enjoying your life". The person was convinced that he had really nothing to complain about and became self-assured. Even as he was returning home on his two-wheeler, he saw his old schoolmate driving past in a Mercedes Benz car. As he watched him cruise in his car, most of his positive feeling vanished. Whereas his

boyhood friend possessed the Mercedes Benz, he did not have even a Maruti! If positive thinking is based on material facts, so is negative thinking. As such, we will be reminded of what we dislike about ourselves. Positive thinking cannot erase the conclusion, "I am not happy with myself". It can only dilute our dissatisfaction and bring some badly needed hope and cheer to get on with life.

Several persons seek the solution by leading the life prescribed by the *śāstra*¹⁴ to accumulate merit so that they may reach, after death, the location that is free from sorrow and is blissful. This method postpones the solution to life after death. It does not also provide a permanent answer, as *śāstra* points out that the duration of our stay in the higher world is determined by the amount of merit accumulated by us.¹⁵ It is like earning money in sultry

¹⁴Human actions produce both seen (*dr̥ṣṭa*) and unseen (*adr̥ṣṭa*) results (*phalam*). The unseen results fall in two categories of *puṇya* (merit) and *pāpa* (demerit). Acting in accordance with the universal commonsense values (*sāmānya dharma*) and following the scriptural injunctions produce *puṇya*. Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.6, refers to five duties called the *pañca-māhā-yajñas*. They are dealt with in detail in Chapter 6. There are also rituals like *jyotiṣṭoma*, *agniṣṭoma* and specific meditations whose proper performance will take the person after death to the higher world called as *svarga* or to the highest world called as *brahmaloka*.

¹⁵Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 1.2.10 says: *nākasya pṛṣṭhe te sukṛte'nubhūtvemaṁ lokam hīnataram vā viśanti*, that is, having, on

Chennai to relax in cool comfort at a hill station but having to return to Chennai as soon as it is spent. Similarly, the person who has gone to the higher world will be reborn in this world or even a lower one, as soon as his merit is exhausted.

Some of us impulsively react to our life situation and shun the world by becoming a *sannyāsī*. This does not also solve our problem since mere renunciation and retiring to the Himalayas will not make us feel complete, secure and happy. Even in the new surroundings, we will continue to judge ourselves and would continue to be unhappy in a different dress and location. Our basic problem of self-judgement based on self-ignorance would persist until the latter is specifically solved.

We are thus usually in the unenviable situation of not having found a proper solution to our problem.

the heights of heaven, enjoyed their reward gained by good works, they again enter this world or a lower one.

CHAPTER THREE

WE ARE THE PROBLEM BUT WE LACK SELF-KNOWLEDGE

I

The basic defect is in our thinking

In our no-win situation, what is defective is our thinking. We seek security through the insecure and fullness through the limited. For gaining enduring security, we constantly seek money. Money can give us such security only if it were itself secure. The very currency, bonds and shares often lose their value. Currency and jewels can also be the source of insecurity, as we can be robbed of them. Our property can be misappropriated. Similarly, we usually seek lasting support through other persons who themselves undergo change. We spare no effort to bring up our children well so that we can depend on them in our old age. But after getting educated, they shift to the place where the job suitable for them is obtainable and become physically unavailable. When they get married and have children, they are preoccupied with them and become mentally unavailable. We have again been seeking enduring security through a changing entity. If

we likewise examine every means that we adopt, we will come to know that none of them is free from defect.

Our expectation to gain total fulfillment through our actions is also illogical. Action cannot produce a result that is not inherent therein. Any action done is limited both in its content and duration. Limited action can produce only a restricted result. What we desire is that which cannot be improved upon. If there is any scope for betterment of what we have, we are not happy with it. We also desire almost everything. What cannot be enhanced and what does not fail to include anything is only the unlimited fullness or wholeness. This is called *pūrṇam*. In effect, it is the *pūrṇam* that we want to become so that nothing can limit us. But through actions, we can make only limited additions to the limited that we have. Incremental growth, which is finite by nature, can never produce the infinite whole. For instance, any number added to any other number, any number of times would not produce infinity. Thus, through our actions, which can bring about only gradual change, we cannot ever achieve fullness¹⁶. But, we overlook this basic fact since we do not

¹⁶ Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12 says, *na asti akṛtaḥ kṛtena*, that (completeness) which cannot be produced cannot be the result of action. Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.10 says, *na hyadruvaiḥ prāpyate hi dhruvaṁ tat*, the permanent one (infinite whole) cannot be attained through the impermanent means (action).

realize that what we are actually in need for abiding happiness is not relative improvement in our condition but fullness.

II

We convert situations into personal problems

We may also now look into the manner in which we convert various situations into personal problems. In this example, the simple need of water to quench the thirst is converted into a mental problem. A couple was traveling by train during a hot summer day. The lady was in distress and said to her husband:

“I am awfully thirsty and we have no water to drink. When will the next station come and when can I get water?”

Her husband assured her:

“Just wait for a while; the station is due to come and I will get you water”.

Some time passed and there was no sign of the station. The lady was distraught and she complained:

“I had told you repeatedly that the water that we are carrying with us would not be enough. You did not listen. Now, we have no water and my throat is totally parched.”

Her husband tried to free her from anxiety by saying:

“Don’t worry. In five more minutes, we would reach the station and I will get you water.”

The lady continued to be troubled and expressed her anxiety:

“But this is summer and water fit for drinking may be exhausted by now.”

Her husband reassured her:

“In the station, they always keep enough water for drinking. If it is not available, I will get you a soft drink.”

The lady continued to be very distressed and raised the doubt:

“Will the stall be open?”

The husband kept quiet. As expected, the train reached the station. He got enough water and her thirst was fully quenched. He also filled all the water bottles that they had. But the lady was uneasy and started saying:

“Look! I was so thirsty, I was so thirsty. You cannot imagine how thirsty I was. You never heed my words. We were fortunate today but if it happens again, I may even die of thirst.”

The problem of the person is not merely the physical thirst that can be taken care of physically and forgotten. When she is thirsty, she makes thirst her present mental problem. When her thirst was quenched, she makes her past thirst her present mental problem. When she imagines that unquenched thirst in future will have disastrous consequences, she makes her future thirst her present mental problem. She thus converts the temporary

physical thirst, which can easily be tackled, into her permanent personal mental problem.

III

We center our problems on our I-sense and become unhappy

If we feel sorry for the person that she is highly subjective towards a need and converts it into a matter of personal anxiety, then we should be equally be concerned about all of us since we are essentially not any different from her. We also convert the world and ourselves into sources of unending mental burden. This requires to be explained.

The world is not divided into persons and things that are desirable and undesirable. It is we who impose such distinction on them. For example, when we are healthy and enjoy ice-cream, we consider it to be an object of pleasure. But when we have a sore throat and avoid it, we consider it as an object of pain. Thus, we project 'joy' on it at one time and 'pain' on it at another, even though the ice-cream has not in any way changed its nature. Owing to our personal predilections, we make similar subjective assessment of the nature of things, persons and situations all the time. We do not usually take them as they are without any personal judgement.

As for ourselves, our body, sense organs and mind function as well as they can. They automatically adjust to

circumstances, naturally heal themselves and function as well as they can. They do not complain. The eyes do not keep shedding tears that they are not bright and sparkling. The skin does not feel bad about its color and makes no effort to change its hue. The body has no complex about becoming fat and stores flesh in all possible places. The mind has no complaints about its sharpness. But we not only judge them but also transfer our judgement about them to ourselves and feel that "My eyes are not bright and sparkling", "I am not fair but dark", "I am fat", "I am not sharp" leading to the conclusion that "I am not good enough". When the knee-joint is painful, we transfer the pain from the knee to ourselves and say, "I am undergoing great pain". Again, when we are in a situation that requires getting help from others, we consider that "I am dependent". When we are not up to meeting difficult situations, without tackling or putting up with it, we bemoan, "I am helpless". Our understanding is similarly distorted in respect of our conclusions like, "I am not understood", "I am not wanted", "I am not loved" and "I am being held down by others".

Animals also experience pleasure and pain. But they do not seem to feel, "I am happy" or "I am unhappy". We, on the other hand, are either happy or unhappy. This is because we are aware of ourselves as a distinct person, who is the I, and in that I-sense, we see the state of being happy or of being unhappy. We center all our self-

assessment and problems arising out of it on that personal I-sense. In that I-sense, we locate the resultant sense of insecurity and unhappiness and become the source of sorrow to ourselves. Thus, we are ourselves essentially responsible for the mental condition in which we are.¹⁷

IV

We do not know what exactly we are

Our concern is naturally about the solution to this problem. Since we are ourselves the problem, we have to first examine as to whether the basis for our self-judgement is correct. *Prima facie*, it appears that we are right in taking the physical body to be the self. We do not exist, for example, in the space between our fingers. But we do not feel separated from the hurt in our toe. Our awareness also extends only up to our body and not beyond. It is also natural for us to take the vital breath (*prāṇa*), the senses, the mind and the intellect to be the self, since they are all conscious like the body and we are intimately aware of them. As for our self-judgment of being incomplete, when we look at ourselves as consisting of the body, the senses and the mind, there is scope for improvement in all of them. Also, all of us feel the same way about ourselves. Thus, our self-judgment appears to be reasonable.

¹⁷ See Swami Dayananda, *The Problem is You, The Solution is You*.

The question, however, arises as to how every one of us is quite happy some times, in spite of being dissatisfied with ourselves. When we are happy, we do not want anything to be different in the circumstances of those moments. Everything seems to fall in place. In fact, only these happy interludes give us the basis for our constant endeavour to be happy at all times. In the present context, this happiness, even though it is occasional, renders our self-assessment questionable since the sense of want that we entertain invariably and the feeling of completeness that we feel in moments of joy cannot co-exist in the mind. Logically, it is impossible for us to be happy even for a moment, as we always consider ourselves to be wanting.

We also find another anomaly. Our understanding is that only if we gain what we desire, or become free from what we dislike, we would be happy. But, without any of these happening, we are happy when we hear a joke. In fact, the person who has a complex about his protruding teeth laughs fully exposing those very teeth. But, all of us soon revert to our original unpleased state and the person referred to is quick to cover his teeth. The plausible explanation for our pleasurable experience is that it is possible for us to be happy when in some situations the notion, "I am wanting" is not there and we cease to be the seekers of some change in us or in the circumstances. In fact, our society uses many ingenious methods of accomplishing these to lift our spirits. With this

explanation about our occasional state of joyousness, our self-judgement seems to be right.

But, there is a fact, which is not in accord with our assessment. If being limited were our true nature, we would be comfortable with it and we would not complain about it. We accept whatever is natural. When we become hungry at regular intervals, we do not consider that we have a health problem and consult a doctor since it is normal for us to feel hungry. We know that all that is necessary is to eat. Similarly, if being limited, insecure and unhappy were our true nature, we would not make it our life's mission not to be so. Also, what our system tries to throw out is that which is alien to it and having done so, it is quite at peace with itself. If we want to get rid of sorrow and the sense of smallness somehow or the other, then they should be foreign to our system like the particle of sand in our eye. These would indicate that being incomplete, insecure and unhappy is not natural to us and that we should be really be what we want to become. However, we cannot rush to that conclusion, since if that were so, the question arises as to why we are generally insecure and unhappy.

Let us also examine happiness. We do not find any object that can be called as happiness. No object can also be considered as the source of happiness since no object delights any of us, at all times. In fact, like the ice-cream, we like it some times and dislike it at another. We cannot

also say that a particular place or time invariably provides joy. It means that the whole world, which consists of objects, places and time, is not the cause of happiness. If the world is not the source, then we are left with only ourselves as the source of joy. But immediately the question comes up as to how we can be ourselves the source of happiness when we are happy only occasionally. The possible explanation is what we have already given before, namely that happiness manifests when we are not seeking anything and are in a state of fullness as when we hear a joke or see a smiling baby. But again, the question arises as to why our own joy should be subject to any condition for it to be experienced by us.

Our enquiry thus remains inconclusive. What is evident is that we lack some crucial knowledge about ourselves, which alone will bring consistency among the facts that now appear to disagree with each other. It could well be that we are actually what we are seeking to become and that only some impediment is preventing us from recognizing it. But we can be definite only when we know what exactly we are and as to why we are in the present condition. This knowledge should be like the astronomical knowledge by which we understand as to why we experience the rising and setting of the sun even though it never rises and sets. Fortunately, we gather from our casual reading¹⁸ and the pursuit of some of our elders¹⁹

¹⁸ Knowledge so gained is called *āpātata-jñānam*.

that such self-knowledge, which solves our problem, is available. Therefore, our next step in our effort to become free from problem of insecurity and unhappiness is to gain the correct and comprehensive knowledge of the self²⁰.

¹⁹ This is called *vṛiddha vyavahāra*.

²⁰ The desire for knowledge (*jñātum icchā*) is called *jijñāsā*. The seeker of knowledge is called *jijñāsu*.

CHAPTER FOUR

VEDĀNTA IS THE MEANS FOR GAINING SELF-KNOWLEDGE

I

The various means of knowledge

Knowledge of anything is gained by accessing what we want to know through the appropriate means of knowledge, which is called as *pramāṇa* in Sanskrit. That is, we can know only through a means of knowledge. But, we may think that the self is the only exception, since the self is self-evident and we know that we exist without having to use any means of knowledge. That is, our existence is self-established; and that we are a conscious being is also self-evident. Now arises the big question as to why we require a means of knowledge for gaining self-knowledge. It becomes necessary, as our problem is not that we do not know that the self exists, but that we are born with self-ignorance, which makes all of us know it incorrectly. We think that the self, which is equated by us with the conscious being, is subject to limitations. Therefore, we require a means of knowledge to know the self in its true nature as the limitless whole.

Now, we have to see whether the means of knowledge that we normally use would serve the purpose for

knowing the self as it really is. Our knowledge is essentially gathered through our sense organs with the support of our mind. Our eyes see everything before them, our ears hear all the sounds, our nose picks up all the smell, our skin feels and our tongue tastes whatever is in contact with them. When the sense organs contact their respective object, there is immediate direct cognition²¹. Thus, we gain knowledge of form and color through the eyes, smell through the nose, taste through the tongue, sound through the ears and touch through the skin. This is direct perception²², which is the basic means of knowledge. Here, the knowledge is gained of an object by the respective sense organ through direct sensory contact with the object. This means of knowledge is naturally restricted to the objects, which are within the reach of the sense organs.

Like perception, non-perception is also a means of knowledge for knowing “negative fact”²³ through its non-perception. This is for gaining knowledge of the absence of a particular thing, like “this flower has no fragrance” and “this chair is empty”.

²¹ Cognition, apprehension and knowledge mean the same.

²² Perception, inference, postulation, comparison, non-perception are known respectively as *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *arthāpatti*, *upamāna* and *anupalabdhi*.

²³ This is called *abhāva*.

From the direct knowledge gained from perception, we derive indirect knowledge through inference. For example, we infer fire on the hill based on the presence of smoke there. We perceive the hill as also the smoke in the hill. We also know through our earlier perceptions that smoke is never seen without a fire²⁴ as in the kitchen using firewood for cooking. These facts when considered together leads to the knowledge that the hill is on fire. Thus, perception together with knowledge of invariable connection between what is now perceived (smoke) and what was earlier perceived (fire) gives inferred knowledge of the presence of the now non-perceived thing (fire). Thus, proper linking of knowledge gained through perception yields further knowledge through inference²⁵.

We also get indirect knowledge through postulation when we encounter situations wherein the known fact cannot be accounted for without the existence of another fact, which is not known. In such circumstances, we are obliged to assume or postulate the unknown fact. The traditional example is: Devadatta is on fast for a number of days and is seen to be fasting during the waking hours. It is also observed that he is not losing weight. These two facts, namely being continuously on fast and not losing weight are mutually contradictory. The inescapable assumption

²⁴ The knowledge of invariable concomitance is called *vyāpti-jñānam*.

²⁵ The components of inference are: *pakṣa* (locus i.e., mountain), *hetu* (reason i.e., smoke), *sādhya* (conclusion i.e., fire) and *dr̥ṣṭānta* (example of invariable co-existence of smoke with fire in the kitchen).

to account for the apparent discrepancy between the two well-attested facts is that Devadatta eats without the knowledge of others. No other deduction is normally possible. This is called as “otherwise it is not possible logic”²⁶ and is of great use in inquiry.

Another means of knowing is comparison, which is to know A’s similarity to ‘B’ through ‘B’s similarity to ‘A’. For example, when we, who have seen the buffalo, go to a forest and see bison, we gain the knowledge that the bison is similar to the buffalo. Based on this knowledge, we come to know that the buffalo is like the bison. We use comparison to communicate the knowledge of an unknown thing through a known thing that is similar to it. If a person does not know what a bison looks like, then we liken it to a buffalo, which he knows.

II

We cannot know the self through the usual means of knowledge

Our present concern is about the means of knowledge that we can use for correctly knowing the self. In the case of knowing, there is always the knower-I who is called the

²⁶ *anyathā anupapatti.*

subject²⁷. What I know by perception is what is different from me. What is so known is called the object. Perception thus yields knowledge only of objects to the subject. It does not provide any knowledge about the subject. As regards inference, postulation and comparison, all of them make use of the knowledge of objects obtained through perception. Therefore, they can also provide knowledge only about objects and not about the subject. As for the subject, all these means of knowledge can provide knowledge about it only if the subject becomes available for them as an object so that it may be cognized. That is, the subject has to become an object for it to be perceived. But it is not possible to convert the subject into an object. Therefore, the subject, who can never become the object, cannot be known through perception and the other means of knowledge based on perception, namely, inference, postulation and comparison. As for non-perception, it is not relevant for gaining knowledge about the subject, which exists. Therefore, we cannot know the self through any of the means of knowledge that we normally use.

²⁷The knower is *pramātā*; the object of knowledge is *prameya*; the knowledge obtained is *pramā*; and the means of knowing is *pramāṇa*.

III

Veda is another means of knowledge that is available

Fortunately, knowledge, which we cannot acquire by ourselves through the usual means of knowing, is available to us in the form of words. It includes knowledge of the self for gaining *mokṣa* (freedom) and other knowledge for the pursuit of *dharma* (virtue), *artha* (material wealth) and *kāma* (pleasure). This composite body of knowledge is Veda²⁸. (The word Veda is derived

²⁸ *vidanti caturaḥ puruṣārthān tat prāpti upāyān ca anena iti vedaḥ* i.e., Veda is the source of knowledge by which we come to know of the four human goals called as *puruṣārthas* (*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*) and of the means of attaining them. When Vyāsacārya compiled them, there were 1180 *śākhās* or recensions with 21 *śākhās* in *Ṛg-Veda* containing *mantras*, in metrical form (*padyam*), primarily containing prayers, 109 *śākhās* in *Yajur-Veda* in prose form (*gadyam*), primarily dealing with rituals, 1000 *śākhās* in *Sāma-Veda*, which are *mantras* that are to be sung (*sāmagāna*) and 50 *śākhās* in *Atharvaṇa-veda* containing *mantras* consisting of prayers and *yajñas* for averting calamities and afflictions. Of the 1180 *śākhās*, seven containing more than 20,000 *mantras* are now available.

Traditionally, in addition to Veda, ten disciplines are studied. They are six *vedāṅgās* (adjuncts), which are *śikṣā* (phonetics), *vyākaraṇa* (grammar), *chandas* (prosody), *nirukta* (etymology), *jyotiṣa* (astrology) and *kalpa* (know-how of rituals). There are four *upāṅgās* (supplements), which are *mīmāṃsā* (system of analysis of the text), *nyāya* (logic), *dharma-śāstra* (text of prescribed conduct) and *purāṇa* (evergreen legendary history). Each Veda has an *upa-veda* (secondary

from the root “*vid*” in Sanskrit which means, “to know”.) Since it is communicated through words, this means of knowledge is called as *śabda*, which means verbal testimony. The means of knowledge is called as *pramāṇa*. Thus, *śabda* is a *pramāṇa* in addition to perception, inference, postulation, comparison and non-perception.

Śabda is a technical word and does not include all verbal communications. To clarify, the words “the hill is on fire” communicates knowledge but cannot be called as *śabda*, since this information can also be obtained through perception of fire on the hill, and by inference through smoke in the hill. For knowledge to be called as *śabda*, it should not be possible to gain it through any other means of knowledge, like, “You are the whole”.

Veda, which is *śabda*, is available in four parts after Vyāsācārya so compiled them for better preservation. They are called as the *Ṛg*, *Yajus*²⁹, *Sāma* and *Atharvaṇa* (or *Atharva*). Each of them is viewed broadly in two sections called as *veda-pūrva* and *veda-anta*. The initial section, which is *veda-pūrva* is voluminous and is called the *karmakāṇḍa*. It essentially imparts knowledge of *karma* or actions, that are physical, oral and mental, that are

veda), which is respectively, *āyurveda* (medicine), *dhanurveda* (archery), *gandharvaveda* (fine arts) and *sthāpatyaveda* (architecture).

²⁹ Yajur-Veda is in two parts, and they are called as *Śukla-Yajur-Veda* and *Kṛṣṇa-Yajur-Veda*.

required to be followed by everyone as also those which are the means to acquire and safeguard the desired ends or to become free from and avert the disliked conditions. It caters to the pursuit of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*.

The latter section of Veda, which is called *veda-anta* or Vedānta, reveals self-knowledge. Since the self is called as *ātmā*³⁰, self-knowledge is referred to as *atmajñāna*. Since *ātmā* is Brahman, it is also known as *brahmajñāna*. Vedānta is also called as *jñānakāṇḍa*. Vedānta consists of Upaniṣads³¹. Thus, Vedānta, *jñānakāṇḍa* and Upaniṣads

³⁰ *Ātmā* and Brahman are dealt with exclusively later.

³¹ The word Upaniṣad is formed out of the Sanskrit verbal root *sad* with the prefixes *upa* and *nī*. *Upa* stands for *upasadana*, which means approaching (the *guru*). *Nī* stands for ascertained knowledge (*nīścaya jñānam*). *Sad* means *viśaraṇa* (to wear out or break), or *gati* (make one reach), or *avasādana* (put an end to). All the three meanings are relevant as this knowledge wears out or breaks the *saṁsāra* by making one 'reach' or know *ātmā* by approaching the *guru* for the knowledge and puts an end to the cause of sorrow (*kāraṇam avasādayati*). Thus, Upaniṣad means doubt-free knowledge of the self or *atmajñāna* acquired from a *guru*, which frees one from *saṁsāra*. The word also means the book that contains the text of the Upaniṣad.

Of the 220 Upaniṣads, which are now available, *bhāṣyam* or commentaries have been written on 108 of them. Śaṅkarācārya has written *bhāṣyam* on the following ten: Aitareya of *Ṛg-veda*, Īśā and Bṛhadāraṇyaka of *Śukla-yajur-veda*, Kaṭha and Taittiriya of *Kṛṣṇa-yajur-veda*, Chāndogya and Kena of *Sāma-veda* and Praśna, Muṇḍaka and Māṇḍūkya of *Atharvaṇa-veda*. Kaivalya Upaniṣad of *Atharvaṇa-veda* is also generally taught. Other Upaniṣads are also quoted by *ācāryas* in their writings and among them are Śvetāśvatara

are synonymous and contain *atmajñāna* or *brahmajñāna*. Since *atmajñāna* removes self-ignorance which is the cause for the sense of limitation, seekers of freedom from limitation or *mokṣa* pursue Vedānta.

Each Veda consists of four sections: *saṁhita*, *brāhmaṇa*, *āraṇyaka*, and *upaniṣad*. *Saṁhita* includes chants and prayers to various deities. The *brāhmaṇa* reveals the *karmas* and their modes of performance. The *āraṇyaka* section contains various *upāsanaṣ* or meditations. Upaniṣads contain *atmajñāna*.

Veda itself contains the information that it originated from Brahman, the infinite reality.³² During manifestation, the first to appear is Brahmāji (“ji” is added to distinguish it from Brahman) who manifests and maintains everything. He teaches the wisdom of Brahman to his eldest son and initiates the flow of knowledge to succeeding generations.³³ Bhagavadgītā³⁴(4.1 and 4.2) states that in

(*Kṛṣṇa-Yajur-Veda*), Kauṣītakī (*Rg-Veda*), Jābāla (*Śukla-Yajur-Veda*) and Mahānārāyaṇa (*Kṛṣṇa-Yajur-Veda*).

³² *Yo brahmāṇaṁ vidadhāti pūrvam yo vai vedāṁśca prahiṇoti tasmai.* | He who at the beginning of creation projected Brahmaji, who delivered the vedas to him .. (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.18); also .. *asyaivaitāni niḥśvasitāni* | They (Vedas) are like the breath of this (supreme self). (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.10.)

³³ *Brahmā devānām prathamam sambabhūva*
viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptā |
Sa brahmavidyām sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhām
atharvāya jyeṣṭhaputrāya prāha | | Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad , 1.1.1.

one of the manifestations, this knowledge is passed on to Vivasvān (Sun); he passes it on to Manu who in turn passes it on to Ikṣvāku, the first of the solar kings. From Ikṣvāku it passes on successively to the royal sages. Sage Vasiṣṭha is one of them. After sage Vasiṣṭha, the lineage of *gurus* mentioned in the regularly recited prayer is as follows³⁵: Vasiṣṭha's son Śakti, his son Parāsara, his son Vyāsa, his son Śuka. Beginning with Śuka, the lineage consists of *sannyāsīs*. It consists of Śuka's disciple Gauḍapāda, his disciple Govinda Bhagavatpāda, his disciple Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda (Śaṅkarācārya), his disciples Hastāmalaka, Sureśvara, Padmapāda, Toṭaka, and their disciples successively until the present *guru*. Hence the prayer³⁶ -

Auspiciously beginning with *Īśvara*, with the teacher Śaṅkara in the middle, I worship the progression of teachers extending up to my teacher.

³⁴Bhagavadgītā consists of the teaching of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the battlefield and is a part of the epic Mahābhārata written by Vyāsācārya.

³⁵*Narāyaṇaṁ padmabuvāṁ vasiṣṭhaṁ śaktiṁ ca tatputraparāśaraṁ ca |*

Vyāsaṁ śukaṁ gauḍapadaṁ mahāntaṁ govindayogīndramathāsya śiṣyaṁ ||

Sriśaṅkarācāryamathāsya padmapādaṁ ca śiṣyaṁ |

Taṁ totakaṁ vārttikārāmanyān asmādgurūn santatamānato'smi ||

³⁶*Sadāśivasamārambhāṁ śaṅkarācāryamadhyamām |*

Asmādcāryaparyantāṁ vande guruparamparām ||

This knowledge is a part of the manifestation and is always available in a subtle form. Some *ṛṣis*³⁷ have the ability to perceive it. For instance, Sage Yājñavalkya perceived the *Śukla Yajur Veda*. Sage Atharvaṇ and Sage Aṅgira perceived the *Atharvaṇa Veda*. Brahmaṛṣi Vasiṣṭha perceived the seventh *maṇḍala* (part) of *R̥g Veda*. Maṇḍūka Ṛṣi perceived the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. Viśvāmitra Ṛṣi perceived the famous *Gāyatrī-mantra*. Such *ṛṣis* are not author of *mantras* (*mantra kartās*), as the knowledge is not born of their intellect or experience. It is important to understand that *ṛṣis* are not mystic experiencers reporting their personal experience. They are only perceiver of *mantras* (*mantra draṣṭas*)³⁸, which are manifest in the subtle form. They teach them to their disciples (*śiṣyas*³⁹). After learning, the *śiṣya* teaches and becomes the *guru*⁴⁰. Successive handing over of knowledge from *guru* to *śiṣya* is called the *guru-śiṣya-paramparā*⁴¹. The teaching tradition maintains the

³⁷ *Ṛṣati jānāti iti ṛṣi*¹

³⁸ Since the knowledge is not born of the human intellect, it is called *apauruṣeya-pramāṇa*.

³⁹ *Śiṣya* is the person who is *śikṣaṇa योग्या* or fit to receive the teaching.

⁴⁰ *Guru* is the person who destroys (*gu*) the darkness or ignorance (*ru*).

⁴¹ *Paramparā* means handing down in regular succession without interruption. It is also called the *karṇa-paramparā* since the disciple gets the knowledge by listening to the *guru*. Veda is also called as

continuity of knowledge like the river, which by its perennial flow makes the water available at all times⁴². The *gurus* may be different but the teaching continues to be the same. This tradition of knowledge as properly and completely handed over by the *guru* through the established teaching methods is called *sampradāya*.

While the knowledge is thus passed down the generations in every cycle of manifestation, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa in Bhagavadgītā (4.2)⁴³ talks of times when the knowledge declines. Śaṅkarācārya explains that the wane of the knowledge is owing to the rise of desire in the minds of people, which makes them pursue improper goals. Bhagavān⁴⁴ then takes *avatāra* (descent to earth) to redeem the situation. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa is one such *avatāra* and his teaching of Gītā to humanity through Arjuna is for resuscitation of *atmajñāna* and for the inculcation of values in living.

āgama, or what is received from the statements of the *guru* (*Guroḥ vākyaṭ āgacchati iti āgamaḥ*)

⁴² This continuity is called *pravāha-nitya*.

⁴³ *Sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ, parantapa ...* | Bhagavadgītā, 4.2.

⁴⁴ Bhagavān is the one who has *bhaga* (*bhagah asya asti iti bhagavān*). *Bhaga* means the six-fold virtues of *jñāna* (knowledge), *vairāgya* (dispassion), *vīrya* (ability to manifest, sustain and resolve), *yaśas* (fame), *śrī* (wealth) and *aīśvarya* (overlordship). Bhagavān is also referred to as *Īśvara*.

The *sampradāya* is also enlivened at critical times through persons born specifically to discharge special duties.⁴⁵ The seer Apāntaratamas was born in this manner as Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana⁴⁶. He compiles the voluminous Veda into four parts so that particular families could study one of them and hand it over to each succeeding generation. This earns him the name of Vedavyāsa or Vyāsācārya. He also condenses the traditionally ascertained knowledge of Vedānta into aphorisms or *sūtras* called the Brahmasūtra. He also writes the epic Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas so that this knowledge may reach the laypersons as well⁴⁷.

Upaniṣads, Bhagavadgītā and Brahmasūtra are the three basic source books of Vedānta and are called *prasthānatrayī*.⁴⁸ Upaniṣad, which is revealed knowledge, is called *śruti*⁴⁹. Brahmasūtra and Bhagavadgītā (which is part of Mahābhārata) are authored by Vyāsācārya and are called *smṛti* or knowledge remembered by humans. In the

⁴⁵ They are called *ādhikārika puruṣas*. (Brahmasūtra 3.3.32.)

⁴⁶ He is also known as Bādarāyaṇa.

⁴⁷ *Purā api navaḥ* is *purāṇa*. It means ancient but evergreen. They are generally in the form of poetry with occasional prose dealing with *devatās*, *dharma*, cosmology, art and dynasties of kings before the historical period. They provide role models in the ancient context and they continue to have the same significance even today.

⁴⁸ Vedānta is called *śruti-prasthāna*; Bhagavadgītā is called *smṛti-prasthāna*; Brahmasūtra is called *nyāya-prasthāna* (*nyāya* means logic).

⁴⁹ *Ṛṣibhiḥ śrūyate iti śrutiḥ* | What is revealed through the *ṛṣi* is *śruti*.

case of doubt arising out of any statement in the *smṛti*, it is the vision of the *śruti* that clarifies.

The transmission of Veda is oral and it is ensured that during such transmission, the text does not suffer any corruption. The oral tradition is very sophisticated, consisting of manifold methods of combination of words for chanting⁵⁰ and through the science of pronunciation and euphony (*śikṣā*).

IV

Vedānta is the means for gaining self-knowledge

Reverting to the subject of the means of acquiring self-knowledge, we have to first consider as to how Vedānta, which reveals self-knowledge is considered as a *pramāṇa*, that is, as an independent source of reliable knowledge. A *pramāṇa* is that which

- provides the knowledge that can be obtained only through it and not by any other *pramāṇa*;
- conveys what is not opposed to the evidence of any other *pramāṇa*; and

⁵⁰The method of combination of words for chanting to preserve the text without mistakes are *prakṛti pāṭha* consisting of words in succession and *vikṛti pāṭha* consisting of words in progression followed by reversing a word at a time. The three types of *prakṛti pāṭha* are *vākya pāṭha*, *pada pāṭha* and *krama pāṭha*. The eight types of *vikṛti pāṭha* are *jaṭā*, *mālā*, *śikhā*, *rekhā*, *dhvaja*, *daṇḍa*, *ratha* and *ghana*.

- conveys what is free from doubt and what is useful.⁵¹

Vedānta fulfils all these requirements. The knowledge revealed by it about the self cannot be known through any other means of knowledge like perception. Since other means of knowledge have no access to the self to know it, they cannot negate, amend or confirm Vedānta. Vedānta is also free from human errors, as it is revealed knowledge and is not the result of the working of the human intellect. It is free from doubt, as its central theme that we are the whole is stated in unequivocal terms. It is the most useful knowledge, as it removes self-ignorance, which is the cause of our sense of inadequacy, insecurity and unhappiness.

⁵¹*Anadhigata* (unknown), *abādhita* (uncontradicted), *phalavat* (useful). *artha bodhakam* (communicating knowledge) *vākyam pramāṇam*.

The *anadhigata* knowledge of *karma-kāṇḍa* is of three types: unknown means for known ends like *putrakāmeṣṭi* ritual for gaining progeny, known means for unknown ends like doing charity for *punya* and unknown means for unknown ends like *jyotiṣṭoma* ritual for reaching the higher world. *Anadhigata* knowledge in *jñāna-kāṇḍa* is the correct knowledge of the self.

V

The validity of knowledge gained through Vedānta

We may now look into the validity of the knowledge obtained through a *pramāṇa*. The basic principle is that whenever all the conditions necessary for gaining a specific knowledge are fulfilled, there must be that knowledge and it must be valid. The validity of the knowledge so gained has two aspects, namely,

- the validity of knowledge arising from the *pramāṇa* is spontaneous; it arises as a matter of course and is inherent in the knowledge; that is, its validity is *svataḥ-siddha* or self-established;
- with the apprehension of the knowledge, its intrinsic validity is spontaneously known, as there is manifestation of its validity along with the manifestation of knowledge; that is, its validity is *svataḥ-prakāṣa* or self-evident.

Thus, whenever there is knowledge of anything, it is intrinsically valid and its validity is spontaneously known. Its validity is questioned only when some deficiency is noticeable in the cause of knowledge, such as the defect of the eyesight or illumination in the case of perception and erroneous reasoning in the case of inference. Thus, the invalidity of knowledge arises from the external agencies alone.

The test of the truth of the knowledge is that it remains uncontradicted. That it is experienced or that it is universally held to be true or that it is of tremendous practical utility does not necessarily mean that the knowledge is true. For example, the rising and setting of the sun are experienced, they are considered by all to be true and they give rise to the day and time. Nevertheless, these do not mean that the rising and setting of the sun are true knowledge, since they are contradicted by astronomical knowledge. Valid knowledge is that which is not contradicted. To cognize the rope as snake is not valid knowledge, as the object of this knowledge, the snake, is contradicted by the knowledge of the rope. The knowledge that is not contradicted is accepted as true and needs no verification. For instance, the cognition derived through the sense of taste establishes the fact that sugar is sweet. On the sole testimony of a single cognition of that one sense, we accept it as an indubitable fact. Knowing arising from the hearing of a sentence of Veda is also of the same type and it need not be established by another means.

We must also note that it is not possible for the knower to affect in any manner the process of knowing through the *pramāṇa*, since *pramāṇa* operates in a choiceless manner. While action requires the will of the knower, knowledge does not. Once the means of knowledge and object of knowledge are aligned, knowledge immediately takes

place. For example, if someone says, “Please open your eyes, look at me but do not see me”, we cannot comply with the request since we have no choice but to see and know. We, as the knower, cannot decide anything about the object in terms of its truth. If a buffalo is before our eyes, we cannot see it as a cow, however much we may wish. Knowledge is as true as the object of knowledge. Also, when we see anything, we cannot say that we do not know it, as the result of the knowing goes to the knower. The technical expression for these unique characteristics of knowing is *vastu-tantram*⁵².

Another intrinsic feature of the *pramāṇa* has to be reiterated. What we can know is entirely determined by the means of knowledge. For example, through the eyes, we can see only color and form; through the ears, we can hear only sounds. What we can know is therefore determined by the means of knowledge used⁵³. We are therefore obliged to use only the appropriate means for knowing and we have no choice in the matter. For example, if we wish to know the smell, we have no other go but to use our nose. We cannot replace one means of knowledge by another and try to smell through the eyes. Similarly, as regards the self, it can be known only through the *pramāṇa* of Vedānta and nothing else.

⁵² *Vastu tantram* is unlike *puruṣa tantram* where we decide whether to perform an action or not and determine the nature of action.

⁵³ This is called *pramāṇa tantra*.

Thus, the crucial points that emerge are:

- Vedānta is a *pramāṇa*, since the knowledge of the self provided by it is not available otherwise (*anadhigata*), is uncontradicted (*abhādita*), is of significant purport (*arthabodhaka*) and is beneficial (*phalavath*)
- Vedānta is the only *pramāṇa* for knowing the self as other *pramāṇas* have no access to the self for knowing it;
- So, for knowing the self, we cannot replace Vedānta by any other means of knowledge;
- The validity of the knowledge gained through any *pramāṇa* is intrinsic and the validity of knowledge is self-evident;
- Since the knowledge gained from any *pramāṇa* is intrinsically valid, it has to be accepted in the same way as we accept the smell as revealed by our nose; and
- Therefore, we do not have any basis to question what Vedānta reveals about the self.

There is, however, the misgiving that Vedānta, being constituted of words, can convey only indirect knowledge and not direct knowledge as is obtained through perception of an object, which is before our eyes. It is true that words reveal only indirect knowledge about objects that are away from us either in space or in time. For example, we get only indirect knowledge of the Valley of

Flowers in the Himalayas by reading or hearing an account of it at Chennai. But unlike the Valley of Flowers, we cannot be ever away from ourselves. We are always immediately available for recognising ourselves through the knowledge communicated by the *pramāṇa*.

It is somewhat similar to the following incident. Once, while Pujya Swamiji was traveling, a co-traveler told him that he is on his way to see Pujya Swamiji. Thereupon, Pujya Swamiji told him that he was already seeing him. What the words of Pujya Swamiji revealed was only direct knowledge, since what is revealed by his words is readily available for direct cognition. While it was necessary to reveal Pujya Swamiji through direct perception for the words to give direct knowledge, it is not necessary to reveal the self, as it is self-revealing. Words can give direct self-knowledge straightaway.

Like any instrument of knowledge, words must be handled appropriately under the right conditions so that they give valid knowledge. For the eyes to function, there must be enough light. For some eyes, corrective lenses are necessary. For the ears to discriminate a given sound, there must be the right volume, the right distance and the right notes. For the words of Vedanta to work as a *pramāṇa*, they must be heard by a fresh, open mind, which is not detracted by reactions, emotions, fears and prejudices from a teacher who, knowing the methodology,

uses them in the appropriate context in accordance with a particular methodology.

The question arises as to how we can clear the doubts that arise in respect of the revelations made by the *pramāṇa*. They are resolved exactly as we do in the case of what is revealed by the other means of knowledge, which is to use the very same *pramāṇa* for the purpose. For example, when we are not clear about what we see, we check by seeing again, perhaps by wearing glasses or by switching on the light or by seeing through a magnifying glass. Similarly, in the case of Vedānta, we look into the concerned text again together with all the connected portions and apply the principles of analysis of the text called *mīmāṃsā* and resolve the doubt through reasoning (*yukti*⁵⁴) based on the facts revealed by the *pramāṇa*.⁵⁵

We may now conclude our discussion by reiterating that

- valid knowledge can be gained only through a *pramāṇa* and not from any other; and
- for knowing the self, Vedānta alone is the *pramāṇa*.

⁵⁴ *Śruti sammata tarka* or reasoning based on *śruti*.

⁵⁵ This is called *vedānta-vicāra*.

CHAPTER FIVE

WE HAVE TO BE QUALIFIED TO GAIN SELF-KNOWLEDGE

I

We have to be qualified to acquire self-knowledge

Our next step is to gain self-knowledge through Vedānta. It is common knowledge that for studying any subject, we need to be qualified for it. In the case of Vedānta, the requirements are far-reaching. Here, the problem consists of not only of the inborn ignorance of our nature but also of having a completely mistaken notion of it. We have also based our entire living on that erroneous notion. As such, the error is entrenched in our mind. What Vedānta reveals is that our notion is totally wrong. It says that we are the whole, while we take ourselves to be limited in every respect. Adding further to our problem in understanding, our every day experience appears to confirm only our limitation, which is erroneous. Understanding the self therefore means that our totally erroneous and deep-rooted notion about us, which appears to be validated by our experience, has to be totally given up. To crown our problems, our mind through which we have to know is entirely at variance with our true nature. Our true nature is revealed as attributeless, actionless and changeless,

while our mind with its likes and dislikes is invariably engaged with objects and is constantly undergoing change. If we listen to the teaching with such a mind, we would understand the teaching differently from what is really meant and would not be able to identify ourselves with our own real nature. On the other hand, we will consider it as a piece of information and with it we would tend to conceive of a new entity and would want to experience it! So, it is essential to bring our mind to as near our true nature as possible to grasp the teaching. Fortunately, it is possible to do so, since the *śāstra* specifies the necessary qualifications and indicates the methods of acquiring them.

II

The prescribed qualifications

Śāstra lists the prescribed qualifications as a group called the four-fold qualification.⁵⁶ We have to possess them to be called as an eligible student.⁵⁷ The prescribed qualifications are:

- discriminative discernment (*viveka*);
- freedom from longing (*vairāgya*);

⁵⁶ The four-fold qualification is called *sādhana-catustayam*.

⁵⁷ A qualified student is called *adhikārī*. *Tattva-bodha* (Central Chinmaya Mission Trust) by Śaṅkarācārya lists the qualifications at pages 12 - 17.

- six-fold accomplishment (*ṣaṭka-sampatti*) consisting of resolution of the mind (*śama*), regulation of the sense organs and the organs of action (*dama*), regulation of action (*uparama*), forbearance (*titikṣā*), trust in the *śāstra* and in the *guru* (*śraddhā*) and the naturally abiding mind (*samādhānam*); and
- intense desire for freedom (*mumukṣutvam*).

We may now look into each of them.

III

Discriminative discernment or *viveka*

The natural tendency of the mind is to be preoccupied with the outside world through the sense organs in pursuit of our objectives⁵⁸. This mental trait is an obstacle to knowing the self, as it is not possible for us to be engaged in the thought of outside objects and to have the vision of the self as well. So, to relieve the mind of its preoccupations, it is necessary for us to arrive at a discriminative understanding of our pursuits to see as to whether we should be engaged in them. Seeking of

⁵⁸*Parāñci khani vyatṛnat svyambhūstasmātparāñpasyati nāntarātman |*

Kaściddhiraḥ pratyagātmānamaiḥṣadāvṛttacakṣuramṛtatvamicchān ||

The Lord destroyed the sense organs (by making them extrovert). Therefore everyone perceives outside, not the inner self. Desiring immortality, a rare discriminative person turns away his eyes (from outside and) sees the inner self. (Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.1.1.)

security, pleasure and *punya*⁵⁹ are our usual pursuits. Through discernment, we come to know that

- what we seek through our pursuits is actually freedom from the sense of “I am insecure” and “I am unhappy”;
- what we seek to attain is that which cannot be improved upon; in effect, we want to be totally secure and be completely happy;
- what we seek for these purposes are from sources other than ourselves and that all of them are themselves limited and time-bound;
- in addition, what we can obtain from them is restricted by our action, which is limited both in content and duration;
- the limited results that we achieve cannot change us into a totally secure and completely happy person.

