



THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

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CHAPTER I

Fourth Brahmana

The stages of creation are described further in continuation of those that have been mentioned already. The Cosmic Being who has been designated as *Purushavidha* is now said to be the Origin of the Principle of Fire (Agni-tattva) which comes out of the mouth of the Supreme Being. And how it comes into existence is mentioned in the following passages.

6. athety abhyamanthat, sa mukhac ca yoner hastabhyam cagnim asrjata, tasmad etad ubhayam alomakam antaratah, alomaka hi yonir antaratah, tad yad idam ahur amum yaja, amum yajety ekaikam devam, etasyaiva sa visrstih, esa u hy eva sarve devah, atha yat kim cedam ar dram, tad retaso asrjata, tad a somah, etavad va idam sarvam annam caivannadas ca, soma, evannam, agnir annadah. saisa brahmano' tistrstih, yac chreyaso devan asrjata: atha yan martyah sann amrtan asrjata, tasmad atistrstih atistrstiyam hasyaitasyam bhavati ya evam veda.

By His operation of the hand and the mouth, they came in contact with each other, and produced Heat; or striking the palm on the mouth, He produced Fire. By rubbing the mouth with hands, He created Fire. In our tradition, and in stories of creation, we have ever been told that there is a great connection between speech and fire; and speech is located in the mouth, in the vocal organ, and so the Cosmic Fire Principle is supposed to be affected by the aspiration of the Cosmic Word-Principle, whose location is said to be in the mouth of the Cosmic Being. And so, in its own symbology, the Upanishad tells us: neither inside the mouth, nor on the palm of the hand have we hair, due to the principle

of fire there operating intensely. There is something peculiar in the mouth and the palm of the hand. Energy seems to have special centres of action in the human organism, of which the palm and the mouth are two pre-eminently important centres. Even when we conduct the Prana, or energy for the purpose of transmitting it upon others, we use the palm. And, of course, the power of speech is well-known. It need not be explained because nothing can be more forceful than the word that one speaks. So is also the conducting element of the energy of the body, namely, the palm of the hand. Both these are powerful centres of energy, and so they are identified with the location of the Fire principle.

Thus summing up, as it were, the Upanishad says that every deity has been projected from one or the other limb of the Virat Purusha. Whenever people say, 'worship this deity, worship that deity, adore this god, adore that god, pray to this, pray to that', what do they actually mean? They mean nothing but one thing only, that all these adorations of the different deities are the adorations of the One Being. Why? Because, all these gods that we worship in religion are nothing but the projections of the One God. We do not have many gods, really. Though we have many limbs of the body, the body is not manifold. So is the religious pantheon not multiple, as it outwardly appears. They are various facets of the crystal of religious adoration, and, so, no religion has many gods. All these 'many gods' of the 'many religions' of the world are the many ways of approach to the One God who is adored in a manifold manner, through the manifold mentalities of individuals. And it is, therefore, the minds of people that are many, not the gods of religion, because all these gods are the aspects of the One God. Verily, all these gods are this God only. It is this God whom we are addressing when we address any other god in any language, in any manner, whatsoever. Whatever be our language with which we supplicate, whatever be the feeling with which we call for the Power that is above, whatever be the method of our invocation of any deity, it is this Supreme Being that we are invoking in one way or the other. We know it or do not know it; that is a different matter. Verily, this God is all the gods.

All these forms of life, called food and the eaters of food, as the Upanishad puts it in its own language, are this God only. The matter that consciousness grasps, and the consciousness which is aware of these forms of matter – both these are the One Being only. The object that is conceived or perceived, and that which cognizes the presence of this object – *Anna* and *Annada* – both these are this Principle which appears as the Anna, or the food, or matter, or object