We now recognise that

- even after all our efforts, our continuing to feel insecure and unhappy as before is only to be expected ; and that

⁵⁹ The word “*dharma*” is not used since it can also be pursued for mental growth and not for *punya*.

- if we persist in our present efforts due to lack of discrimination, we would eternally continue to be seekers; and that
- we cannot solve our problem even by reaching the higher worlds, since we can stay there only as long as our *punya* lasts.

Thus through reasoning, we recognize that the security that *artha* gives, the pleasure that *kāma* provides and *punya* that *dharma* confers cannot ever solve our problem. *Śāstra* gives us a telling example. Around a broomstick, we tie an elegant silken string and then a shining golden string. Finally, we garland the broomstick with a dazzling necklace. Despite these decorations, the broomstick continues to remain a broomstick!

If we look beyond the immediate purpose that our usual goals serve, we would find that their ultimate aim is only to make us free from being a wanting person. That is, we do not want to be limited in any way. So, what we are really after is freedom from every limitation, which is *mokṣa*. Therefore, our goals are not really four-fold *dharma, artha, kāma* and *mokṣa*, but is actually only one of *mokṣa*. When we were pursuing that single goal through *artha, kāma* and *dharma* for *punya*, we have been failing to see the lack of connection between the limited means and the unlimited goal. Thus, in our pursuits we have been overlooking a basic error in not matching the means with the end. This reasoning gives rise to the

clarity that what is to be pursued by us is not *artha*, *kāma* and *dharma* for *puṇya* as we have been doing so far but *mokṣa* through the proper means.

Now the fundamental question arises. If any action that we do cannot make us complete, how do we solve our problem? There is one crucial fact that we have not taken into account so far. It is our ignorance about our true nature. Given this self-ignorance, the only possible solution to our problem is that we are already a non-wanting person but are painfully ignorant of it! Vedānta reveals that this is indeed so. So, the only way out of our problem is for us to gain the knowledge of our wholeness, which is unknown to us, through Vedānta.

As Kaṭha Upaniṣad puts it:

Both the preferable infinite and the pleasurable finite approach the human being. Having considered both of them very clearly, the discriminative person distinguishes them. The discriminative person prefers the infinite to finite. (Only) the indiscriminate one chooses finite for the sake of acquisition and preservation.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ *Śreyaśca preyaśca manuṣyametaḥ tau saṁparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ |*
Śreyo hi dhīrobhipreyaso vṛñīte preyo mando yogakṣemād vṛñīte | | 1.2.2

The discernment that what is to be pursued is not the temporary and limited through *artha*, *kāma* and *dharma* for *puṇya* but the permanent and unlimited through *jñāna* is called *viveka*.⁶¹ This understanding is indispensable for the meaningful pursuit of Vedānta.

IV

Freedom from longing or *vairāgya*

What flows from *viveka* is objectivity in our thinking. When it is cultivated, it matures into dispassion towards the previous goals of money, possession, power, security, pleasure, and of reaching the higher worlds after death⁶². As a sample, we may analyze it in some detail in respect of money, which we passionately seek. The value of money cannot be disputed. It is obvious that we cannot live without it, since it provides goods and services. So, money has an objective value. But, if we think that it solves our problem of insecurity, then we are adding to it a value that it does not have. This is because money does not address the root cause of this problem, which is our sense of inadequacy and incompleteness. It also

⁶¹ *Ādau nityānityavastuvivekaḥ pariḡaṇyate..* In the beginning, the discriminative understanding between what is eternal and what is time-bound is reckoned clearly. (Śaṅkarācārya, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 19.)

⁶² *Virāgaḥ kaḥ? What is Virāga? Ihasvargabhogeṣu icchārāhityam!* The absence of desire for the enjoyment (of the fruits of actions) in this world, as also in the higher world. (Śaṅkarācārya, *Tattva-bodha*, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, p. 13.)

contributes to our insecurity, as it can be lost, stolen or misappropriated. Thus, we add to money the value of the provider of guarantee against insecurity that was not there at all. If we make similar analysis in respect of the other objects that we seek, we would come to know that we have been viewing them also differently from what they are by conferring on them a sought after value that they do not have⁶³. When we realize that they do not have what we really want, we see things as they are. The object becomes just an object that serves to meet particular needs rather than as the answer to our insecurity and unhappiness.

Seeing the limitations of money, power and acceptance of others have to be done repeatedly. Repetition is necessary since the false value supplied to them is not a mistake for which one time correction is adequate. Our society gives importance to such false values and they are firmly rooted in us. So, repeated understanding of their limitations is necessary for us to grow out of them. Only then, we can become free from the deep attachment that we have towards them. The freedom from longing for them, which arises out of such discrimination, is called *vairāgya*⁶⁴.

⁶³ This overvaluation, which consists of supplying of an erroneous appeal, is called *śobhanādhyāsa*.

⁶⁴ The person released from longing for various things is called *vigatasprahaḥ*.

Some times false detachment⁶⁵ comes from mental or physical pain. This is an impulsive reaction and it is temporary and valueless since it is not the outcome of objective discernment. A person's dear friend suddenly died. Only on the previous day, he had spent the entire evening with him. Now, his friend is dead and is being cremated. While watching the proceedings, the feeling of impermanence of life and relationships surged in him. Nothing of the world seemed to be of any consequence to him. On returning home, he found a brass vessel filled with water kept outside the door of his house so that he may wash his feet before entering it. Even as he saw the vessel, he pulled up his wife for leaving it unattended outside the house. The person who was only a few minutes ago disenchanted with everything could not now stand even the distant probability of losing a small article!

Vairāgya does not also mean running away from our situation in life or cultivating hatred for the worldly activities. Vedānta does not say that the world is sorrowful (*duḥkhātmaka*) and that it has to be shunned. It says that we are primarily responsible for our mental state and not the world, as we impose on things values that they do not have and become sad when our expectations are belied. So, neither blaming the world nor withdrawing from it as a reaction is going to solve our problem.

⁶⁵ This is called *jihāsā vairāgya*.

It is also not necessary for us to hate anything to have dispassion towards it. When we throw away the peel of the banana, it is not because we hate the peel but because we do not need it. We do not feel that we have renounced the banana peel or that we have done a great sacrifice by discarding it. Similarly, our dispassion towards our earlier pursuits is simply born out of the understanding that it is futile to depend on them to get what we want. We keep away from them since they do not serve our purpose.

We need not also have any distaste for the essential transactions with the world since we are doing only what are necessary without any personal agenda. By maintaining this discrimination, we can actually enjoy doing them without being diverted from our ultimate goal.

Often the members of the family and friends of the person who has lost interest in worldly matters feel sorry for him. This is like sympathizing with the person who has given up the banana peel. In fact, the person with dispassion will be rightly feeling sorry for others for being totally lost in pursuits, which will ultimately prove to be futile!

It is through *viveka* and *vairagya* that the natural propensity of the mind to be involved with the outside world gets curbed. As such, they constitute the foundation of the requisite qualifications.

V

Gaining a hold over the mind (*śama*) and the organs of perception and action (*dama*)

We function through our organs. Some of them are external like the sense organs and the organs of action. The sense organs are the eyes, the ears, the tongue, the nose and the skin. The organs of action are mouth, hands, legs, organs of excretion and reproduction. Some, which are not organs in the usual sense, are internal like the mind. They are in the form of thought modifications called *vṛtti*. *Vṛtti* is of three main types. One type is *manas* or the mind. Thoughts, emotions, desires, doubt and vacillations are all *manas*. There is another type of thinking, which is deliberate enquiry. When there is resolution, decision and will, it is called *buddhi*. Recollection and memory are called *citta*. *Manas*, *buddhi* and *citta* are collectively called *antaḥkaraṇa* or the internal organ. It is through the *antaḥkaraṇa* that we can inwardly think, feel, will, imagine, remember, rejoice, regret and so on without using any of the ten organs. Often the *antaḥkaraṇa* is itself referred to as the mind. The sense of ownership of the *antaḥkaraṇa* is the I-sense, *aham*. This is the individual "I" thought or the one who employs the *antaḥkaraṇa*. *Ahaṁ-kāra* is the sense of "I-ness".

Our powers are the expressions of the mind and are grouped as *icchā-śakti* (desiring power), *jñāna-śakti* (knowing power) and *kriyā-śakti* (acting power).

Regulation of the mind is meant for channelising these powers and is, therefore, of great importance. But, as our habits die very hard, we find it very difficult to do so even when we gain some degree of discrimination⁶⁶. Bhagavadgītā says that even a man of knowledge acts according to his nature⁶⁷ owing to continuance in some degree of attachment to desired objects and aversion towards undesired objects.⁶⁸ This happens, as the emotional value for the object is different from its cognitive or intellectual value. Cognitively one may lose the value for an object, but the object still has an emotional hold on the mind. Emotions make the person much more than cognition. They sweep aside the cognitive person and take over. Therefore, it is only through the emotional resolution of the mind that dispassion becomes a reality.

⁶⁶ *Yatato hyapi kaunteya puruṣasya vipaścitah |*

Indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabham manaḥ | | Bhagavadgītā 2.60.

Arjuna! Indeed, the powerful sense organs forcibly carry away the mind of even a wise man who is striving.

⁶⁷ *Sadṛśam ceṣṭate svasyāḥ, prakṛterjñānavānapi | Bhagavadgītā 3.33.*

⁶⁸ Attachment is called *rāga* and aversion is called *dveṣa*.

Indriyasyendriyasyārthe rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau |

Tayorna vasamāgacchetau hyasya paripanthinau | | Bhagavadgītā 3.34.

There is attachment and aversion with reference to every sense object. May one not come under the spell of these two as they are one's enemies.

This is not easy but can be achieved through sustained effort. In the mind, the first thought arises by itself and we have no control over it. But we have control on how far we go with the thoughts that arise out of the first thought. Our mental state is not the outcome of the first thought but is the result of our identification with the stream of thoughts that follows. We can decide not to be led by the thoughts that lead us astray by using our reasoning faculty. When the thoughts lack support, they are not sustained and the mental condition resolves. Such ability makes the mind available for study. This ability is called *śama* and is a very important qualification ⁶⁹.

There are occasions when we come under the grip of emotions and become irrational in thinking and rash in our speech and action. This happens when the sway of emotion caused by our likes and dislikes prevents the discriminating capacity from functioning. In such situations, the organs of perception⁷⁰ and of action⁷¹ through which the mind seeks to express itself have to be restrained. It is like catching hold of the tail of the frolicking calf when we have lost hold of the rope tied to its neck. Whenever the functioning of any organ is

⁶⁹ *Śamaḥ kaḥ? Mano nigrahaḥ*. What is *śama*? Mastery over the mind. (Śaṅkarācārya, *Tattva-bodha*, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, p.14.)

⁷⁰ The organs of hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell, namely ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose.

⁷¹ The organs of speaking, grasping, moving, evacuating and generating, namely mouth, hands, legs, anus and penis.

inappropriate, we have to practice to deliberately withdraw it from its undesirable activities. This is called *dama*⁷² and it ensures appropriate behaviour. If this were not possible, the rash action has to be diverted to innocuous targets, like punching the pillow instead of the person, shouting in the bathroom instead of at the person. We can also simply withdraw from the scene.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad (1.3.3 to 1.3.9) uses the imagery of the seeker traveling in a chariot drawn by five horses to bring home the importance of *śama* and *dama*. The body is compared to the chariot; the senses to the horses; the sense-objects to the roads; the mind to the reins; the intellect to the charioteer who holds the reins and drives the chariot and the seeker to the master. It says that only a charioteer with discriminative intellect who guides the horses with the reins of the controlled mind can by proper use of the senses take the master along the right road to the end of the journey.

VI

Discipline over actions or *uparati*

The regulation over our unwarranted outward tendencies becomes complete when we withdraw from all activities

⁷² *Damaḥ kaḥ? Caḥsurādibāhyendriyanigrahaḥ* | What is *dama*? Control of the external sense organs of perception and action. (Śaṅkarācārya, *Tattva-bodha*, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, p. 14.)

that are unconnected with the pursuit of our goal. It marks the culmination of our discriminative capacity. All of us have the tendency to omit what we have to do, do what we need not do, or do something else. *Uparati*⁷³ or *uparama* consists of withdrawal from prohibited actions and engagement in only those actions that require to be done, regardless of whether we like it or not. Through it, we establish our mastery over our likes and dislikes. We succeed in being in charge and in being able to do only that, which is to be done. We feel good in having succeeded in reorganizing our inner life.

Uparati has also the meaning of leading the life of a *sannyāsī* who, in accordance with the *śāstra*, formally gives up all the duties and connections for dedicating himself to the pursuit. The life style of renunciation is ideal for the seeker of *jñāna*.

VII

Forbearance or *titikṣā*

Our internal and external conditions keep changing and they may affect us adversely. When this happens, we have to identify and isolate the problem and try to solve it. If it is beyond solution, we are neither to retaliate nor to

⁷³ *Uparati kaḥ?* What is *uparati*? *Svadharmānuṣṭhānameva* | Strict observance of one's own duty. (Śaṅkarācārya, *Tattva-bodha*, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, p. 15.)

suffer in silence. We have to accept what cannot be changed as inevitable without getting emotionally affected by it. If we keep reacting to the changes that we cannot alter, our mind cannot be tranquil. Suffering without accepting it, on the other hand, produces resentment in the mind. So, forbearance or *titikṣā*⁷⁴ to accommodate changes including the opposites becomes an essential qualification. It is easy to acquire it when we realize that we encounter only the result of our own previous actions allotted for experience during this life⁷⁵. Given this understanding, we will be able to go through the difficult situations with equanimity and be cheerful.

VIII

Trust in the *śāstra* and in the *guru* until understanding or *śraddhā*

The further qualification that is necessary until our understanding of the teaching is trust or *śraddhā*⁷⁶ in the *pramāṇa* and in the *guru* who unfolds it. Without it, the clarity about the goal and the mental equanimity that we

⁷⁴ *Titikṣā kā?* What is *titikṣā*? *Sitoṣṇasukhaduḥkhādisahiṣṇutvam* | The endurance of heat and cold, pleasure and pain etc. (Śaṅkarācārya, *Tattva-bodha*, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, p. 15.)

⁷⁵ This is called *prārabdha-karma*.

⁷⁶ *Śraddhā kidṛṣī?* *Guruvedāntavākyādiṣu viśvāsaḥ śraddhā* | What is the nature of *śraddhā*? Trust in the words of the *guru* and in the scriptures is *śraddhā*. (Śaṅkarācārya, *Tattva-bodha*, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, p. 16.)

have achieved will not be of much avail in getting the knowledge.

Even at the outset, we must be clear that through *śraddhā* we are *not* being asked to impose *unquestioning faith* in Vedānta and *believe* it to be true. There is hardly any need for them, as what Vedānta reveals about the self is a recognizable fact and its teaching is only for revealing this fact for recognition by systematically removing the misunderstanding. *Śraddhā* or trust is required only to allow this process to take place.

Another fact is that we are not acquiring this knowledge out of academic interest. We value our freedom and we want to learn this for no other purpose than to be free. Since the teaching itself is the means of knowledge, we must have the appropriate attitude towards the teaching and the teacher so that we may get what we want.

Even so, serious doubt about the validity of Vedānta⁷⁷ and the correctness of what it reveals⁷⁸ will keep on arising, as its revelations appear to be contradicted by our experience. Vedānta declares that we are the unlimited whole (*pūrṇaḥ*) with nothing that is the second to the self (*advaita*), and that we are abiding happiness (*ānanda*). The questions that naturally arise are: how can we be *pūrṇaḥ* when we are only our body, senses and mind;

⁷⁷ This is called *pramāṇa asambhāvanā*.

⁷⁸ This is called *prameya asambhāvanā*.

how can we say that there is nothing which is second to us when right from the time we open our eyes till we go to sleep, the second is right before our eyes and is affecting us; and how can we be *ānanda* when we are only occasionally happy? Also, religions like Buddhism and Jainism totally reject Veda as a means of knowledge. Schools of philosophy like Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Pūrva-mīmāṃsā⁷⁹, even while accepting Veda, differ from the revelations of Vedānta. It is true that the Upaniṣads credibly conveys its vision and the teaching tradition unfolds it clearly and answers convincingly all the objections raised by the contenders. But *śraddhā* in Vedānta and in the *guru* is necessary for us to be open to the teaching for clearing our doubts. Otherwise, we may give up Vedānta offhand without considering what it says.

Actually, when *śraddhā* towards Vedānta is considered necessary, nothing unusual is demanded of us. We have *śraddhā* towards the other *pramāṇas*. When we look towards an object, our mind immediately strips itself of all notions, customs, thought, prejudices etc. and we accept it as we see it regardless of whether we like or dislike what we see. Even a scientist does not start by questioning the validity of what he has observed. He proceeds without distrusting his eye and what he has seen. We do not say

⁷⁹ Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Pūrva-mīmāṃsā are respectively propounded by Kapila, Patañjali, Gautama, Kaṇāda and Jaimini.

that he has belief or faith in his eyes and in what he has seen. He just has *śraddhā*, which is based on the implicit reliability of the means of knowledge. If he did not have it, he would have said that accepting what the eyes see is a blind belief!

The situation that would arise if we refuse to trust the *pramāṇa* will be clear from the following episode. A person who was born blind undergoes a surgical procedure that would enable him to see. After performing the operation successfully, the doctor is confident that the person would now be able to see. After removing the bandages, the doctor eagerly asks him to open his eyes. But, without opening his eyes, he says, "Doctor, I will open my eyes only when you prove that I can see. Otherwise I do not want to take a chance on such a disappointing experience". What can the doctor do now? He is being asked to prove that the man's eyes are capable of sight and that they are a means of perceptual knowledge to him. How can he do that? Any means of knowledge is self-proving. He can only say: "The operation has been successful and there is no reason why your eyes should not perceive. Now it is for you to use your eyes and tell us whether your eyes are able to see." Even if the doctor forces the man's eyes open, the only proof that the patient will be able to see is the sight registered by his eyes themselves. It is the same with the *pramāṇa*. What we need to do is to allow it to do its job and see whether it works. And Vedānta is safe to try since

the falsity of the notion we have about ourselves will be seen through by us with the help of the *śāstra*⁸⁰ and the *guru*.⁸¹

We should have *śraddhā* not only towards the *pramāṇa* but also towards the *guru* who becomes the *pramāṇa* by unfolding it. The *guru* becomes very important, as it is the teaching tradition that holds the key for unlocking the meaning of the *śāstra*. Even if we feel that a statement from the *guru* is not found in the *śāstra*, he is not to be dismissed since he is rooted in the *sampradāya* and knows the purport of the text as also the tradition of teaching it. He can deliver the goods only when we trust his teaching and unconditionally expose ourselves to it.

This does not mean that we are to swallow whatever the *guru* says without any thinking. What we are required to do is to be receptive to the knowledge that is being imparted to us without any mental reservation. While doing so, if we find that certain areas are not acceptable, we have to isolate the problem and seek clarification from the *guru* to find out as to what is inadequate in our

⁸⁰ *Śāstra*, in the context of self-knowledge, means the Upaniṣads, Bhagavad-gītā, *Brahma-sūtra* and commentaries (*bhāṣyam*) of Śaṅkarācārya thereon and second order commentaries (*vārttikā*) and recognized explanatory texts (*prakaraṇa granthas*).

⁸¹ Swami Dayananda, *Gita Home Study, Volume 1*, p 20.

understanding⁸². This is the reason why the revelation in the Upaniṣads and in Bhagavadgītā is in the form of a dialogue between the disciple and the *guru*.

When the mind is fully receptive and when there is unwavering trust in the competence of the *guru*, our I-sense is held under check and our *buddhi* is, as if, taken over by the *pramāṇa* which is unfolded by the *guru*. In this impersonal state, our intellect, which is capable of knowing, receives it⁸³. This is called surrender. We lose nothing in such surrender as it only means that we are having the proper attitude to the *pramāṇa* and the *guru* so that the *pramāṇa* may prove itself to us. It is very fruitful since *śāstra* is categorical that “the person with *śraddhā* shall get the knowledge and will soon attain supreme peace”⁸⁴.

⁸² *Tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā* | Understand that (which is to be known) by prostrating, by asking proper questions (and) by service. Bhagavadgītā 4.34.

⁸³ Swami Dayananda - *Talks on Upadeśa Sāram*, pp. 99 – 100.

⁸⁴ *Śraddhāvān-labhate jñānaṁ, tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ* |

Jñānaṁ labdhvā parāṁ śāntimacireṇādhiḡacchati || Bhagavadgītā 4.39.

One who has trust (in the *śāstra* and in the words of the teacher), who is committed to that (knowledge) and who is master of one’s senses gains the knowledge. Having gained the knowledge, one immediately gains absolute peace.

IX

Naturally abiding mind or *samādhānam*

The nature of our mind is to shift its attention, as only then we can know things. The problem arises when it moves away from the chosen occupation. It generally happens on two counts. We may be interested in too many things or doing more than one thing at the same time. The second is lack of either intellectual or emotional interest in what we are doing. *Śāstra* has prescribed the qualifications taking these into account. Through discrimination, we discern that our essential pursuit is to obtain self-knowledge. Through dispassion, we remain free from unessential pursuits. Through *śama* and *dama*, we have a hold on our mind, the sense organs and organs of action. Through *titikṣā*, we have the physical and mental capacity to withstand the difficulties of living and devote ourselves to the pursuit. Through *uparama*, we withdraw from all unnecessary activities. Through *śraddhā*, we have trust in what we are listening to. As a result of these, our mind becomes relaxed and is naturally alert. It has objectivity and enjoys equanimity. In other words, it has *cittaśuddhi* and has become capable of devoting itself to the subject of study with mental poise. In this state called *samādhānam*⁸⁵, the mind naturally

⁸⁵*Samādhānam kim? What is samādhānam? Cittaikāgratā* | Unwavering steadiness of the mind. (Śaṅkarācārya, *Tattva-bodha*, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, p. 16.)

abides. This contemplative quality of the mind is an important qualification for understanding the self. *This condition is not the same as concentration where a distracted mind is temporarily forced to focus on the subject.* The self is undifferentiated and to recognise it, our mind must be in a state as similar to it as is possible⁸⁶.

X

Intense desire for freedom or *mumuṣṣutvam*

Our mind is now fully available for study. For sustaining this state, the desire to be free must be so intense that it prevails over all other desires like the big fish gobbling up all the smaller ones⁸⁷. Upaniṣads call such a competent and committed seeker of freedom as *dhīraḥ*⁸⁸ or the person who makes the best use of his intellect. Kaṭha Upaniṣad presents one in the young boy Naciketas. When he seeks the knowledge from Yama, the Lord of Death, Yama tries to dissuade him from his pursuit by offering to make him the emperor of the world with all the pleasures including those not attainable in this world and with as long a life as he wants. Naciketas rejects them outright

⁸⁶Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.4.23. says:

Tasmādevaṃ vicchānto dānta uparatastitikṣuḥ samāhito bhūtvātmānyevātmānaṃ pasyati. Therefore, he who knows it as such becomes self-controlled, calm, withdrawn into himself, patient and collected; he sees the self in his own self; he sees all as the self.

⁸⁷This is called intense seeking of freedom or *tivra-mumuṣṣutvam*.

⁸⁸ *Dhiyaṃ yarāti iti dhīraḥ* |

saying that life in any world is finite alone and tells Yama “let all your celestial vehicles, dance and music be yours only”⁸⁹ and insists on the knowledge being imparted to him⁹⁰. This is what ideal seeking is. While dispassion keeps us away from the non-self, it is the intense desire for freedom that turns us resolutely towards the self.

Having set out the necessary qualifications, we shall look into the methods prescribed for preparing the mind for self-knowledge in the next chapter.

⁸⁹ *sarvaṁ jīvitamalpameva tavaiva vāhāstava nṛtyagīte* | Kāṭha Upaniṣad, 1.1.26.

⁹⁰ This is called *jijñāsā-vairāgya* or desire for knowledge born out of dispassion.

CHAPTER SIX

PREPARING THE MIND FOR SELF- KNOWLEDGE⁹¹

I

Likes (*rāga*) and dislikes (*dveṣa*) are the impurities of the mind (*mala*)

The *śāstra*, besides prescribing the qualifications to gain self-knowledge, also indicates the methods of preparing the mind for self-knowledge. For detailing this, let us start at the very beginning when we are lacking in discrimination. At this stage, we are nothing but a collection of likes and dislikes. We desire particular objects, persons and situations that are the source of pleasure to us and dislike such of them which cause unhappiness in us. Based on the desires and dislikes in our mind, actions prompted by them⁹² arise. The problem with these actions is that they do not resolve desires and dislikes but perpetuate them. Success creates a liking while failure brings about a dislike. As a result, the mind is always under their hold. They distort the meaning of

⁹¹ This chapter is based essentially on Swami Dayananda, *The Sādhana and the Sādhyā*.

⁹² Desire-prompted action is called *kāmya-karma*.

the words of even the most competent *guru*. In their presence, if we are told that we are full and complete, we cannot understand that. They are therefore considered as the impurities of the mind (*mala*).

II

Values help us to avoid improper actions born out of our likes and dislikes

When our actions are governed by our likes and dislikes, we are not generally concerned as to whether they are in keeping with the injunctions of the *śāstra* or in conformity with the universal values like non-injury, truthfulness. In those situations, while we are aware as to what the proper action is, we know that we are not doing it. This creates a split in the mind and it prevents us from enjoying anything fully. Our sense of togetherness with the total order is also vitiated by our breach of the order through our acts contravening *dharma* and we feel alienated from it. This creates a sense of insecurity. We become a loser in both ways.

For guiding us towards proper conduct, Bhagavadgītā lists the values that are to be followed by us as seekers of knowledge so that we may make the right choice while performing actions and in transacting with others⁹³. When

⁹³ Bhagavadgītā, 13. 8 to 12. They are: humility, simplicity, non-injury, forbearance, honesty, service to the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-

we follow values in life, the choices that we make are not any more based on our likes and dislikes but on the criteria supplied by the values. But, it would be possible for us to do so only if we analyze their exact implications and understand as to how they become valuable to us. Without it, they become a list of do's and don'ts that are imposed on us. So, it is necessary for us to understand the value of the values so that our mind accepts them and makes them its own. Only then, we would be inclined to act in accordance with the values. Otherwise, they create a conflict in the mind and produce a feeling of guilt when our actions are guided by our likes and dislikes and not by the values.

We may now look into the more important of them.

The cardinal value is the value for a simple, tranquil mind. Every value, when analyzed, ultimately leads to only one value of acquiring such a mind. All our efforts are only to make us happy with ourselves and have a mind that is quiet and content. So, if the action based on our likes and dislikes does not bring this about, we must

control, detachment from sense objects, absence of egoism, constant awareness of misery in birth, death, disease etc., dispassion, non-identification with son, wife, house etc., equanimity in desirable and undesirable situations, unswerving devotion to *Īśvara*, seclusion, non-indulgence in people's company, constant self-enquiry and not losing sight of the fruit of knowledge. These are dealt with in detail in Swami Dayananda, *The Value of Values*.

realize that persisting with it is valueless to us. This constitutes the basic discriminative discernment (*viveka*).

Truth is our nature and we instinctively value it. Speaking untruth makes us the deliberate doer of false action at the level of speech. We know the truth and know instinctively that truth has to be spoken but we cannot do it. This fact makes us judge ourselves as the person who cannot do what he wants to do. Such a person is not fit for Vedānta or for anything worthwhile. Speaking the truth with understanding and conviction maintains the alignment of action with thought, avoids conflict in the mind and brings about a tranquil mind suitable for self-knowledge.

Straightforwardness (*āṛjavam*) is a value allied with truthfulness. It consists of freedom from mental angularities and being open. There is no variation between thought, word and deed. It keeps our mind uncluttered and simple.

Non-injury (*ahimsā*) is another basic value. It is the attitude that we should not hurt anybody, as we do not like to be hurt by any one. We can injure others through body, speech or mind (through negative thoughts). By being sensitive to the rights and points of view of others, including members of the animal and plant kingdom, we can avoid deliberate injury. Practice of non-injury changes us into a sensitive person and makes it easier to own our true nature through knowledge.

Absence of pride (*amānitvam*) is an important value as without it, it is not possible to retain a peaceful disposition of the mind. As a proud person, we expect others to recognize and respect us. We are hurt and angry when the response falls below our expectations. Thus, our happiness depends on others giving us respect. When we are hurt, we start planning to teach a lesson to the person who has caused the hurt. The hurt does not heal itself easily like the physical wounds. It remains in tact and we continue to be disturbed. To avoid it, we should be content with what we have so that we are happy regardless of whether it brings us respect or not. This attitude makes us a person with a harmonious frame of mind.

When we are proud, we expect to be respected for what we are; when we are pretentious, we show off more than what we are. Pretension arises out of the deep sense inadequacy. When we are pretending, we deliberately remain away from ourselves. When we cannot be with ourselves, acquiring self-knowledge is impossible. We have to face ourselves and own up the limitations that hurt us and avoid the disintegration of our personality through unpretentiousness (*adambhitvam*).

Accommodation (*kṣānti*) is a saintly value like non-injury (*ahimsā*). A saint does not consciously hurt another person in any way and accommodates persons just as they are and has the endless capacity to accept others. He

grants others the freedom to be what they are. When we are accommodative like the saint, we respond to the person and not to the action. We see wrong action as a mistake born of inner conflict and are humane to the person who commits it. The attitude to be accommodative expands our heart to accept people as they are, without desiring or demanding that they be different. Our mind is tranquil in any situation that we face. Such a mind is receptive to self-knowledge.

III

Pañca-mahā-yajña refines the mind

Śāstra, which sets down the appropriate values, also prescribes number of *karmas* or actions for the refinement of the mind (*antaḥ-karaṇa saṁskāra*)⁹⁴. The foremost among them is *pañca-mahā-yajña*. It consists of five daily acts of worship (*yajña*) for discharging our debt⁹⁵ to all those on whose shoulders we are standing and are able to look ahead.⁹⁶ The *yajñas* consists of worship of Vedas

⁹⁴ The person acting essentially according to his likes and dislikes is called *prākṛta puruṣa*, while the person acting according to *dharma* is called *saṁskṛta puruṣa*.

⁹⁵ The obligation that we have to discharge is called *ṛṇa*.

⁹⁶ Swami Paramarthananda, *Introduction to Vedānta*, p. 20-23.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (1.4.16.) says:

“The self is an object of enjoyment to all beings. That he makes oblations in the fire and performs sacrifices is how he becomes such an object to the gods. That he studies the Vedas is how he becomes an

(*brahma-yajña*), ancestors (*pitṛ-yajña*), deities (*deva-yajña*), human beings (*manuṣya-yajña*) and other living beings (*bhūta-yajña*). Through these, we correct our wrong attitude that the world is meant for our consumption and that others exist for our convenience. We develop humility by acknowledging, through our offering, the support that we get from these sources and our dependence on them.

In *brahma-yajña*, we worship Veda and the ṛṣis who have perceived it and have made it available to us. We regularly chant Veda, learn its meaning and teach it. We set up or aid the vedic schools (*veda-pāṭhāśālās*) and support vedic scholars. In *pitṛ-yajña*, we have unconditional reverence to our parents, worship our ancestors and perform the prescribed ceremonies. In *deva-yajña*, we worship *Īśvara* in the form of any deity of our choice through various means and build as well as maintain temples. Performance of *pūjā*⁹⁷ and celebration of various religious festivities are its traditional forms. In

object of enjoyment to the ṛṣis. That he makes offerings to the manes and desires children is how he becomes such an object to the manes. That he gives shelter to men as well as food is how he becomes such an object to them. And that the beasts and birds and even the ants, feed in his home is how he becomes an object of enjoyment to these. “ (Translation)

⁹⁷For details on performing *pūjā*, see the chapter, “Puja” in Swamini Pramananda Saraswati and Sri Dhira Caitanya, “*Pūrṇa Vidyā, Guidelines for Teaching, Part 7*” titled “Ishvara and Religious Discipline”.

manuṣya-yajña, we have reverential attitude to humanity and perform social service. Greeting everyone with folded hands (*namaskār*), soliciting guests before eating, digging of wells and tanks and establishment of free choultries are its traditional forms. In *bhūta-yajña*, we respect all forms of life. We avoid violence and do not kill either for eating, sport or commerce. Worshipping the trees and animals, vegetarianism, feeding the crow, the ant and the cow before eating, setting up of shelters for cows, planting of trees are its traditional forms.

The reverential recognition of *Īśvara* and his creation and the expression of gratitude to them expressed through *pañca-mahā-yajña* refine our mind and prepare it for self-knowledge.

IV

***Karma-yoga* neutralizes our likes and dislikes**

We saw that our likes and dislikes are not reduced through our actions and that they are actually sustained by them. Bhagavadgītā indicates as to how we can perform action so that it has the effect of neutralizing our likes and dislikes. The means suggested by it is to bring *Īśvara* who manifests, pervades and maintains everything into the picture. The understanding of *Īśvara* makes us recognize that we are integrated with the manifestation and that we cannot overlook its implications.

Let us look into them in respect of our action and its result. As regards action, we are attached to it, as we use our freewill, decide what to do, and do it using our skill, time and energy. We consider that we are the authors of the action and own up the entire action. As for the result, we are attached to it, since we took the trouble of doing the action only for obtaining the result. What we have not taken into account is *Īśvara*, who has provided us with everything. We are not the authors of either of our body-mind-sense-complex or of whatever we use. Everything is given to us. So, we can have no personal attachment to our action. In recognition of these facts, we take our performance of action to be an expression of gratitude to *Īśvara* for all that he has provided us. This attitude converts our action into an offering to him. This is called *Īśvara-arpaṇa-buddhi*.

Since our action is submitted to *Īśvara*, we would exercise restraint so that it does not go against *dharma*⁹⁸. Therefore, such action would no longer be entirely based on our likes and dislikes. When we, as a deliberate person continue in doing what is to be done, our action becomes free from the hold of our likes and dislikes.

As regards the result, we saw that when we consider our action to be a success, new like is caused and that when

⁹⁸ ... *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* | Yoga is discretion in action (through proper interpretation of *dharma*). Bhagavadgītā, 2.50.

we take it as a failure, new dislike is caused. But, when we do not judge the result either as a success or as a failure, no new like or dislike is caused. *Śāstra* reveals that there is no room for us to judge the result, as it is never a success or a failure. It is always appropriate. This requires to be explained. In the circumstances in which we are placed, we have the free will to decide as to what action we should take. Even so, we cannot determine as to what the result of our actions should be, as it is in accordance with *Īśvara's* law that governs the entire universe.⁹⁹ We can only estimate the result based on our understanding of the few laws that we know. It is only our assessment that fails or succeeds and not our action.

The determining law is not separate from *Īśvara*. So, *Īśvara* becomes the giver of the fruits of action.¹⁰⁰ The law is impartial and is infallible. So, the result is always proper. When the result is understood as coming from *Īśvara*, it becomes his *prasāda*¹⁰¹. When we receive the *prasāda* in the temple, we accept it with reverence and gratitude without judging it. Now that we know that the result is *prasāda*, it is similarly accepted without any

⁹⁹ *Karmaṇyevā'dhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana..* (Bhagavadgītā, 2.47)

You have the choice in performing an action but never in determining the result thereof.

¹⁰⁰ The giver of the fruits of action is called *karma-phala-dātā*.

¹⁰¹ Before eating, food is first offered to *Īśvara*. It gains his grace and it is called *prasāda*.

judgement. So, what is equal to our expectations is *prasāda*; what is exceeding our expectations is *prasāda*; and what is below our expectations or contrary to them is also *prasāda*. We are thus no longer attached with the result. Whatever it may be, we accept it as *prasāda* and it does not affect the equanimity of our mind¹⁰². This is called *Īśvara-prasāda-buddhi*. Performance of action with *Īśvara-arpaṇa-buddhi* and acceptance of the result with *Īśvara-prasāda-buddhi* constitute *karma-yoga*.

Karma-yoga is neither a technique nor a particular action meant for particular situations. It is our life. We are not a devotee whose devotion comes every now and then. As a *karma-yogī*, we are always devoted to *Īśvara*, performing actions with *Īśvara-arpaṇa-buddhi* and accepting the results with *Īśvara-prasāda-buddhi*.

V

Non-binding desires are harmless

The likes and dislikes that we have been discussing are those that are binding in that they compel us to fulfill them and in their non-fulfillment, we feel that we are a loser and are unhappy. We also have preferences. They are non-binding desires since they do not pressurize us to fulfill them. We do not come under their spell and their

¹⁰² The equanimity of the mind is called *samatvam*. *Samatvam yoga ucyate* .. (Bhagavadgītā, 2.47)

non-fulfillment does not upset the mind. They are not problems as they do not affect our equanimity and nothing needs be done about them so long as they do not contravene *dharma*. We can continue to have such preferences.

VI

Distraction of the mind (*vikṣepa*) is the other major problem

Distraction of the mind is the other major impediment to knowledge. Trying to know through an unsteady mind is like wanting to study the details of our face in an unsteady mirror. We may now look into the exact nature of this problem.

It is the nature of the mind to change fast. When we see a friend, the friend thought takes place in the mind. When we see a cow behind the friend, the cow-thought should take place distinctly in the mind for the cow to be cognized. For this to happen, the friend-thought goes away quickly and prevents the overlapping of the two thoughts. So, the mind changes quickly and completely to enable clear perception of different objects to take place. Thus, the changing nature of the mind is not a problem but is a boon.

The problem arises when the mind makes us go its way like the dog, which leads us when we take it out for a walk. Ordinarily, we do not pay any serious attention to it and allow it to function the way it wants even though our life becomes mechanical in the process. But now, as a seeker, when we want it to be fully available to receive self-knowledge, it is unable to do so. It moves away without our consent. It thus becomes necessary for us to train the mind not to be mechanical in its functioning.

VII

Upāsanā or meditation trains the mind to be undistracted

The practice prescribed for training the mind not to be mechanical is *upāsanā* or meditation. *Upāsanā* is the process of directing an unbroken flow of thought towards a locus sanctioned by the *śāstra*¹⁰³. Indications are given in Bhagavadgītā about the seat and posture for meditation. These are pointers and not rules. The basic requirement is that we should be able to sit in a given posture for forty-five minutes without our body becoming a source of distraction. We can, however, start doing *upāsanā* straightaway and accomplish this ability in course of time.

¹⁰³ *Upāsanā* is *sajātiya-vṛtti-pravāha* i.e., flow of thoughts of the same kind.

We sit for meditation, place the hands in the lap, lock the fingers, relax the body, close the eyes and turn the mind away from the world outside. When the mind has become relatively steady, we invoke *Īśvara* through any symbol representing him¹⁰⁴. It can be any deity of our choice. We think of him as the one from whom everything has come, by whom everything is sustained and into whom everything goes back. When we worship what we venerate, our I-sense with its likes and dislikes surrenders. In the process, our assertive I-sense becomes the humble I-sense, which is worshipping.

The next step is to offer mental worship. It can be done through *ślokas* of mental worship like *Śiva-mānasa-pūjā*¹⁰⁵ or any other. It can also be done according to our own thinking. We see vividly whatever we offer. We visualize every detail taking nothing for granted. The mental worship is concluded with prostration in which our whole body is laid before *Īśvara*. Through *upāsanā*, we become self-effacing and our mind gets trained to stay within the confines of a particular subject in the manner that we want. This is called *citta-ekāgratā* or undivided mental attentiveness.

¹⁰⁴ For details, see “Lord Appreciated through Upasanas” in Swamini Pramananda Saraswati and Sri Dhira Caitanya, “*Pūrṇa Vidyā*”, Part 7 titled “Isvara and Religious Discipline”, pp. 59-60.

¹⁰⁵ *Śiva-mānasa-pūjā* is composed by Śaṅkarācārya.

Ācāryas also teach their disciples meditations to take care of their particular problems. Some of them are relaxation-meditation, expansion-meditation and value-meditation. In one form of relaxation-meditation, the meditator lovingly visualizes beautiful scenes in nature like flowers in the garden, rolling green meadows, snow-capped mountains against the blue sky. In an expansion-meditation, which is done for freeing the mind from its restricted perspective, the expansive space over the vast ocean is usually meditated upon. In value-meditation, the positive virtues like truth, non-hurting, compassion, and patience, and negative traits like impulsive reaction, hurting others, jealousy, hate are reflected upon to see, respectively, the positive and negative aspects of these traits.¹⁰⁶

VIII

***Japa* or repetition of *mantra* with attention to the silence between the chants**

In distraction (*vikṣepa*), the mind moves from one object to another through association. For example, while listening to the teaching based on the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, the mind moves from the teaching to Śaṅkarācārya, then to the friend, Śaṅkar, then to the earlier days spent together and so on. The mind keeps

¹⁰⁶For some more details of these meditations, see Swami Paramarthaṇanda, *Introduction to Vedānta*, pp. 29-30.

moving from one thought to another without being aware of it. The thoughts are connected but they are dissimilar. Dissimilar thoughts distract the mind from the original thought. In the example given, it has moved from the teaching to the experience with Śankar.

Japa trains the mind not to wander. In *japa*, the same *mantra* like *namśśivāya*, *namo nārāyaṇāya* is repeated with attention to the gaps of silence between the chants. As the same *mantra* is repeated, the possibility of the build-up of association and development of distracting thought patterns is greatly reduced. Generally, they do not develop. If a different thought were to arise, we bring back the *mantra* without any reaction and continue the chanting as before.

There is a gap between any two successive thoughts even when the thoughts constantly flow. We do not usually notice this gap, as the flow of thought is rapid. In this gap, there is no tangible thought. When there is no thought, the mind is silent. Even as we have awareness of the thought when it is there, we have also the awareness of the lack of any thought. Thus, there is awareness with thought, then awareness without thought, then awareness with thought, then awareness without thought and so on. This is how thinking takes place. What is unchanging in the thought process is awareness. It is intrinsic and it does not change. During the mental silence in the gap between the chants,

this intrinsic awareness is recognized and our mind experiences tranquility (*śānti*).

Normally, we do not own up our tranquility between the thoughts. For doing so, we repeat the *mantra* in the following manner. We utter the *mantra* consciously and not mechanically. We do not go to the next repetition without seeing and owning up the silence between the two chants. By being aware of the silence between two successive chants, we avoid being mechanical. If we own up the silence constantly, in course of time, the thought - silence - thought pattern changes into silence - thought - silence pattern. Our mind abides easily in the silence, as it is natural to us.

This process enables us to be at home with ourselves. It prevents the mind from being mechanical. As *Īśvara's* name is being chanted, the attitude of devotion and surrender also develops. The assertive I-sense becomes non-projecting. Our mind relaxes and is at peace without any distraction.

IX

Supportive practices

Initially, adequate will power is necessary to follow these practices. For developing the necessary will power, generally deliberate denial or *tapas* is adopted. This consists of fasting (*upavāsa*), which is control of the eating

tongue, silence (*maunam*), which is control of the speaking tongue, pilgrimages (*yātrā*) for worship, which also trains the body to adjust to discomfort during travel and stay away from home.¹⁰⁷

In addition to these, regulation of the breath (*prāṇāyāma*) is very useful for calming the mind and the body. *Prāṇāyāma* is one of the eight limbs of the *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga*.¹⁰⁸ Even though the vision of this *Yoga* is at variance with Vedānta, the physical and mental practices of *Yoga* are very beneficial to the seeker. Another simple but very effective practice to calm the mind is to be aware of the breath as it enters and leaves the tip of the nose¹⁰⁹. Witnessing the breathing that is taking place without any

¹⁰⁷ For a comprehensive account of the various religious disciplines, see Swamini Pramananda Saraswati and Sri Dhira Caitanya, *Pūrṇa Vidyā, Part 7* titled “Iṣvara and Religious Discipline” pp. 68–143.

¹⁰⁸ See “Eight-limbed Yoga” in Swamini Pramananda Saraswati and Sri Dhira Caitanya, *“Pūrṇa Vidyā”, Part 7* titled “Iṣvara and Religious Discipline”, p. 140-143. The eight limbs are (1) *yama* (restraint), which consists of *ahimsā* (non-injury), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacarya* (celibacy) and *aparigraha* (absence of greed); (2) *niyama* (observances), which consists of *sauca* (purity), *santoṣa* (contentment), *tapas* (austerity), *svādhyāya* (study) and *Īśvara praṇidhāna* (devotion to *Īśvara*); (3) *āsana* (body posture); (4) *prāṇāyāma* (breath control); (5) *pratyāhāra* (restraint of sense organs); (6) *dhāraṇa* (fixing of mind on objects); (7) *dhyāna* (flow of thought on a particular subject without interruption); and (8) *samādhi* (absorption).

¹⁰⁹ This is called *prāṇa-vikṣaṇam*.

physical effort to regulate it and without any mental emotion or intellectual judgement makes us objective and free from tension. These are done before *pūjā*, *japa* and *upāsana*.

X

Dealing with our deep-seated problems

Now, we have a hold on the mind. But our mind retains the painful past impressions and emotions that we are unaware of at present. Hidden in the mind are the sense of helplessness and abandonment that it had not been able to handle especially in childhood. Deep hurt and guilt, which have been turned away from personal awareness, also lie inside.¹¹⁰ These are called *kaṣāya* and they manifest most unexpectedly in our mind like the bubbles that suddenly come up in placid waters with a “plop” sound and unsettle it.

We cannot handle the deeply painful past that surfaces suddenly only now. We cannot also change what has already happened. If someone holds us, we can seek help from others to free ourselves. Here, the holder, the held

¹¹⁰ The hurt is because of others doing things that should not have been done and not doing things that should have been done. The guilt is because of similar action and inaction by ourselves.

Kimahaṁ sādhu nākaravam | Kimahaṁ pāpamakaravamiti |

Why did I not do good (actions)? Why did I do evil (actions)?
(Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Brahmavallī, 9.)

and the holding are all the same. We can have only the understanding that certain problems are there. We can quietly recall the situations, the people and the events that disturbed us and accept them as they are like the way we accept the stars, the mountains and the birds. We neutralize our problem through accommodation.

We can also hope to find the solution through well-directed prayers.¹¹¹ The basis of our entire prayer is acknowledgement of our helplessness. We seek grace not to change the mind but to accept it. When we plead and implore, our will willingly submits. The willing submission constitutes acceptance of what disturbs us and what is accepted ceases to be a problem. Then, our emotions start going hand in hand with our intellect.

We are likely to have a number of disturbances and many kinds of deficiencies. These disciplines are helpful provided we are clear about their purpose. They are the means and not the end. These practices are for freeing the mind from its subjective attitude of attachment and aversion, or for preventing it from being distracted, or for relieving it of hurt, guilt and other hidden painful emotions, or for harmonizing the body-mind-sense-complex. *Śāstra* refers to them as for *citta-śuddhi* (mental purity) or *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi* (purity of the internal organ). Any discipline is *yoga* if it is meant for this

¹¹¹ See Swami Dayananda, *Morning Meditation Prayers*.

purpose and we may follow it for making our mind fit to receive the knowledge.

XI

The two committed life styles for the seeker

Bhagavadgītā specifies two committed life styles that the seeker of self-knowledge may follow. They are the life of activity with proper attitude to action and its results, which is *karma-yoga* and the life of renunciation, which is *sannyāsa*. As regards *karma-yoga*, the discipline and devotion inherent in it result in inner growth. This is called *saṁskāra* or refinement. We gain *citta-śuddhi* even while being engaged in actions and make the mind fit to receive knowledge¹¹².

The ultimate life style is that of the *sannyāsi*. *Śāstra* envisages it as the fourth and final stage in our life¹¹³ in which we are allowed to renounce all forms of *karma* and *upāsana* prescribed in the *karma-kāṇḍa* for committing ourselves totally to the pursuit of knowledge in *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. The four stages prescribed are, being the celibate

¹¹² *Kāyena manasā buddhyā kevalindriyairapi |*

Yogīnaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṁ tyaktvātmasūdhaye | |

Through body, mind, intellect and mere senses, yogins perform work without attachment, for the purification of the mind. (Bhagavadgītā, 5.11.)

¹¹³ See chapter 3, *Varṇāśrama-vyavasthā*, in Swami Paramarthananda's *Introduction to Vedānta*.

(*brahmacārī*) for learning the *śāstra* while staying with the *guru* and serving him, then being the house-holder (*gṛhastha*) with wife and children for pursuing *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, then being the dweller in the edge of the forest (*vānaprastha*) in preparation for *sannyāsa* and doing only the obligatory *karma* and finally, being the renunciate (*sannyāsī*) by giving up all *karmas* for the dedicated pursuit of self-knowledge for gaining *mokṣa*.

Renunciation of action is a natural consequence of *karma-yoga*. When the likes and dislikes are largely neutralized, we are ready to renounce action and take to *sannyāsa*. It is the outcome of self-growth and is an indication of a mature mind that is not demanding. We become free to wholeheartedly pursue self-knowledge to the exclusion of all other involvements. We have no roles to play like the husband/wife or the father/mother. We have no possessions, obligations, relationships and transactions. Our needs are confined to mere subsistence.¹¹⁴ We do not have any expectations and are not in competition with anyone. Our mental composure does not get upset. So,

¹¹⁴ “Desiring this world (the self) alone, monks renounce their home. .. The ancient sages, it is said, did not desire children (thinking), ‘What shall we achieve through children, we who have attained this self.’ .. They, it is said, renounced their desire for sons, for wealth and for the higher worlds, and lived a mendicant’s life.” (Translation of extract from Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.4.22.)

sannyāsa becomes the natural choice¹¹⁵. We would also notice that the essential qualifications prescribed by the *śāstra* for the seeker make him as good as a *sannyāsī*. As we had seen earlier, *uparati* (withdrawal), which is prescribed for the seeker, means not only the spirit of renunciation but also renunciation as a way of life, which is *sannyāsa*.

This does not, however, mean that as a householder (*gṛhastha*), we cannot gain self-knowledge even when we learn systematically under a competent *guru*. We can, provided we have acquired the prescribed qualifications and discharge our responsibilities as a *karma-yogī*. We have the examples of Janaka and Aśvapati who were steadfast *jñānīs* even while being a king. Only, the *gṛhastha's* stage of life is neither meant for it nor is suited for it.

¹¹⁵ Renunciation for gaining self-knowledge is called *vividiṣā-sannyāsa*. *Veditum icchā* (desire for knowledge) is *vividiṣā*. Renunciation that arises out of self-knowledge is called *vidvat-sannyāsa*. Renunciation for the purpose of contemplation on self-knowledge (called as *nididhyāsanam*) is also referred to as *vidvat-sannyāsa*. *Nididhyāsanam* is dealt with in chapter 18.

CHAPTER SEVEN

VEDĀNTA HAS TO BE LEARNT FROM A QUALIFIED *GURU*

I

We have to approach a *guru* for learning Vedānta

We have now acquired the prescribed qualifications to a reasonable extent and are ready to learn Vedānta. At this stage, *śruti* prescribes¹¹⁶ that

- we have to learn it from a *guru*;
- the *guru* must have been taught by a *guru*¹¹⁷ in accordance with the tradition,¹¹⁸ and that
- the *guru* must be established in the self-knowledge gained by him¹¹⁹.

The reasons for these stipulations need to be explained.

Veda communicates knowledge through words. But the words in the language can exactly communicate only the knowledge relating to objects obtained through

¹¹⁶ Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad , 1.2.12. It is reproduced at the end of the chapter.

¹¹⁷ He is called *śrotriyah*.

¹¹⁸ He is called *sampradāya-vid*.

¹¹⁹ He is called *brahma-niṣṭhaḥ*.

perception and the other means of knowledge based on it. Word is able to easily communicate such knowledge when everyone knows the object. In the case of other objects, word indicates through the species to which they belong or by their qualities or through their relationship they have with a known object or by their activities¹²⁰. For example, the unusual Chihuahua can be indicated as a dog, the unfamiliar durian fruit through its prickly skin and stinking smell, the unknown person as the brother of a known person, the unseen air by its movement, which makes the leaves flutter.

Unfortunately, the word cannot use any of these means for communicating about the self, since the self, which is the whole,

- cannot be perceived, as it is not an object;
- does not belong to any species as it is without a second;
- is without any quality, since the limitless cannot have any limitation through quality;
- is without any activity, since it is partless and since there is no second thing to act upon; and
- has no relationship, as nothing else is available to establish relationship.

¹²⁰ Well known through perception (*pratyakṣa prasiddhiḥ*) is called *rūḍhiḥ*, species is called *jāti*, attribute is called *guṇa*, activity is called *kriyā* and relationship is called *sambandha*. These are known as *śabda pravṛtti nimittāni* or conditions for the functioning of the word.

Thus, none of the conditions under which the word can function is fulfilled. No word can, therefore, exactly reveal the self. In this context, Taittirīya Upaniṣad¹²¹ says: “Words along with the mind return without reaching that.” It is Vedānta, which names the true self as *ātmā* when viewed from the individual standpoint and as Brahman from the universal standpoint.

To illustrate the problem in communication: when we say, “rose”, the object “rose” appears in our mind. However, when we hear the word “Brahman” or “*ātmā*”, nothing comes to our mind. Only the word is registered. The word does not result in any understanding since it does not refer to something of the world that is known to us. It is a non-worldly or *alaukika* word. It cannot be objectified (that is, known as an object) and the mind does not grasp anything in particular. If we try to explain it through another *alaukika* word, it does not also help. For example the statement “Brahman is the very same as *ātmā*”, does not make us understand Brahman since neither *ātmā* nor Brahman is known whereas the statement, “Rose is a fragrant, red flower” is successful in conveying information as all the words used pertain to the known world (*laukika*). However, certain things that cannot be expressed fully in words like taste or emotions can be appreciated directly by the senses and the mind without

¹²¹ *Yato vāco nivartante | Aprāpya manasā saha |* Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Brahnavallī, 9.

being expressed in words. So, the question arises as to whether *ātmā* or Brahman can be reached by the mind even though it is beyond the reach of the words. “No” says the Upaniṣad. “The eye does not go there¹²², nor speech, nor mind.”¹²³ But our predicament is that the Upaniṣads consist only of words and the knowledge has to take place only in our mind!

The problem is got over by using the words not for conveying their direct meaning but their intended meaning¹²⁴. That is, the words are the indirect expressions of the intended meaning. But we do not know the intended meaning of the words used, as we do not know the method of arriving at it. So, it is not possible for us to gain the knowledge by reading the text ourselves. For example, for revealing that we are the whole, it says, “*Tattvamasi*”, whose literal meaning is, “You are that”. Unless what “you” and “that” stand for are explained, we cannot know what the statement means.

There are other reasons as well. Sometimes, even the direct meaning of words requires to be explained, as it changes according to the way in which it is derived. For example, the word *jñāna* can mean the subject of

¹²² ‘Not go there’ means ‘not reveal it’.

¹²³ *Na tatra cakṣurgacchati na vāggacchati no manaḥ...* Kena Upaniṣad, 1.3.

¹²⁴ Literal meaning of the word is called *vācyārtha* while the indirectly expressed intended meaning is called *lakṣyārtha*.

knowledge or the object of knowledge or the instrument of knowledge or the process of knowledge¹²⁵. The purport of negative statements requires to be explained as negation can be used in six different senses. There are sentences of praise and condemnation that are not to be taken literally but have to be understood in terms of the context¹²⁶. Communication is also done through paradoxes. For example, to indicate that the concept of size does not apply to *ātmā*-Brahman and as such does not lend itself to comparative analysis, it is said that it is “bigger than the biggest and smaller than the smallest”¹²⁷. There are incomplete sentences that have to be completed through close adherence to other parts of the text. There are sentences with the words in inappropriate case endings and they have to be interpreted properly to make them meaningful. Upaniṣads also contain a number of unclear statements about Brahman¹²⁸ and statements that do not convey the main purport¹²⁹. In all these situations,

¹²⁵ These are respectively called *kartru*, *karma*, *karaṇa* and *bhāva vyutpattiḥ*.

¹²⁶ *Arthavāda*.

¹²⁷ *Aṇoraṇīyānmaḥato mahīyānā'tmāsya jantornihito guhāyām* | Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 1.2.20.

¹²⁸ Clear statement revealing Brahman is called *spaṣṭa-brahma-liṅga-vākya* and unclear statement revealing Brahman is called *aspaṣṭa-brahma-liṅga-vākya*.

¹²⁹ Statement conveying the main purport is called *tātparyā-yukta-vākya* and statement not conveying the main purport is called *tātparyā-rahita-vākya*.

the *mīmāṃsā śāstra* provides the key to the correct understanding of the text. All these facts rule out the self-study of Vedānta. We have to necessarily approach a competent *guru* for learning it.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad (6.14.1 and 6.14.2) drives home this point by comparing the seeker to a person blindfolded and abandoned in a forest and the *guru* to the person who releases his eyes from the bandage and guides him to reach his destination and then affirming that a person having a teacher acquires knowledge¹³⁰. In the same Upaniṣad, we also find the example of Nārada who is very learned in numerous branches of knowledge approaching Sanatkumāra for knowledge of the self with the request: “Oh! Venerable Sir, please teach me.” (7.1.1 to 7.1.3)

II

The *guru* must know the traditional teaching and its methods

The Upaniṣads and the teachers in the tradition use a number of methods to communicate the vision of Vedānta¹³¹. No teaching is required to prove the existence of *ātmanā*, as it is self-evident. We know that we exist. The teaching has to handle only our deeply ingrained incorrect

¹³⁰ .. *ācāryavānpuruṣo veda*..Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.14.2.

¹³¹ The methods are called as *prakriyās*.

understanding of it. When we say, “I am the conscious body-mind-sense-complex”, we have lumped together what is *ātmā* with what is not *ātmā*. The latter is called *anātmā*. The job of the Upaniṣads and the teaching methods is to convince us as to what is *anātmā* so that we can have correct understanding of *ātmā* by mentally separating *anātmā* from our existing notion and also make us know the relationship between the two.

The basic technique adopted is to start from the incorrectly known mixture of *ātmā* and *anātmā* and negate systematically all *anātmās* so that *ātmā* is known correctly. The *anātmā* component is called as *adhyāropa*, or super-imposition. When the *anātmā* is negated through knowledge, it is called *apavāda* or negation. The whole process is correction of error through knowledge. The steps of removal of error are gradual. So, we have to be properly led by the *guru* so that we may reach the final destination. This is the basic technique of *adhyāropa-apavāda*.

This situation of revealing through negation in gradual steps is similar to the seeing of the star called *Arundhatī*. This star is close to the star *Vasiṣṭha* and is too small to be easily perceived. Even *Vasiṣṭha* is difficult to see. During the marriage ceremony, the bride has to see *Arundhatī* to emulate her since *Arundhatī* and her husband *Vasiṣṭha* are the ideal couple who have been immortalized as stars. For this purpose, the moon, which is easily seen, is taken

as the starting point for her and her vision is shifted from the moon to the group of seven stars. From here, her vision is shifted to *Vasiṣṭha*. Once *Vasiṣṭha* is reached, then *Arundhatī* can be seen as the barely visible star closest to it¹³².

The teaching methods play the crucial role in the unfolding of the knowledge. The methods, which would be discussed in detail later, are:

- *Drg-dṛśya-viveka* (discrimination between the seer and the seen) which distinguishes *anātmā* from *ātmā* through the logic that what is seen as an object cannot be the seer, which is the subject,¹³³
- *Avasthā-traya-prakriyā* which uses the experience of waking, dream and deep sleep states to arrive at what is invariable in all the three states through the logic of invariable co-existence and invariable co-absence called as *anvaya-vyatirekha*,¹³⁴
- *Kārya-kāraṇa-prakriyā*, which establishes that since Brahman, which is *ātmā*, is the cause of manifestation, the effect, which is the manifestation is *anātmā*,¹³⁵ and

¹³² This is called *arundhatī-darśana-nyāya*.

¹³³ This is dealt with in Chapter 8.

¹³⁴ This is dealt with in Chapter 9.

¹³⁵ This is dealt with in Chapter 13.

- *Pañca-kośa-prakriyā*, which reveals the five functional parts of the body-mind-sense-complex (*pañca-kośas*) as *anātmā*¹³⁶.

Upaniṣads also reveal the extra-ordinary through the ordinary by employing our ability to know through attributes. So, it uses the apparent and incidental attributes of Brahman-*ātmā* to know it. Even as the sky is known through the apparent attribute of blueness, the self is revealed through it being apparently the witness of everything. The sentience of the insentient body and mind is used to know consciousness in its true nature. Existence of the world is used to know existence, which is Brahman¹³⁷. But to explain the attributeless through attributes require skillful handling of the methods adopted for the purpose by the Upaniṣads. For example, we should not end up by making the mistake that Brahman is of two kinds, one with attributes and the other without attributes.

Only when the *guru* has been taught by his *guru* according to the tradition (*sampradāya*), he would know the teaching methods and would be able to handle them properly to communicate the knowledge. He would be careful as not to use words in a manner that would lead to

¹³⁶ This is called *pañca-kośa-prakriyā* and is dealt with in Chapter 14.

¹³⁷ This is called *śākhā-chandra-nyāya*. The third digit of the moon, which is barely visible, is revealed through its seeming contiguity with the easily seen branch of the tree.

forming of wrong conclusions. He would also ensure that his teaching does not create concepts. Concepts are an obstacle to removal of self-ignorance since we are not trying to know an unknown entity through conceptualization but to recognise an existing fact. He would mention specifically whatever misconceptions are possible and negate them. He would answer fully the questions asked and clear the doubts. He would try to resolve all doubts as the intellect will never accept anything fully even if there is the least trace of doubt about it.

Śaṅkarācārya places great stress on the *sampradāya* by specifically warning against learning from scholars who, though well read in the *śāstra*, imagine what is not stated in it and misinterpret it. He also says that while they themselves have gone astray, they delude others also. So, he declares that even when a person is well versed in all *śāstras*, he deserves to be rejected as an ignoramus, if he is ignorant of the *sampradāya*¹³⁸.

We have also to learn from a live *guru* since the teaching has to be personal, as our strength and weakness in learning are different. Knowing us enables the teacher to

¹³⁸ *svayaṁ mūḍhaḥ anyāṁśca vyāmohayati śāstrārthasampradāyarahitatvāt, śrutihāniṁ aśrutakalpanāṁ ca kurvan* | *Tasmāt, asampradāyavit sarvasāstravidapi mūrkhavadeva upekṣanīyaḥ* | Extract from Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on Bhagavadgītā, 13.2.

appropriately handle the subject to communicate the teaching to us. He has also to be readily available to clear our doubts.

III

The *guru* should be established in self-knowledge

Upaniṣad is particular that the *guru* should have recognized that he is Brahman-*ātmā* and continue to remain as such. Actually, when the *guru* is not able to abide in the knowledge, he is considered as an ordinary *guru*¹³⁹. He is, however, not considered unfit for teaching, as he can teach the *śāstra* on the same lines as he has learnt it from his *guru*. He is aware as to how his *guru* handled the difficulties that the disciples had in understanding the text. But, he is not what he is unfolding. His words will not have the ring of infallible truth about them and his exposition may not be insightful. He can teach it only as the knowledge contained in the scriptures, as it has not yet been validated by the recognition of himself as Brahman-*ātmā*.

The superior *guru* is obviously the person who has learnt from a *guru* belonging to the *sampradāya* and having gained the knowledge is a steadfast *jñāni*¹⁴⁰. As he has learnt the *śāstra* systematically and as he is himself the

¹³⁹ He is called a *kevala śrotriya*.

¹⁴⁰ He is called a *śrotriya brahmaniṣṭha*.

meaning of the words, he is extremely dexterous in handling the *pramāṇa*. He knows how to approach the subject from the angle in which we are trying to look at it and correct our wrong understanding. As he knows adequacy himself, by using ordinary, known words, he can successfully create the context in which the words can show our limitlessness. When he is teaching, both the person and the words disappear and only the meaning remains. There is real *upadeśa*.¹⁴¹ The whole vision of the *śāstra* is there for us to understand with the result that those of us who are fully qualified are enabled to recognize the self at the time of teaching itself. He is the best that we can have.

Śāstra considers the *jñānī* who has not learnt the *śāstra* according to the *sampradāya* from a *guru* as an inferior *guru*. This is because he does not know the methodology of teaching and will not be able to communicate the knowledge systematically¹⁴². We may approach him for receiving his blessings and for getting inspired by him but not for being taught.

As for our choosing the *guru*, since we are not *jñānīs*, we cannot identify a *jñānī*. And no *jñānī* will declare that he is one. So, what we can do is to choose a *guru* belonging to

¹⁴¹ *Ananyaprokte'gatiratra nāsti.* When taught by the one who is non-different from the self, there is no misunderstanding about this (self). Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 2.1.8.

¹⁴² He is called a *kevala brahmaniṣṭha*.

the *sampradāya* who is devoted to the teaching of Vedānta.

We may now conclude with *mantra* 1.2.12 of Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, which puts in a nutshell the entire exposition made so far:¹⁴³

A seeker of Brahman-*ātmā* should resort to dispassion (renunciation) after examining the worlds acquired through *karma*, with the help of the understanding that what is not a product (the whole or *mokṣa*) cannot be attained through *karma*. Therefore, to attain knowledge of that (Brahman-*ātmā*), he must necessarily approach, with *samit* in hand (that is, with *śraddha*) a teacher who has learnt the scriptures in accordance with the *sampradāya* from a *guru*, and is established in Brahman-*ātmā*.

The stage is now set for the revelation. As Kaṭha Upaniṣad says:

Arise (be discriminative). Awake (seek self-knowledge). Having approached the great ones, may you know (the self)¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴³ *Parīkṣya lokān karmacidān brāhmaṇo nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtah kṛtena | Tadvijñānārtham sa gurumevābhigacchet samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahmaniṣṭham | |*

¹⁴⁴ *Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varānnibodhata |* Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 1.3.14.

Thus begins in the next chapter the teaching by the *guru* to the student who is equipped to receive the knowledge.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ENQUIRY INTO THE SELF AS THE SUBJECT

I

The subject-object division

It is possible to divide everything into two distinct categories for the purpose of analysis. When we look at the entire picture, we find that what is unique is ourselves. We are aware of ourselves. We also see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and become aware of other things. Everything that we come to know through them is different from us in that we are the one who are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching everything else. We constitute the subject and everything else is the object of our knowledge. The latter includes all that is known whether animate or inanimate. Everything that we have known earlier is also the object of our knowledge. Everything that we do not know now but will come to know later will also be the object of our knowledge. If we go to any of the other worlds, which *śāstra* speaks of, they will also be objects of our knowledge¹⁴⁵. *Īśvara* will also be

This Chapter is essentially based on the book, *Talks on Who am I* by Swami Dayananda and talks No 37 and 38 by Swami Dayananda for the TV recorded in the *gurukula* at Anaikatti in 2003.

an object. Therefore, everything without exception, which is other than the subject, is the object. So, the analysis of both the subject and the object will cover the entire picture. Upaniṣads take any one of them as the starting point and analyze. We shall start with the subject.

II

We consider the body to be the subject

In all languages, there are pronouns – “he”, “she” and “it”. From *Īśvara* to all persons and animals, the pronouns “he” and “she” are used. For all the others “it” is used. But the pronoun “I” is used nowhere else except for oneself, the subject. I am the only one who is the subject and for everyone, there is at all times only oneself who is available for analysis as the self.

Beginning our enquiry, let us demarcate the subject from the object. All of us are definite that the physical body defines the limit of the subject since we exist in the physical body. If some one touches our physical body, we feel that we are touched. We do not have the I-sense with reference to anything outside the physical body. Every thing up to the skin is I and everything beyond the skin is

¹⁴⁵ *Bhuḥ* is earth; *Bhuvah*, *Svah*, *Mahah*, *Janah*, *Tapah*, and *Satya* are the higher lokas and *Atala*, *Vitala*, *Sutala*, *Rasātala*, *Talātala*, *Mahātala* and *Pātāla* are the lower lokas.

“not-I”. Obviously, the skin of the body is the line of separation between the subject and the object.

It is thus that the physical body determines the lot of I. The condition of the body is the condition of I. The body is tall, fair and fat; I am tall, fair and fat. When the body is born, I am born. The age of the body is the age of I. When the body perishes, I perish. Where the body is, there I am. Body sits here, I sit here. When the body is walking, I am walking. The body is sleeping; I am sleeping. Whatever the body does, that I do.

III

We mix up the known with the knower

All these are based on the reasoning that “I am the physical body”. Taking the body as I is quite different from having a relationship with it. There are houses and houses and we can have relationship with a particular house and say: “This is my house.” Similarly, there are bodies and bodies and we can say: “This body is mine”. But to say that the body is I is altogether different and this assumption does not stand scrutiny. When we say, “I am tall”, it is because we know that the body is tall. Knowing the body as tall is the same as knowing that the tree is tall. They are not any different from each other, as we are the knower of the tree as much as we are the knower of the body. But when we know that the tree is tall, we do not say that we are tall. Even so, when we know that the body

is tall, we say that we are tall even though the body is as much an object of knowledge as the tree.

This is because of the mixing up of the known object with the knower subject¹⁴⁶. This is caused by ignorance or *avidyā*.¹⁴⁷ It is through the mental separation of the known from the knower¹⁴⁸ that this conclusion can be set right. The separation is done through the basic principle that for something to be perceived, it has to be different from the knower and that whatever is known through perception is a known-object and cannot be the knower-subject. And when the knower and the known are different from each other, it follows that the attributes of the known object cannot be ascribed to the knower subject. We may now apply this reasoning to identify the subject.

IV

Mental separation of the known from the knower

Let us start with the body, which we consider to be the subject. We perceive the body and are aware of the changes that it undergoes. It is a distinctly known entity and I, the knower, cannot be the body, which is the

¹⁴⁶ This is known as *dṛg-dṛśya-aviveka*.

¹⁴⁷ This is also called as *māyā*. This is dealt with in detail later.

¹⁴⁸ This teaching method (*prakriyā*) is called *dṛg-dṛśya-viveka* and is explained in the text of the same name, which is ascribed to Śaṅkarācārya.

known. Tallness is the attribute of the known object, the body. Since the knower subject is different from the known object, not only the tallness but also all the other attributes of the known body are not the attributes of the knower subject. The conclusions are therefore that I, the knower subject, am neither the body nor do I possess its attributes.

Then, am I the sense organs, since I say, "I see", "I hear", "I smell"? This conclusion is again not correct. I very well know the condition of my sense organs. I know that my eyes are sharp and that my nose, skin and tongue are sensitive. I am also aware of their functioning. They are all objects of my knowledge. So, I cannot be the sense organs that I know.

Am I then the mind, since I say, "I am at peace" when the mind is at peace and say that "I am agitated" when the mind is agitated. Applying the same test, calmness and restlessness also belong to the known category, since it is only through knowing the mind that I am able to say that I feel that I am peaceful or disturbed. In fact, I am aware of the arrival and departure of various thoughts. Since I cannot take the known objects to be the knower subject, I cannot also be the mind.

Am I then the intellect, which analyses and decides? Again, I am aware of the process of reasoning done by the

intellect and so I cannot be the known object, which is the intellect.

Am I then the memory that constitutes my autobiography? Again, I am aware of the coming and going of thoughts relating to the past and I cannot be the memory that becomes known to me.

Is it that I am the I-sense because of which I say, "I work", "I experience" or "I know". But, this I-sense also belongs to the category of the known, as I know that I have the I-sense except in moments of joy, the state of deep sleep and in the state of absorption during meditation. So, I cannot also be the I-sense, which I know.

Now, there is nothing left to negate. Am I then the void or nothingness? This is ridiculous, since, if there is anything that cannot be negated, it is that I am aware and that I exist. The very fact that I am making the enquiry shows that I exist.

V

I am the awareness or consciousness

Who am I then? We have so far negated what we are not. In the negative conclusions "I am aware that I am not the body", "I am aware that I am not the sense organs", "I am aware that I am not the mind", "I am aware that I am not the intellect", "I am aware that I am not the memory", "I

am aware that I am not the I-sense” and “I am aware that I am not nothingness”, there is a common, unnegated positive component, which is that “I am aware”. The one who is aware is called the awarer. Thus the process of separation of the known from the knower has brought us to the awarer as the subject.

“Awarer” reveals a person with reference to the function of being aware of objects. We have now to know as to what is intrinsic in the awarer. This is done by removing the object and inquiring into the awarer. If the object is removed, the awarer loses his status as the awarer and what remains of him without the function of being the awarer is awareness.

Śruti provides the next crucial step, which is unknown to us. It reveals that the awareness in the body-mind-sense-complex that makes it sentient does not belong to it and that it is borrowed. It reveals that the self is not the borrowed awareness but is the awareness, which is the source of awareness in the mind, the senses and the body. We shall refer to the source awareness merely as awareness.

This awareness and the awarer are crucially different. For functioning as the awarer with borrowed awareness, the awarer is connected both with awareness for borrowing it and with the object of which it is aware. Awarer is thus an entity with borrowed awareness, which belongs to the

relative realm of the subject-object. It is not an independent entity, since it is dependent on awareness. But, awareness is not dependent on anything, as it exists by itself. It is also of the non-relative realm. It is so because, while the relative awarer is connected to the non-relative awareness, *non-relative awareness is not related to the relative awarer. The relationship between them is not reciprocal.* That is, while awarer exists entirely due to awareness with which it is connected, non-relative awareness is not the relative awarer. This is like the relationship between the light and the objects that it illumines. While the objects are linked to the light, the light is entirely unrelated to and unaffected by what it illumines. Light remains the same regardless of whether it lights up the holy water of the river Ganges or the dirty water of the drain. And light is independent of the objects and exists even when there are no objects.

The word that is usually used for this non-relative awareness is "consciousness". The other words used for consciousness, which is non-relative are: original consciousness, pure consciousness, principle of consciousness and the absolute. We will refer to it merely as either consciousness or awareness. The net result of this enquiry made with the help of logic and the *śruti* is that consciousness is the self.

Knowing the self as consciousness leads to further discoveries about it. When we hear anything, awareness

or consciousness is; otherwise, we cannot hear. When nothing is uttered, we know that nothing is uttered. Knowing this is possible only if consciousness is there, as otherwise we would not know that nothing is uttered. The same position holds good when we see or do not see, when we taste or do not taste, when we smell or do not smell, when we touch or do not touch. Similarly, when a thought comes, consciousness is, as otherwise we cannot know the thought. When thought goes, consciousness is, as without it we would not know the absence of thought. Thus, consciousness always exists regardless of the presence or absence of any object. It always exists as awareness.

We also find that there is no distance between consciousness and any object. When we are looking at our hand that is nearby, we find that there is zero distance between the hand in consciousness and consciousness. If we see the most distant star, we find that there is no distance between it and consciousness. We are aware of space; so, space is also within consciousness. As such, the concept of space and the limitation of space cannot arise for consciousness. Since everything is in consciousness, consciousness can have no form, dimension or boundaries. The statement that consciousness is all-pervasive inadequately expresses this fact.

The question now arises as to why we are not aware of all the objects when everything is in consciousness. It is

because we perceive only those objects that are within the reach of our sense organs through our mind. Everything, even though it is unperceived by us, is not outside consciousness. It is like some persons being inside with reference to the space within the house but everyone without any exception being inside with reference to the entire space. Similar is the position with the objects cognized by the mind and the objects in consciousness. Some are in our minds and are known; everything else is out of our minds and remains unknown; but everything known and unknown to us are always in consciousness.

As regards the presence of consciousness in terms of time, we may apply the same logic. Since we are aware of time, it is also within consciousness. Hence, the concept of time and the question of limitation of time cannot arise for consciousness.

Thus, we arrive at the conclusion that we are consciousness to which no limitation can apply. So, when we say, "I am", it means "Consciousness is". This consciousness, which is the self, is called as *ātmā*¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁹ *Āpnoti iti ātmā* | That which includes all.

VI

Consciousness is existence

The self is not only consciousness but is also existence. For anything to exist, it has to be known to exist by some person or the other at some time or the other. Thus, everything is existent because it is evident. Otherwise, it cannot be stated to exist. So, existence presupposes knowability. Knowability presupposes awareness or consciousness since it is through consciousness that everything, whether it be an object in the external world, or our body or our internal mental state is known. Thus, while existence is knowability, knowability is consciousness. When we say, "Swamiji exists", it also means that Swamiji-consciousness is. So, "is" in "Swamiji is", denotes not only the existence with reference to Swamiji but also the consciousness with reference to Swamiji. Existence is called *sat*. Consciousness is called *cit*. What is *cit* has to be *sat* and what is *sat* has to be *cit*. So, *sat* will bring in *cit* and *cit* will bring in *sat*. Consciousness is existence and existence is consciousness.

To explain it in concrete terms, the existence of an object is known in the form of thought. The thought-form is called *vṛtti*. When the object-thought is illumined by consciousness in the mind, knowledge of the object-existence takes place. Existence (*sat*) is always existence-consciousness (*sat-cit*) since self-existent consciousness can alone be *sat*. Consciousness (*cit*) is always

consciousness-existence (*cit-sat*), since consciousness is self-established. Even if there is no thought, the consciousness-existence is still there, as it is not dependent on the thought for its existence. Similarly, consciousness-existence without the body, consciousness-existence without the world, continues to be consciousness-existence.

Consciousness or the self is self-illuminating or *svaparakāśa*. It is self-luminous in the sense that, while it reveals everything else, it itself is not revealed by anything¹⁵⁰. It is self-evident. As evidence and existence go together, what is self-evident is self-existing. What is self-existent is called *svataḥsiddha* or self-established. Thus, *svaparakāśa* is *svataḥsiddha*.

VII

The position of the body-mind-sense-complex with reference to consciousness

We may now look into the position of the body-mind-sense-complex with reference to consciousness, which is the self.¹⁵¹ The following example will help to clarify their

¹⁵⁰ It is wrong to say that the self illumines itself since it cannot be simultaneously the illuminator and the illumined. Illumination is its nature (*svarūpa*) and is not action on its part.

¹⁵¹ This section is based on Chapter 11 of the book *Introduction to Vedanta* by Swami Paramarthananda.

relationship. Supposing some one points out his hand to us and then asks, “what is there?” our answer would be immediate: “the hand”. If we were asked: “What else is there in the hand?” we would look again and say: “Some lines are there in the hand and some wrinkles are there in the skin”. What we would miss to notice even if we were to look again is the light on the hand because of which we are able to see the hand. The presence of light is usually taken for granted by us since it is there with every object that we perceive and we do not feel any need to take note of it. Similarly, we do not recognise the consciousness aspect of the body-mind-sense-complex.

Now, if we look into the relationship between the hand and the light, we find that

- Light is not a part, property or product of the hand since the hand is not always lighted;
- Light is an independent entity which pervades the hand and makes it visible;
- Light does not get limited by the hand, while lighting the hand; it is as pervasive as before since wherever the hand is moved, it can be seen;
- Light does not cease to be present when the hand is not there; light is there, regardless of the presence or absence of the hand; while the hand is dependent on the light for it to be seen, the presence of the light is not dependent on the presence of the hand;

- Light, which is always everywhere, is not visible to us wherever there is no object that can reflect it.

According to the *śruti*¹⁵², the relation between consciousness, which is the self, and the body-mind-sense-complex is similar to the connection between the light and the object that it illumines. So, it is possible to make similar conclusions about consciousness, and say that

- Consciousness, which is the self, is not a part, property or product of the body-mind-sense-complex;
- Consciousness, which is the self, is an independent entity and its manifestation in body-mind-sense-complex makes it sentient;
- Consciousness, which is the self, is not limited to the body-mind-sense-complex; it is present both in it and outside it;
- Consciousness, which is the self, is not affected by the destruction of the body; in the absence of the body, it continues to be present in the unmanifest condition;
- Consciousness, which is the self, is present always and everywhere even though it is not recognizable when the manifesting medium is not available.

¹⁵² *Sūryo yathā sarvalokasya cakṣuḥ* (Kāṭha Upaniṣad, 2.2.11.)

Just as the sun, which is the eye of the entire world.

We will be discussing further aspects of this subject in the following chapters.

CHAPTER NINE

ANALYSIS OF THE SUBJECT IN ITS THREE STATES OF EXPERIENCE

I

The three components of the body

Having considered the subject with the support of reasoning and the *śruti* and arriving at the self, we may now analyze it through our experience, reasoning and the *śruti*.¹⁵³ When we consider ourselves, due to ignorance (*avidyā*), as individuals confined to the body-mind-sense-complex¹⁵⁴ or as the *jīva*, we undergo three different states of experience. They are the waking state in the waking world, the dream state in the dream world and the dreamless sleep state called as the deep sleep state in the deep sleep world¹⁵⁵. *Śāstra* calls the body-mind-sense-complex as the abode of experience during these states¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Analysis is generally done through *śruti* (veda), *yukti* (reasoning) and *anubhava* (perception of the object and recognition of the subject).

¹⁵⁴ This is called *dehātma-buddhi*. The body-mind-sense-complex is called *kārya-karaṇa-saṅghātā*.

¹⁵⁵ The teaching method (*prakriyā*), which uses these three states, is called *avasthā-traya-prakriyā*.

¹⁵⁶ It is called *bhogāyatanam*.

and reveals that it consists of three parts, namely, the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body.¹⁵⁷

The gross body is made up of the elements of space (*ākāśa*), air (*vāyu*), fire (*agni*), water (*āpa*) and earth (*pr̥thivī*)¹⁵⁸ in their gross condition. The gross body can be perceived and consists of the head, the trunk, the hands and the legs. It is subject to six changes: exists (in the potential state), is born, grows, transforms, decays and dies.¹⁵⁹ It has a life as long as the fruits of the person's actions in his previous lives¹⁶⁰ that are allotted for undergoing during the present life¹⁶¹ take to be experienced.

The subtle body is made of the same five elements in their subtle state¹⁶². They are not visible. The subtle body consists of -

- the sense organs¹⁶³ through which we gain knowledge, namely the eyes, the ears, the skin, the

¹⁵⁷ The gross, subtle and causal bodies are called *sthūla śarīra*, *sūkṣma śarīra* and *kāraṇa śarīra*.

¹⁵⁸ These are called *pañca-bhūtas*.

¹⁵⁹ The six change of states are called as *ṣaḍbhāva-vikārah*, are *asti*, *jāyate*, *vardhate*, *vipariṇamate*, *apakṣīyate* and *vinaśyati*.

¹⁶⁰ This is called *sañcita-karma*.

¹⁶¹ This is called *prārabdha-karma*.

¹⁶² It is also called as *linga-śarīra*, since it is through it that the self is known.

tongue and the nose; the sense organs refer to their functioning, which is invisible and subtle, and not to their physical counterparts (*golakams*) which are visible and gross;

- the organs through which we act which are the mouth, the hands, the legs, the organs of excretion and reproduction; again, these refer to their functioning which is invisible and subtle and not to their physical counterparts which are visible and gross;
- the five vital principles, *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna* and *samāna*¹⁶⁴ behind all the physiological functions and the operations of all the organs; and
- the *antaḥ-karaṇa* (internal organ), which is the aggregate of the mental processes of (i) the mind (*manas*) consisting of thoughts, which are indecisive, and feelings; (ii) the intellect (*buddhi*) consisting of discerning thoughts; and (iii) the

¹⁶³ The organ of knowledge is called as *jñānendriya* and the organ of action is called *karmendriya*. The *jñānendriyas* are eyes (*cakṣu*), ears (*śrotram*), skin (*tvak*), tongue (*rasanā*) and nose (*ghrāṇa*). The *karmendriyas* are mouth (*vāk*), hands (*pāṇi*), legs (*pāda*), organs of excretion (*pāyu*) and reproduction (*upastha*).

¹⁶⁴ *Prāṇa* is the vital principle of energizing, *apāna* is the vital principle of cleansing, *vyāna* is the circulating vital principle, *samāna* is the assimilating vital principle and *udāna* is the forceful rejecting vital principle.

memory (*citta*) consisting of the stored thoughts and feelings and (iv) the I-sense (*ahaṅkāra*), which is identification of the individual in all the processes. It is the I-sense, which creates the distinction between the experiencer-I and the experienced-object.

Buddhi, which is the subtlest in the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, has the capacity to manifest (or reflect) consciousness (*ātmā*), in it. On *buddhi* manifesting consciousness, the mind gains consciousness from it. The sense organs gain consciousness from the mind while the physical body gains consciousness from the sense organs. The manifestation of consciousness in the entire body-mind-sense-complex makes us conclude that the body-mind-sense-complex is *ātmā*. This is correct. But we also conclude that *ātmā* is the body-mind-sense-complex. This is incorrect and is the cause of all our problems.

Buddhi is the instrument of knowledge. Knowledge is in the *buddhi* in the form of *vṛtti*, or mental modification, which we generally refer to as thought. When consciousness is reflected in the *vṛtti*, the *vṛtti* becomes known. It is important to understand that the *vṛtti* itself is not *jñāna*.

The internal organs cannot be individualized and given specific locations. They are four different

mental processes at work. It is given a particular name contextually depending upon the predominance of the mental process that is functioning. However, the composite internal organ is often referred to as the mind.

The subtle body also undergoes change like the gross body. When it leaves the gross body, the gross body loses its sentiency and dies. The subtle body resolves into the causal body and the living being continues to exist in it. According to its allotted fruits of action, it takes another subtle and gross body and starts its interaction with the world in which it comes into being. This being is called the *jīva*.

The causal body is formed of the five elements in their most subtle form. It is the seed-state of manifestation and it is in the invisible, undifferentiated form.¹⁶⁵ It is from the casual body that the subtle body is formed and sustained. It is from the subtle body that the gross body is formed and sustained. The causal body is also the resolution ground of the subtle body. During deep sleep, the subtle body withdraws into the causal body to manifest again on

¹⁶⁵ *Anirvārcyānādhyavidyārūpaṁ śarīradvayasya kāraṇamātraṁ satsvarūpā'jñānaṁ nirvikalpakarūpaṁ yadasti tatkāraṇaśarīram* | That which is inexplicable, beginningless and in the form of *avidyā*, the cause for the other two bodies, ignorant of one's own real nature, free from duality or division is known as the causal body. (Śaṅkarācārya, *Tattva-bodha*, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, p. 30.)

waking up. After death, the subtle body resolves into the causal body. On the resolution of the entire manifestation (*pralaya*) also, the subtle body resolves into the causal body. Both at the time of the next birth and after *pralaya*, the subtle body is formed from the casual body and the gross body is formed from the subtle body. Then the *jīva* begins interacting with the world in which it comes into being.

The causal body is in the form of *avidyā*, which conceals the true nature of the limitless self and projects it as the manifestation with limitations of form, attributes and change.¹⁶⁶ It is because of *avidyā* that the self is mistaken to be the body-mind-sense-complex and everything else is erroneously considered as real, independent entities separate from the self¹⁶⁷.

II

The three states of experience

Our experience as the *jīva* with these three bodies is in the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep¹⁶⁸. In the waking state, we function through the physical body, the

¹⁶⁶ Concealing is called *āvaraṇa* and projection is called *vikṣepa*.

¹⁶⁷ Depending on the context, *avidyā* is also referred to as *māyā*, *avyākta* and *prakṛti*. These are dealt with in detail later.

¹⁶⁸ The waking, dream and deep sleep states are called respectively, *jāgrat-avasthā*, *svapna-avasthā* and *suṣupti-avasthā*.

sense organs and the *antaḥ-karaṇa* making use of our gross, subtle and causal bodies. In this state, we remain connected with the world by knowing it through our sense organs and interacting with it through our organs of action. We function as the knower (*jñātā*), the doer (*kartā*) and the experiencer (*bhoktā*). Our experience is stored in the memory and contributes to the formation of latent tendencies in the mind called *vāsanās*. Our physical, oral and mental actions done by exercising our free-will earn us the fruits of action (*karma-phala*), which consists of *puṇya* (merit) and *pāpa* (demerit).

In the dream state, our identification with the gross body ceases. We do not know that we have a physical body and that there is a physical world. Our connection and transaction with the waking world ceases. Now we are interacting in the dream world with a dream body with dream sense organs. All these are subtle and are created by our mind with the impressions stored in it. These impressions could also be of our previous lives¹⁶⁹. During the dream, our dream body and sense organs and the dream world seem no different from the physical body, sense organs and the waking world. Our dream world appears as external to us just like the physical world in our waking state. We depend on the dream world the same way as we depend on the waking world in the

¹⁶⁹ Sometimes the past life experiences also manifest in the waking state as skills even at a very early age or as love or hatred for certain persons and things.

waking state. The dream world is as real to us during the dream as the outside world is to us in waking state. It is only on waking up that we call our experience as a dream that had occurred within us. Only then, we realize that the dream world was not supporting us but that we had created the dream world and its transactions.

The distinction between the dream and waking states is very elusive. During the dream, everything is as real as the waking state. The dream tiger is as real as the tiger in the waking state and the dream fear of the dream tiger is equally real. If we say that dream objects are unreal and that the dream water will not quench the thirst in the waking state, it is equally true that the water jug placed near the bed will not quench the dreamer's thirst. Just as what is affirmed by the dream experience is denied by the waking experience, what is experienced in the waking state is denied by the dream experience. We experience nothing in the dream that would suggest that the experience that we are having is different from that of the waking world. Thinkers of all traditions have always been baffled as to whether there is any real difference between them. King Janaka once underwent the experience of being a beggar in one of his dreams. On waking up, he experienced himself as a king. He wondered as to which one of them is to be taken as true. So, he asked his *guru*: Am I a king dreaming of being a beggar or a beggar dreaming of being a king? The question arises out of mixing up of two different states. The waking state is,

however, generally considered as real and the dream state as unsubstantial. This is because others can also perceive what we perceive in the waking state. Moreover, the dream lasts a few minutes whereas the waking state extends for hours. There is also the continuity of the waking world despite the interruption caused by the dream or the sleep. Only with the attainment of self-knowledge, we would come to know that the waking world also lacks essential substantiality like the dream.

In the deep sleep state, we function only in our causal body. Our *antaḥ-karaṇa* is dormant. We do not experience our physical body, the physical world and our mind. We do not have any I-sense or our memory. There is neither the internal perception of the *antaḥ-karaṇa* nor the external perception of the *jagat*. We do not know that we are asleep. Only the involuntary activities are functional. Since the mind is withdrawn, we remain free from all effort. We do not know anything during the sleep and we enjoy our sleep. On waking up, we identify ourselves with the very person who went to sleep with the same mind, memory and I-sense. We also know that we slept happily without knowing anything. Thus, it is not a state of blankness but of awareness of the state of enjoyment as well as of not knowing anything. This state of consciousness is described as, “though seeing then, it does not see”.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ *Yadvai tanna paśyati paśyanvai tanna paśyati ..*

During deep sleep, since the I-sense identified with the mind, the sense organs and the physical body is not functional, our existence is without the nature of the individual. There is the absence of the subject-object duality. In that sense, we have intimations of our true self during deep sleep. But we continue to be ignorant of our true self since the causal body is the very basis of our ignorance of our true nature. It is a state not of knowledge but of ignorance. Even though we experience happiness during sleep, we do not know that it is derived from our intrinsic nature.

III

The invariable in all the states of experience

Every day, we pass through the different states of the waker, the dreamer and the sleeper. Nevertheless, we take ourselves to be essentially the waker who sleeps regularly and dreams frequently. *Śāstra* enquires into this assumption by employing the principle of *anvaya-vyatireka*¹⁷¹. *Anvaya* is invariable concomitance or co-existence of two or more things. If one is there, the others are also there. *Vyatireka* is invariable co-absence. If one is not there, the others are also not there. Through this test,

That it does not see in that state is because, though seeing them, it does not see. (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.3.23.)

¹⁷¹ *Tadbhāve bhāvāt tadabhāvāt ca abhāvāt*! Present when the other is present, absent when the other is absent.

we determine what is intrinsic and what is incidental in an entity. What is intrinsic should have both *anvaya* and *vyatireka* with the entity. For example, in the case of gold ornament, let us see whether being the ornament is intrinsic to gold. When the gold ornament is there, gold is always there since the ornament is made of gold. Therefore, there is *anvaya*. As for *vyatireka*, however, if the gold ornament is not there, gold can exist in forms other than an ornament like, a mere lump, or a bangle, or a ring. So the *vyatikreka* test fails. Since both conditions are not fulfilled, being an ornament is not intrinsic to gold.

Let us apply the above reasoning to see as to which of our three states, waking, dreaming and sleeping is intrinsic to ourselves. As for invariable co-presence, when we as the waker are there, we as the dreamer and the sleeper are not there. When we as the dreamer are there, we as the waker and the sleeper are not there. When we as the sleeper are there, we as the waker and the dreamer are not there. So there is no invariable co-existence or *anvaya* between ourselves in any one of the three states and ourselves in the other states. As for invariable co-absence, when we as the waker are not there, we as either the dreamer or the sleeper are there. When we as the dreamer are not there, we as either the waker or the sleeper are there. When we as the sleeper are not there, we as either the waker or the dreamer are there. So there is no invariable co-absence or *vyatireka* also between ourselves in any of the three states with ourselves in the other states. Therefore, both tests fail

in respect of ourselves as the waker, dreamer or sleeper. So, we are intrinsically neither the waker nor the dreamer nor the sleeper. The failure of both tests also indicates that we were analyzing an entirely untenable proposition.

Coming back to the rule, what is it that is present in all the three states? If we were asked, "Are you conscious?" we do not have to check, as we have no doubt whatever that we are aware. That we hear the very question is because we are conscious. That we think is because we are.¹⁷² Before a thought arises, we are. When the thought is there, we are. After the thought has gone, we are. Therefore, consciousness is there before the thought, during the thought and after the thought. In the same way, consciousness is the awareness in the waking state, the dream state and in the deep sleep state. A doubt may arise in respect of the presence of consciousness in the deep sleep state; but it is because of consciousness we were aware that we were blissfully ignorant of everything while we were asleep. It is owing to consciousness that the experience of three different states is recognized as the varying experience of the same person. So, what is invariably present in all the three states is consciousness that witnesses all of them.

As for invariable co-absence, if consciousness were not there, the three different states cannot be there, as without

¹⁷² It is not that we think and therefore, we are.

consciousness nothing can be known to exist. So there is invariable co-absence of consciousness in all the three states. Since both tests of *anvaya vyatireka* reasoning are successful, we can conclude that what is intrinsic in all the states of experience is consciousness.

IV

The witness-consciousness or *sākṣī*

Another name for the self in the context of these three states is *sākṣī* or the witness-consciousness. The word “witness” is used to indicate that *consciousness is not the subject in relationship with any object*. It has no connection either with the subject or with the objects in the waking or dreaming state or lack of any tangible object in the sleep state. It has no link with anything at any time nor is it the waker, the dreamer or the sleeper. It is just awareness or presence. The nearest comparisons are the light, which reveals but does not participate in any manner with what it reveals, and space, which accommodates but has no relationship with anything that it accommodates.

Witnessing by consciousness and the seeing done by the individual are very different from each other. Explaining this, Saṅkarācārya points out that the illumining or witnessing by consciousness is not an action on its part like seeing. It is like the burning by the fire. Even when we say, “fire burns the finger”, there is no will involved on

the part of fire to burn, as the fire does not decide to burn the finger as soon as the finger is put into it. On the part of the fire, burning is not a process with a beginning and an end. When fire burns, the beginning of burning is only for the finger, which is the time at which it is put into the fire. The end is again only for the finger, being the time at which it is taken out of fire. As far as the fire is concerned, burning is its intrinsic nature that has neither a beginning nor an end. The verb “burns” in the expression “Fire burns the finger” is thus only figuratively a verb¹⁷³ and does not connote action on the part of the fire. Similarly, illumining or witnessing the mind is not an action on the part of consciousness even though the verbal form “consciousness illumines” and “consciousness witnesses” are used. Illumining or witnessing is intrinsic to consciousness. As for the *jīva*, it is through his mind with its borrowed consciousness that he becomes the knower. This knowing by the mind is an action that has a beginning and an end.

There is also another difference between witnessing and knowing. Knowing takes place through the mental mode (*vṛtti*) that corresponds to the object of perception. The mental mode keeps on changing from moment to moment in keeping with the perceived object. In the case of witness consciousness, knowing is intrinsic to it. It is not a process involving change. Thus, the witness consciousness

¹⁷³ It is called *aupacārika kriyāpadam*.

undergoes no change at all at any time. Like the anvil in the blacksmith's shop that serves as the base for the beating the metal into different shapes, consciousness remains as the unchanging witness of all the changes that continuously take place. It is for this reason that it is also referred to as the *kūṭastha*, the anvil.

The mind has two roles. With reference to the world, it is the knower and with reference to the witness consciousness, it is the witnessed. Witness consciousness, on the other hand, is ever the witness.

V

Ātmā is self-effulgent or *svayaṁjyotiḥ*

In Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (4.3.2 to 4.3.7), Yājñavalkya reveals to King Janaka, that it is consciousness or *ātmā* that serves as the light for us. The expression "light" includes all those, in the presence of which things are known and in the absence of which things are not known. After mentioning the obvious external sources like the light of the sun, the moon, the fire, the speech (which includes the odor, taste and touch), he discloses the ultimate source as *ātmā*, which is the self-effulgent illumination, *svayaṁjyotiḥ*.

Usually we consider that the sun, the moon, the fire etc., which are sources extraneous to the body, provide illumination and enable us to vividly live and transact in

the waking world. However, even when the objects are lighted and the sense organs are in their functional state, we are able to perceive only when the mind turns its attention to them. Nevertheless, even though the mind is not functioning in the state of deep sleep, we awake from the sleep with the knowledge that we slept well. From these it is clear that consciousness or *ātmā*, which is different from the mind, the sense organs and the external sources, illumines them like the sun. *Ātmā* is intrinsically luminous and it is itself not illumined by anything else. It is the ever-shining light and by its light, everything shines variously. Explaining the process, Śaṅkarācārya says that *buddhi*, which is pure and is the subtlest, gains sentience from *ātmā* and *manas* obtains it from the *buddhi* and the sense organs from the *manas*. Thus, all of them function through borrowed consciousness.

Kena Upanisad (1.2 to 1.9) presents it graphically and says that consciousness is the mind of the mind, the life force of the life force, the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear and the speech of the speech.¹⁷⁴ This description makes it clear that

¹⁷⁴ *Śrotrasya śrotraṃ manaso mano yad vāco ha vācaṃ sa u prāṇasya prāṇaḥ | Cakṣuścakṣuratimucya dhirāḥ pretyāsmāḷlokādamṛtā bhavanti |*

It is the ear of the ear, mind of the mind, speech of speech, the life of the life force and the eye of the eye; therefore, wise persons, having become free from ignorance, become immortal when they leave this world. (Kena Upaniṣad, 1.2.)

- consciousness is different from the mind, the life-force and the sense organs;
- consciousness pervades the mind, the life-force and the sense organs; and
- consciousness makes the mind function as the mind, the life-force as the life-force and the sense organs as sense organs.

Thus, the presupposition of all sentience and knowledge through the mind and the sense organs is only *ātmā*, the light of all lights or *jyotiṣāṁ jyotiḥ*.¹⁷⁵

VI

The means to recognise *ātmā*

Having said this, Kena Upanisad also clarifies that consciousness is not something to be looked for in the various things as an object. The eyes cannot reach it, or the speech, or even the mind¹⁷⁶ as it is not an object either

¹⁷⁵ *Na tatra suryo bhāti na candratārakaṁ nemā vidyuto bhānti kutoyamagniḥ |*

Tameva bhāntamanubhāti sarvaṁ tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṁ vibhāti | |

Neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars illumine that (self). These flashes of lightning (also) do not illumine (the self). (Then) what to talk of this fire? Everything shines after that (self) alone, which is self-effulgent. (Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 2.2.15.)

¹⁷⁶ *Na tatra caṅṣurgacchati na vāggacchati no manaḥ | ... (Kena Upaniṣad, 1.3.)*

known or unknown.¹⁷⁷ So, the seeker who thinks that he knows it as an object does not really know it while the seeker who does not know it as an object knows it.¹⁷⁸ In Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (3.4.2), Sage Yājñavalkya explains the reason for the same to Uṣasta and also reveals the self:

You cannot see that which is the witness of vision; you cannot hear that which is the hearer of hearing; you cannot think that which is the thinker of thought; you cannot know that which is the knower of knowledge. This self is the self of all.

The question now arises as to how we can know it when we cannot perceive it as an object. Kena Upaniṣad explains that it is because of consciousness that everything is known and so, it can be recognized as that which makes the cognition of everything possible. It says that it is that which cannot be uttered by speech but because of which speech can be uttered; it is that which one cannot comprehend with the mind, but by which the mind is thought; it is that which one cannot see with the eyes, but by which the eyes see; it is that which one cannot hear

¹⁷⁷ *Anyadeva tadviditādadhō aviditādadhī* | ... (Kena Upaniṣad, 1.4.)

Indeed, it is other than what is known, and other than what is unknown.

¹⁷⁸ *Yasyāmatam tasya matam matam yasya na veda saḥ* |

Avijñātām vijānatām vijñātamavijānatām | | (Kena Upaniṣad, 2.3.)

with the ears, but by which the hearing is heard; it is that which is not enlivened by the vital force, but by which the vital force is enlivened. It is that which is always known in every thought, in every piece of knowledge¹⁷⁹. Explaining this further, Saṅkarācārya says:

Being the witness of all cognitions, and being by nature nothing but the power of consciousness, the self is indicated by the cognitions themselves, in the midst of cognitions, as pervading all of them. There is no other door to its awareness for recognising it.

In everything that we see, we can recognise the light as that which makes seeing possible by the eyes. Similarly, in every experience, we can recognise consciousness as that which makes experiencing possible. Even as we do not require a particular lighted object to know the light, we do not require any particular experience to recognise consciousness or *ātmā*.

VII

Mantra* from Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad about *ātmā

The revelation about *ātmā* is comprehensively given in Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad (7) and is reproduced below.

¹⁷⁹ *Pratibodhaviditaṁ matamamṛtatvaṁ hi vindate |*

Ātmanā vindate vīryaṁ vidyayā vindate'mṛtam || (Kena Upaniṣad, 2.4.)

They consider the Fourth¹⁸⁰ (*ātmā*) to be, that which is

not the outward consciousness (the waker), not the inward consciousness (the dreamer), not the consciousness turned both sides (the state of transition), not a mass of consciousness (the sleeper), not conscious (the all-knowing consciousness of *Īśvara*), not unconscious;

beyond perception, beyond transaction, beyond grasp (of the organs of action), beyond inference, beyond thoughts, beyond description;

traceable through the unbroken self-awareness;

free from the world, tranquil, auspicious; and

non-dual.

It is *ātmā*.

It is to be known (recognized in its true nature).

¹⁸⁰ since it is different from the three states of the waker, dreamer and sleeper.

CHAPTER TEN

ENQUIRY INTO *JĪVA*, THE LIVING BEING

I

The presence of consciousness in the *jīva*

We may now look further into the presence of consciousness in the body-mind-sense-complex. It is usually explained in three different ways. In one, consciousness is compared to space and consciousness in the body-mind-sense-complex is compared to the space inside a pot.¹⁸¹ The space is all pervading. But when there is a pot in it, the all-pervading space (*mahā-ākāśa*) appears to be confined to the pot as pot-space (*ghaṭa-ākāśa*). The fact is that the pot is itself in space and is occupying space. There is space inside the pot, in the material constituting the pot and outside the pot. Regardless of the presence of the pot, space is present everywhere without any division. Even so, the pot makes the space appear to be divided and makes the space inside the pot appear as limited to its own dimension¹⁸².

¹⁸² This method of explaining is adopted by Vācaspati Miśra in *Bhāmatī* and is called *avaccheda-vāda*.

Similarly, the ignorance that leads us to consider *ātmā* to be the body-mind-sense-complex, makes consciousness appear to be confined in it.

Another method of explaining this situation is through the example of a reflecting medium like the mirror¹⁸³. When a reflecting medium reflects the light incident on it, the reflecting medium, which has no illumination of its own, appears to become a source of illumination by illumining the surroundings. Similarly, when *buddhi* reflects consciousness, it appears to become the source of consciousness by providing it to the entire body-mind-sense-complex. Consciousness is the source and consciousness available in the body-mind-sense-complex is the reflected consciousness. The truth is the original. If we mistake the reflection to be the original, it will appear to be limited to the body-mind-sense-complex.

Still another method of explanation is that consciousness available in the body-mind-sense-complex is the semblance or *ābhāsa* of consciousness, i.e., *cidābhāsa*. *Ābhāsa* is what appears to be the original even when it is different from it. It is like the appearance of a person seeming to have entered into a mirror or like the sun

¹⁸³ The original consciousness is called *bimba* and the reflected consciousness is called *pratibimba*. This is called *pratibimba-vāda* and is based on the explanation given by Padmapāda who is one of the direct disciples of Śaṅkarācārya.

appearing to be present in the surface of the water contained in a pot. Like the person in the mirror and the sun in the water surface, what is within the body-mind-sense-complex is the semblance of consciousness.

In the semblance explanation, the semblance is different from the original. In the reflection explanation, the reflection is considered to be the same as the original except for the features imposed on it by the reflecting medium.¹⁸⁴

All these explanations have the following in common:

- Consciousness;
- Availability of consciousness in the body-mind-sense-complex either as a limitation or reflection or semblance of consciousness;
- The consciousness available in the body-mind-sense-complex does not affect the source-consciousness in any way. The apparent delimitation of space by the pot does not affect the space; the reflection of the illumination does not affect the source of illumination; and the image of the person appearing in the mirror does not affect the person;

¹⁸⁴ This explanation is given by Sureśvara who is one of the direct disciples of Śaṅkarācārya. This is called *ābhāsa-vāda*.

- The availability of consciousness in the body-mind-sense-complex provides the clue to recognise the source, which is consciousness, as the reality. In the limitation explanation, we recognize the original by knowing that the limitation is only apparent like the limitless space appearing as limited inside the pot. In the reflection explanation, we recognise the original, through the knowledge that what is seen is only the reflection and in the semblance explanation that it is only the semblance of the original.

II

The place where *ātmā* is recognized by the *jīva*

Śruti states that *ātmā* resides in the cave of the being and describes it as the (self-effulgent) light within the *hṛdaya* (heart).¹⁸⁵ *Hṛdaya* refers to the *buddhi* or the intellect, which is considered to be in the physical heart¹⁸⁶. *Buddhi* is not the gross physical brain but is the subtle organ where the discriminative understanding takes place. In the waking state, the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, which includes the

¹⁸⁵ *ātmāsyā jantor nihito guhāyām* (Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 1.2.20.)

hṛdyantajyotiḥ puruṣaḥ (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.3.7.)

¹⁸⁶ Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary on 4.3.7 of Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad states: Heart is primarily the lotus-shaped lump of flesh; here it means the intellect, which has its seat in the heart. The expression therefore means ‘within the intellect’. (Translation)

buddhi, functions throughout the body including the brain. The brain in the body is only a field of its expression¹⁸⁷.

In the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, *buddhi*, being the subtlest, gets illumined by consciousness. *Buddhi* consists of three components: (i) consciousness (*cit*); (ii) the insentient subtle matter of the *buddhi*; and (iii) the *cidābhāsa* or consciousness as available in the *buddhi*. *Buddhi* is comparable to the iron ball that is glowing because of the heat. In the glowing iron ball, the heat, the iron ball and the red glow are different from each other but exist together.

In Taittirīya Upaniṣad, it is stated, “That (Brahman-*ātmā*) having created, entered into that very thing (the cavity of the heart)”.¹⁸⁸ Even as light enters into the water surface to produce reflection, Brahman-*ātmā* enters, as though, into the *buddhi* and *buddhi* becomes sentient. It is a matter of experience that knowledge of a thing is dependent on its particular associations. In the present case, the *buddhi* is, as it were, proximate to consciousness. The association of *ātmā* with the *buddhi* causes in the *buddhi* the knowledge of *ātmā* owing to its proximity and the nature of

¹⁸⁷ Swami Paramarthaṇanda, class 27 (2010) of Kaṭha Upaniṣad.

¹⁸⁸ *Tatsṛṣtvā / Tadevānuprāviśat /* Having created this, he entered this itself. (Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.6.)

illumination.¹⁸⁹ Just as the pot is perceived when it is in contact with the light, so also *ātmā* is recognized when in contact with the light of intellectual conviction. However, owing to inborn ignorance (*avidyā* or *ajñāna*), the “I-sense”, which develops in the *buddhi*, wrongly identifies itself with the body-mind-sense-complex. Thus, all of us initially consider *ātmā* to be the body-mind-sense-complex. This wrong notion is dropped by the *buddhi* only when it gains knowledge of the self through the Vedānta-*pramāṇa*. Thus, *buddhi* is the place where both the erroneous notion and the correct knowledge of *ātmā* take place¹⁹⁰.

No *jīva* is initially free from *avidyā*. *Avidyā* is not just lack of correct knowledge. It is opposed to knowledge¹⁹¹ as it not only conceals the true nature but also presents the false in its place. *Avidyā* is treated as *bhāvarūpa* or as somewhat existent since it causes the appearance of the erroneous. *Avidyā* is seen as one or many according to the way of looking at it. If it is seen individually, it becomes as many as the individuals. Since all *jīvas* are affected by *avidyā*, if it is seen collectively, *avidyā* is one. It is not possible to determine the beginning of *avidyā* and it is called as *anādi*. It is also not possible to investigate *anādi*

¹⁸⁹ Śaṅkarācārya’s commentary on Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.6.

¹⁹⁰ *Manasaivānudraṣṭvyam* ..Through the mind alone, it is to be recognized. (Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 4.4.19.)

¹⁹¹ *Jñāna-virodhi*.

avidyā through our own erroneous knowledge since it is like looking into darkness with the help of darkness. To know *avidyā* by correct knowledge would be like seeing darkness through light. The characteristic of *avidyā* is its lack of intelligibility.

III

Upādhi* or the condition that appears to limit *ātmā

Explaining the arising of the error, *śāstra* says that the body-mind-sense-complex is intrinsically insentient. Because of *avidyā*, *ātmā* is mistaken to be the insentient body-mind-sense-complex. This wrong identification limits *ātmā* to the body-mind-sense-complex.

It must be noted that *ātmā*, which is the whole, can have no personal sense of 'I'. The physically inert body-mind-sense-complex including the *buddhi* can have no sense of its own. Therefore, this wholly unreasonable limited I-sense, which is present, is explained as the veiling of the truth and projection of the false brought about by *avidyā*. This is why we require a means of knowledge to recognize the true self.

Explaining it in physical terms through an example, when a red flower is placed near a colorless crystal, its colorlessness is concealed and the crystal appears to be

red like the flower. If it is taken away, there is no redness in the crystal. The color does not belong to the crystal. It belongs to the flower. The crystal always remains colorless, despite appearing to be red, when the red flower is next to it. It is in a similar way that the body-mind-sense-complex, which is limited, conceals the real nature of *ātmā* and imposes its own attribute on it with the result that *ātmā*, which is limitless, appears to be limited to the body-mind-sense-complex. Even as the colorless crystal never becomes colored, *ātmā* never becomes limited. The limitation belongs to the body-mind-sense-complex alone. The technical expression defining this situation is that the *upādhi*¹⁹² of the body-mind-sense-complex imposes its attributes on *ātmā*, the *upahita*. *Upādhi* is translated as the conditioning adjunct and *upahita* as the conditioned entity. In our waking state, the *upādhi* of the body-mind-sense organs appears to limit *ātmā* to it, in the dream state, the *upādhi* of the mind appears to limit *ātmā* to it and in deep sleep state, the *upādhi* of the causal body appears to limit *ātmā* to it. *Ātmā* is not actually affected by any of the *upādhis* at any time.

¹⁹² *Samīpavartini vastuni svadharmān ādadhāti*! Places its own attributes on something that is nearby.

IV

Adhyāsa or knowing a thing as something else

The ascription of qualities to an entity that does not really possess them is called *adhyāsa*.¹⁹³ *Adhyāsa* is wrong attribution leading to the knowing of one thing erroneously as another. *Adhyāsa* is also referred to as *adhyāropa* or the erroneous superimposition on the real entity¹⁹⁴. The real entity is then called as *adhiṣṭhāna* or the real basis for the erroneous attribution. (*adhiṣṭhāna* is usually translated as “sub-stratum”.)

With reference to the individual, when we say, “I am the body-mind-sense-complex”, “I am”, which is the unconditioned consciousness, provides the basis. This “I-am-ness” allows or lends a seeming reality to the body-mind-sense-complex, which is the conditioned consciousness. The conditioned “I”, which is the individual, becomes conscious and he lives in a conscious body with conscious mind and sense organs. Thus, the conscious body-mind-sense-complex exists because of the consciousness present in it and giving it sentiency. Unfortunately, as the basis is not recognized and gets

¹⁹³ Śaṅkarācārya’s in his introductory commentary to Brahma-sūtra calls it as *atasmintadbuddhiḥ* or knowing a thing as something else.

¹⁹⁴ We make this super-imposition due to ignorance. When we consider the *linga* to be *Īśvara*, we make the super-imposition intentionally.

super-imposed, as it were, we suffer the apparent loss of our true self as the unconditioned consciousness and we take our apparent conditioning to be the true self.

The *adhyāsa* or erroneous understanding of the true self is present throughout:

- When I say I am a tall male weighing 90 kilos, I consider myself to be the physical body; there is *adhyāsa* of the physical body on *ātmā* since it is the physical body which is tall, weighing 90 kilos and not *ātmā*;
- When I say I am short of hearing, I consider myself to be the sense organs; there is *adhyāsa* of the sense organs on *ātmā* since it is the sense organ that is affected and not *ātmā*;
- When I say I am worried, I consider myself to be my mind; there is *adhyāsa* of the mind on *ātmā* since it is the mind that is worried and not *ātmā*;
- When I say I am intelligent, I consider myself to be my intellect; there is *adhyāsa* of the intellect on *ātmā* since it is the intellect that is intelligent and not *ātmā*;
- When I suffer from a sense of hurt or guilt, there is *adhyāsa* of memory on *ātmā* since it is the memory which has the hurt or guilt and not *ātmā*;

- When I say, “I know”, “I am the doer”, “I am the experiencer” and “I have these likes and dislikes”, there is *adhyāsa* of the knower, the doer, the experiencer, the liker, the disliker on *ātmā* since it is the I-sense associated with the body-mind-sense-complex which is the knower, the doer, the experiencer, the liker and the disliker and not *ātmā*;
- When I say my family, my house, my money, my reputation, my country, my religion, my guru, my *Īśvara*, I extend my I-sense to the family, the house, the money, the reputation, the country, the religion, the *guru* and *Īśvara* and there is *adhyāsa* of my-sense (*mamakāra*) in respect of all these on *ātmā* since all these are connected with the I-sense and not with *ātmā*;
- Finally, when I say that I am a separate entity or *jīva*, there is *adhyāsa* of the nature of *jīva* on *ātmā* since *ātmā* is not a *jīva*.

There is not only *adhyāsa* of what is not *ātmā* (*anātmā*) on *ātmā* but also mutual *adhyāsa* of *ātmā* on *anātmā* in every case. When I say that my body, sense organs, mind and intellect are sentient and that I am a self-conscious being with a name and form, there is *adhyāsa* of *ātmā* on the body, the sense organs, the mind, the intellect, the name and the form. The mutuality of super-imposition of *ātmā* on *anātmā* and of *anātmā* on *ātmā* causes their fusion, as it

were, into one, creating confusion about their nature and causing difficulty in unraveling them.

V

Mixing up of the untruth with the truth

We may now look into *adhyāsa* through the traditional example of mistaking the rope for the snake. A rope is lying on the ground. In broad daylight, it is recognized as a rope and there is rope-knowledge. In darkness, the rope is invisible and there is no perception of the rope. There is rope-ignorance; but no error is committed about the object. In semi-darkness, the existence of an object is known but it is not recognized correctly but erroneously. The existing rope is mistaken to be the existing snake. From the standpoint of the rope, we can define the error as mistaking the rope as something else¹⁹⁵. From the standpoint of the snake, it is a non-existent snake, which is superimposed, as it were, on the rope¹⁹⁶.

The comprehensive understanding of the situation is that there is a mixing up of what really exists with what it is actually not. What is real is that a thing is existing. What is unreal is that the existing thing is identified wrongly as a snake. In the statement “this is a rope”, both “this is a” and “rope” are true. But in the same situation, in the

¹⁹⁵ *Anyathā-grahaṇam.*

¹⁹⁶ *Adhyāropa.*

statement, “this is a snake”, “this is a” is true, while “snake” is untrue. That is, in the unitary perception of the person, who commits the mistake, there is the mixing up of the truth with the untruth. Similarly, in the statements “I am tall”, “I am short of hearing”, “I am disturbed”, “I am intelligent”, “I am the doer”, “I am the experiencer”, “I am the mortal *jīva*” and “I am the limited *jīva*”, “I am” is the true part. But whatever is stated after “I am” is not true as they do not belong to consciousness, but to the body-mind-sense-complex. All these constitute the mixing of the untruth (*anṛta*) with the truth (*satya*).¹⁹⁷ Untruth is non-*ātmā*, or *anātmā*. The mixing up of the untruth (*anātmā*) with the truth (*ātmā*) is known as the knot of ignorance in the heart¹⁹⁸. It is called a knot since it binds and as the tendencies and impressions created by ignorance are hard to untie like the knot.

VI

Adhyāsa is central to our living

Adhyāsa is central to our living as it is pervasive in everything that we know, that we do and that we experience. The self is non-relational consciousness but it is wrongly viewed as the subject in relation to objects. The self becomes an “I” (*aham-padārtha*) because of *adhyāsa* and becomes a knower, a doer and an experiencer. It

¹⁹⁷ This is termed as *satya-anṛta-mithunīkaraṇam*.

¹⁹⁸ *Avidyāgranthi*. (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 2.1.10.)

becomes an individual with the I-sense or a *jīva*. All actions that are derived from the I-sense become personal and give rise to accrual of *puṇya* and *pāpa* to the doer-*jīva*. This obliges the *jīva* to take another body after death to experience the fruits of such actions. Again, in the new body, because of *avidyā*, it considers itself to be a *jīva* with the limited I-sense and the process of trying to become complete through action starts all over again. This results in accrual of fresh *puṇya* and *pāpa*. This necessitates another birth and the life of becoming or *samsāra* for gaining fulfillment in every life continues endlessly.

This *jīva* is now striving for freedom. What *śruti* teaches the *jīva* is that he has erroneously imposed the limitations on himself by mixing the untruth with the truth and that all that he needs to do to be free from the limitations is to become free from all the incorrect notions through *ātmajñāna*.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE REVELATION ABOUT BRAHMAN

I

Satyam jñānāmanantam brahma

Having known the self as consciousness, we may now turn our attention to the object. The object consists of the entire manifestation. In this regard, *śruti* reveals Brahman and states that this manifestation is its incidental nature. As for Brahman's essential nature, it says that it is "one only, without a second" and that "in the beginning all this was existence (*sat*) alone".¹⁹⁹ We may first consider its essential nature and then its incidental nature.

The word "Brahman" means "big". It is a noun formed out of the Sanskrit root "*br̥h*", which means to "to grow" or "burst forth". "Big" is used as a noun by the *śruti* to indicate that it is not used as an attribute to a thing but as an entity in itself. It means that it is not something that is relatively big²⁰⁰ but that it is unconditionally big where

¹⁹⁹ *Sat-eva somya-idam-agra asīt-ekam-eva-advitīyam.* (Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.2.1.)

R̥g Veda (10.129.) refers to it as *tat-ekam* or "That One".

²⁰⁰ Relative bigness varies; the bigness of the big particle and the bigness of the big mountain are different.

nothing different from it exists. What can be different from it could be only of three kinds. Differences may exist within the entity itself like the trunk, the branch, the leaves, and the flowers in a tree²⁰¹. Differences can be there within the same class as between various trees like the banyan and the cocoanut.²⁰² There can be difference owing to the existence of diverse classes like the trees, the animals and the birds²⁰³. In the case of Brahman, no difference can exist out of others in the same class, as there is nothing, which is similar to Brahman for it to arise. As regards internal differentiation, Brahman is not a whole consisting of parts for it to be present. As regards the difference due the existence of a different class, there is nothing, which is second to Brahman for it to be there. These facts are made clear by the *śruti* through the words *ekam* (one), *eva* (only) *advitīyam* (without a second).

The only one, without a second is unfolded by Taittirīya Upaniṣad²⁰⁴ by quoting a *ṛg-mantra* as “*satyaṁ jñānamanantaṁ brahma*”. The three words, *satyam*, *jñānam* and *anantam* mean respectively, existence, consciousness and limitless. These words are related

²⁰¹ *Svagata-bheda.*

²⁰² *Sajātīya-bheda.*

²⁰³ *Vijātīya-bheda.*

²⁰⁴ Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Brahmānandavalli, 1.

grammatically to Brahman in the same way²⁰⁵. Such words are normally adjectives distinguishing the qualified entity from others of its class. For example, when we say “blue, big, fragrant lily”, the words, blue, big and fragrant qualify the noun, lily to indicate that among the lilies of different color, size and fragrance, we mean only that lily which is blue in color, big in size and fragrant in smell. But the words ‘blue, big, fragrant’ are not tight since they can fit in at many other places as everything that is blue, big and fragrant is not a lily. These words therefore serve merely to indicate some attributes or *viśeṣaṇas* of the lily in question to distinguish it from lilies with other attributes. But in the case of Brahman, no other Brahman exists for this Brahman to be distinguished from other Brahmans in this manner. So, we have to release these words from being adjectives. The distinctly different purpose that the three words *satyam*, *jñānam* and *anantam*, serve is to serve as indicators (*lakṣaṇas*) to unmistakably reveal Brahman. The words indicate its *svatūpa-lakṣaṇa*, or its essential nature through their intended or indirectly expressed meaning (*lakṣyārtha*). Even though three words are used for the purpose, each of them, in their *lakṣyārtha*, by itself indicates Brahman. This is so since,

²⁰⁵ Words which refer to the same object by the sense of their own meaning and which are put in the same case are stated to have *sāmānādhikaraṇyam*.

- what is existence (*satyam*) is consciousness (*jñānam*) and is limitless (*anantam*) and is Brahman;
- what is consciousness (*jñānam*) is existence (*satyam*) and is limitless (*anantam*) and is Brahman;
- what is limitless (*anantam*) is existence (*satyam*) and is consciousness (*jñānam*) and is Brahman.

The word *satyam* is a commonly used word with the meaning of “the real” and is taken to mean anything that exists and is available for transactions. This direct meaning of the word does not distinguish it from everything else. So, even when we hear “*satyam brahma*”, we may think that it is some object that exists. Since we do not see Brahman, this word would lead us to think that Brahman would exist at a certain place and time, and that it would be limited like other objects. This is the commonly understood direct meaning of the word and it is called as *vācyārtha*²⁰⁶. But *satyam*, as used here, cannot have that direct meaning, as the word *anantam*, which is also used in respect of Brahman means limitless. So, the direct meaning of the word cannot indicate Brahman.

When the direct meaning of the word does not fit in, we have to go in for its indirectly expressed meaning or

²⁰⁶ The method of communication through direct meaning is called *abhidhā-vṛttiḥ*.

lakṣyārtha. As for its *lakṣyārtha*, everything has two aspects:

- it has existence (*sattā*); and
- it has a particular name and form (*nāma* and *rūpa*).

When we say, “wood”, the word not only communicates the name and form (attributes) of the wood but also its existence. While name and form are limited, existence is not limited as regardless of the changes in name and form, existence continues unchanged. For example, when “wood” undergoes different changes, it would be known as: “plank”, “furniture”, “wood pieces”, “shaving”, “saw dust” or “ash”. But existence, which is conveyed by these different words, is constant. Shifting our vision from particular objects to everything, we cannot conceive of any particular location at any time where existence is not there. So, existence has no limitation of space or time. All these mean that *satyam* has to be understood through its *lakṣyārtha* as existence without any limitation or as *sat*²⁰⁷. This word is therefore for understanding that Brahman is real for the reason that Brahman, which is existence, is there everywhere, at all times. It cannot be negated anywhere at anytime.

²⁰⁷ There are three methods of arriving at the *lakṣyārtha*; these are discussed in Chapter 16. The method used here is dropping, on valid grounds, of the incompatible part of the meaning.

Jñānam means awareness, consciousness or knowledge. Knowledge is generally associated with an object; for, when we hear this word, immediately we ask, “The knowledge of what?” Knowledge is born of consciousness illumining a *vṛtti* or thought modification in the mind. *Vṛtti* relating to the object is only as big as the object. Its time span is also limited since it disappears after appearing. So, *jñāna-vṛtti* is not *anantam* or limitless. The direct meaning of this word will not therefore indicate Brahman. We are now obliged to adopt its *lakṣyārtha*. Like *satyam*, *jñānam* has two aspects consisting of

- name and form (*nāma-rūpa*), which is the *jñāna-vṛtti*; and
- consciousness or *cit*, which makes it known.

Thoughts come and go; but consciousness is always there. Even when there are no thoughts as during deep sleep, consciousness is there since we know that we enjoyed our sleep. Thus, while the *vṛtti* aspect of *jñānam* is limited both in content and time, the *cit* aspect of *jñānam* is limitless. So, the *lakṣyārtha* of *jñānam* is the *cit* aspect of *jñānam*, which is the limitless, undifferentiated consciousness and it has to be taken as the meaning.

As regards the word *anantam*, besides indicating the meaning of limitless in terms of all factors that cause limitation, namely, time (*kāla*), space (*deśa*) and entity (*vastu*), it ensures that both *satyam* and *jñānam* are not misunderstood.

It would be noted that these words do not define Brahman through their direct meaning but indicate Brahman through their *lakṣyārta* or their intended meaning. This is because positive expressions, being limited in content, cannot refer to limitless Brahman through their direct meaning. Only what Brahman is not can be exactly stated. All positive expressions with reference to Brahman, which necessarily have only their intended meaning, have their exact direct negative meaning. Being *sat* excludes all ideas of non-being; being *cit* or *jñānam* excludes all ideas of non-intelligence and insentience; being *anantam* excludes all ideas of incompleteness.

II

Existence (*sat*) with reference to the body-mind-sense-complex

We had seen the position of consciousness, which is the self, with reference to its presence in the body-mind-complex earlier. We may now do so in respect of existence (*sat*) with reference to the body-mind-complex and the objects of the world. Since existence (*sat*) is consciousness (*cit*), it is the same as it is for consciousness and is set out below:

- Existence (*sat*), which is consciousness (*cit*) and which is the self (*ātmā*), is not a part, property or product of the body-mind-sense-complex or of any object, since

- Existence is an independent and all-pervading entity, which lends existence to the body-mind-sense-complex and objects.
- So, the manifesting mediums of existence, which are the body-mind-complex and objects, do not limit the presence of existence to them; it is present both in them and outside them in the unmanifest condition.
- Existence is not affected in any way by the presence, absence or change of the manifesting mediums; and
- Existence, being limitless, is present always and everywhere; but it is not recognizable as existence wherever the manifesting medium is not available.

III

Anantam is Ānanda

We may now go into the subject of *anantam*. *Anantam* is limitless in terms of all factors that cause limitation, namely, time, space and object. In other words, it is fullness or *pūrṇatvam* in every sense. *Śruti* often uses the word *ānanda* in the place of *ananta*²⁰⁸ since what is *ananta* is *ānanda*. Chāndogya Upaniṣad says: “That is *ānanda*

²⁰⁸ *vijñānamānandaṁ brahma* (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 3.9.28.7.), *ānanda ātmā* (Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.5.1.), *ānandaṁ brahmaṇo vidvān* (Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.9.1.), *ānando brahmeti vyajānāt* (Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 3.6.1.)

which indeed is the infinite. There is no *ānanda* in the finite. The infinite alone is *ānanda*²⁰⁹. The reasoning is simple. Where there is infinite, there can be no want, and where there is no want, there can be no unhappiness.

It is relevant to note in this context as to how Sage Yājñavalkya explains to his wife the need for the true recognition of *ātmanā*. He says that we are fond of only that which gives us pleasure²¹⁰. Whatever we love is not for the sake of the object, but for the sake of what is dear to us. And, “This self is dearer than a son, dearer than wealth, dearer than everything else”²¹¹. When we say, “I love you”, we really mean, “You please me now”. It is as though we love our pleased self. The position that emerges through his reasoning is:

- We do not love anything for its own sake;
- We love only that which pleases us;
- We love ourselves the most;
- The self is, therefore, our primary pleasure;
- Therefore, it is the self that should be recognized by us in its true nature.

²⁰⁹ *Yo vai bhūmā tatsukhaṁ nālpe sukhamasti bhūmaiva sukham* | 7.23.1.

²¹⁰ *Ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṁ priyaṁ bhavati* | All is dear not for the sake of all, but for one’s own sake. (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 2.4.5.)

²¹¹ Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.8.

As for the objects in all *lokas* and the body-mind-sense-complex, they are limited and cannot be *ānanda*, since only that which is complete in all respects (*pūrṇah*) is *ānanda*. We, however, think that we derive happiness from the desired persons, objects and situations since we are happy when our sense organs are in contact with them. But this does not stand scrutiny as, if any person, object or situation were the source of happiness to us, they should give joy to all of us, at all times. But, this is not the case, as none of them is the source of constant happiness to anyone. In fact, we enjoy the sleep while not experiencing any object at that time. Money and comfort also do not mean happiness, as many are unhappy even though they have them and some are happy even though they do not have them. We are like the dog that considers the bone that it bites to be the source of its pleasure even when what makes it happy is the taste of its own blood that oozes when it bites the bone. All persons, objects and situations, like the bone, play only an incidental role, as we shall now see.

Śāstra reveals that we are happy when *ananta* called, in this context, as *brahmānanda* or *ātmānanda* is manifest in our mind in the form of *vṛtti*. The *vṛtti* is comparable to the reflected face in the mirror when the mind is the mirror and *ātmānanda* is the face. In this context, *ātmānanda* is called *bimbānanda* and *ānanda* experienced

in the mind is called *pratibimbānanda*²¹². The doubt that naturally arises is as to why we are not permanently happy when *ātmā* is itself *ānanda*. The explanation lies in the fact that even though *ātmā* is *ānanda-svarūpa*, *ānanda* can be experienced by the mind only when it is in a state that does not oppose the limitlessness of *ātmā*. The mind does not vitiate limitlessness only when it stops projecting or when it is resolved. The mind is non-projecting when it is not assuming, not desiring²¹³, not willing and not seeking or rejecting anything outside or inside. This happens when we experience something that makes us non-judgemental and non-demanding. As for the resolution of the mind, it takes place during sleep and in the state of absorption during meditation²¹⁴. During these occasions of non-projection and resolution of the mind, the unobstructed completeness is experienced as happiness through the *vṛttis* in the mind. Its duration and degree are dependent respectively, on how long and how far our mind does not obstruct it. The *vṛttis* that are experienced are of three levels of happiness called as *priya*, which is like the pleasure that we have while seeing a desired object, *moda*, which is less inhibited than *priya*

²¹² This is also called as *kośānanda*.

²¹³ Taittirīya Upaniṣad (Brahmānandavalli, 8.) and Bṛhdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (4.3.33.), which present a comparative picture of the happiness enjoyed in this world and in the higher worlds, make it clear that we have to be free from desire (*akāmahataḥ*) to enjoy happiness.

²¹⁴ This state attained during the meditation is called *samādhi*.

and is comparable to the pleasure that we have while possessing the desired object and *pramoda*, which is less inhibited than *moda* and is similar to the pleasure that we have while enjoying the desired object. Any state of experiential happiness is because of the presence of these *vṛttis* in the mind.

Another question that arises is as to how the opposite of happiness, which is sorrow is in us when *ātmā* is *ānanda*. Similar questions can also be raised as to how *cit*, which is knowledge, accommodates ignorance and how *sat* which is existence, sustains unsubstantial appearances. All distinctions of happiness, sorrow, misery, ignorance, misapprehension, form, characteristics and other limitations are due to the *upādhi* of the body-mind-sense-complex, which imposes its nature on *ātmā*.

Ānanda will be in its full natural state in us when we drop the identification of *ātmā* with the limited body-mind-complex through *ātmajñāna*. This *ānanda* is not experienced in the mind as a *vṛtti* but is intrinsic *ānanda*, which is our true nature and which is self-existing. As such, it is not conditioned in any way. It is not subject either to arrival or departure. It is also not graded in its intensity. It is therefore sensible to seek *ātmajñāna* rather than persons, objects and situations that are conducive for

experiencing temporary and limited *ānanda*, which is but a semblance of *ātmānanda*.²¹⁵

IV

Ānanda with reference to the body-mind-sense-complex

The position of *ānanda* with reference to the body-mind-complex and the objects is the same as it is for *cit* and *sat* and is set out below:

- *Ānanda* or *ananta*, which is *ātmā*, is not a part, property or product of the mind or of any object;
- Since limitless (*ananta*) is happiness, the body-mind-sense-complex and objects, which are limited are not its source. The source of the happiness, which is experienced by the mind, is *ānanda*, which is *ātmā*;
- The manifesting medium, which is the mind, does not limit the presence of *ānanda* to itself; it is present both in it and outside of it in the unmanifest condition;
- *Ānanda*, which is present always and everywhere, is not experienced as happiness wherever the manifesting medium, which is the mind, obstructs

²¹⁵ *Etasyaivānandasyānyāni bhūtāni mātrāmupajīvanti* | On a very particle (or semblance) of this *ānanda*, other beings (*ajñānīs*) live. (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.3.32.)

its manifestation; in the case of *atma-jñanī*, he himself is *ānanda*, since he has recognized through *atma-jñāna* that his true nature is *ātmā*. This is why the word, *ānanda*, is attached to his name.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BRAHMAN AS THE CAUSE OF THE MANIFESTATION

I

Brahman is both the intelligent and the material cause

Śruti reveals the incidental nature²¹⁶ of Brahman as the cause of everything that is manifest²¹⁷. It dramatically does so by posing the question: “What is it by knowing which everything is known?”²¹⁸ Taittirīya Upaniṣad answers it comprehensively: “Know Brahman as that from which all beings come into existence, that by which all-born beings exist and that towards which they move and into which they merge”.²¹⁹

The question that immediately arises is as to why Brahman’s status as the cause should be called as

²¹⁶ *Taṭastha lakṣaṇa*, is that which is distinct from the nature of the thing and yet by which it is known. It is like the crow sitting on the roof of a house, which helps to identify that house.

²¹⁷ This is called *mūlakāraṇam*.

²¹⁸ Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 1.1.3. and Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.1.3.

²¹⁹ *Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | Yena jātāni jīvanti | Yatprayantya bhisaṁviśanti | Tat vijñāśasva | Tat brahmeti |* Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 3.1.1.

incidental. While this will become fully clear later, briefly, it is because Brahman, as the cause, does not undergo actual change to become the effect and as it has no direct relationship with the effect.

We may now look into this incidental nature of Brahman. Every cause consists of two parts. If we take the case of pot, it is made of clay. This is the material cause or *upādāna kāraṇam*. But, mere presence of clay does not produce a pot. It requires a potter to make a pot out of clay. This is the intelligent or efficient cause or *nimitta kāraṇam*. The pot is the total effect or *kārya* of both the material and intelligent causes.

Normally, the material cause and the intelligent cause are different. For example, in the case of the pot, the material cause is clay and the intelligent cause is the pot maker. In the present case, the Upanisadic statement “that from which everything comes into being, by whom they are sustained and unto whom they go back” does not mention any cause other than Brahman. It also quotes: “This (universe) was indeed the unmanifest (Brahman) in the beginning. From that alone the manifest (universe) was born. That (Brahman) created itself by itself. Therefore, it is said to be the self-creator.”²²⁰ There is also another statement to the effect, “It thought, may I be many, may I

²²⁰

Asadvā idamagra asit| Tato tadātmānaggssvayamakuruta| Tasmāttatsukṛtamucyata iti| Yadvai tat sukṛtam| Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.7.1.

grow forth”²²¹. From this we understand that Brahman is both the maker and the material or *abhinna-nimitta-upādāna kāraṇam*. Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad illustrates this dual role through the example of spider: “Just as the spider creates and withdraws (its web), just as trees originate on the earth, just as hairs on the head and body (grow) from a living person, in the same manner, the universe is born here out of Brahman.”²²² Another everyday example is the mind, which provides the material for the dream out of the impressions stored in it and creates the dream out of them.

In the case of Brahman, however, the question arises as to how that which is without a second can become many, and how that which is without any limitation of qualities (*nirguṇa*) can become limited through qualities. Also, production involves action for bringing about the necessary change on the parts of the cause and it is inconceivable as to how Brahman can produce anything when it is partless, actionless and changeless.

The explanation lies in the cause being of two different kinds. One is what we are very familiar with, namely the cause that transforms itself to produce the effect. It is

²²¹ *Tadaikṣata bahu syām prjāyeyeti..* Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad, 6.2.3.

²²² *Yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate grhṇate ca, yathā pṛthivyāmoṣadhayaḥ sambhavanti* |

Yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni, tathākṣarāt sambhavatiḥa viśvam | | Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 1.1.7.

called the *pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇam*. Here, the material cause changes itself to become the effect²²³ like the milk converting itself into the curd. The other type of cause becomes the effect without changing itself and without giving up any of its own nature²²⁴. It undergoes only apparent change to produce the effect. This is known as the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇam*. For example, the rope in semi-darkness appears to be a real snake without the rope changing itself in any way; the colorless crystal appears as a red crystal when the red flower is placed near it without the crystal actually changing its color. We had seen that the apparent change is brought about by the limiting adjunct or *upādhi*. The crystal in the *upādhi* of red flower appears as red. In the case of Brahman, the *upādhi* of *māyā* is the cause of the appearance of the manifestation²²⁵.

²²³ *Svasvarūpa parityāgena rūpāntarāpattiḥ.*

²²⁴ *Svasvarūpa aparityāgena rūpāntarāpattiḥ.*

²²⁵ *Māyāṁ tu prakṛtiṁ vidyānmāyinaṁ ca maheśvaram |*

Tasyāvayavabhūtaistu vyāptaṁ sarvavidam jagat | |

Know then that primal source is *māyā* and that *maheśvara* (Brahman) is the lord of *Māyā*. The whole world is filled with beings who form his parts.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 4.10.

II

The role of *Māyā*

*Māyā*²²⁶ is *avidyā*²²⁷ or ignorance. The *āśraya* (locus) of *māyā* is Brahman²²⁸. But, Brahman is not its cause. *Māyā* has no cause to account for its origination and is without a beginning (*anādī*). But ignorance is not endless, as it can exist only until the rise of knowledge. It is not a negative entity signifying the absence of knowledge. It is *bhāvarūpa*, which means that it is somewhat existent. It has the powers called as the *āvaraṇa-śakti* and the *vikṣepa-śakti*. *Āvaraṇa-śakti*, which is usually translated as concealing power, does not fully conceal. Anything unknown through concealment cannot be the locus of error.²²⁹ What it does is to obscure the knowledge of the true nature of *satyaṁ jñānāmanantam brahman*. It is *vikṣepa*, which makes it appear to be different from what it is, like the flower that makes the colorless crystal appear as red in color. *Māyā* by being the limiting adjunct to Brahman makes it appear as the manifestation. At the

²²⁶ *Yā mā sā* (That which is not) is *māyā*. It means, “that which has no independent reality” or “that which does not really exist”.

²²⁷ This is called fundamental *avidyā* or *mūlāvidyā*. Particular ignorance is called *tūlāvidyā*.

²²⁸ *Brahmāśraya*. Ṛg veda (10.129.2.) says: “There existed the one (*tadekam*), which is free from activity and which is associated with *māyā*.”

²²⁹ *Āvaraṇa* is *vastu-agrahaṇa* i.e., non-recognition of the *vastu*, which is Brahman.

individual level, all of us also wrongly identify the self as the body-mind-sense-complex and create endless problems for ourselves. The root cause of the ignorance and error is *māyā*.

The components of *māyā* are three fold. They are (i) *sattva* or intelligence, knowledge and purity; (ii) *rajas* or desire, energy and action; and (iii) *tamas* or ignorance, grossness and inaction²³⁰. These are called *guṇas* and every manifestation has all the three cohering in differing measures. They are not qualities but components of *māyā*, which bind *ātmā* to the body²³¹. *Sattva* leads to the experience of the pleasure (*sukha*) and makes the experiencer identify *ātmā* with the experiencer and say, "I am happy". *Rajas* gives rise to a more deeply entrenched sense of bondage through similar identification of *ātmā* with the likes and dislikes and the actions arising from them. *Tamas* binds through the inability to acquire discriminative knowledge and the incapacity to do what is to be done.

Māyā has the powers of *jñāna* (knowledge), *icchā* (desire) and *kriyā* (action). The power of knowing is related to *sattva-guṇa* and the power of desiring and acting is related to *rajoguṇa*. The disinclination for knowledge and action is related to *tamoguna*.

²³⁰ This is why *māyā* is called as *triguṇātmikā*.

²³¹ Bhagavadgītā, 14.5.

Māyā cannot be logically categorized. It is neither *sat* (real) nor *asat* (unreal). It is not *sat*, as it does not exist independently, being dependent on Brahman for its existence. It is not non-existent *asat*, as, if it were so, there would be no effect from it. We cannot also say that it is both *sat* and *asat*, as no existent thing can coexist with a non-existent thing. It is also not a part or quality of Brahman, since Brahman is without parts and without qualities. Even though it is beginningless in the sense that it has no cause, it is not endless, since it is resolved by knowledge. Viewed in any manner, it does not lend itself to any categorization. Therefore, it is called *anirvacanīya* or not logically categorisable. As it is different from *sat* and *asat*, it is called *sad-asad-vilakṣaṇa*. What is *sad-asad-vilakṣaṇa* is *anirvacanīya* and is called as *mithyā*. This aspect is true of not only of *māyā* but also of everything in the manifestation, which is its effect.

The projection of *māyā* is the causal, undifferentiated state of manifestation. It is called *avyaktam*²³². Differentiation from this potential state takes place by passing through the subtle and gross states²³³. If we look at the manifestation from the standpoint of *māyā*, it becomes the

²³² The projection viewed as the material basis of the various forms is called as *prakṛti*. This is not the same as *prakṛti* of Sāṅkhya school of thought where it is considered to be capable of independently creating.

²³³ It is called as *hiranyagarbha* in the subtle state and as *virāt* in the gross state.

pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇam, as it is the material source, which undergoes actual change to produce the effect. Brahman in the *upādhi* of *māyā* is called as *Īśvara*. It is thus that *Īśvara* is considered as the creator, sustainer and resolver of the universe. However, viewed from the angle of Brahman, Brahman is the ultimate *upādāna-kāraṇam*, as *māyā* is dependent on Brahman for its existence. But, Brahman is only the apparent cause or the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇam*, as it is only *māyā*, which undergoes actual change to produce the effect, and not Brahman. Brahman in the *upādhi* of *māyā* when looked upon from the standpoint of consciousness is the intelligent cause or *nimitta-kāraṇam*. It is thus that Brahman itself is both the *nimitta* and *upādāna-kāraṇam* or the *abhinna-nimitta-upādāna-kāraṇam*. This accords with the statements in the *śruti*, “My dear, in the beginning all this was existence (*sat* or Brahman) alone”²³⁴ and “It thought. May I become many”.²³⁵

Avidyā and *māyā* are identical. *Māyā*, which is universal, is individualized and personal in the *jīva*. *Avidyā* and *ajñāna* are synonymous. The *upādhi* of *jīva* has low *sattva* or knowledge component and *jīva* becomes a victim of the *āvaraṇa-śakti* of *māyā*. It results in non-apprehension,

²³⁴ *Sat-eva soṃya-idam-agra asit-ekam-eva-advitīyam*. Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad, 6.2.1.

²³⁵ *Tadaikṣata bahu syām prjāyeyeti..* Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad, 6.2.3.

misapprehension and doubt²³⁶ and the *jīva* considers himself to be limited in every sense. The *upādhi* of *Īśvara*, on the other hand, is predominantly *sattva* and the *āvaraṇa-śakti* does not function. That is why he is omniscient or all-knowing, omnipotent or all-powerful and omnipresent or all- pervading.

III

Doubts that arise about Brahman being the cause

The first doubt that arises about Brahman being the cause is because of the dissimilarity between Brahman, which is the cause and the material world, which is its product. Brahman is consciousness while the world is insentient. The cause and effect should have same nature like the clay and the pot. The answer lies in the nature of the cause. Clay is the *pariṇāmi-upādāna kāraṇam* of pot and changes itself to become the effect; so, the pot has the characteristics of clay. However, in the case of Brahman, it is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇam*. Therefore, the change into *jagat* is not actual but is only apparent (*vivarta*). So, the effect is not exactly the same as the cause. What is identical between Brahman and the manifestation is the basis of existence (*sattā*). Even appearances should have a basis that lends existence to it; for example, the basis of the appearance of the snake is the rope. Without the rope, the snake cannot appear. In the case of the entire

²³⁶Non-apprehension is *agrahaṇa*; misapprehension is *viparīta-grahaṇa*; and doubt is *saṁśaya*.

manifestation, its basis for existence or *adhiṣṭhānam* is Brahman. As for the correspondence between the *pariṇāmi-upādāna kāraṇam* and its effect, the components of *māyā*, which are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are present in every manifestation; only, their relative proportions in each vary.

Another objection is that no material would be available for Brahman to create, as nothing exists apart from Brahman. The explanation is that what appears as manifestation is owing to *māyā*, which conceals the knowledge of Brahman and projects different forms as manifestation. Brahman provides the *adhiṣṭhānam* for *māyā* to do so.

Māyā is in the causal, undifferentiated, potential state and what appears as the *jagat* is the manifestation of what is already available in the undifferentiated, potential condition in the differentiated subtle and gross forms²³⁷. What is existent alone comes into being. As what exists potentially is manifested, nothing is produced anew. It means that there is neither any creation or nor any creator. Nothing is also destroyed as what is manifest is only resolved back into its potential state. There is thus only the potential state manifesting and then resolving back into the potential state. Manifestation and resolution keep taking place cyclically exactly like our state of sleep in the

²³⁷While the undifferentiated form is called *avyākta* or *avyākṛta*, the differentiated form is called *vyākta*.

night and state of activity during the day. And in all states of manifestation, the *adhiṣṭhānam* or supporting basis for existence is Brahman.

IV

The purpose of the manifestation

The entire manifestation is meant for the *jīva* to experience the fruits of his past actions (*karma*) as determined by the law of *karma*. Setting the *karmanas* of all *jīvas* into an interconnected whole at all points of time is an infinitely complex matter requiring the omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent *Īśvara* to bring this about. *Īśvara* is called in this context as the *karmaphaladātā* or the bestower of the fruit of *karma*. Since omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence are qualities, *Īśvara* is sometimes called as *saguṇa* Brahman or Brahman with qualities while Brahman is, in this context, called *nirguṇa* Brahman or Brahman without qualities. Despite these terminologies, we must remember that one and the same entity cannot be both with qualities and without qualities and that the Upaniṣads categorically deny all forms and characteristics in Brahman through the teaching “Not this”, “Not this”²³⁸ and specific negations²³⁹. The characteristics that Brahman

²³⁸ *Neti, neti.*. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 2.3.6.

²³⁹ “It is neither gross nor minute, neither short nor long, neither red color nor oiliness, neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor ether, unattached, neither savour nor odour, without eyes or ears, without

appears to have is because of the *upādhi* of *māyā* and the *upādhi* does not change Brahman in anyway like the red flower not changing the colorless crystal in any way.²⁴⁰

V

An account of the process of manifestation

In Taittiriya Upanisad, we have one of the accounts of the process of manifestation. It says that the first element to manifest is *ākāśa* (space). It does not mean that from Brahman comes *ākāśa*. It means that from Brahman, which has for its adjunct *māyā* or *avidyā*, which is in the causal, undifferentiated form, *ākāśa* in its subtle form is projected by *māyā*. The characteristic of *ākāśa* is sound. From subtle *ākāśa*, that is, Brahman with the limiting adjunct of *māyā* as *ākāśa*²⁴¹ comes subtle *vāyu* (air), which has the characteristic of touch. Similarly, from subtle *vāyu* comes subtle *agni* (fire), which has the characteristic of form. Similarly, from subtle *agni* comes subtle *āpa* (water), which is characterized by taste. Similarly, from subtle *āpa* comes subtle *pṛthvī* (earth) characterized by smell. *Ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *agni*, *āpa* and *pṛthvī* are called *pañca-*

the vocal organ or mind, non-lustrous (like that of fire), without the vital force or mouth, not a measure and without interior or exterior” (Translation of extract from Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 3.8.8.)

²⁴⁰ Brahman with *upādhi* is called *sopādhika* Brahman while Brahman without *upādhi* is called *nirupādhika* Brahman.

²⁴¹ This is true of *vāyu*, *agni*, *āpa* and *pṛthvī* as well, as *ākāśa* and others cannot bring about manifestation by themselves.

bhūtas or five elements. These in their subtle form containing their own characteristic attribute are called *tanmātras*. Every thing, that is, *Īśvara*, *jīva* and *jagat*, is constituted of only *pañca-bhūtas*.

Ākāśa, which appears first, is the subtlest and later appearances are of progressively lower subtlety. Even as subtlety decreases, the element has more qualities and *when grossified*, becomes available for perception through more sense organs. While space has the quality of only sound and can only be heard, air has in addition to its own quality of touch has also the quality of sound and can be felt and heard; fire in addition to its own quality of form has the qualities of sound and touch and can be seen, heard and felt; water in addition to its own quality of taste has the qualities of sound, touch and form and can be tasted, heard, felt and seen; and finally, earth has in addition to its quality of smell has the qualities of sound, touch, form and taste and can be smelled, heard, felt, seen and tasted. None of the elements in their subtle form is perceptible to any sense organ.

From the subtle elements are formed the gross elements through a process of grossification.²⁴² Each element divides into two halves. Then, one half of each subtle element combines with one eighth each of the other four subtle elements to make one gross element. Even though

²⁴² The process of grossification is called *pañcīkaraṇam*.

each gross element is a mixture of all the elements, it retains the name of the element preponderant in it.

The manifestation can be viewed either in its entirety as macrocosm or individually as microcosm²⁴³. They carry different names at each stage of manifestation and they are given below.

State of Manifestation	Total	Individual
Causal (<i>kāraṇa</i>)	<i>antaryāmi</i>	<i>prājña</i>
Subtle (<i>sūkṣma</i>)	<i>hiraṇyagarbha</i> ²⁴⁴	<i>taijasa</i>
Gross (<i>sthūla</i>)	<i>virāt</i>	<i>viśva</i>
Total	<i>Īśvara</i>	<i>jīva</i>

Antaryāmi means the internal controller as it refers to the causal state of entire manifestation. Its individual product is called as *prājña* or one who is more or less ignorant (of its true nature)²⁴⁵. This state is called “mass of consciousness” as everything is in the undifferentiated, indiscernible state. *Hiraṇyagarbha*, whose literal meaning is golden foetus, is the subtle level of manifestation in which differentiation of what is potential has started. It is also called as *sūtrātman* or the thread passing through

²⁴³ Macrocosm is called *brahmāṇḍam* and microcosm is called *piṇḍāṇḍam*.

²⁴⁴ This is equivalent to Brahmaji.

²⁴⁵ *Prāyeṇa ajñyaḥ* |

and connecting the manifestation²⁴⁶. Its individual product, *taijasa* means the one full of light or thoughts. The gross universe is called *virāt*²⁴⁷ or the completely manifest visible universe. Its individual product is called as *viśva*, since it is manifest in diverse ways.

VI

The manifestation of the different parts of the *jīva*

The manifestation of the different parts of the *jīva* takes place as follows:

Of the *sattva* aspect of each of the five subtle elements are formed the five subtle sense organs. (The sense organs and organs of action that we see are their gross physical counterparts.) Of the subtle space is formed the subtle ear, the subtle sense organ of hearing; of subtle air is formed the subtle skin, the subtle sense organ of touch; of the subtle fire is formed the subtle eye, the subtle sense organ of form and color; of subtle water is formed the subtle tongue, the subtle sense organ of taste and of the subtle earth is formed the subtle nose, the subtle sense organ of smell.

Of the *sattva* aspect of all the five subtle elements are formed the *antaḥ-karaṇa* consisting of the *manas* which is

²⁴⁶ It is also referred to as *prāṇa* in Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 3.9.9.

²⁴⁷ *Vividam rājate iti virāt* |

the mind that is not discriminatory, *buddhi*, which is the discriminatory aspect of mind, *ahaṅkāra*, which is the I-sense and *citta*, which is the memory.

Of the *rajas* aspect of the five subtle elements are formed the five subtle organs of action. Of the subtle space is formed the subtle organ of speech; of the subtle air is formed the subtle hands; of the subtle fire are formed the subtle legs; of the subtle water is formed the subtle genitals; and of the subtle earth is formed the subtle anus.

All the subtle organs referred to here belong to the subtle body and their gross counterparts are the physical organs of the physical body.

Of the *rajas* aspect of all the five subtle elements are formed the five subtle *prāṇas*, which are *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna* and *samāna*. *Prāṇa* is the vital principle of energizing; *apāna* is the vital principle of cleansing; *vyāna* is the circulating vital principle; *samāna* is the assimilating vital principle and *udāna* is the forceful rejecting vital principle²⁴⁸. The entire physiological functions of the body are dependent on the subtle *prāṇa*, which belongs to the subtle body.

²⁴⁸ Sneezing, vomiting and withdrawal of the subtle body from the gross body at the time of death are owing to its activity.

The gross physical body is formed of all the five gross elements.

All the sense and physical organs and *antaḥ-karaṇa* derive their ability through the presence of their presiding deities, which are different aspects of *Īśvara*²⁴⁹. (What enlivens *Īśvara*, the deities and the organs is consciousness.)

VII

The division of the *jīva* into five functional parts

For the purposes of analysis, *jīva* is considered to consist of five parts based on their nature and function. They are: *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya*. The individual *jīva*'s (*vyāṣṭi*) *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya* etc. are the products of the total (*samaṣṭi*) *anna*, *prāṇa* etc. The suffix *maya* means *vikāra* or modification²⁵⁰. For example, *annamaya* refers to the physical body, which is formed through the assimilation of the gross elements of *anna* or food. We may now look into these.

²⁴⁹ The presiding deities are called *adhīstāna devatās*. For example, Aitareya Upaniṣad (1.2.4) says, *agnīrvāgbhūtvā mukhaṁ prāvīśat*, Agni, in the form of the organ of speech, entered the mouth. The *devatās* are listed at pages 58 to 60 of Śaṅkarācārya, *Tattva-bodha*, (Central Chinmaya Mission Trust) .

²⁵⁰ Another meaning is *prācūrya*, which means preponderance or saturation.

Annamaya: It derives its name from *anna* or food out of whose assimilation the gross body²⁵¹ is formed. The body provides the physical base for the *antaḥ-karaṇa*, the sense organs and the organs of action. All knowing, doing and experiencing take place only through the organs in the physical body, which are the physical counterparts of the organs of the subtle body. *Ātmā* is mistaken by the *jīva* to be the *annamaya* and the *jīva* says: "I am the body".

Prāṇamaya: It consists of the five fold *prāṇas* along with the five organs of action. *Prāṇa* keeps the body alive. Pervaded by *prāṇamaya*, the body engages in all physiological activities²⁵². *Ātmā* is mistaken by the *jīva* to be *prāṇamaya* and the *jīva* says: "I am full of vim and vigour", "I am hungry" or "I am thirsty".

Manomaya: It consists of the mind and the organs of perception. The mind lacks the ability to discriminate and decide and is in that sense different from the intellect. The mind has the faculty of desire²⁵³. Desire arises from the input from all the sense organs. *Manomaya* includes all forms of emotions. The *annamaya* and *prāṇamaya* do not have the sense of I. But in the *manomaya* and *vijñānamaya*, there is the I-sense or *aham-buddhi* as also

²⁵¹ The details of the gross, subtle and causal bodies are given in Chapter 8.

²⁵² *Kriyā-śakti*.

²⁵³ *Icchā-śakti*.

the my-sense or *mamakāra*. The mind and *buddhi* identify themselves with one body and divide the world into 'mine' and 'not-mine'. They are the cause for all kinds of projections. *Ātmā* is mistaken by the *jīva* to be *manomaya* when the *jīva* says: "I do not know for certain"; "I like"; "I dislike"; "I feel".

Vijñānamaya: The mind bifurcates itself into *manomaya* or *vijñānamaya* depending on the nature of the *vṛtti*. When it is of nature of discriminative intelligence or *buddhi*²⁵⁴, it functions as *vijñānamaya*. The organs of perception are included in it, as in *manomaya*. *Buddhi* is characterized by ascertained thoughts. It is, however, the *manomaya* that sets up the whole pattern of cognition. The whole world enters through it as it keeps on objectifying things by undergoing change relevant to the objects in the form of *vṛttis*. Their cognition takes place from the standpoint of *vijñānamaya* by virtue of the *cidābhāsa* that it has gained from *cit*. *Buddhi* and *cidābhāsa* are inseparable, since *buddhi* is as though the reflecting medium of *cit* giving rise to *cidābhāsa*. *Vijñānamaya* also provides *cidābhāsa* to the *manomaya* and through it to the *prāṇamaya* and the *annamaya*. It is through the *vijñānamaya* that the insentient body-mind-sense-complex becomes sentient.

²⁵⁴ *Jñāna-śakti*.

Vijñānamaya becomes the cause for *saṁsāra* for the *jīva* as the I-sense arises in it. The I-sense erroneously identifies itself with the body-mind-sense-complex and becomes the subject-knower, doer and experiencer. Everything other than the subject becomes *idam-vṛtti* or object. It performs all the activities and enjoys their results. In this context, the *manomaya* is only an instrument (*karaṇa*) of *vijñānamaya*.

The I-sense in the *vijñānamaya* cannot himself recognise his *avidyā*. That is why teaching is necessary. But the identification of *ātmā* with *vijñānamaya* is so total that he does not entertain any doubt whatever that he may be wrong. That is why it is very difficult to make the person even see the fact that *ātmā* may be other than the *vijñānamaya* and that *ātmā* is to be understood correctly. So, *vijñānamaya* can keep the person in *saṁsāra* forever. However, it can also free that person by seeking and gaining self-knowledge. But the person would require *Īśvara's* grace gained through *punya* to make him seek self-knowledge. It is for this purpose and for overcoming obstacles during the pursuit that *Īśvara-anugraha* is necessary for the seeker of *ātmajñāna*.

Ānandamaya: the seeming modification of *ātmā* (Brahman) into the causal state of manifestation owing to conditioning adjunct of *avidyā* is *ānandamaya*. It is the potential state of manifestation as well as the state of resolution of the manifestation. It is of the nature of

ignorance. At the total level, it becomes the cause for the entire manifestation. At the individual level, it also leads to the *buddhi* mistaking the self to be limited to the body-mind-sense-complex.

The *jīva* functions entirely in *ānandamaya* in the state of deep sleep. In that state, his mind is resolved. He is neither the knower nor the doer but only the experiencer. He experiences *ānanda* in this state. It should not be confused with *svarūpānanda*, as *ātma-jñāna* is lacking. In fact, *ātmā* is mistaken to be *ānandamaya* by the *jīva* and the *jīva* says: "I did not know anything and I enjoyed my sleep".

While Veda uses the appellation of '*maya*' to indicate the seeming modification, the *sampradāya* has added '*kośa*' to it making, for example, '*annamaya*' into '*annamayakośa*'. Translation of '*kośa*' as the 'sheath' creates the absurd impression that *ātmā* is located within the five coverings in each individual whereas they are sheaths in the sense that they are the five types of erroneous notions, which conceal the real nature of *ātmā*. It is not possible to cover the limitless *ātmā*. What covers it, are the ignorance of the true nature of *ātmā* and the erroneous notions that *ātmā* is *ānanda*, *vijñāna*, *mana*, *prāṇa* and *anna*. *Ātmā*-Brahman is none of them even though all these owe their existence to it and are not separate from it. This would be made clear in the following chapters.

VIII

The three states of the manifestation

The manifestation can also be divided into the causal, the subtle and the gross. Causal is the invisible seed state of manifestation in which every detail is only in a potential state and is undifferentiated²⁵⁵. Subtle is the invisible state in which differentiation have begun to manifest but not become fully developed. Gross state is the fully differentiated state of manifestation, which is visible²⁵⁶.

There is a correspondence between the five *kośas* and these three states. The causal correlates with the *ānandamaya*, the subtle with the *vijañānamaya*, *manomaya* and *prāṇamaya* and the gross with the *annamaya*.

The states of experience of the *jīva* are also related to the different states of the manifestation. During the deep sleep, the *jīva* functions in the causal state; during the dream, it functions in the causal and subtle states; and during the waking state, it functions in the causal, subtle and gross states.

²⁵⁵ *Avyākta*.

²⁵⁶ *Vyakta*.

IX

We now have the basic information necessary for further discussion of the subject and it follows.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSE AND THE EFFECT

I

The differences between the cause and the effect

We may now analyze the cause and the effect to know the implications of the manifestation being the effect of Brahman. For this purpose, we may take the example of clay as the cause (*kāraṇa*) and the pot as the effect (*kārya*).

Clay, the material cause, is one. From clay, many pots are made as also other products like pan, cups, lids, lamps and art objects. If we count the objects made of clay, we can count many. However, if we count clay, it is only one even though there are many objects of clay. Clay is one; but the clay products are many. *Kāraṇa* is one or *ekam* but *kāryas* are many or *anekam*.

When clay is shaped into a pot, the pot weighs the same as the clay from which it is made. The weight of the pot is the weight of clay. If clay were removed from the pot, the pot would cease to exist. So, the pot is completely

dependent upon clay for its existence. The effect (*kārya*) can never be separate from cause (*kāraṇa*), as it is sustained by the cause (*kāraṇa*) Therefore, the effect cannot exist at any time without the cause. Thus, while *kāraṇa* is substantial or *sāram*, *kārya* is unsubstantial or *asāram*.

The cause, clay exists even before its manifestation as the pot. Clay continues to exist when manifest as the pot. Clay will continue to exist even when the pot is broken into pieces. Clay is thus present during all the three periods of time, the past, the present and the future. What exists in this manner is called *nitya* or permanent. Clay as *kāraṇa* is *nitya*. As regards the pot, the *kārya*, it comes into manifestation at particular point of time and was not there before that time. Later, at another point of time, when it is broken, the pot will cease to be. It has a beginning and an end and is not present in all the three periods of time. Pot is thus temporary or *anityam*. Thus, while *kāraṇam* is *nityam*, *kārya* is *anityam*.

II

Satyam and mithyā

Clay can exist on its own at all points of time. It can be a mere clod of clay; or, it may be the pot, the lid or any other product of clay. Its existence is not dependent on anything else. However, in the case of the effect, the pot, the position is not the same. It can never exist without

being dependent on its cause. The pot will cease to exist the moment it severs its connection with clay. Since the effect does not have its own basis for its existence, it is not considered as *satyam* or real. 'Not real' does not mean that it does not exist. It very much exists and has a particular name, form and function. However, it is not considered real since it is not independent but is entirely dependent on clay for its existence. The pot is therefore not *satyam*. That is, *the truth of the pot is not the pot but is clay*. At the same time, the pot cannot be considered as unreal (*tuccham*), since it not only exists but also is available for transactions. *Tuccham*, on the other hand, is that which does not exist at any point of time. The traditional examples of *tuccham* have been italicized in the following sentence: "Having bathed in *the water of the mirage*, having put *a crown of sky-flowers* on his head, there goes *the son of a barren woman*, armed with *a bow made of hare's horn*". The present-day example is the square-circle. Unlike these, which can never be in existence, the pot has a dependent existence. Since it is neither real as it has no existence of its own, nor unreal as it does exist as form and function, its reality status is neither real nor unreal. Its reality status cannot thus be categorically stated and it is called as *anirvacanīya*. That which does not admit of categorization either as real or as unreal is also called as *sad-asad-vilakṣaṇīya*. It is otherwise called as *mithyā*. Thus, we arrive at the position that while the cause, *kāraṇa* is *satyam*, the effect, *kārya* is *mithyā*. In the case of the pot made of clay, clay is the

substance and is *satyam*; pot, which is not a substance but is only a form (*rūpa*), which is called by the name (*nāma*), pot, is *mithyā*. Square-circle, which does not exist at any point of time, is *tuccham*.

Mithyā is not name and form (*nāma-rūpa*). It is a word revealing our understanding of the reality status of the object. A pot is *mithyā*. Nevertheless, we can use the *mithyā*-pot. But, *mithyā* cannot be put to use as it expresses only the reality status of the object.

Another important thing to be noted is that only when clay is appreciated as the truth of the pot or as *satyam*, the pot, which is made of clay, can be considered as *mithyā*. So, without knowing *satyam*, figuring out *mithyā* is not possible.

III

The cause produces only name, form and function

The question that arises out of this discussion is as to what the cause produces, when the effect is pre-existing in it. When the pot is made, what exactly is it that comes into being. The clay, which has been a lump, is now in a different form. The clay in the new form can be now put to particular uses. Since it has a specific form and particular uses, this clay now gets a new name, namely,

the pot, for identifying it during the daily transactions. The effect that the cause brings about is production of name, form and function. *Kārya* is *nāma*, *rūpa* and *karma*. When the clay is shaped into different forms with different uses, the same clay gets different names. Even so, many names, forms and functions do not mean many substances since all of them are made only of clay. When we say pot, there is no independent substance called the pot but only clay from which the pot is made.

Causation does not bring about any change in clay as a substance. In the following conversation, clay enlightens the pot-maker on this point:

Pot-maker to clay: See what I have done! You were earlier a lump of clay; I have now converted you into a shapely pot.

Clay: What do you mean? I have not become anything different. I continue to be the same clay as before.

Pot-maker: How is it that you miss very evident things? Earlier you were a lump. Now you are shapely. Earlier you had no particular use. Now you can be used for carrying water and for a variety of other jobs. Earlier you were called clay. Now you are called a pot. Are these not changes?

Clay: I do not understand you. With shape or without shape, I am only clay. With use or without use, I am only clay. I may be called a pot or anything else; but I continue to be only clay. Now tell me what change has taken place to me as clay? I have undergone no change at all!

The pot-maker had no answer to give to clay!

The word “pot” sits on the tongue only and does not cover any substance. Chāndogya Upaniṣad says: Pot is only a name dependent on speech. The product is merely a verbal distinction. In reality, only clay exists.²⁵⁷

We have only words and their meaning. We think that there are tangible objects for which we have the words. But, these are just words and their meanings. The word, “pot” has its meaning which we understand and we can communicate it to others. This is *vyavahāra* or transaction. But, we consider that the object that we perceive is the meaning of the word. But our notion does not give the pot, for example, that kind of tangibility. This is because “pot” has no being, as the is-ness of the pot belongs to clay. The capacity to go beyond the pot and see clay without doing anything to the pot or the clay is Vedānta. The pot continues to be pot and clay continues to be clay. But, our understanding of them becomes different.

²⁵⁷ *Vacārambhaṇam vikaro nāmadheyam | Mṛttikā-iti-eva satyam |*
(Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.1.4.)

IV

What exists is the clay and not the pot

The reality that underlies all changes of forms is the substance itself. Change of form does not produce any change in substance. Every time we see the pot, the substance that we see is nothing but clay. When the substance remains the same in all forms and the change does not affect the substance, the change into forms cannot be considered as change, as far as the substance is concerned. So, from the angle of the substance, the change is not considered as real. For example, Devadatta, sitting, standing or lying is considered to be the one and the same person. In the case of the clay and the pot, we, however, tend to think of the pot not as an apparent change of the clay but consider the pot as a new *substance* and call it a clay pot. If we hold it in our hand and ask someone as to what it is, we would invariably get the answer that it is a pot. However, when we touch the pot, we are only touching clay. When we see the color of the pot, we are seeing only the color of clay. When we feel the texture of the pot, we are feeling the texture of only clay. The weight of the pot is only the weight of clay. However, we call the substance clay as the substance pot. We can use the two words, pot and clay for the same thing only when both words mean the same thing. The clay must be the pot and the pot must be the clay. To arrive at this conclusion, pot must pass the *anvaya-vyatireka* test. Applying this test, we find that whenever the pot is present, clay is also

present. Therefore, there is *anvaya* or invariable co-existence. However, whenever the pot is not present, clay can be present as a lump or as many other objects made of clay like the lid, bowl, and lamp. So, there is no *vyatireka* or invariable co-absence. Since the pot and the clay have not stood the test, they cannot be equated and used as synonyms.

Again, when we say ‘clay pot’, pot becomes the substantial noun and clay as the attribute of pot becomes an adjective. Nevertheless, in reality, clay is the substance and pot is the attribute, which is a particular form and usage of clay. Therefore, clay has to be the noun and pot has to be the adjective. The right expression would therefore be ‘potty clay’ and not ‘clay pot’. The grammatical error in the expression ‘clay pot’ arises out of the error in understanding. We confer substantiality on pot that does not have any substantiality being only a name, form and function of clay and deny substantiality to clay, which is the actual substance. When we say, “pot is”, the is-ness or existence belongs to clay and not to the pot. The is-ness of the pot is entirely borrowed from clay. Overlooking this fact is the basic error.

V

Potness is an incidental or *mithyā* attribute of clay

We have also to understand as to how it is possible to equate the mere clay with the clay that has form, function

and name. For this, we should know the relationship of form, function and name, which is the pot, with the material cause, which is clay. The exact position is that mere clay now appears as potty-clay. We recognise a thing as a pot by its potness. Now, we have to see as to where this potness exists.

Let us consider the situation before the pot was produced from clay. Before the production of the pot, the pot is not in existence. As for the existence of potness, it cannot exist in a non-existent pot. Potness cannot also exist in an object, which is not a pot. If potness can neither exist in a non-existent pot nor in a non-pot, it can exist only in the clay from which the pot comes to be produced.

Let us consider the position after the pot is produced. If we see as to whether potness exists in the pot, we find that pot is itself unsubstantial as when the clay is removed from the pot, the pot ceases to exist. Potness cannot exist in something that is not a substance. So, potness cannot exist in the pot. As before, potness cannot also exist in a non-pot. Then where can potness be, if it can neither be in the non-pot or in the pot? Again, it can be only in clay.

But if potness exists in clay, then we will have a problem, as clay will always has to exist as a pot. But this is not the case since clay exists even when it is not a pot. Then where can the potness exist? It exists only in clay but not intrinsically. Since potness is not intrinsic to clay, clay

need not exist only as a pot. Clay can be a pot incidentally. Potness is, therefore, an incidental attribute²⁵⁸ of clay, or an attributed (*kalpita*) quality of clay or a super-imposition (*āropita*) on clay. This incidental attribute is perceived to be present; but it has no substantiality of its own. So, its reality status is *mithyā*. Thus, clay, which is the substantive *satyam*²⁵⁹, has the incidental *mithyā* attribute of pot. It is in this context that clay is said to be the sub-stratum and pot as the super-imposition. The sub-stratum is *satyam* while the super-imposition is *mithya*.

The *mithyā* name, form and function cannot be treated as a separate entity and added to *satyam*, as *mithyā* indicates their lack of substantiality. The moment we recognise that the name, form and function are fully dependent on clay and are without substantiality of their own, the *mithyā* attribute *mentally* resolves into *satyam* clay. Therefore, in terms of reality, we commit no mistake in equating clay with name, form and function with clay without them.

VI

Between *satyam* and *mithyā*, there is no connection

The question arises as to how *satyam* and *mithyā* are connected. The answer is that there is no connection

²⁵⁸ *Taṭastha-lakṣaṇam*.

²⁵⁹ *Satyam* is also referred to as *sat* or *satya*.

between them. Connection is possible only between two things, which have substantiality of their own. That is, only if there is another *satyam*, we can speak of any connection between them. But, there is no second *satyam* to make this possible. As for the basis-based (*ādhāra-ādheyā*) connection between them, it can also exist only if they are two distinct entities. But this is not so. The position is that *mithyā* does not exist apart from *satyam* like the pot not existing without clay. They are not two separate things. The relationship between them is that *mithyā is non-separate from satyam*; but *satyam is independent of mithya*. That is, pot cannot exist without clay and is not separate from clay; but clay can exist by itself without being the pot or anything else. Therefore, when we say that everything is based on Brahman, or everything is a superimposition on it, we must understand that everything owes its existence to Brahman and is not separate from Brahman, without Brahman having any connection with it.

VII

The different types of reality

The distinction between the clay and the pot in their nature of existence makes us recognise them as having different types of reality. If we go beyond the perspective of clay-pot and analyze clay, we find that clay itself is not independent but is dependent on various minerals for its existence. Minerals in turn are dependent on compounds,

compounds on elements, elements on molecules, molecules on atoms, atoms on sub-atomic particles and so on, till it becomes indefinable. All these entities are connected to each other through dependence. This is true not only in the case of clay but in respect of every object that we know. It means that everything is a dependent entity. Since the dependent entity is the *mithyā* attribute of the cause, it is not a substantive. Thus, there is no substantive in the world. The *jagat* is *mithyā*.

In this scenario, *śruti* reveals that the original cause or *mūla kāraṇam*, which is not dependent on anything else but on which everything else is dependent, is Brahman or *ātmā*²⁶⁰. It exists by itself. It is *svataḥsiddha* or self-established. It is self-evident or *svaprakāśa*. No means of knowledge can testify to its existence since it is itself dependent on Brahman-*ātmā* for its functioning. It is called *pāramārthika-satya* or the essential reality. It is without a second and is the only *pāramārthika-satya*, as everything else is *mithyā*, being dependent on Brahman-*ātmā* for its existence. Hence the statement, *Brahma-satyam, jaganmithyā*.

To list the features of *sat*, which is *pāramārthika-satya*, serially,

²⁶⁰ Since Brahman is revealed by the Upaniṣads, it is called *aupaniṣidaṁ brahma*.

- It is self-established (*svataḥsiddham*); therefore,
- it is always existing (*nityam*).
- It is self-evident (*svaprakāśam*); therefore,
- it is self-validating (*svayamprakāśitam*); and
- it can always be asserted as existing (*abhāvarahitam*); and
- it can never be negated (*bādharahitam*).
- It is self-contained and endowed with one's own nature (*svasvarūpam*), as it is independent.
- It is single and is second to none (*ekamevādvitīyam*), as everything else is *mithyā*.

In contrast, *asat* (used in the sense of non-existing) is that which

- is never the object of perception or verbal authority (*ananubhūtiviśayakam*);
- has never any form or nature (*svarūpa-hīnam*);
- is never in relationship with anything (*anadhikaraṇatvam*);
- is never assertible (*nirūpākhyam*); and
- is impossible at all times (*kālatraya bādhitam*).

Apart from *pāramārthika-satya*, we have everything else, which is dependent on that reality and which have mere name, form and function. Even though they have no essential reality, they have transactional or empirical reality and behave within certain laws. We use only these in all our transactions. This is called *vyāvahārika-satya*.

This type of reality covers not only everything that is known but also the unknown within the sphere of manifestation. When Veda talks about the ends like the higher worlds and the means for attaining them, it is only talking about empirical reality. The physical body, its organs, the senses and their constituents, the capacity to remember, to love, to think, and to know, are also *vyavahārika* with empirical reality.

We have also the third order of reality that is mere appearance. It is called *prātibhāsika-satya*. While the entire manifestation, which is *vyavahārika* reality, is produced by *Īśvara* (*Īśvara-sṛṣṭi*), the *prātibhāsika* reality is our personal creation (*jīva-sṛṣṭi*). When a person mistakes the rope for a snake, the rope, which is empirically real in the world of ordinary experience, becomes subjectively real as the snake for the person committing the mistake in perception. The snake exists only for that person, at that place and at that time. How long it so exists depends on that person. The rope, as rope, belongs to *vyavahārika* reality, while the mistaken snake is of the *prātibhāsika* reality. *Prātibhāsika* means existing only in appearance. It is not available for public perception but is seen only in the mind. The dream belongs to this category. Similarly, when we imagine that someone does not like us, it is a purely personal projection. Any mistaken notion, unknown fears and all forms of personal projection are *prātibhāsika* reality. This type of reality is the outcome of the limitations of the

mind. That is why we do see what is not there in the world²⁶¹. Even though the *prātibhāsika* reality is eventually negated, like the dream on waking up, we cognize it, take it to be real and react to it. Therefore, it is considered as a type of reality.

Both *vyāvahārika-satya* and *prātibhāsika-satya* are relative concepts. For example, from the point of the view of the waking state, the dream is *prātibhāsika-satya*. But in the dream state, the dream is *vyāvahārika-satya*. That is why in the dream, the dream person runs to save himself on seeing the dream tiger, since it actually exists for him. The dream world is real to the dream person. The waking world is also real to the waker only in the same way; it is no different. From the *pāramārthika* angle, the waker and the waking world have no reality of their own and are *mithyā* very much like the dreamer and dream world.

In terms of the differentiation as *satyam* and *mithyā*, *pāramārthika-satya* is the only *satyam*. Both *vyāvahārika-satya* and *prātibhāsika-satya* do not have independent existence and are *mithyā*. At all times, we are confronting the empirical *vyāvahārika* and the subjective *prātibhāsika* orders of reality, which are *mithyā*. Even though we call them as orders of reality, the only reality is the *pāramārthika-satya* on which everything else is based.

²⁶¹ Swami Dayananda, *Gita Home Study, Volume 2*, pp. 32 – 34.

VIII

Brahman is *advaitam*, without the second

Reverting to the subject, we started with the entire manifestation, taking it to be real. Then we considered it as an effect (*kārya*) caused by Brahman, the *kāraṇa*. By the analysis of the relationship between the cause and the effect, we found that the effect is without essential substantiality (*mithyā*), as it is dependent on the cause for its existence. Since the effect (*kārya*) is unsubstantial and is *mithyā*, it does not qualify to become the characteristic of Brahman. That is, Brahman is *kārya-vilakṣaṇa*.

There is another outcome from the analysis. It is that Brahman loses the status of the cause, since the effect is unsubstantial. This is like the *guru* ceasing to have the *guru*-status as soon as he has no disciple. It means that being the cause is also not the characteristic of Brahman; or, Brahman is *kāraṇa-vilakṣaṇa* also.

The net result is that Brahman is neither the cause nor the effect. Brahman is *kārya-kāraṇa-vilakṣaṇa*.²⁶² Even so, the effect and the cause are the indicatory marks for recognising Brahman through the manifestation when the nature of its relationship with Brahman is explained. It is like identifying the house through crow sitting on its roof,

²⁶² There is neither any real creation nor any creator. Therefore, there is no real birth. This is Gauḍapādācārya's *ajāti-vāda* (*Kārikā*, 4.22.)

even though the crow is not a part of the house. Once we recognize the house, the crow is not a part of the understanding of the house. It is called *tatastha-lakṣaṇa*. Similarly, the manifestation serves as the indicator for recognising the actual Brahman, which is *niṣprapañca* (without the manifestation) and is free from it (*prapañcopaśamanī*²⁶³). This is the reason why the exact process of manifestation is not of any consequence in recognising Brahman.

We may now set down below the results of the various stages of analysis:

- The cause Brahman is single (*eka*), while the effects are many (*aneka*).
- *Jagat* and *jīva* are not independent of Brahman, as their real basis (*adhiṣṭhānam*) is Brahman; they consist of name, form and function and are *mithyā*.
- Brahman is in and through *jagat* and *jīva*; that is, *sat* Brahman is immanent in the *mithyā jagat* and *jīva*, as Brahman is their real basis.
- *Jagat* and *jīva* are not the content of Brahman, since they are *mithyā*; but *sat* Brahman is the content of *jagat* and *jīva*, as without it, the *mithyā* effect is not

²⁶³ Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, 7.

possible. (This is the same as: rope is not the mistaken snake; but the mistaken snake is the rope.)

- Since the entire manifestation consisting of name and form is *mithyā*, it cannot be called as the characteristic of Brahman (*kārya-vilakṣaṇa*); Brahman is free from it (*prapañcopaśamam*).
- Since the effect is *mithyā*, there is actually no real manifestation and the *kāraṇa*-status of Brahman is *mithyā*; thus, being the cause is also not the characteristic of Brahman (*kāraṇa-vilakṣaṇa*).
- Even though the *mithyā* manifestation cannot exist without *sat* Brahman, *sat* Brahman is without the manifestation (*niṣprapañca*), since it is *mithyā*. (This is the same as: the snake cannot exist without the rope; but the snake is not a part of the rope, since the snake is unsubstantial.)
- *Īsvara* is also *mithyā*, since he is Brahman with *mithyā kāraṇa* status.
- Therefore, the only *satyam* is Brahman.
- Thus, Brahman is *advaitam*, without the second.

CHAPTER 14

THE RESOLUTION OF THE *JĪVA*, THE *JAGAT* AND *ĪŚVARA* INTO BRAHMAN

I

Resolution through *pañca-kośa-viveka*

Taittirīya Upaniṣad reveals Brahman as the *jagat-kāraṇam*. It states: “From that (Brahman), which is *ātmā*, space is born. From space, air is born. From air, fire (is born). From fire, water (is born). From water, earth (is born). From earth, plants are born. From plants, food is born. From food, the human being (is born). The human being consisting of the essence of food is indeed this (body)”²⁶⁴. The manifestation takes place at the total and at the individual levels. However, the manifestation constitutes *adhyāropa* or super-imposition, since it makes Brahman to be known by us differently from what it is. Proceeding from our erroneous notion of taking the manifestation to be real, the Upaniṣad corrects the error (*apavāda*) at each stage of the manifestation both at the individual and total level to reveal Brahman-*ātmā* in its true nature. Following the *arundhatī-darśana-nyāya*, it

²⁶⁴ Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Brahnavallī, 1.

does the correction beginning from the gross physical body (*annamaya*) and progresses through the subtle *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya* and ends with Brahman-*ātmā*. The result of the correction of error is the resolution of *annamaya* into *prāṇamaya*, *prāṇamaya* with resolved *annamaya* into *manomaya*, *manomaya* with resolved *prāṇamaya* and *annamaya* into *vijñānamaya* and *vijñānamaya* with resolved *manomaya*, *prāṇamaya* and *annamaya* into *ānandamaya* and *ānandamaya* with resolved *vijñānamaya*, *manomaya*, *prāṇamaya* and *annamaya* into Brahman-*ātmā*. The process of manifestation and resolution are set out not for throwing light on these processes but for revealing that whatever that exists is only the one *vastu*, which is Brahman-*ātmā*. It also shows that *ātmā* is not the body-mind-sense-complex by negating it at all levels of misunderstanding, namely, *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya*. The resolution also demonstrates as to how *ātmā* is none other than Brahman.

The method (*prakriyā*) adopted for bringing about the resolution through correction of the five erroneous notions is called the *pañca-kośa-viveka*. The steps of the resolution are:

- The Upaniṣad first takes *ātmā* to be the *annamaya*²⁶⁵. Then it says that in fact, *ātmā* is the *prāṇamaya*, which is other than the *annamaya*, and that *annamaya* is filled by *prāṇamaya*. Thus, it negates the notion that *ātmā* is the *annamaya*.²⁶⁶
- The negation makes the *annamaya* into *anātmā* and *annamaya* is now called as *annamaya-kośa*.
- As *annamaya-kosa*, it derives its existence from *prāṇamaya*, which has now been revealed as *ātmā*. Without any existence of its own, *annamaya-kosa* is only a form with a function and is called by a particular name. That is, it is mere *nāma*, *rūpa* and *kārya*.
- Since it has dependent existence, its status of reality is not logically categorisable either as independently existing (*sat*) or non-existing (*asat*). That is, it is *sat-asat-vilakṣaṇa* or *mithyā*.
- Since it is without intrinsic existence (*mithyā*), it is as good as non-existing²⁶⁷.
- Since it is as good as non-existing, its apparent existence stands *mentally* resolved into *prāṇamaya* from which it derives its existence (*pravilāpanam*).
- Thus, the *annamaya-kosa* stands mentally resolved into the *prāṇamaya*.

²⁶⁵ Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Brahma-vallī, 1.

²⁶⁶ Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Brahma-vallī, 2.

²⁶⁷ *Ādāvante ca yannāsti vartamāne'pi tattathā* | That which is non-existent at the beginning and in the end, is necessarily so (non-existent) in the middle. Gauḍapāda, *Kārikā*, 4.31.

The resolution takes place both at the individual level (*vyāṣṭi*) as well as the total level (*samaṣṭi*). At the *anna* level, we have both the total *anna* and the individual *annamaya*. The total *anna* is the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇam*) and *annamaya* is its product. As such, *annamaya* is manifested by *anna*, sustained by *anna* and goes back into *anna*. Total *anna* for the purposes of the reasoning adopted for resolution is the same as the individual *annamayas*. Therefore, the resolution of the individual *annamaya* into the individual *prāṇamaya* applies also to the resolution of the total *anna* into total *prāṇa*. Thus, total *anna* also resolves into the total *prāṇa*.

When this reasoning is applied at the levels of *prāṇa*, *manas*, and *vijñāna*, the resolution of both the individual and total also takes place simultaneously into the next higher individual and total level.

When the identification of *ātmā* is shifted from *annamaya* to *prāṇamaya*, *annamaya* becomes *anātmā* and *ātmā* becomes *prāṇamaya*. This is the position in terms of the reality of existence. However, in transactional terms, *annamaya-kośa* remains unaffected by the change in its reality status into *anātmā* and continues to be the same as before, since its name, form and function continue to be sustained by *prāṇamaya*. The vital difference is that *ātmā* is now not considered as *annamaya-kosa* and the *jīva* stops saying, "I am tall"; instead, he says, "the body is tall".

Reverting to *prāṇamaya* into which the *annamaya-kosa* has resolved, the Upaniṣad²⁶⁸ similarly reveals that *ātmā* is the *manomaya*. Thus, *prāṇamaya* becomes *anātmā* and is called as *prāṇamaya-kośa*. The *prāṇamaya-kośa*, which is without intrinsic existence (*mithyā*), resolves into *manomaya*. Even as *anātmā*, which is *mithyā*, the name, form and function of *prāṇamaya-kośa* continue to be as before since they are sustained by *manomaya*. However, *ātmā* becomes the *manomaya* and the *jīva* instead of saying, “I am energetic”, says, “The body is energetic”.

The Upaniṣad²⁶⁹ now reveals that *ātmā* is *vijñānamaya*. Therefore, *manomaya* becomes *anātmā* and is called the *manomaya-kośa*. Being without intrinsic existence (*mithyā*), it resolves into *vijñānamaya*. Even as *mithyā*, *manomaya-kośa* continues to be as before, since the name, form and function of *manomaya-kośa* continue to be sustained by *vijñānamaya*. But, *ātmā* becomes the *vijñānamaya* and the *jīva* instead of saying, “I am mentally disturbed”, now says, “the mind is disturbed”.

The Upaniṣad²⁷⁰ now reveals that *ātmā* is *ānandamaya*. So, *vijñānamaya* becomes *anātmā* and is called the *vijñānamaya-kośa*. Being without intrinsic existence (*mithyā*), it resolves into *ānandamaya*. Even as *mithyā*,

²⁶⁸ Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Brahma-vallī, 3.

²⁶⁹ Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Brahma-vallī, 4.

²⁷⁰ Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Brahma-vallī, 5.

vijñānamaya-kośa continues to be as before since its name, form and function continue to be sustained by *ānandamaya*. But *ātmā* becomes the *ānandamaya* and the *jīva* instead of saying, “I am intelligent”, now says, “the *buddhi* is sharp”.

As regards *ānandamaya*, it is the causal body of the *jīva*. The Upaniṣad states that the sub-stratum or base (*pratiṣṭhā*) of *ānandamaya* is Brahman-*ātmā*²⁷¹. Thus, *ānandamaya* becomes *anātmā*. Since *ānandamaya* is dependent on Brahman-*ātmā*, it has no intrinsic existence. It is thus *mithyā* and gets mentally resolved into Brahman-*ātmā*. The *ānandamaya*, which is now understood as *anātmā*, is called as *ānandamayakośa*. Even as *anātmā*, *ānandamayakośa* continues to be the same as before, since its name, form and function continue to be sustained by *ātmā*. As for *ātmā*, it is not anything but itself and the enlightened *jīva* instead of saying, “I enjoyed my sleep” now says, “the sleep was undisturbed”.

We had seen earlier that the resolution of the individual and the total take place simultaneously to their next level. So, at the final stage, we have total *ananda* into which total *vijñāna*, total *manas*, total *prāṇa* and total *anna* have resolved. Total *ānanda* is the causal body of the total and it is *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is Brahman in *māyā-upādhi* and is

²⁷¹ *Brahma pucchaṁ pratiṣṭhā*, Taittiriya Upaniṣad, Brahma-vallī, 5.

mithyā. This understanding of the reality status of *Īśvara* results in his resolution into Brahman.

While the expression *ātmā* is with reference to the individual, Brahman is used with reference to the total. The individual and the total having been resolved into the very same *vastu*, *ātmā* is Brahman and Brahman is *ātmā*.

The net outcome is that all the levels of manifestation are only *anātmā*, which is dependent on *ātmā*. Thus, not only the individual manifestation, consisting of *prāñña*, *taijasa* and *virāṭ* but also the total consisting of *antaryāmī*, *hiraṇyagarbha* and *virāṭ* are *anātmā* and are *mithyā*. Only *ātmā*-Brahman, which is self-existent, *svataḥ-siddhaḥ*, and is not dependent on anything else for its existence and which is the basis of existence of everything is *sat*.

We may now sum up the results of the resolution of the entire manifestation into Brahman in terms of the statements of the Upaniṣads:

- All this is Brahman;²⁷²
- Nothing whatsoever exists which is distinct from it (Brahman);²⁷³
- All that is in front is but Brahman, the immortal. Brahman is at the back, as also on the right and

²⁷² *Sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma*, Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 3.14.1.

²⁷³ *neha nānāsti kiṁcana*, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.4.19.

the left. It is extended above and below, too. This world is nothing but Brahman, the highest;²⁷⁴

- Brahman that is immediate and direct is the self that is within all;²⁷⁵
- This self is Brahman;²⁷⁶
- I am Brahman.²⁷⁷

II

Recognising *ātmā* and *anātmā* or *satyam* and *mithyā* in every cognition

It must be noted that the resolution done is purely mental. It does not physically affect what is logically resolved. It only changes our understanding of it. Only in those cases where one is entirely mistaken to be another that does not exist, what is negated disappears; for instance, when a rope is mistaken for the non-existing snake and the mistake is corrected, the rope entirely displaces the

²⁷⁴ *Brahmaivedamamṛtaṃ purastādbrahma paścādbrahmadakṣiṇataścottareṇa |*

Adhaścordhvaṃ ca praṣṭaṃ brahmaivedaṃ viśvamiḍaṃ variṣṭhaṃ | | Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 2.2.11.

²⁷⁵ *yatsākṣādaparokṣādbrahma, ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ ...Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 3. 4.1.*

²⁷⁶ *.. ayamātmā brahma, Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, 2.*

²⁷⁷ *ahaṃ brahmāsmi., Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.10.*

negated snake.²⁷⁸ But here, the error is like taking the sun to rise and set everyday based on our perception even when the sun never rises or sets. Even after the mistake is corrected, the sun rises and sets since what is corrected by astronomy is not our perception but only our conclusion based on our perception.²⁷⁹ In the matter under discussion also, it is the conclusion about the essential reality of the various levels of manifestation and taking *ātmā* to be them that is corrected by Vedānta. Knowledge dispels only the wrong conclusion about the reality status of the manifestation. *Śāstra* does not negate the name, form and function of the manifestation. It says when we see the *jīva* or the *jagat* as existing, it is the *adhiṣṭhāna* Brahman-*ātmā* alone that exists. When we say, “*Īśvara* is”, “the *jīva* is”, “the *jagat* is” or “the sun is”, or “the dust is” or “ignorance is”, the “is-ness” belongs only to Brahman-*ātmā*. All cognitions have two components – the “is” cognition, which is, *sat buddhi* and the name and form cognition, which is *asat*²⁸⁰ or *anātmā* or *mithyā* cognition.

The is-cognition is invariable in all cognitions. When we see a pot, there is pot-*buddhi* or pot cognition and we say, “the pot is”. Suppose, we look at Swamiji, the pot-*buddhi* is gone and Swamiji-*buddhi* is there in its place and we

²⁷⁸ This is called *nirūpādhika adhyāsa* or *tadātmya adhyāsa*.

²⁷⁹ This is called *sopādhika adhyāsa* or *saṁsarga adhyāsa*.

²⁸⁰ Here, *asat* has the meaning of *mithyā*.

say, “Swamiji is”. The pot goes as it is *asat*²⁸¹ and *sat* that is always there is now recognized as being with Swamiji as “is”. When we shift our attention from Swamiji to the notebook, Swamiji-*buddhi* is gone and note-book-*buddhi* comes. The *sat*, which is always there, is now recognized as being with the notebook. Even as we shift our attention away from the notebook, the ‘notebook-*buddhi*’ goes and some other *buddhi* will be there. This changing object-*buddhi* is called *asat-buddhi* or *anātmā-buddhi* or *mithyā-buddhi*. The ‘is-*buddhi*’ whether it is of the pot, or of Swamiji or of the notebook or of any other never goes and is unchanging in every cognition. This is the *sat-buddhi*. In other words, in every perception, there are two *buddhis* - the ‘object *buddhi*’, which is *asat-buddhi* or *anātmā-buddhi* or *mithyā-buddhi* and the ‘is-*buddhi*’, which is ‘*sat-buddhi*’. The *jagat*, our body-mind-sense-complex²⁸² and *Īsvara* are object-*buddhi* and are *asat*, *anātmā* or *mithyā* while the is-*buddhi* is *satyam*, which is Brahman-*ātmā*.

III

Recognizing *satyam* in the *mithyā* manifestation

It is possible to recognize *satyam* in every *mithyā* manifestation. For example, when we look at the pot

²⁸¹ Here, *asat* has the meaning of *mithyā*.

²⁸² In Chapter 7, we had seen as to how the body-mind-sense complex is a *dr̥śya*, or an object.

made of clay, the pot is *mithyā*, since it is dependent on clay for its existence. But if we see the pot as clay, then it is *satyam*, since clay has independent existence. Then pot becomes *satya*-clay with the *mithyā* attribute of the pot. Our normal way of seeing the manifestation is in terms of its name, form and function, which is *mithyā*. However, if we understand it in terms of its *adhiṣṭāna*, which is Brahman, then it is *satyam* Brahman with *mithyā* name, form and function. Thus, everything can be recognized as Brahman with *mithyā* attributes.

IV

Saguṇa-brahman exists only from the standpoint of *avidyā*

The presentation of Brahman in its *māyā-upādhi*, as the manifestor, sustainer and resolver of the universe has led to the concept of Brahman with qualities or *saguṇa-brahman*. For differentiating this *saguṇa-brahman* from Brahman, Brahman gets to be called as *nirguṇa-brahman*. As regards Brahman possessing qualities, we had seen that in the case of pot, potness is only an incidental or *mithyā* attribute of clay since clay is not always in the form of the pot. The qualities that Brahman appears to possess in the *māyā-upādhi* are also purely incidental being the outcome of *upādhi* and are not *satyam* but are *mithyā*. They cannot modify Brahman without any quality into Brahman with qualities. Brahman, which is *satyam*, remains unchanged by the *mithyā* manifestation. Only

from the standpoint of *avidyā*, in which the knowledge of *satyam* and *mithyā* are not there, *saguṇa*-Brahman exists; from the enlightened angle, Brahman in *māyā-upādhi* is *Īśvara*.

CHAPTER 15

UNDERSTANDING *Īśvara*

I

The manifestation is not separate from *Īśvara*

Before going further into the implications of the resolution of the *jīva*, the *jagat* and *Īśvara* into Brahman, it would be very fruitful to retrace our steps and look into outcome of the knowledge that *Īśvara* is both the maker and the material of the manifestation at the transactional level. It is from the *pārāmāṛthika* angle that the *jīva*, the *jagat* and *Īśvara* resolve into Brahman and *Īśvara* is himself *mithyā* like the *jīva* and the *jagat*. Now, we are going to consider the situation in which

- there is no knowledge of the difference between *satyam* and *mithyā* and the transactional reality is taken to be the actual reality; and
- the understanding remains restricted to *Īśvara* being both the maker and material of the manifestation.

Even this level of knowledge confers substantial benefits if its implications are fully analysed²⁸³ and understood.

We saw in the case of the clay-pot example that the single material cause, clay, gives rise to many products and that the material clay is the substance of all of them. It means that clay, as the material cause, can be recognized in any of its products like the pot. Similarly, *Īśvara* being the material cause of the *jagat*, his presence can be recognized as its material in every form including time²⁸⁴ and space²⁸⁵. Everything is one presence and this presence is the manifestation of *Īśvara*. Therefore, when we say that everything is *Īśvara*, it is not a matter for *belief* but for *understanding* in terms of the reasoning that even as the pot is not separate from the clay, everything that is here is *Īśvara*²⁸⁶.

II

The manifestation of *Īśvara* is in the form of various orders

Also, everything that is available is a manifestation through the knowledge of *Īśvara*. Analyzing one organ is sufficient to make out as to how intelligently and

²⁸³ Swami Dayananda, *Ishvara in One's Life*, pp. 50 – 64.

²⁸⁴ Time is associated with the change that takes place constantly in the manifestation.

²⁸⁵ As we had seen, space is the first to manifest.

²⁸⁶ Therefore, there is nothing that can be called as secular.

efficiently everything is put together. We can also see that in every one of the living beings, its numerous parts have a role to play and are meaningfully knit together into a functioning whole. In addition, the billions of these are intelligently related to each other so that they may exist and function as one whole. *Īśvara* is all knowledge and it is through this knowledge that all forms of the manifestation and the scheme of their functioning individually as an integral part of the whole are assembled.

Knowledge exists in the form of order. When the order is unraveled, it yields equations and laws and we call it as science. Actually, all branches of science constitute the knowledge of *Īśvara* present as the manifestation. When we pursue knowledge, we are in touch with *Īśvara*'s mind and it is an enthralling experience²⁸⁷.

We may now look into this breathtaking order. The order includes all forces and processes and encompasses the entire physical universe, all the life forms and the inanimate things. All of them together form the physical and biological order. Billions and billions of stars are there in our own milky way. Every star is a sun and each one of them can have a system of planets and some of them can have life. They are parts of the same physical and

²⁸⁷ This is called *vidyānanda*.

biological order. The laws are the same for all of them and they are not separate from *Īśvara*.

In every living organism, there is *prāṇa*, which is the source of energy for all activities. The functions of *prāṇa* including its governance of health and ill health form the physiological order. It is because of the existence of this order that the scientists who work on various preventive and curative medicines can first try its effect on a rat. Once they work successfully on a rat, they are very sure that they will work on a human being because of this order.

There is also a psychological order. A dog has fidelity and it is dog-psychology. There is no unfaithful dog. All animals have their own psychology. Each species behave in the same manner more or less. And human beings have their own psychology. We are anxious and are prone to fear, anger and other emotions. Our behaviour, values and attitudes are the expressions of our background and it is the order that connects them. This is the psychological order.

Then we have the cognitive order by which we can say whether a particular knowledge is valid or not. The epistemological pursuit is based on this order. It is through this order that we are able to assimilate a statement. Our understanding of all orders is also because of the cognitive order.

We have the faculty of *buddhi*, which is so mature and evolved that we have the freedom to explore and know as also the freedom to do, or not to do, or to do differently. Wherever there is choice, there is a possibility of the choice being appropriate or inappropriate. We must have certain norms for basing our choices. The norms must be universal; for, only then the choices can either be appropriate or inappropriate. In this regard, we have the reality that everybody, whoever he may be and wherever he may be, seems to know exactly what is appropriate and inappropriate. Every living organism seeks to survive and does not want to get hurt. Everybody wants to be free from being a victim of somebody's action. Therefore, the basic value structure is well recognized and does not require to be revealed by any one to us. It is *Īśvara* himself who is manifest in the form of this commonly sensed, universal value that is called as *dharma*.

Together with the order of *dharma*, there is the order of *karma*, as every action has a result. The result is both in the visible form, which is known, as well as in the invisible form, which is revealed by Veda. The invisible results are *pāpa* when we go against the *dharma* and *punya* when we go with it. All of us, without exception, have to reap the results of our *karma* sometime or the other. This is the law of *karma* and it is a very essential part of the order. It is not a belief, as is commonly thought to be, but is a fact, which is to be recognized.

The various orders that are obtaining are all unfailing and infallible. It is the infallible order, which is *Īśvara*. It is not *Īśvara* who is infallible. They are without exceptions and they cannot go wrong anywhere and at any time. This fact makes it possible for us to generalize and understand them.

III

The benefits of understanding *Īśvara*

Understanding of *Īśvara* brings about a radical change in our life. We were earlier away from the awareness and presence of *Īśvara* only because we were unclearly seized of the facts and were ignorant of their implications. The first fact is that *Īśvara* is the cause of everything. Since the effects are the material manifestation of *Īśvara*, the cause, everything that is here is *Īśvara* himself. We can never be away from him at any time. The second fact is that everything is intelligently put together in one *mahā*-order through all-knowledge, which is *Īśvara*. The implication is that we always function in the well-ordered whole and since the order is infallible, nothing can go wrong at any time. When everything is right, everything stands validated. In personal terms, the implication of the validation is that we gain the ability to accept our situation without condemning ourselves or others and neutralize our reactions to disagreeable circumstances. Since the means to deal with them are also given within the order, we can also handle them dispassionately.

On *assimilation* of these facts and the implications of the validation of the existing reality, we discover the presence of the infallible order in our awareness. We recognize that we are an integral part of the order and cease to feel alienated from anyone or anything. Our sense of being a separate and helpless entity in this vast world, which has been the cause for our insecurity and fear ends. Our search that started in our childhood for the support of the infallible to protect and take care of us stands fulfilled. We discover the composure within ourselves to live confidently and without fear. We handle our situation dispassionately and intelligently and live with little stress and great mental comfort. Actually, we are now just one crucial step away from total freedom.

IV

The principles of *karma-yoga* flow naturally from the order

The principles of *karma-yoga* flow naturally from the vision that the order of manifestation is *Īśvara*. Appropriate *karma* is that which is to be done in a given situation. What is to be done in a given circumstance is nothing but *Īśvara* in the form of *dharma* and that exactly determines one's duty or *svakarma*. Discretion in action lies in doing the appropriate thing at the appropriate time and at the appropriate place. On the other hand, if we go against *dharma* by doing what is not to be done, we are alienated from the whole. We become an orphan. When

our action follows the *dharmā*, we are in harmony with everything and we find satisfaction, even when our action is not to our liking. By following *dharmā*, we lead an alert life using our discriminating ability and we become a *yogī*. Since we choose our *karmas* recognising *dharmā* as *Īśvara*, our actions become a form of worship of *Īśvara*. This recognition is not an ordinary thing but is vision.

While action in harmony with *dharmā* becomes an offering to *Īśvara* (*Īśvara-arpita*), the proper attitude to the result of the action makes the result *Īśvara-prasāda*. We do not seek the outcome through our action since we do it only as the means to a desired end. However, our attitude towards the result is now different. We accept it willingly, regardless of what it is. We do so not because of the pragmatic approach of taking our life as it comes. We accept the result as *dharmā*-based, which brings *Īśvara* into the whole picture. We recognize *Īśvara* as the giver of the results of action or as the *karma-phala-dātā*. Once the action is done, the results of the action, coming as they do from the laws that are not separate from *Īśvara*, come from *Īśvara*. It is in accordance with the order. It means that every result of action whether it is equal, less, more or opposite with reference to our expectations comes from him. The awareness that it comes from *Īśvara* is the cognitive change and it converts the result into a *prasāda*. The attitude of *prasāda* is the vedic attitude. If this attitude is there, more than our expectation is *prasāda*, equal is *prasāda*, less is *prasāda* and opposite is also

prasāda. We are not swept away by the outcome of our action. This is not one time but for lifetime since life is full of these four types of results. Therefore, equal we can accept; more we can accept; less we can accept; opposite we can accept. The sameness of the mind with respect to the responses, in the wake of desirable and undesirable situations is *yogaḥ*.²⁸⁸ Thus, we become a *yogī* even while being involved in *karma*.²⁸⁹

Day after day, the present effort and the past *karma* combine themselves to shape different types of situations for us. All situations and experiences are all shaped by our own actions, as per the law of *karma*, which is *Īśvara*'s order. Therefore, as they come, we receive them cheerfully with an attitude of *prasāda*. Owing to this attitude, we are aware of the presence of *Īśvara* in our life. And, being in harmony with *Īśvara*, we are at peace.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ *Samatvaṁ yoga ucyate*. (Bhagavadgīta, 2.48.)

²⁸⁹ See Swami Dayananda, *Need for Cognitive Change*, pp. 37-40 and *Ishvara in One's Life*, pp. 70-75 and *Bhagavadgītā Home Study Course-1*, p. 314 and p. 295.

²⁹⁰ Swami Dayananda, *Ishvara in One's Life*, p. 76.

CHAPTER 16

“TATTVAMASI”

I

The purport or *tātparya* of the *śāstra*

There are two ways of looking at the wave and the ocean. The first one is that the wave is born from the ocean, is sustained by the ocean and goes back to the ocean. This is the created-creator relationship as in the case of the *jīva* and *Īśvara* and we looked into its implications in the preceding chapter. *The second way of looking at the wave and the ocean is to see them both as water.* This vision transforms the entire situation. Now, as water, despite the obvious differences between the wave and the ocean, they are essentially the same, as both consist of water. A similar vision is revealed about the *jīva* and *Īśvara* by the Upaniṣads through the statements that they are essentially one and the same Brahman. Such statements revealing *jīva-īśvara-aikyam* are called *mahāvākyas* and *they are numerous.* Tradition highlights one among them from each Veda. They are:

R̥g Veda	Aitareya Upaniṣad, 3.1.3.	<i>Prajñānam brahma</i> Consciousness is Brahman.
Yajur Veda	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.10.	<i>Aham brahmāsmi</i> I am Brahman.
Sāma Veda	Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.8.7.	<i>Tattvamasi</i> You are that.
Atharvaṇa Veda	Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, 2.	<i>Ayamātmā brahma</i> This self is Brahman.

The *mahāvākyas* contain the crucial truth conveyed by the Upaniṣads. This conclusion has been arrived at by the application of six indicators (*ṣaḍ-tātparya liṅgas*) that the *śāstra* gives to arrive at the central meaning of any text. They are as follows.

(i) *Upakrama* (the beginning) and *upasaṁhāra* (the end): Any text invariably begins with a statement of the subject matter that it is going to deal with. Similarly, the text ends with the conclusion that it has reached about the subject matter. Therefore, what is dealt with both in the beginning and at the end of the text constitutes the theme of the text. Applying this principle to the sixth chapter of Chāndogya Upaniṣad,

we find that in the beginning, Uddālaka asks his son Śvetaketu: “Did you ask for that knowledge gaining which everything is gained, that is, what is not heard of becomes heard, what is not thought of becomes thought of and what is not known becomes known²⁹¹. From this, we understand that there is a *vastu* by knowing which everything is as good as known. That means there is only one *vastu*. Otherwise, by knowing one thing, everything cannot be known. At the end of the chapter, the concluding statement is: “This *sat* is the *ātmā* of all this. That is the ultimate reality. That is *ātmā*. You are that.”²⁹² The *śruti* reveals that *ātmā* and the *sad-vastu* are the same and that it is only one *vastu*. So, both the beginning and the end reveal the non-dual reality as the central subject matter of the Upaniṣad.

(ii) *Abhyāsa* (repetition): While the central subject matter appears at the beginning and at the end of the text, it is also repeatedly dealt with in the body of the text. What is being explained repeatedly from different angles is the central theme. It is the revelation that the self and Brahman without a second are one and the same that recur in the text. As regards Chāndogya Upaniṣad, the *mahāvākya*, *Tattvamasi*, occurs nine times in it establishing its validity from nine

²⁹¹ *Tamādeśamaprākṣyaḥ yena aśrutam śrutam bhavati, amataṁ matamavijñātam vijñātamiti*’ (6.1.2. and 3.)

²⁹² *Aitadātmyamidam sarvaṁ tatsatyam sa ātmā tattvamasi*, 6.16.3.

standpoints leaving no doubt about what it wants to reveal.

(iii) *Apūrvatā* (uniqueness): The main theme of the text is naturally that unique knowledge which is revealed only by this text and not by any other. It is only through Vedānta that we know that there is Brahman and that *ātmā* is Brahman. Even the *karma-kāṇḍa* of Veda does not reveal this knowledge. The central theme is naturally this fact, which no other means of knowledge gives.

(iv) *Phalam* (the fruit or benefit): Veda reveals only such information as would confer some benefit. This being so, the central theme is that which confers the maximum benefit. The unique result of the *mahāvākya*, which is specifically mentioned in the text, is that through this knowledge, everything becomes as well as known. More significantly, every Upaniṣad²⁹³ after revealing the self as Brahman mentions its unique *phalam* as attainment of the infinite or *mokṣa*. The central theme is naturally this *jñāna* that one seeks for gaining *mokṣa*.

(v) *Arthavāda* (glorification and condemnation for emphasis): It is the central theme, which is glorified in the text and that, which is contrary to it is condemned.

²⁹³ Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2. 1; Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.2.9; Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.9, 4.4.23; Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 7.1.3.

There is glorification of *brahmajñāna* by saying that everything becomes known by knowing it. This is exaggeration as it is not that everything is known in detail when Brahman is known; only the truth of everything is known. Similarly, when *śruti* says that if this knowledge is not gained, there is great destruction²⁹⁴, it is condemnation of *ajñāna*, as ignorance results only in *saṁsāra* and not in destruction. *Brahmajñāna* is the subject of glorification and *brahma-ajñāna* is what is condemned. These are pointers to the central theme being *brahma-jñāna*.

(vi) *Upapatti* (intelligibility in the light of reasoning): It is the central theme that is explained in detail with the support of reasoning so that it may carry conviction. The reasoning in Chāndogya Upaniṣad²⁹⁵ is that the cause alone is real, while its products known by different names are mere words which have no substantiality of their own. The first example cited is the pot made of clay, which we had seen in detail earlier. Like the pot, the entire manifestation is the *kārya* and like the clay, Brahman is the *kāraṇam*. Only *kāraṇam* Brahman has independent existence and not the *kārya*. Here, it is the reality of Brahman and the existence of only one *vastu* that is logically explained. What is to be known and what is explained through

²⁹⁴ *Na cedihāvedīn mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ* (Kena Upaniṣad, 2.5.)

²⁹⁵ *Vacārambhaṇam vikāro nāmadheyam mṛttikā-iti-eva satyam* | (6.1.4.)

reasoning (*upapatti*) is Brahman and the *jīva-īśvara-aiḱyam* is the direct result of Brahman knowledge.

Through these six-indicators, we conclude that the intention of the *śruti* is to reveal that which cannot be known by any other means, namely, the *vastu* by which the ignorance of *ātmā* is dropped and the ultimate goal of freedom from limitation, which is *mokṣa*, is gained.

II

The direct meaning or *vācyārtha* of “*Tattvamasi*”

Among the numerous *mahāvākyas* that the Upaniṣads contain, we may go into the *mahāvākyā*, “*Tattvamasi*”. This sentence contains two pronouns “*tat*”, which means “that” and “*tvam*”, which means “you” and the verb “*asi*”, which means “are”. The words “*tat*” and “*tvam*” are both in the nominative case and have the same locus. They are in grammatical apposition²⁹⁶. The appositional usage of words serves several purposes²⁹⁷. In this

²⁹⁶The relationship between words having the same locus is called *sāmānādhikaraṇyam*. *Samāna* means the same and *adhikaraṇa* means the base.

²⁹⁷ There are 16 types. In *Tattvamasi*, *aiḱya-sāmānādhikaraṇyam* is used to indicate the oneness of *tat* and *tvam*. In *ayam sarpaḥ rajjuḥ* | (this serpent is a rope), it is *bhādhāyam-sāmānādhikaraṇyam* for negation of the serpent as rope. In *nīlam mahat sugandhi utpalam* (blue, big, fragrant lily), it is *viśeṣaṇa-sāmānādhikaraṇyam* where the words serve as adjectives.

statement, these words with different meanings indicate their oneness. They are like the thousand nouns in Viṣṇu Sahasranāma that reveal one Viṣṇu only. Thus, “*tat*” and “*tvam*” connected by the word “*asi*” refer to the same entity.

As regards what these two pronouns stand for, the statement containing them is made by *guru* Uddālaka to his son Śvetaketu while revealing the *vastu* by knowing which everything is as well as known. He gives many examples. One of them is that by knowing clay, all the products of clay are known. In other words, by knowing the cause, we know all its effects. So, what is to be known and referred to by *tat* is the *kāraṇam* of the *jagat* or the *jagat-kāraṇam*. A doubt may arise as to whether it means *satyaṃ jñānamanantam brahma* or whether it refers to *Īśvara*, which is Brahman in *māyā-upādhi*. The development of the theme of the actual process of manifestation indicates that “*tat*” has to be taken as *Īśvara* that functions at the transactional level and not Brahman of the non-relative level. As for the pronoun “*tvam*”, since Uddālaka is addressing Śvetaketu, for the dramatic culmination in the *mahāvākya* “*Tattvamasi*”, “*tvam*” is the *jīva*. So, “*tat*” and “*tvam*” in the equation mean *Īśvara* and *jīva*, respectively.

Even though Veda says so, it is very difficult to accept this statement to the effect that *jīva* and *Īśvara* are the very same. While *jīva* is self-evident, *Īśvara* is unperceived. They have diametrically opposite qualities since the *jīva* is

limited in every sense while *Īśvara*, which is the cause of the entire *jagat*, is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. In fact, they are different like the servant and his king. Therefore, we cannot tell the *jīva* that he is *Īśvara*. It is not that *śruti* is not aware of the disparity between the two. In fact, it is providing the equation only because they are the same even though their apparent difference is very patent. Obviously, when *śruti* reveals that they are one and the same, it would not be referring to the direct or primary meaning²⁹⁸ of *jīva* and *Īśvara* but only to their implied or intended meaning²⁹⁹.

III

The methods of deriving the implied meaning or *lakṣyārtha*

As regards deriving the implied or intended meaning of any word, *śāstra* provides three indicators (*lakṣaṇās*) for the purpose. They are explained below.

- (i) In *jahad-lakṣaṇā*, the direct meaning of the word is given up and its implied meaning which is appropriate is substituted to make the statement sensible. For example, in the sentence "The village is on the Gaṅgā"³⁰⁰, the direct meaning of the word

²⁹⁸ *Vācyārtha*.

²⁹⁹ *Lakṣyārtha*.

³⁰⁰ *Gaṅgāyām̐ ghoṣaḥ*.

“Gaṅgā” is the river by that name. As the village cannot be situated on the flowing waters of the river, this word could not have been used in that sense. So, the direct meaning as the river is given up and its implied meaning is taken to arrive at the purport of the statement. The implied meaning of the word Gaṅgā that is adopted is the bank of that river. By doing so, the sentence is taken to mean that the village is on the bank of the river Gaṅgā.

- (ii) In *ajahad-lakṣaṇā*, the direct meaning of the word is fully accepted and its implied sense, which is appropriate, is added to the direct meaning to make the statement meaningful. For example, in the sentence “the red is running”³⁰¹, the direct meaning of “red” is obviously incomplete, as the color, red cannot run. So, for understanding what it means, it is taken to include not only its direct meaning, “red” but also what “red” indicates. Contextually, it is taken to mean the red horse and the sentence is taken to mean that the red horse is running.
- (iii) In *jahad-ajahad-lakṣaṇā*³⁰², there is both selective partial acceptance and partial rejection of the direct

³⁰¹ *Śoṇo dhāvati* |

³⁰² Since there is giving up of the contradictory part, it is also called as *bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇā*.

meaning. In other words, it consists of partial *ajahad-lakṣaṇā* and partial *jahad-lakṣaṇā*. Hence, it is called *jahad-ajahad-lakṣaṇā*. What is accepted is the compatible part of the direct meaning and what is given up is its incompatible part. For example, we see Devadatta and tell our friend, who is seeing him after very many years, “This is that Devadatta”³⁰³. This statement has internal contradiction since ‘this’ indicates present place, time and characteristics while ‘that’ indicates past place, time and characteristics. But, both ‘this’ and ‘that’ and the differing place, time and attributes pertain to the same Devadatta. Devadatta being the same, the statement becomes meaningful only when the differences are excluded, and the substantive Devadatta is retained. Therefore, the differing qualities of the present and earlier Devadatta, which are impermanent, and the differences in the place and time of seeing him now and earlier, which are contexts, are given up. Only the continuing identity of the person Devadatta, which is permanent, is accepted for recognising Devadatta. What are dropped can be given up, as they are the changing entities, namely, the attributes of Devadatta and the place and time of seeing Devadatta. What is retained has to be

³⁰³ *Soyam devadattaḥ* |

accepted, as it is the unchanging identity of Devadatta.

IV

The implied meaning or *lakṣyārtha* of “*Tattvamasi*”

We have to now examine as to which of these three indicators can be applied in the case of the equation, “*Tattvamasi*” to arrive at the intended meaning. ‘*Tat*’, which is *Īśvara*, consists of consciousness in the *upādhi* of the causal, subtle and gross manifestation in its totality. ‘*Tvam*’, which is *jīva*, consists of consciousness in the *upādhi* of the causal, subtle and gross body of the individual. Between consciousness in the *upādhi* of the total and in the *upādhi* of the individual, there is agreement in regard to consciousness and disagreement in respect of the *upādhi*.

In *jahad-lakṣaṇā*, the primary meaning has to be given up. This would mean giving up of *Īśvara*. Even though we can bring something else in its place, we can bring in only that which is not the whole in the place of what is the whole. In that case, *Tattvamasi* will not give undivided oneness, which is the vision of *śruti*. As regards *tvam*, if we give up the direct meaning of that word, which is *jīva*, then the word *asi* also goes away leaving behind *tat* alone. By the mere word *tat*, we are not teaching anything to anyone. So, the *jahad-lakṣaṇā* cannot be applied.

In *ajahad-lakṣaṇā*, the direct meaning is accepted in its entirety and we bring in a new word to make the sentence meaningful. 'Tat' stands for *Īśvara*, which includes all names and forms and does not leave out any object. So, 'tat' cannot receive another word. As regards 'tvam', or *jīva*, any addition to the limited-I cannot make it into *Īśvara*. So, it is not possible to make any meaningful addition. In any case, it is not possible to retain the entire meaning of both 'tat' and 'tvam', since it would retain the contradiction between the total and the individual *upādhi*, again making the equation unfeasible. So, application of the *ajahad-lakṣaṇā* is also ruled out.

It is *jahad-ajahad-lakṣaṇā* that can be applied since it is possible to accept one part and drop the other part in each of them. The contradiction between them is due to their *upādhis*. The *jīvā's* enjoyership, knowership, doership, confusion and smallness, which are due to *upādhi*, belong only to the causal (*ānandamaya*), subtle (*vijñāna-maya*, *manomaya* and *prāṇa-maya*) and gross (*annamaya*) bodies. Similarly, *Īśvara's jagat-kāraṇatvam*, *sarvajñatvam* and *sarvaśaktitvam*, which are due to *upādhi*, belong only to the total causal, subtle and gross bodies, which constitute the various worlds (*prapañcas*). These attributes of the *upādhi* of both *jīva* and *Īśvara* are dependent on Brahman for their existence. By themselves, they are only name, form and function and are *mithyā*. What is common in both the individual and total with their different *mithyā* names, forms and functions is that they have their common being in Brahman. So, by *jahad-*

ajahad-lakṣaṇā, the differences caused by the *upādhis*, which are *mithyā*, are dropped and both are revealed as Brahman.

Looking at the equation as revealing the oneness of *jīva* and *Īśvara*, *Īśvara* is

1. *Sthūla prapañca*, the physical universe, which is *mithyā*;
2. *Sūkṣma prapañca*, the subtle universe, which is *mithyā*;
3. *Kāraṇa prapañca*, the causal universe, which is *mithyā*;
4. Consciousness in them as *cidābhāsa*, which is *mithyā*; and
5. Brahman, which is consciousness (*cit*), and which is *satyam*.

Jīva is

1. *Sthūla śarīra*, the gross body, which is *mithyā*;
2. *Sūkṣma śarīra*, the subtle body, which is *mithyā*;
3. *Kāraṇa śarīra*, the causal body, which is *mithyā*;
4. Consciousness in them as *cidābhāsa*, which is *mithyā*; and

5. Consciousness (*cit*), which is Brahman and which is *satyam*.

Of the five on both sides of the equation, four of them are different and they are all *mithyā*. One of them is the same, which is Brahman/consciousness and it is *satyam*. Among them, it is possible to accept what is *satyam*, which is their true nature and which is *pāramārthika* reality and discard what is *mithyā*, which is their incidental nature and which is *vyāvahārika* reality. So, by *jahad-ajahad-lakṣaṇā*, the *mithya* aspect of 'tat' (*Īśvara*) and of 'tvam' (*jīva*) are given up and only Brahman/consciousness, which is *satyam*, is taken as their meaning. This brings us to the conclusion that the equation is valid since the real nature of both *jīva* and *Īśvara* is the same limitless Brahman-*ātmā*³⁰⁴. This undivided oneness is called *aikya*.³⁰⁵

The oneness is not what is obtained by joining two divided parts. The oneness is already an obtaining fact as it ever exists and is understood in terms of Brahman knowledge. When *Īśvara* says: "I am *Īśvara* " and *jīva* says: "I am *jīva* ", there is no difference in "I am", which is Brahman. Only from the standpoint of the individual without Brahman knowledge, there is *jīvatvam* (*jīva*-hood) and only from the point of *jīvatvam*, there is *Īśvaratvam* (*Īśvara*-hood). On the other hand, the person with Brahman knowledge knows that in reality there is

³⁰⁴ Real nature is called *svarūpa*.

³⁰⁵ This is called *jīva-īśvara-aikyam*.

neither the *jīva* nor *Īśvara* but only Brahman. This is the exact import of *jīva-īśvara-aikyam*.

Śāstra gives an example as to how negation of differences set up by *upādhis* brings about oneness. The king has the *upādhi* of kingdom and the soldier has the *upādhi* of the armour plate. When we remove the kingdom, the king is no longer a king and is recognized as a human being. Similarly, when we remove the armour, the soldier also ceases to be a soldier and becomes known as a human being. They are the same as human beings. Even when we recognise this fact, there are still two persons with different attributes. Similarly, *Īśvara* and *jīva* are two relative entities with different qualities but are the very same in respect of the non-relative *vastu*, which is one.

V

Recognising the true self through the

*mahāvākya*³⁰⁶

We may now see as to how we come to recognize the true self through the *mahāvākya*. Firstly, let us enumerate the relevant points in regard to gaining of knowledge. They are:

- knowledge always takes place in the form of thought (*vṛtti*) generated in the mind (*antaḥ-*

³⁰⁶ This section is based on Swami Paramarthananda's class No.184 on *Pañcadaśī*.

karaṇa) by the operation of the appropriate means of knowledge;

- the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is always pervaded by the reflected consciousness (*cidābhāsa*), even at the time of deep sleep;
- the operation of the means of knowledge modifies the *antaḥ-karaṇa* in the form of thought (*vṛtti*);
- since the *antaḥ-karaṇa* is pervaded by reflected consciousness, the *vṛtti* is pervaded by it and becomes known.
- Every knowledge (*jñānam*) has thus two components, (i) the *vṛtti* and (ii) reflected consciousness (*cidābhāsa*).

As regards knowing of objects through direct perception,

- the *antaḥ-karaṇa* through the sense organ reaches out to the object in the form of *vṛtti*;
- this *vṛtti* pervades the object and the pervasion of the *antaḥ-karaṇa-vṛtti* is called *vṛtti-vyāpti*;
- since the *vṛtti* is with *cidābhāsa*, there is corresponding pervasion of the *cidābhāsa* also. It is called as *cidābhāsa-vyāpti*. This is also referred to as *phala-vyāpti*;

- the *vṛtti-vyāpti* and *phala-vyāpti* perform two different jobs;
- the *vṛtti-vyāpti* removes the veil of ignorance (*āvaraṇa-nivṛtti*) and thereby removes ignorance (*ajñāna-nivṛtti*) in respect of the object. For example, pot-*vṛtti-vyāpti* removes pot-*āvaraṇam* and thereby removes pot-*ajñāna*;
- the *cidābhāsa-vyāpti* illumines the object³⁰⁷;
- as the veil of ignorance is removed and the unveiled object is illumined, knowledge takes place. The user of the *antaḥ-karaṇa* then says, “This is a pot”.

We may now see as to how the knowledge that, “I am Brahman” takes place.

- When we listen to the teaching, which is *śabda-pramāṇa*, the *vṛtti* is produced.
- The *pramāṇa* negates the differences between ‘*tat*’, which is *Īśvara* and ‘*tvam*’, which is *jīva* and then says, “*Tattvamasī*” which means, “that *Īśvara* is you”. After the negation of the differences, what is common between *Īśvara* and the *jīva* is limitless or *akhaṇḍa*. It means that between what is revealed by the knowledge and the knower, there is no

³⁰⁷ This is called *viśaya-prakāśanam* or *viśaya-sphūrthi*.

difference or division to create any limitation³⁰⁸. This *vṛtti* created by the *mahāvākya* is, therefore, called the *akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti*³⁰⁹, or *vṛtti* with limitless form.

- The *akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti-vyāpti* removes the veil (*āvaraṇa*) created by *ajñāna* in respect of Brahman and removes Brahman-ignorance (*Brahma-ajñāna-nivṛtti*).
- But, unlike in the case of objects, the *citābhāsa-vyāpti*, which is present, does not have to illumine Brahman, as Brahman is itself consciousness, which is self-luminous. Only the non-luminous requires to be illumined and not the self-luminous. For example, the moon, which reflects the light from the sun, does not have to illumine the luminous sun for the sun to be known. To know *anātma*, we require the *vṛtti* and *cidābhāsa*; but to know Brahman, we require only the *akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti*. So, in the case of *Brahma-jñānam*, the *citābhāsa-vyāpti*, which is called the *phala-vyāpti*, is not utilized, even though it is present.

We are always aware of ourself; only, out of *ajñāna*, we identified ourselves with the body-mind-sense-complex

³⁰⁸ That is, there is no difference among the knower, the knowledge and the known. The collective name for these three is *tripuṭi*. The disappearance of the distinction between them is called *tripuṭi-vilaya*.

³⁰⁹ *Akhaṇḍa* means limitless. *Ākāra* means form.

and were saying, "I am the body-mind-sense-complex", even though we are Brahman. After hearing the *mahāvākya*, our *ajñāna* is gone and we recognize that we are Brahman and say, "I am Brahman". This recognition is called *brahma-sākṣātkāra* or *ātma-sākṣātkāra*.

Brahman-*ātmā* is not something that comes into being after the ignorance is removed, since it is ever present in its true nature. *Ajñāna-nivṛtti* is, therefore, not the cause and the true nature of Brahman-*ātmā* is not the effect. It is like the already present light becoming evident as light when what is obstructing its vision is removed.

The *akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti* disappears on its own accord in the same way as the *kataka*, which is used to clarify water with sediments, gets precipitated along with the sediments or like the medicine that gets itself removed after curing the disease. Thus, like any other *vṛtti*, *akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti* is also impermanent and is *mithyā*. But the knowledge remains in tact, as in any other case.

VI

Sarvātmabhāva

What self-knowledge reveals is the *sarvātmabhāva*³¹⁰. It is in terms of the *upādhi* that there are many people. But there is only one *ātmā* since all body-mind-sense-

³¹⁰ Knowing Brahman, Ṛṣi Vāmadeva attained *sarvātmabhāva*. (Rg Veda, 4.26.1.)

complexes are present as many *upādhis* in it. When we count, bodies are many but from the standpoint of *ātmā*, which is undivided, we can count only one. So, this is the knowledge by which all beings are in one *ātmā* alone.

Also, *ātmā* that is conditioned by the knower, *ātmā* that is conditioned by the knowledge and *ātmā* that is conditioned by the object of knowledge are one *ātmā* alone. Thus, everything is only in one *ātmā*³¹¹.

From the existence angle, *Īśvara* and all names, forms and functions of the *jīva* and the *jagat* are in one *sat* (existence) alone as different *upādhis*. These do not have independent existence apart from *sat*. *Sat* that is conditioned by the sentient *upādhi* and the *sat* that is conditioned by the insentient *upādhi* are one alone. And existence of everything, which is *sat*, is nothing but the awareness of everything, which is *cit*. Thus, we finally arrive at one *vastu* alone. This recognition that everything is one *vastu* is *sarvātmabhāva*³¹². It swallows all the differences, like those between *jīva* and *jīva*, *jīva* and *Īśvara*, *jīva* and *jagat* and *jagat* and *Īśvara*.

It is, however, not that the person with Brahman knowledge considers all persons and things as being the very same. He knows them with their varying qualities of

³¹¹ *aham-yeva-idaṁ sarvaḥ-asmi-iti* .. This (universe) is myself; I am all. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.3.20.

³¹² *Sarvam ātmā iti bhāva*.

their *upādhis*; at the same time, he recognizes that the truth of everyone and everything is *ātmā*. He does not overlook their incidental qualities during his transactions with them. But, he knows that the differences between them are incidental and not real. Owing to this perception, his attitude to everyone and everything becomes accommodative and inclusive. Since all beings are the self, there is no other object that can be the cause for revulsion, fear or sorrow.³¹³

VII

The self with reference to the *jīva*, the *jagat* and *Īśvara*

Now, “I” does not mean the I-sense associated with the body-mind-sense-complex. It means *ātmā* or Brahman. But the body-mind-sense-complex and the *jagat* continue to exist very much as before without any change. But *I being different from the earlier I-sense, the understanding of I with reference to them has changed*. I, as *satyam*, am independent of the *mithyā* body-mind-sense-complex, the *jagat* and *Īśvara* and am not affected by them. But the body-mind-sense-complex, the *jagat* and *Īśvara* are not separate from me, as they are dependent on *satyam*-I.

It is easy to grasp this situation through an illustration. Consider an actor A who takes on the role of a beggar B in

³¹³ Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad, 6 and 7.

a drama. Where the beggar stands, the actor stands. But there is a distance between the actor and his role. The distance is not physical but mental. The distance lies in that B's problems and privations are not A's problems. Owing to this fact, while being the beggar, the actor congratulates himself on doing a good job of shedding real tears. Others too congratulate him. If A were really crying, it is not a matter for congratulation. The congratulations are all because there is a distance between B and A. The cause of this distance is the knowledge of the *svarūpa* of A. A is A all the way. Even when he is a beggar, he is not affected by the role and does not cease to be A. While being A, he can identify with the role B, and can even make up for the missing lines of the other person who is cast with him in the drama. At the same time, he never misses out being A. This is the essence of the whole knowledge. "Everything is me but I am not anyone of them" (Bhagavadgīta 9.4).³¹⁴

³¹⁴ *Matsthāni sarvabhūtāni na cāhaṁ teṣu-avasthitaḥ* |

CHAPTER 17

THE DIVERGING VIEWS

I

Should not *jñāna* be combined with *karma* to gain *mokṣa*?

We may now look into some of the major diverging views and their refutation to gain greater clarity of the vision of Vedānta. Even within the fold of Veda, the Pūrva-mīmāṃsakas hold the radically different view that Veda is meant to enjoin *karma* and that the statements that are not connected to an injunction are useless³¹⁵. Only *karma* can produce results and not *jñāna*. As such, the revelation that *ātmā* is Brahman cannot by itself confer *mokṣa*. *Karma* enjoined by Veda should be necessarily performed for gaining it. *Karma* is the basic requisite and *jñāna* is the auxiliary means (*aṅga*) for gaining the fruit of *mokṣa*³¹⁶. Śaṅkarācārya takes every opportunity in his commentary to rebut this stand comprehensively³¹⁷. He reasons on the following lines.

³¹⁵ *āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād ānarthakyam atadarthhānām ...* (Jaimini Sūtra, 1.2.1.)

³¹⁶ This is called *jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vada*.

³¹⁷ Śaṅkarācāryā's introductory commentary to Kena Upaniṣad and Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad.

- *Karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* are poles apart³¹⁸ even though they are two parts of the same Veda. Their subject matters are fundamentally different in nature. *Karma* is the means for producing a desired result and doing it is entirely dependent on the doer³¹⁹. *Jñāna*, on the other hand, is for knowing a thing as it is. The knower exercises no choice over the knowing³²⁰ and is obliged to use the appropriate means of knowledge for the purpose. He cannot use *karma* for the purpose, since *karma* has no capacity to provide knowledge. So, in their very nature, there is no scope for *jñāna* and *karma* to work in combination.
- Knowledge reveals the non-dual reality. But action, which involves duality in the form of the means and the end, the doer and the deed, conceals the reality. Their co-existence is thus absurd.
- It is not possible for *karma* to yield *mokṣa*. The fruits of *karma* are production, reaching another place, attaining some object, effecting a modification or purification³²¹. Wholeness cannot be produced since whatever is produced would be limited. It cannot be brought into being by

³¹⁸ *dūramete viparīte* (Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 1.2.4.)

³¹⁹ It is *puruṣa-tantram*.

³²⁰ It is *vastu-tantram*.

³²¹ These are called *utpādyam*, *āpyam*, *prāpyam*, *vikāryam* and *samskāryam*.

modification as whatever is modified is subject to time and would be lost. It cannot be obtained by purification, as what was once impure would again become impure. As for reaching or attaining it, there is no need for it as it is already the self. It cannot, therefore, be the result of *karma* at all. Wholeness is already present but it is not known. Gaining what is lost through ignorance can only be through knowledge and not through *karma*.

- *Karma* and *jñāna* cannot be combined as they serve mutually contradictory purposes. The person doing *karma* and the person seeking *jñāna* have necessarily to be different as their diagnosis of their problem and its solution are discordant. A person seeks *jñāna* after knowing through discriminative enquiry that the wholeness that he seeks cannot be obtained through *karma*. Out of this *viveka*, he develops dispassion towards *karma*, withdraws from inessential activities and seeks *jñāna* for gaining knowledge of his wholeness³²². The person engaged in *karma* considers, on the other hand, that through the performance of *karma* prescribed in *karma-kāṇḍa*, he can gain what he desires and be fulfilled³²³. He is yet to know that he cannot get the completeness, which is what he is really after,

³²² This is called *nivṛtti-mārga* or the path of release from bondage. This is also referred to as *śreyas*.

³²³ This is called *pravṛtti-mārga* or the path of activity. If it is for worldly gains, it is referred to as *preyas*.

through *karma* and is yet to develop *viveka* and *vairāgya*. He is yet to realize that only *jñāna* can solve his problem. If at all, he may have only a passing interest in seeking *jñāna*. Nor is he now eligible to seek it as only a person who performs *karma* as a *karma-yogī* becomes qualified to seek knowledge. So, he will be committed only to *karma*. The seeker of *jñāna*, on the other hand, would not be pursuing *karma*, since he knows that *karma* does not bestow self-knowledge. Thus, neither of them will be committed to both.

- *Karma* perpetuates bondage, since we have to be born again to experience the *puṇya* and *pāpa* that we have earned through our actions. So, *karma*, which is the cause for *saṁsāra* and *jñāna* which destroys *saṁsāra* are mutually contradictory like light and darkness and cannot be brought together even by hundred injunctions.
- It is incorrect to say that *karma* ordained by Veda cannot be given up, since Veda itself prescribes *sannyāsa* as a stage of life in which *karma* is abandoned to gain self-knowledge from a *guru*.
- *Śruti*, which indicates the means for various ends, nowhere prescribes any *karma* for gaining *mokṣa*. On the other hand, it is categorical at numerous

places that attainment of self-knowledge is itself *mokṣa*³²⁴.

- *Mokṣa* is not produced by knowledge. Knowledge only removes the ignorance, which is the cause of bondage. *Mokṣa* is always an existent fact, being the essential nature of *ātmā*. That is why *mokṣa* is by knowledge alone.

Śaṅkarācārya concludes that the antithesis between *jñāna* and *karma* is irremovable like a mountain. He adds that the only manner in which *karma* can be connected with *jñāna* is through its contributory role for purifying the mind, thereby making it receptive to *jñāna*. He points out in this regard that recitation (*svādhyāya*) of Veda and performance of *karma* in a spirit of dedication to *Īśvara* (*karma-yoga*) purify the mind. The seeker usually practices these.

II

Are not alternative means available to gain *mokṣa*?

Another grave misconception is that different paths are available for gaining *mokṣa* and that we can choose any

³²⁴ *Brahmaveda brahmaiva bhavati*. Anyone who knows Brahman becomes Brahman indeed. (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.2.9.)

Tamevaṁ vidvānamṛta iha bhavati | One becomes immortal here by knowing that (Brahman) in this way. (Puruṣasūktam, 7.)

Section II is based essentially on Swami Dayananda, *The Teaching Tradition of Advaita Vedanta*, p. 9 – 11.

one of them. Each 'path for *mokṣa*' is called *yoga* and the paths are, *jñāna-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, *karma-yoga* and *haṭha-yoga*. According to this thinking, *jñāna-yoga* will suit the intellectual, *karma-yoga* will suit the extrovert and action-oriented, *bhakti-yoga* will suit the emotional and *haṭha-yoga* will suit those who are body-oriented. An 'integrated' *yoga* has also been put together based on the reasoning that only a combination of *yogas* would suit this complicated *kali-yuga*.

The above thinking that *mokṣa* is possible through various means other than by acquiring self-knowledge overlooks the fact that -

- the self is already free from all limitations and all that is needed is to become qualified to receive this knowledge and obtain it from a *guru* who has learnt it according to the *sampradāya* (*jñāna-yoga*);
- this knowledge cannot be obtained through *bhakti-yoga*, *haṭha-yoga*, *karma-yoga* and performance of any *karma*;
- this knowledge can be obtained only through the appropriate means of knowledge, which is Vedānta.

The seeker of *mokṣa* has therefore no option except to gain self-knowledge through the *pramāṇa* of Vedānta

from a competent *guru*. We may now consider the contrary view.

As for *bhakti-yoga*, *bhakti* is the recognition of *Īśvara* and *yoga* is any *karma* done for the sake of recognising *Īśvara*. Even if we meditate on *Īśvara*, it is *bhakti*, since *Īśvara* is involved. *Bhakti* is *karma*, since we are doing it with our will. When the *bhakti-yogī* performs obligatory duties, he is doing *karma*. When he does daily *pūjās*, it is *kāyikaṁ karma* (action through the body). If he does *kīrtana*, it is *vācikaṁ karma* (action through the mouth). If he does meditation for invoking the grace of *Īśvara*, then it is *mānasaṁ karma* (action through the mind). Therefore, the expression *bhakti-yoga* has to be taken as *karma-yoga*, *bhakti* being the common element in all these actions. As for the connection between *karma-yoga* and self-knowledge, we have already seen that it can only prepare the mind for knowledge and cannot bestow knowledge. Since *bhakti-yoga* is not different from *karma-yoga*, its usefulness is also restricted to being helpful to make the mind suitable for self-knowledge.

Bhagavadgītā³²⁵ classifies *bhaktas* into the following four types:

- the devotee who is in distress³²⁶;

³²⁵ Chapter 7.

³²⁶ *ārthaḥ*.

- the devotee who is not only in distress but also wants to gain something³²⁷;
- the devotee who seeks to know the *svarūpa* of *Īśvara*,³²⁸ and
- the *jñāni* who knows that he is essentially not different from *Īśvara*.

In the case of *bhaktas* belonging to the first two types, they are not *bhakti-yogis*, as they are self-seeking and their connection with *Īśvara* is only for getting the result that they desire. Even so, their devotion will have some positive influence on them. But it will not result in the self-knowledge that he is the whole. As for the third category, the selfless devotion of these *bhaktas* will purify their minds and make them fit for knowledge. But, *bhakti* cannot lead the *ajñāni-bhaktas* to the recognition that the non-dual Brahman is the self. Only knowledge can remove the ignorance, which stands against the *ajñāni-bhaktas* from recognising that they are the whole and that they are already essentially non-different from *Īśvara*. In short, all *ajñāni-bhaktas* will not get *jñāna* through *bhakti* and therefore cannot gain *mokṣa* through *bhakti*. As regards the *jñāni-bhaktas*, they have already gained self-knowledge and they know the truth of their being only as though separate from *Īśvara*. He is, in fact, the only real *bhakta*, as his *bhakti* is fulfilled.

³²⁷ *arthārthī*.

³²⁸ *jñānāsu*.

The question, however, arises as to how in the same Gītā there is a separate chapter entitled, *Bhakti-yoga*. Each chapter in Gītā is given a title, based on the predominant topic therein and it is called *yoga*. The word 'yoga' is used here in the sense of topic. *Saṅgati* (topic) is a synonym for *yoga*. For example, the topic of the first chapter is Arjuna's despondency and it is called *Arjuna-viśāda-yoga*. Similarly, the chapter that deals with *bhakti* is called *Bhakti-yoga*. Both *yogas* are only topics.

We must understand that *bhakti* is common to all seekers, regardless of whether their life-style is of *karma-yoga* or of *sannyāsa*. It is easy to appreciate that the *karma-yogī* is a *bhakta*, since he considers his actions as *Īśvara-arpita* and their results as *Īśvara-prasāda*. As regards the *sannyāsī*, he is either a seeker of *jñāna* or a *jñānī*. When he is a seeker, his understanding of *Īśvara* progresses. Initially his appreciation of *Īśvara* is that he has become the manifestation and that he is *viśva-rūpa*. The seeker is reverential and devotional as he sees everything as *saguṇa Īśvara*. Then he comes to know that all that exists is only the appearance of Brahman. All differentiations cease, objects become the self and *saguṇa Īśvara* becomes *nirguṇa Īśvara*. He, as *jñānī* with *sarvātma-bhāva*, sees everything as himself. In the absence of the subject-object division, *Īśvara-upāsanā* now becomes contemplation on

ātmā, which is called as *nididhyāsanam*³²⁹. Therefore, *sannyāsī* is also a *bhakta* and *bhakti* is common to both the *karma-yogī* and the *sannyāsī*.

As regards *hatha-yoga*, all including the *sannyāsī*, the *karma-yogī* and the non-seekers may pursue it as a discipline. While it is useful to gain a certain degree of fitness and co-ordination of the body and the mind, it does not lead to *mokṣa* since it cannot provide self-knowledge.

The basic position on this subject must be reiterated. The problem being ignorance and error, the solution can only be knowledge. In this, there is no choice. And when *śruti* says that knowledge alone is *mokṣa*, it does not amount to fanaticism. If we say eyes alone see colors, we are not fanatics. There is fanaticism only when we propagate a belief, which is subject to negation, as the only truth, or hold on to one means as true while there are many equally valid options. When the self is mistaken for a limited being (*saṁsāri*), nothing other than knowledge can correct that mistake. That is why Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad states that *ātmā* has to be known for which one has to do *śāstra-vicāra*.³³⁰

³²⁹ Swami Paramarthananda, Lectures on the Bhagavadgītā, Volume I, The Samskrita Academy, Chennai, p. 177.

³³⁰ *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsītavyo maitreyi* (2.4.5.)

III

Is not the elimination of thoughts the only means for self-realization?

There is also a widespread contention that enlightenment is the state of mental absorption called as *samādhi*, which is the culmination of Sage Patañjali's *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. In that state, which is called *nirvikalpa*, the mind is free from thoughts and the subject-object distinction is absent. The reasoning is that the truth of the self is covered by *vṛttis* (thought-forms) and it has to be uncovered through stoppage of thoughts³³¹. The misunderstanding is that thought divides *ātmā* and prevents *ātmā* from being partless (*nirvikalpa*).

The vision of the *śāstra* is that while the knower, known, and knowledge are not separate from *ātmā*, *ātmā* is independent of all of them. The object of any thought is non-separate from the consciousness. The knower of the object and the thought itself are also non-separate from it. In Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad and in the *kārikā*, the dreamer is cited as proof that there is no real division such as the dreamer, the dream and the dreamt, even though during

The self, my dear Maitreyi, has to be seen (known), heard of (from a *guru*), analyzed and contemplated upon.

³³¹ This is called *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*.

Section III is based essentially on Swami Dayananda, *The Teaching Tradition of Advaita Vedanta*, pp. 11 – 12.

the dream, the division was experienced to be real. The purpose of the dream example is to make us see that the waker's experience of division is not any different. *Nirvikalpa* does not mean the absence of thought but refers to the fact that there is no real difference between the knower, knowledge and known. In Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (4.3.1-6), the invariable *ātmā* is presented as the light of awareness (*jyotiṣvarūpaḥ*). It is ever present and does not undergo any modification. It is always *nirvikalpa*, in spite of the apparent division. That is what is said in Kena Upaniṣad: 'in every form of knowledge, *ātmā* is understood by the discriminative as the invariable' (2.4). Therefore, the knowledge is that *ātmā* is thought-free (*nirvikalpa*) in spite of the experience of thoughts by the I-sense.

Elimination of thoughts is not knowledge. It is also not self-discovery as thoughts do not cover *ātmā*. Thoughts come, I am. Thoughts vanish, I am. This is the same as when snake is, rope is and when snake is not, rope is. Therefore, the mistake lies in equating thoughts with I. If I do not know who I am, this original mistake cannot be corrected even if we remove the thoughts. Vedānta does not accept thoughts as the cause for sorrow. The mistake of taking thoughts for *ātmā* is the cause of sorrow.

Sorrow is a result of a mix up between the real and the apparent. A wave is not separate from or independent of water while the water does not depend upon the wave. So

too, a thought is not independent of *ātmā*, while *ātmā* is independent of the thought. The mistake of taking the thought as *ātmā* is obviously the cause of sorrow. Even if thought is a problem, getting rid of the thoughts will not solve it. The thought, 'I am small' is the problem. Mistaking that thought for I is the problem and the solution is the knowledge, 'I am real, all thoughts are apparent'.

To reiterate, the source of our problems is not the mind but the reality that we attach to the mind. The reality given to the mind is to be dropped by knowing the invariable *ātmā* manifest in all thoughts. *Ātmā* is not covered by thoughts even as the waves do not cover water. The waves need not subside for us to see the water; in waves themselves, we see water. *Ātmā* cannot be covered by anything except by ignorance. We are awareness, always free from thoughts, in spite of our thoughts. What is real is always one and one alone is real. It is this knowledge that nullifies the mind that stood against us owing to our ignorance. Thinking continues but it is known as *mithyā*, which is incapable of affecting *ātmā*. One's shadow is not a problem when it is known as a shadow. Mind is not a problem when it is known to be *mithyā*.

IV

Does not the enquiry “Who am I?” reveal the self?

Another view that is prevalent among the devotees of Ramana Maharishi of Tiruvaṅṅāmalai is that the inquiry “Who am I?” conducted by a person will make the mind go back to its source and that if this state of inwardness (*antar-mukhatvam*) is maintained, the “I” which is the source of all thoughts will go and that the self which ever exists will shine.

This method of knowing the truth of the self does not stand scrutiny³³². Let us consider the situation where the rope is mistaken to be a snake. Here, object-awareness plus ignorance-born mistake of taking the object, which is a rope, as a snake becomes snake-knowledge. Similarly, I is *sat-cit-ānanda* but this self-evident I with the ignorance of I is *ahaṅkāra*, the I-notion. There are, however, not two ‘I’s but only one I which is either correctly or incorrectly known. The I that is with memory, biography etc. is not the real I, as it is merely a concept and is nothing but a thought, which is illumined by consciousness. It is different from all other thoughts and keeps on gathering new notions. In addition to the I-thought, we have the object-thoughts, which are centered on the I-thought.

³³² Section IV is based essentially on Swami Dayananda, *Talks on Upadesa Saram of Ramana Maharishi*, pp. 95 -98.

When these thoughts are absent, the mind is peaceful; but the I-thought remains.

The I-thought will not go in spite our doing anything to be free from it. For instance, it will remain as, 'I am a *yogī*' or 'I have surrendered to *Īśvara*' or 'I am spiritual' or 'I am a *sannyāsi*' or 'I am a *bhakta*'. It always gathers a new qualification to remain there. The I-thought is born of ignorance and it will go only through knowledge. It is like the snake that will resolve into rope only on rope-knowledge.

As regards self-inquiry as the solution, the incorrectly known I cannot conduct the enquiry on itself to rectify the error. It must be dealt with from the outside base of knowledge. That can only be the teaching from a competent *guru*. Otherwise the notion, 'I am the enquirer', will persist and the only result would be that the I-thought would get a new lease of life. Teaching "*tattvamasi*" is the *brahmāstra*³³³ and it works when the *guru* uses it on a receptive mind. When it is exposed to the teaching, the self replaces the erroneous I-notion. The expression, *mano-nāśa* or the destruction of the mind means only the dropping of the erroneous I-notion born of ignorance in the wake of knowledge.

³³³ The infallible weapon of destruction.

V

Is it not necessary to remove *vāsanās* to gain *mokṣa*?

Some hold that our problem is that *ātmā* is polluted and that it can be brought to its original nature only by cleansing it. One system concerns itself with whatever has been accumulated over the previous *janmas* called as *vāsanās*³³⁴. These are retained impressions and are equated with the results of all past actions. It is held that their exhaustion is necessary for knowing the self.

This misgiving is baseless as *ātmā* is the only reality. There exists no other real entity for *ātmā* to be affected by it. As for *vāsanās*, they themselves depend upon *ātmā* for their existence. They are *mithyā*. If these facts were understood, it would be clear that *vāsanās* can never pollute *ātmā*. Even if we assume that it does so, it is not possible for anyone in a given incarnation to exhaust the *vāsanās* collected in an infinite number of lives.

The *śāstra* does mention exhaustion of *vāsanā*. The *vāsanās* that the later *ācāryas* talk about are with reference to the mind and they are three fold. The first is the fascination for an object (*viśaya-vāsanā*) born out of the thinking that it can give us security and happiness. By

³³⁴ Swami Dayananda, *The Teaching Tradition of Advaita Vedanta*, p. 13.

vicāra, we have to remove this from the mind to become eligible for self-knowledge. The second is the 'I-am-this-body-*vāsanā*' (*deha-vāsanā*) and it has to be removed by inquiry and contemplation based on knowledge. The third *vāsanā* is the craving for the study of *śāstra* other than Vedānta (*śāstra-vāsanā*) and it has to be tackled by discrimination and commitment to Vedānta-*vicāra*. This three-fold *vāsanā* is not presented by the *ācāryas* as a cause for *ātmā* to become a *jīva* since *ātmā* has never become a *jīva*. *Jīvatva* or the notion of being the limited individual has arisen owing to ignorance of the self and the pursuit is therefore to be an eligible seeker and gain knowledge from the *guru* that the *svarūpa* of *ātmā* is free from *jīvatva*.

VI

Is not cleaning of *pañcakōśas* necessary to remove the pollution from *ātmā*?

The other misunderstanding related to cleansing is that *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya* are the five *kōśas* that cover *ātmā* and that they have to be cleansed so that they do not contaminate *ātmā*. This is a serious problem. The *śruti* speaks of *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya* as those that are mistaken to be *ātmā*. The word *kōśa* has not been used by *śruti* but it has been appended by the *sampradāya* to all of them making them into *annamayakosa*, *prāṇamayakosa* etc. *Maya* has two

different meanings, *pracūrya* and *vikāra*. *Pracūrya* means predominance or saturation and *vikāra* means modification. When it is wrongly taken to be saturation, the word *kośa* added to *maya* makes the *kosa* to be the covering of *ātmā*. This misunderstanding has led to the practice of *kośa*-cleansing. Cleansing of *annamayakośa* is sought to be achieved through physical cleanliness and the taking of clean *sāttvic* food, of *prāṇamayakośa* through regulation of breath, of *manomayakośa* through elimination of negative emotions like *rāga*, *dveṣa* and cultivation of positive emotions through *bhakti*, *pūjā*, *bhajan*, *kīrtan* etc, of *vijñānamayakośa* through *japa* of *mantras* like *Gāyatrī* and self-effacement through *upāsanā* and of *ānandamayakośa* by prayer to *Īśvara* to redeem the self from being a *jīva*. The misunderstanding is that the *kośas* cover *ātmā* and affect *ātmā*.

Kośas cannot be the physical covers of *ātmā*, as limitless *ātmā* can never be covered. What covers *ātmā* is only ignorance in these five different ways. The *annamaya* and others are merely name, form and function. They do not cover Brahman, even as the wave does not cover water. Like seeing water in the wave, we can see Brahman in all of them. The remedy therefore lies in *śāstra-vicāra*. This does not mean that the practices mentioned are not useful. As we had seen earlier, cleansing has its legitimate purpose for gaining *citta-śuddhi* so that the mind may become fit to receive self-knowledge.

VII

Is not knowledge to be realized through experience?

According to modern Vedānta, self-knowledge is intellectual while self-realisation is experiential. Their contention is that the study of *śruti* can provide only indirect intellectual knowledge, and that this knowledge has to be directly experienced for self-realization to take place. This confusion has arisen out of the thinking that even as we get only indirect knowledge through words about objects that are not available for direct perception, we get only indirect knowledge from the words of *śruti* about the self.

It is true that when an object is not available for 'first-hand' experience, being out of sight (*parokṣa*), the knowledge gained of it through words is indirect knowledge³³⁵. It is also called as mediate knowledge or intellectual knowledge. What it means is that we are not personally aware of what is revealed by the knowledge. In such cases, we have to directly perceive them to convert it into direct knowledge. This is called direct or immediate knowledge (*aparokṣa-jñāna*). Following this thinking relating to objects, when no personal experience takes place when the self is known as *sat-cit-ānanda*, it is considered that *sādhana*s (practices) are necessary to gain

³³⁵ *parokṣa-jñānam*.

the direct experience of *sat-cit-ānanda*. This is called self-realization, which is experiential as distinct from self-knowledge, which is called as intellectual. Towards this end, seekers have been adopting various practices and graphic accounts of the experience gained through them by some seekers are available in prose, poetry and painting.

Let us consider this contention. Firstly, Brahman-*ātmā* is that, which has neither the object nor the subject. For the subject to be there, there has to be an object. But, there is no object since we cannot objectify *ātmā*-Brahman. Even though it has neither the subject nor the object, there is no doubt about its existence, since it is self-evident. Nothing can be more evident³³⁶ than what is self-evident.

Śruti does not say that we have to realize self-evident *ātmā*-Brahman. It says that we are *ātmā*, which is Brahman. The confusion of making a distinction between knowledge and realisation is caused only because of not recognizing that *ātmā* is present before the receipt of self-knowledge, during the receipt of self-knowledge and after the receipt of self-knowledge. There is invariable presence (*aparokṣatva*) of *ātmā* in all situations and *śruti* is the means of knowledge for us to recognise this *svarūpa* of *ātmā*. Not understanding that *ātmā* is invariably present and what *śruti* does is only to reveal this fact to us are the

³³⁶ *prakatikṛta*.

reasons for this erroneous thinking. They also overlook the fact that all forms of knowledge happen in the intellect. As such, there is no such thing as intellectual knowledge. There can be only two types of knowledge of objects; one is direct and the other is indirect. But the self is not an object. It is the self-effulgent and self-evident self. On receipt of self-knowledge, what happens is the dropping of the misconception about the self and immediate recognition of the true nature of the self.

Those who speak about *ātmā*-Brahman experience also overlook the fact that *ātmā*-Brahman cannot be experienced as it is soundless, touchless, colorless, tasteless and smell-less.³³⁷ Any experience of sound, touch, colour, taste or smell that one has, however unique it may be, is not of *ātmā*-Brahman. What is experienced is only *anātmā*.

We may say that we have indirect knowledge (*parokṣa jñāna*) of *ātmā*-Brahman, since we know how exactly *śruti* says that Brahman is *satyam*, *jñānam* and *anantam* and that *ātmā* is Brahman. This is not tenable since there is no object called *ātmā* or Brahman to have indirect knowledge of it. When *ātmā* is known through the *śāstra-pramāṇa*, it does not become an object for the knower, as it is ever the self-evident self. Knower does not correctly know *ātmā* by himself because of his in-born ignorance caused by *māyā*.

³³⁷ Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 1.3.15.

However, *śruti* creates the correct *vṛtti* in the *buddhi* and destroys the ignorance of the true nature of self-evident *ātmā*. In the case of *ātmā*-Brahman, there is no knower-known-knowledge distinction, as in the case of objects. If it is an object, knower will take it as *pramāṇa phalam*. It is not an object but is the self. In the case of the self, when the self-knowledge is there, ignorance of the self is gone. This is how self-knowledge takes place. Neither any object nor any perception is involved in recognizing the self.

Our problem is that, out of ignorance, we do not recognize the invariable presence (*aparokṣatvam*) of *ātmā* in all situations. Kena Upaniṣad (2.4) makes it clear that it is known in every thought³³⁸. The fact is that the cognition of anything does not displace consciousness, since the *vṛttis* caused by the sound, touch, form, taste or smell are themselves lighted by consciousness. It lends its existence (*sattā*) to the *vṛtti*. Its nature, which is *jñapti* (consciousness), is lent to that. It also lights up the knower, knowledge, known and all these are bathed in one consciousness alone.

³³⁸ *pratibodha-viditaṁ matam.*

VIII

What is *ātmānubhava*?

The question now arises as to why the *śāstra* speaks of *ātmānubhava* when *ātmā* cannot be experienced³³⁹. This problem arises when 'anubhava' is taken to mean experience. In certain contexts, the word *anubhava* means *pratyakṣa* or *aparokṣa-jñāna* or direct knowledge. The word 'experience' does not convey the same sense and causes this confusion. *Ātmā* is consciousness and its presence is never lost in any form of experience. In seeing, hearing, thinking, the presence of consciousness is never missed. The *svarūpa* of *ātmā* is this *anubhūti*, the content of every experience. Consciousness, the content of experience, is recognized as Brahman, the limitless, which fact *śruti* reveals in sentences such as '*tattvamasi*'.

To reiterate, the thinking that the self is to be experienced is ridiculous since the experiencer, the experienced and the experience are all dependent on consciousness and the truth of their existence is only consciousness. But consciousness, which is the self, is not the experiencer, the experienced or the experience. It is like the same person performing different roles being the same person but the person not being any of the roles. But the problem is that the self, is mistaken to be the experiencer, different from

³³⁹ This section is based on *Arsha Vidya Bharati*, December, 1997, pp. 1 -2.

the object of experience. This duality is an error imposed upon the self. Vedānta negates this error and makes us recognise the self as being free from this duality. This recognition is *ātmānubhava* or *ātmajñāna*. (It is also referred to as *ātma-sākṣātkāra* or *brahma-sākṣātkāra*.) The word 'experience' fails to convey the meaning of self-knowledge and misguides the person to the pursuit of gaining the experience of the self. If a person after systematically listening to the *śāstra* from a competent *guru* still seeks experience of *ātmā*-Brahman, it means that he is still to understand the teaching.

CHAPTER 18

GAINING *JÑĀNA-NIṢṬHĀ*

I

The *mahavākya* gives direct knowledge

When we are a fully qualified seeker and are told about our true nature through any of the *mahavākyas* after preparing the ground for it, the *vṛtti* caused by hearing it provides immediate recognition of ourselves as Brahman³⁴⁰. It is instantaneous³⁴¹ and *śruti* elucidates it through the example of the “tenth man”. A *guru* entrusted to his senior *śiṣya* the responsibility of conducting a group of *śiṣyas* to a place across the river and bringing them back. He told him: “You are ten in all. Ensure that all the ten return”. The group left and chose to swim across the swollen river after discarding the ferry. After they reached the other bank, the senior *śiṣya* lined them up and counted them. Being engrossed in the counting of others, he missed counting himself and counted only up to nine. Filled with the worry as to whether one had not been swept away in the river, he asked another to check. But he

³⁴⁰ This is called *aparokṣa-jñānam*.

³⁴¹ *Sa yo ha vai tatparamaṁ brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati!* Anyone who knows that supreme Brahman becomes Brahman indeed. Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.2.9.

committed the same mistake as he was also in a similar mental frame. They concluded that one has been lost in the waters of the river and were in tears. An old man who was passing by enquired about the problem and when appraised of it counted them and found that they were ten. He told them that they were ten in all and that no one has been lost. Trust in the words of the passer-by gave them the indirect knowledge of the existence of the tenth man. They stopped weeping and the old man asked the senior *śiṣya* to count them again to know it by himself. But he missed counting himself, as before. Then the old man revealed to him, “You are the tenth man”. The senior *śiṣya* instantly had direct knowledge of the missing man and jumped with joy. The problem was the ignorance of the tenth man and when the *śiṣya* was told in the proper context that he was himself the solution to his problem, the dropping of ignorance and solving of the problem were immediate. So is the dropping of being a *saṁsāri-jīva* by the eligible person on his being told, after creating the context for it, that he is none other than Brahman.

The nature of this situation has to be clearly grasped. Even without the help of the old man, the tenth man had a store of knowledge about himself. He could describe himself physically. He knew his mental condition. He knew that he was the leader of the group and was standing on the bank of the river looking for the tenth man. He had general knowledge of himself or *sāmānya jñānam*. What he lacked was the particular knowledge or *viśeṣa jñānam* of himself that he was the tenth man.

When the old man revealed this knowledge, he did not make the bald statement that he was the tenth man. He first gave the knowledge that the tenth man existed. The leader had trust in the correctness of the words of the old man, pending its confirmation by personal verification. The indirect knowledge that he so gained calmed his mind making it ready for knowledge. For gaining it, the old man made him count again and commit the same mistake and created the context for revealing that he is the tenth man. Thus, the leader was led to see himself through the words spoken in a carefully created context that he was the missing man that he sought. The state of mind and the interrelated condition surrounding the words are, therefore, important factors in the ability of the words to convey the meaning intended by the teacher.

II

We cannot bypass the prescribed qualifications

Unfortunately, many of us remain a *saṁsāri-jīva* even after listening to the *śāstra* for a considerable length of time from a competent *guru*. Kaṭha Upaniṣad says: “In spite of listening, many people do not understand”.³⁴² In the Upaniṣads themselves, only a few like the ideal disciple Naciketas³⁴³ gain the knowledge immediately. In

³⁴² ..*śṛṇvanto’pi bahavo yaṁ na vidyuḥ* .. 1.2.7.

³⁴³ In Kaṭha Upaniṣad. King Janaka is another. (Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 4.2.4.)

the case of Śvetaketu, who had spent twelve years in the *gurukula*, his father had to explain it nine times through different examples³⁴⁴. As regards Indra who was taught by *Prajāpati*, he first misunderstood *ātmā* to be the body in the waking state; later, on further teaching as body in the dream state; then, after further teaching, as the body in the deep sleep state and only later, on further teaching, as consciousness. A demon king, Virocana, who had also learnt from *Prajāpati* understood that the body in waking state is *ātmā* and never realized that his understanding was wrong³⁴⁵.

The reason is that self-knowledge can be grasped only by those who possess the qualifications prescribed by the *śāstra*. *Śāstra* has prescribed the qualifications so that the severity of our mental orientation based on self-ignorance may be neutralized. While listening to the teaching, only on being qualified, it would be possible for us to relieve the I-sense of functioning in the dual state as the knower seeking knowledge from the *guru*. While teaching, the *guru* is himself the *pramāṇa* and is in an impersonal state. We should also be in a similar state as the receiver of the *pramāṇa*³⁴⁶. Otherwise, what is revealed would not be clear to us, as our mental condition would be opposed to the knowledge. So, we have no option at all except to

³⁴⁴ Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad, 6.8.7. to 6.16.3.

³⁴⁵ Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad, chapter 8, section 7.

³⁴⁶ We had earlier referred to this situation as “surrender”.

become at least reasonably well qualified to receive the knowledge.

III

Śravaṇam, mananam and nididhyāsanam

The second part of the discipline presented by the *śruti* for

- receiving the knowledge;
- gaining certainty of the knowledge; and
- freeing it from obstructions

is stated in the following terms³⁴⁷

- the self, my dear is worthy to be seen (known);³⁴⁸
- is to be heard of (from a guru) (*śravaṇam*),
- analysed (*mananam*); and
- contemplated upon (*nididhyāsanam*).

As no commandment is feasible in respect of knowing, the prescription for knowing is taken as a likeness of

³⁴⁷ *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo maitreyi* (Bṛhdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 2.4.5.)

³⁴⁸ The word used is *draṣṭavyaḥ* and it means *pradarśanīyaḥ* or *prakarṣeṇa draṣṭum योग्याḥ*, which means, "fit or worthy to be known". It is taken as *vidhi-chāyā* (likeness of injunction). But *śrotavyaḥ*, *mantavyaḥ* and *nididhyāsitavyaḥ* are taken as *vidhi* (injunction) and they must be done.

injunction. The injunction about *śravaṇam*, *mananam* and *nididhyāsanam* is categorized as a *niyama-vidhi*, or that which has to be compulsorily followed.

Śravaṇam is consistent and systematic study of Vedānta for a length of time from a live *guru* who has learnt it according to the *sampradāya*. Under the guidance of the *guru*, we inquire³⁴⁹ into and analyze the meaning of the statements of the text and arrive at a distinct and exact understanding of what they say. We learn to correctly interpret the apparently contradicting statements and understand the purport of the *śruti* properly. We arrive at the exact revelation under the guidance of the *guru*, after clearing the doubts that arise in this regard. Through *śravaṇam* we accomplish

- cessation of ignorance about the self (*ajñāna-nivṛtti*);
- freedom from the doubts about the competence of the means of knowledge to reveal the self (*pramāṇa-asambhāvanā-nivṛtti*); and
- freedom from the doubts arising from the seeming contradictions in the text (*śruti-virodha-nivṛtti*).

Invariably, during *śravaṇam*, our intellect with its own presumptions and inferences challenges the knowledge,

³⁴⁹ *Śravaṇam* is derived from the root, *śru* and has the meaning of both 'to hear or listen' and 'to inquire' (into the purport) (*vedāntānām tātparya niścayaḥ*.)

just as in the case of any other knowledge that is gathered. In the case of this knowledge of non-duality, our doubt is deep rooted, since our perception establishes only duality. We have also great reluctance in accepting that we are essentially the same as *Īśvara*. We have the serious doubt, “Are we really what the *śruti* says?”

As for solving this problem, perceptual knowledge, which is based on the duality of the subject and the object, cannot reveal the non-duality of the self. Therefore, it is now the job of the very same reasoning intellect to realize through logic³⁵⁰ that neither can non-duality be disproved nor can duality be established. Fortunately for us, Gaudapādācārya has logically proved in the *kārikās* (commentary in verse) written on Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad that Vedānta is beyond argument and contradiction.

Doubts also arise from the contentions of various schools of thought and the teaching of charismatic personalities. The differences that arise are wide ranging. Scientists and Cārvākas do not accept whatever is not available for observation and so, *ātmā* does not exist for them. Among those who admit its existence, there are wide differences about its nature³⁵¹. Their views are examined and the

³⁵⁰ This is called *yukti saha cintanam* or *mananam*.

³⁵¹ None of them accept that there is only one *ātmā*. Its nature is variously described as inert (Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika), mixture of sentient and insentient (Bhāṭṭa section of Pūrva-mīmāṃsaka), momentarily sentient (Vijñānavādin among Buddhists).

distortions of reasoning introduced by them are established through reasoning. This matter has been dealt with in detail by Vyāsācārya in the second chapter of his *Brahmasūtra* and by Śāṅkarācārya in his commentary thereon. Thus, all obstructive fallacies entertained are cleared by the intellect until they no longer raise any objection to the knowledge received. This process is called *mananam*. Through *mananam* we achieve

- removal of doubts about the validity of the revelation made by the means of knowledge (*prameya-asambhāvanā-nivṛtti*);
- removal of doubts arising out of seeming contradiction between the revelation and reasoning (*śruti-yukti-virodha-nivṛtti*);
- in effect, the removal of all doubts (*saṁśaya-nivṛtti*).

When all the logical reservations are gone, our questioning intellect is able to accept the knowledge conveyed by the *pramāṇa* that the self, *ātmā*, is Brahman and that it is *nitya* (free from time), *śuddha* (free from attributes), *buddha* (free from ignorance) and *mukta* (free from bondage), *adhiṣṭāna* (the basis of everything) and *satya* (the truth of everything).

Even so, we are not able to entirely free our mind from its earlier notions. This situation arises as self-knowledge is unlike the knowledge of objects, which we know for

certain once we perceive them. In the case of self-knowledge, generally there are obstructions to the knowledge, as our entire living has been based on our erroneous notion that “I” is limited in all respects. Normally, a single clarification is adequate to remove the confusion about what we want to know. But, we cannot eliminate the deep-seated misunderstanding about ourselves so easily. Even in the case of the wall clock that has been shifted to another location, we continue to look for it only at the old place for a number of days. In this case, the obstruction caused by the old habit is far more serious. Apart from the ingrained erroneous notion of considering ourselves to be small and insignificant, the worry, concern, anxiety and panic born during the childhood are still in us and they manifest. Thus, there arises the condition in which our stored experience is opposed to what we know in spite of the invalidation of the “opposite attitude” to the knowledge³⁵² by *śravaṇam* and *mananam*. It obstructs the cognition created by the *śruti* that while our body-mind-sense-complex is not separate from *sat-cit-ananta-ātmā*, *sat-cit-ananta-ātmā* is not our body-mind-sense-complex. It stands against the very knowledge and prevents the owning up of the fact about ourselves. Therefore, the need arises to free our mind from its hold. This is why we have the expression, *jñāna-niṣṭā*, which is steady, unwavering knowledge free from obstruction.

³⁵² This is called *vīparīta bhāvanā*.

Straying away from the truth is undone by staying with the truth continually. This is accomplished through continued *śravaṇam* and *mananam* and by dwelling upon the knowledge by reading, mutual discussion among seekers, writing, teaching and contemplation³⁵³. Contemplation consists of consciously staying exclusively with the knowledge. It is called *nididhyāsanam*.

During *nididhyāsanam*, we dwell on the knowledge that we are the whole without any process of thinking. It is possible for us to do so as

- our body-mind-sense-complex has become a vehicle for *nididhyāsanam* having given up the pursuits for *artha*, *kāma* and *puṇya*;
- we have no emotional problems and are of a cheerful disposition ;
- we are free from expectations including that of *mokṣa*;
- in effect, we are no longer a seeker (*sādhaka*), having known through *ātma-jñāna* that we are the whole ; and

³⁵³ *Taccintanaṁ tatkathanaṁ anyonyaṁ tatprabhodanam |
Etadekapatratvaṁ ca brahmābhyāsaṁ vidurbudhāḥ | |
Śaṅkarācārya, Laghuvākyavṛttiḥ, 17.*

The knowledgeable persons know that constantly thinking, speaking, discussing, teaching and being absorbed in that (Brahman) is inculcation of Brahman.

- we are either internally or both internally and externally a *sannyāsī*³⁵⁴.

Nididhyāsanam is not autosuggestion or self-hypnosis. It is merely seeing what we already know as the fact. Our will is dropped and we become as though possessed by contemplativeness. We let the appreciation of *ātmā* take place in the mind by seeing it from different angles: the limitless self (*pūrṇa-ātmā*), the detached self (*asaṅga-ātmā*), the self as witness (*sākṣi-ātmā*), the action-free self (*akarṭṛ-ātmā*), the self that is free from the sense of being an enjoyer (*abhokṭṛ-ātmā*), and the self that is ever full (*ānanda-ātmā*). The meaning of key words that reveal our true nature like “*sat-svarūpo’ham*”, “*cit-svarūpo’ham*”, “*ānanda-svarūpo’ham*”, “*ahaṁ brahmāsmi*”(the self is Brahman) “*ātmā idaṁ sarvaṁ*” (the self is everything), “*ātmā pūrṇaḥ*” (the self is the whole), “*ātmā suddhaḥ*” (the self is pure), “*ātmā nitya-muktaḥ*” (the self is always free), “*ātmā paraṁ brahma*” (the self is limitless Brahman), “*ātmā sarvasya kāraṇam*” (the self is the cause of everything) are maintained in the mind without any thinking process to just see the fact of them. Through contemplation, we merely highlight the fact of being none other than Brahman.

Nididhyāsanam on the knowledge does not produce any new knowledge. Contemplation upon the knowledge is

³⁵⁴ This is called as *vividīṣā sannyāsa*.

also not an action (*karma*). As we have already seen, *karma* can only produce, modify, attain, cleanse or reach something. When a statement of fact about which we have gained clarity is contemplated upon, none of these results is produced as what is contemplated upon is already a fact. The fact is that we are *ātmā*, which is Brahman. It is like saying that “fire is hot”. The heat of fire is not the result of the action of saying it. As a statement of fact, it is merely to be owned up. Moreover, if self-knowledge does not have the power to remove self-ignorance, it is not going to acquire that power through repetition. So, *nididhyāsanam* is not the cause for knowing that *ātmā* is Brahman. We already have that knowledge but it is stifled. This obstruction has to be removed so that knowledge may be effective. What *nididhyāsanam* does is only to neutralize the obstructive opposite attitude to the knowledge that we have.

Nididhyāsanam is practiced until the opposite attitude to knowledge is gone. When the impediments to knowledge are removed, the *pramāṇa* gives rise to *aparokṣa-jñānam* of *ātmā*, like the direct knowledge of the tenth man to the *śiṣya*, which once for all freed him from his problem.

The expression “meditation” is used both for *nididhyāsanam* and *upāsanā*. This creates confusion, as they are quite different from each other even though both of them are mental processes. In *upāsanā*, the meditator and the object of meditation are different from each other.

In contemplation however, we do not meditate on the self as Brahman but on the knowledge that we are Brahman. We contemplate upon our own true nature. There is no difference between what we contemplate upon and what we are. In *upāsanā*, the *vṛtti* in the mind corresponds to the form of the object of meditation. In *nididhyāsanam*, the *vṛtti* corresponds to the self, which is the whole without any division.

IV

Nididhyāsanam as set out in Bhagavadgītā

Contemplation is set out in Bhagavadgītā³⁵⁵ as *yoga*. In it, the physical preparation consists of choosing a secluded, undisturbed place and a seat which is neither too low nor high and neither too hard nor too soft. The body, neck and head have to be erect and the external objects should be kept out of sight by looking as though at the tip of the nose. The breathing should be even. The mental preparation consists of giving up all desires and withdrawing the mind and sense organs from all other activities with the help of the discriminating intellect. The meditation consists of abiding in the self with a tension-free, undisturbed, withdrawn and one-pointed mind. If the mind gets distracted, it is brought back to one's own self so that the flow of similar thoughts is constant. When there is absorption of mind, abidance becomes effortless.

³⁵⁵ In the sixth chapter.

Thus, the contemplator effortlessly abides as the self with the knowledge that “I am the self”. The abidance in *ātmā* is purely in the form of clear knowledge. This is called *jñāna-samādhi*.

V

Jñāna-niṣṭhā

The state of abidance as *ātmā* is called *jñāna-niṣṭhā*³⁵⁶ (being the knowledge) or *brāhmī-sthiti* (being Brahman) or *brahma-nirvāṇam* (absorption as Brahman) or *svātmanyavasthānam* (established as the self). The person with *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is called a *sthitaprajña* or as person for whom the knowledge of *ātmā* stays without any doubt, vagueness or error. The knowledge that “I am the whole”, “*paraṁ brahma aham asmī*” is well established and well rooted. He remains in his true nature effortlessly in and through all transactions. The *sthitaprajña* is also referred to simply as a *jñānī* or a wise person. As we shall see, he is a *jīvan-mukta*, or a person who is free even while living in the body.

³⁵⁶ Some times the commitment to the pursuit of knowledge leading to *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is also referred to as *jñāna-niṣṭhā*.

CHAPTER 19

JĪVAN-MUKTA

I

The changes that *ātmā-jñāna* brings about

Śruti says that the person who knows Brahman becomes Brahman itself and asserts that he attains the infinite³⁵⁷ and becomes immortal here itself³⁵⁸. The rationale behind this assertion is simple and is as follows:

- The self, which is Brahman, is limitless;
- It always remains so, since it is unattached (*asaṅga*);
- Owing to in born ignorance (*avidyā* or *ajñāna*), the intellect considers the self to be limited to the body-mind-sense complex;
- As soon as the intellect recognizes through the teaching that the self is limitless, which is *jñāna*, the intellect drops the wrong notion of its limitation, which is *ajñāna*;
- As knowledge removes ignorance in the same way as light dispels darkness, recognition of the self, which is Brahman, in its true nature is immediate.

³⁵⁷ *Brahmavidāpnoti param* | Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.1.

³⁵⁸ *Tamevaṁ vidvān amṛta iha bhavati* | Puruṣasūktam, 7.

As Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says, 'Being but Brahman, he attains Brahman'.³⁵⁹

When we abide in Brahman-knowledge, we cease to be a *jīva*. We are called the *jīvan-mukta*, or the person who is freed even while living³⁶⁰. This position does not change even when we transact with the world. We stay in our true nature regardless of the activities of the body-mind-sense-complex.³⁶¹ We do not have to remove a single thought from our mind to be what we are, even as there is no need to remove the wave to discover the water, once it is known that wave is water. For us, there is nothing, which is ever other than Brahman, and that Brahman is ever ourselves³⁶².

We, as *jīvan-mukta*, continue to have the same old body with the same old features. The existent body does not disappear along with self-ignorance. It is not like the non-

³⁵⁹ *Brahmaiva sanbrahmāpyeti*, 4.4.6.

³⁶⁰ This is called as *sadyo-mukti* (instant *mukti*).

³⁶¹ .. *svena rūpeṇābhiniṣpadyata*..|Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.3.4. The achievement of the establishment as the actionless self is called *naiṣkarma-siddhi*.

³⁶² *idaṁ sarvaṁ yadayamātmā*| This all are this self. (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 2.4.6.)

yevamevāsminnātmani, sarvaṇi bhūtāni, sarve devāḥ, sarve lokāḥ, sarve prāṇāḥ, sarva eta ātmānaḥ samarpitāḥ| In this self are fixed all gods, all world, all organs and all these selves. (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 2.5.15.)

existent snake for it to disappear on being known to be a rope. It is like the colorless crystal continuing to appear to be colored even after knowing that the color belongs to the flower and not to the crystal. Thus, the body-mind-sense-complex continues to exist and is experienced even after the erroneous self-knowledge has been corrected³⁶³. We continue to function in it, but without the “I” sense and “my” sense with reference to it. Our bio-data remains the same for the world but we have the understanding that it pertains only to the body-mind-sense-complex and not to *ātmā*. We use it merely for transacting with the world without any sense of identification with it. We continue to experience the body with its physical pain and disease; but we do not consider them to be our affliction but that of the body and are objective in dealing with it. What we are free from is the mental suffering that usually arises out of owning the physical discomfort as our own. We continue to rely on the world for meeting our physical needs as before. Only, we are free from the insecurity that this situation had earlier caused.

Our *antaḥ-karaṇa* remains the same but with the crucial difference, that the *antaḥ-karaṇa* together with the I-sense is a mere instrument like the spectacles. Not being identified with the mind, we are free from all mental problems like worry, disappointment, loneliness and

³⁶³ These were explained in Chapter 14 also.

sorrow³⁶⁴. We have no sense of guilt or hurt with reference to the past or insecurity about the future. We are unaffected either by praise or criticism. Even if any emotional fluctuation should take place, it is feeble and transient. Like the tanjore-doll, we regain our natural state quickly.

We do not safeguard ourselves from anything, as there is nothing, which exists apart from us. We are ever secure and are not afraid of anything at any time³⁶⁵, as fear exists only when difference, in any degree, is made in the self through ignorance³⁶⁶. Nevertheless, as for the body-mind-sense-complex, we know that it is vulnerable and we may run to save it like the *ajñānī* when faced with a tiger. Only,

³⁶⁴ *Yasminsarvāṇi bhūtānyātmaivābhūdviñānataḥ* |

Tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvamanupaśyataḥ | |Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad, 7.

When to the man of realization all beings become the very self, then what delusion and what sorrow can remain for that seer of oneness.

³⁶⁵ *Ānandaṁ brahmaṇo vidvān* | *Na bibheti kutaścaneti* | Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.9.

The enlightened man is not afraid of anything after knowing the bliss that is Brahman.

Ānandaṁ brahmaṇo vidvān | *Na bibheti kadācaneti* | Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.4.

One is not subjected to fear at any time after knowing the bliss that is Brahman.

³⁶⁶ *Yadā hyevaīṣa etasminnudaramantaraṁ kurute* | *Atha tasya bhayaṁ bhavati* | Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.7.

we would not be frightened, as we know that *anātmā* is running away from *anātmā*! We are the person who does not need anything to feel secure and are not afraid of anything to feel insecure.

We are happy by ourselves³⁶⁷, since we are full and complete without any sense of want³⁶⁸. *Ānanda* is our very nature. It is different from the *ānanda* that we experienced as a *jīva* in those situations when the mind did not obstruct the natural *ānanda*. Now, it is intrinsic (*svarūpa*) *ānanda* and it is continuous without any break and without any change in its intensity. Our *ānanda*, which is natural to us, expresses itself as loving kindness towards all beings³⁶⁹. This does not mean that we are oblivious to other people's behaviour; in fact, we are far more sensitive than others; but we naturally accommodate them, as they are, without judging them. We have no attachment or

³⁶⁷ *..ātmanevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ* ..Bhagavadgītā, 2.55.

³⁶⁸ *Ātmānaṁ cedvijānīyādayamaṣmīti pūruṣaḥ* |

Kimicchankasya kāmāyaśarīramanusānjvaret | | Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.4.12

If a man knows the self as "I am this", then desiring what and for whose sake will he suffer in the wake of the body? .

³⁶⁹ *Adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṁ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca* |

Nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ samaduḥkasukhaḥ kṣamī | | Bhagavadgītā, 12.13.

The one who has not hatred for all beings, who has the disposition of a friend, who is compassionate, free from possessiveness, free from "I" notion, equal in pleasant and unpleasant (circumstances) and indeed, one who is naturally accommodative.

aversion towards anyone or anything³⁷⁰. Should any emotions arise, they do not touch us, since we know that they are *mithyā*.³⁷¹ We are always objective. We have neither the notion, “I am holier than thou” nor the urge, “I should save the world”. There are no such reactions on our part; even if they take place, they go away even as they arise. Our response to the world is born only of compassion. Helping is natural us. We are a true friend, philosopher and guide. Our presence brings about temporary quietness in the mind and contentment to those near us³⁷². Our mental intent fructifies³⁷³ and everyone can benefit by being blessed by us³⁷⁴.

Our actions are spontaneous. Free will, likes and dislikes are not factors affecting our action. Though we are a law unto ourselves, we do not violate moral norms and social conventions. Our life is a paradigm of right action. We may be totally withdrawn and silent or move from place to place and be articulate. We may be in a state of abandon and be mistaken to be intoxicated or be

³⁷⁰ *Yastu sarvāni bhūtāni ātmanyevānupaśyati* |

Sarvabhūteṣu cātmanāṃ tato na vijugupsate | Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad, 6.

He who sees everything in himself and himself in everything never hates anything.

³⁷¹ This is called *bādhita-anuvṛtti*.

³⁷² *abhaya*.

³⁷³ Such a person is called *satya-kāmaḥ*.

³⁷⁴ Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.1.10. and 3.2.1.

impeccable in our behaviour. We may remain oblivious to everything including our physical state. We may teach the *śāstra* or write. For the sake of posterity, we may take steps to nurture the knowledge and protect the *dharma*, which we have found to be the most beneficial. We may engage ourselves in various activities like *pūjā*, *japa* and *upāsanā* so that others may follow our example and get *citta-suddhi* for gaining self-knowledge. We may set up and run institutions and engage ourselves in the welfare of all beings. Some of our actions would be due to *prārabhda-karma*, which it is still functional. But, even when we do *karma*, the notion of difference between doer and the deed born of ignorance is not there. Whatever we may be doing or not doing, we cannot be assessed by it, as the ways of the *jñānī* cannot be correctly judged by the *ajñānī*. Wherever we are and whatever we may be doing, we are a blessing to all.

II

The seeker has to emulate the characteristics of the *jñānī*

Śruti recounts these marks of the *jñānī* as the means to be adopted by the seekers for becoming a *jñānī*. So, the *jñānī*'s spontaneous expressions in life, the attitudes and disposition with which the *jñānī* interacts with others

establish the norms to be followed by the seeker as a *sādhana*.³⁷⁵

III

The consequences of becoming a *jīvan-mukta*

Lack of “I-sense” with reference to the body-mind-sense-complex makes us lose all its attributes like the doer (*kartā*), enjoyer (*bhoktā*) and knower (*jñātā*). We know that *ātmā* is *akartā* and that doership is attributed to *ātmā* due to ignorance. Neither activity nor inactivity belongs to us, as we are neither the agent of action nor of inaction. The ceasing of the wrong notion being of a doer in the wake of self-knowledge is called *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*³⁷⁶. Doing, we do not do.³⁷⁷ We think, as it were; we shake, as it were.³⁷⁸

As regards freedom from all *karmas*, it is important to understand that all of us are all along free from *karmas*. We do not know it owing to our self-ignorance. When we know it through self-knowledge, we call it freedom from all *karmas* from the standpoint of prior ignorance. *Sarva-*

³⁷⁵ Swami Dayananda, *Gita Home Study, Volume 1*, p. 330 - 331.

³⁷⁶ This is also called as *naiṣkarma-siddhi* or being actionlessness as *ātmā*.

³⁷⁷ *kurvan api na karoti* |

³⁷⁸ ... *dhyāyatiṃva lelāyatiṃva..* | Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.3.7.

karma-sannyāsa is the very nature of *ātmā* and is only to be owned up through *ātmā-jñāna*.

Even as we, as the *jñānī*, is not a doer, we are also not the experiencer or the knower. We are simply the *anumantā* (permitter), who bless whatever happens in the mind as the doer, experiencer and knower. These happenings belong to the organs³⁷⁹. This marks the total resolution of *samsāra*.

As on attainment of self-knowledge we cease to be a *jīva*, we become immediately free from the consequences of our earlier actions as a *jīva*. It is as a *jīva* that we are the agent of action and the experiencer of its consequences. Now that we are not a *jīva* anymore, we are now not available either to experience the stored results of our previous lives or to earn fresh *puṇya* or *pāpa* through our actions in this life. So, all the *puṇya* and *pāpa* earned in the present life (*āgāmi karma*) as also in all the previous lives (*sancita karma*) as *jīvā* cannot fructify³⁸⁰. They are now like roasted seeds having been burnt by the fire of

³⁷⁹ Bhagavadgītā, 5.8 and 5.9.

³⁸⁰ *Bhidyate hrdayagranthiśchidyante sarvasaṁśayāḥ |*

Kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi tasmīn dṛṣṭe parāvare || Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 2.2.8.

When that Brahman, which is in the form of cause and effect is known, the knot (of ignorance) in the heart is broken, all doubts are destroyed and all his *karmas* become worn out.

knowledge and cannot germinate³⁸¹. But the *karma* that has already started to fructify in the present life (*prārabdha karma*³⁸²) continues to be experienced by the body-mind-sense-complex until death. It runs its full course just like the arrow that has been released continues its flight until it loses its momentum. But because of *jñāna*, *prārabdha* continues in our perception only as a semblance (*ābhāsa*) like a tree that has been uprooted. The body that has been brought into being by *prārabdha-karma* lasts until that *karma* is exhausted.

On exhaustion of *prārabdha-karma*, death takes place. The gross body becomes part of the gross manifestation (*virāt*), the subtle body merges with subtle manifestation (*hiraṇyagarbha*) and the causal body merges into causal manifestation (*antaryāmi*). The *anātmā* is thus merged with the total *anātmā*. No causal body is now available for a new subtle body and gross body to manifest. No *karma* is in store for its results to be experienced. This is called *videha-mukti* or bodiless *mukti*. The *mukti*, which has already been attained on gaining self-knowledge, is called *sadyo-mukti*. It is only from the viewpoint of the *ajñānī* that there is a distinction between *sadyo-mukti* and *videha-mukti*. As for us, the *jñānī*, the knowledge that we are not the body-mind-complex makes the body as good

³⁸¹ *jñānāgnidagdhakarmā* (Bhagavadgītā, 4.19.)

³⁸² *prārabdha* means well begun.

as dead for us immediately. As *ātmā*, we never undergo any change and are always without any birth or death.

IV

Krama-mukti

There are texts in the Upaniṣads to the effect that on death, the *jīva*'s subtle and causal bodies move along a path from the crown of the person to gain immortality³⁸³. This is not applicable to us. the *brahma-jñānī*, as, on death, our subtle and causal bodies immediately merge with the total. As for *ātmā*, travel would be necessary only if it were different from Brahman and if Brahman were located elsewhere. But *ātmā* is Brahman and it is all pervading. Therefore, no such travel is either necessary for *ātmā* or is it possible. It is like pot-space not having to go anywhere to merge with total space on the breaking of the pot. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says: "His subtle bodies do not depart. Being but Brahman, he is merged in Brahman."³⁸⁴ The *śruti* texts on travel to *Brahma-loka* are in respect of those who meditate on the *mantra Om* as Brahman or on *Īśvara* or on *Hiraṇyagarbha* or on any deity of one's liking or on oneself after invoking the

³⁸³Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 2.3.16. Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.6.6. and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 6.2.15.

³⁸⁴ .. *na tasya prāṇā utkrāmantī, brahmaiva sanbrahmāpyeti* | 4.4.6.

Also, ..*atraiva samavanīyante* (3.2.11.) They merge there itself only

chosen deity in it³⁸⁵. What is gained through such meditation is *Hiraṇyagarbha*'s abode or *Brahma-loka*. But he continues to be a *jīva* there. On gaining self-knowledge in that *loka*, he gains *mokṣa*. This is called *krama-mukti* or step-by-step *mukti*.

Some consider that *ātmā* in the individual becomes Brahman by merging with Brahman like the river commingling with the ocean to become the ocean. This view is also not tenable since *ātmā* and Brahman are not separate entities to become one through union. The analogy is not in respect of achieving the state of non-separation through merger but of gaining the knowledge of non-difference when the name and form are known as incidental characteristics. The example is to the effect that the river becomes the ocean by giving up its name and form³⁸⁶.

³⁸⁵ This is called *aharṅgraha-upāsanā*.

³⁸⁶ *Yathā nadyaḥ syandamānāḥ samudre'stam gacchanti nāmarūpe vihāya* |

Tathā vidvānnāmarūpādvimuktaḥ parātparam puruṣamupaiti divyam | |

Just as the rivers, flowing in various directions, resolve in the ocean giving up their names and forms, in the same way, the wise man becomes freed from name and form and becomes one with the effulgent (Brahman) which is superior to *māyā*. (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.2.8.)

CHAPTER 20

MAṄGAḶAM

I

It would be appropriate to conclude with an overview of this unique knowledge. The revealed truth can neither be described as “monism” nor as any form of dualism. The *jīva*, the *jagat* and *Īśvara* are not the essential parts of Brahman for everything to become a single composite entity. It is not dual, as they do not have independent existence for them to be considered as the second entity. It can be termed only as non-dual or as “*a-dvaita*” since the *jīva*, the *jagat* and *Īśvara* can neither be dismissed as non-existing nor accepted as having essential reality. This position arises since the relationship between Brahman and the *jīva*, the *jagat* and *Īśvara* is non-reciprocal. If A were B and B were A, their relationship would be reciprocal and there would be no difference between A and B resulting in monism. But what obtains is that even though everything has no existence apart from Brahman, it is not a part of Brahman, as it has no substantiality of its own. *Śāstra* calls its neither real nor unreal status as *mithyā*. The difference in their reality status is the cause of their non-reciprocal relationship resulting in *a-dvaita*.

Śruti reveals *māyā*, which is dependent on Brahman for its existence and which has the powers of concealing the truth and projecting the erroneous. It is also known as *avidyā* or *ajñāna* and through its powers, Brahman appears as the *jīva*, the *jagat* and *Īśvara*. *Māyā*'s effect is pervasive at all levels giving rise to our transactional reality consisting of the *jīva* as the subject, everything else as the object and *Īśvara* as their manifestor, sustainer and resolver. *Sampradāya* explains this phenomenon as the mistaking of the real existence of Brahman to be the unreal name, form and function of the transactional reality and calls this error as *adhyāsa*.

Sampradāya provides us with greater clarity on the subject by explaining it through *upādhi*, or the limiting adjunct. Brahman is one, but manifestation is many. Brahman has no qualities but manifestation has countless attributes. But Brahman is the cause without undergoing any change and everything has no existence apart from Brahman. It is by means of *upādhi* that we are made to grasp as to how these take place. We are provided with the example of colorless crystal appearing as red without undergoing any change, owing to its proximity with a red flower. The red flower is called the *upādhi* or the limiting adjunct of the crystal. In the case of Brahman, which is limitless and without qualities, every adjunct makes it appear as being limited to it with its qualities. The body-mind-sense-complex is the *upādhi* of the self, making it appear as the *jīva*. *Māyā* is the *upādhi* for Brahman,

making him appear as *Īśvara*. The manifestation is the *upādhi* for Brahman, making him appear as the *jāgat*.

Ajñāna, which is inborn, plays the central role in our lives. It results in the mistaken identification of “I” with the *buddhi* that reflects consciousness. Then there is further mis-identification of the “I” through the subtle body with the entire physical body. It is because of *ajñāna* that we consider ourselves to be the body-mind-sense-complex and feel limited and desire (*kāma*) to become complete through action (*karma*). Action produces visible and invisible results. Through the visible results, which are limited, we do not become free from our limitations and our effort to be without limitations becomes ceaseless. We thus end up by becoming the *saṁsārī*. The invisible result consists of *puṇya* and *pāpa* for reaping which we are reborn with the same *ajñāna* and the cycle of *saṁsāra* continues. The root cause of this human situation is not desire that leads to action but the *ajñāna* of our wholeness, which gives rise to desire. Its anti-dote is the knowledge (*jnāna*) that we are not limited as we think but that we are the whole. This is how we become free instantly through *jnāna*.

II

Sampradāya uses reasoning to unfold the vision. In revealing the self as consciousness through *dr̥g-dr̥śya-viveka*, it uses the logic that the subject cannot be what it perceives since what is perceived is the object. It is wrong

to ascribe the qualities of the object to the subject. Since we perceive the body-mind-sense-complex, we cannot be it. In the analysis of the three states of *jivā's* experience, it uses the reasoning that what is intrinsic should always be available and through it negates the body-mind-sense-complex as the self. In resolving the manifestation back into Brahman, it uses the *kāraṇa-kārya-vāda*. While in transactional reality, both the cause and the effect are taken as real, *śruti* uses the clay-pot example to establish the cause as real and the effect as *mithyā*. Through this logic, the manifestation, which is the *mithyā* effect, is resolved into its cause, Brahman. Then, the causal status of Brahman is also negated since the effect that it produces is not real but is *mithyā*. What is left unresolved is mere Brahman, the one without a second.

Without the *sampradāya*, we would not have been able to make head or tail out of this priceless wisdom. It deserves as much respect as the *pramāṇa* itself. It is Śaṅkarācārya who has provided us with the complete written account of it. Humanity has to be eternally grateful to him.

III

The uniqueness of Vedānta is that while revealing the ultimate reality as the whole, it also accommodates all the available views in their appropriate place. It readily accepts everyday experience since relative truth has relative validity and gives it the status of transactional

reality. It also accords the status of apparent reality to subjective perception and appearance, as they are valid to the person concerned. Only, these two realities are not ultimately real, since the apparent reality comes to be negated by the knowledge of the transactional reality and the transactional reality by the knowledge of the essential reality. Even after the negation of their essential reality, we continue to function in them but with the crucial difference that we do not get affected by them as before.

All forms of worship to any deity, with or without form, are considered useful, as they refine the mind. It is not concerned about what the deity is or what type of relationship is formed with it or what the mode of worship is, as all of them lead to personal effacement. It has no conflict with any religion, since it does not matter to it as to whether the deity is Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śakti, Father in Heaven or any other at the level of transactional reality since the ultimate reality is the whole, which is the self and is not the deity. It has no serious problem with any view on the creator or on the creation since their essential reality is eventually negated.

At the relative standpoint of transactional reality, it makes clear that *Īsvara*, as the material, inheres in the entire creation. Nothing exists, which is other than him. Therefore, right now, everyone without exception can be one with him and with the others by recognising this fact. No one is alienated from him at any time. Also, since

Īsvara is the maker, everything that exists is manifestation of his knowledge. Since knowledge exists in the form of order, everything is in *Īsvara*'s order. As such, nothing can go wrong in it. This provides us with the basis for accepting things as they are and making use of the opportunities that the order provides. By understanding *Īsvara*, we can lead a harmonious and meaningful life free from stress.

When the final vision is unfolded, we know that we are none other than Brahman and we realize that we, as the essential reality, are the very self of the creator and of every thing that there is. This fact rules out the existence of any essential difference anywhere, at any time. "You are the whole" is understood and recognized. This is total freedom.

Vedānta is the most inclusive among knowledge. It can have no parallel. Among knowledge, it is also the most useful since it solves our fundamental problem of mistaking ourselves to be limited beings and frees us totally from insecurity and unhappiness. Truly, there can be no greater blessing to humanity than Vedānta.

We may now conclude by worshipping the *guru* who has imparted to us this invaluable knowledge.

Vedāntavākyapuṣpebhyo jñānāmṛtamadhūttamam |
Ujjahārālivadyo namastasmai sadgurave namaḥ | |

I bow down to my *sadguru*, a knower of Brahman, who collected for us the nectar of knowledge from Vedānta like a bee collecting the best honey from flowers. (Śaṅkarācārya, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 18.233.)

Om tat sat।

APPENDIX

Accessing the teaching through audio-recording of classes and books

I - Pujya Swamiji Dayananda

Arsha Vidya Pitham,
Swami Dayananda Ashram, Purani Jhadi,
Rishikesh, 249201, Uttarakhand.
Tel: 0135 – 2431769.
Web site: www.dayananda.org

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam,
Anaikatti P.O.
Coimbatore, 641108.
Tel: 0422 – 2657001.
Web site: <http://www.arshavidya.in>
E mail: office@arshavidya.in

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam,
P.O.Box No. 1059, Saylorsberg, PA, 18353, USA.
Tel: 570 992 2339.
Web site: <http://www.arshavidya.org>
<http://books.arshavidya.org>

Arsha Vidya Centre, Research and Publications,
32/4, Sri Nidhi Apartments, III Floor,
Sir Desika Road, Mylapore, Chennai, 600004.
Tel: 044 – 24997023, 24997131.

Sastraprakasika Trust,
Chandra Vilas Apartments,
A – 3, No. 19, 8th Street,
Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai,
Mylapore, Chennai 600004.
Phone 044 –24870311
E mail : info@sastraprakasika.org
Web site: <http://sastraprakasika.org>

II – Swami Paramarthananda

As above and at
Web site: <http://vedantavidyarthisingha.org>

III – Swami Siddhabodhananda

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam,
Anaikatti P.O.
Coimbatore, 641108.
Tel: 0422 – 2657001.
Web site: <http://www.arshavidya.in>
E mail: office@arshavidya.in

IV- Swamini Pramananda

Purna Vidya Trust,
"Mamatha" Basement,
8 A, North Gopalapuram, 2nd Street,
Chennai 600086.
Tele: 044 – 28352593, 42102981.
Website: [http // www.purnavidya.com](http://www.purnavidya.com)
Email: purnavidyachennai@gmail.com

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam,
Anaikatti P.O.
Coimbatore, 641108.
Tel: 0422 – 2657001.
Web site: [http // www.arshavidya.in](http://www.arshavidya.in)
E mail: office@arshavidya.in

V – Swami Veditatmananda, Swami Tattvavidananda and Swami Pratyagbodhananda

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam,
P.O.Box No. 1059, Saylorsberg, PA, 18353, USA.
Tel: 570 992 2339.
Web site: [http // www.arshavidya.org](http://www.arshavidya.org)
[http // books.arshavidya.org](http://books.arshavidya.org)

VI – Upaniṣads and other works

Sri Ramakrishna Math,
31, Ramakrishna Math Road,
Mylapore, Chennai 600004.
Tele: 044 - 24621110
E mail: mail@chennaiamath.org
Web Site: [http//www.chennaiamath.org](http://www.chennaiamath.org)

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Tele: 044 - 24990539
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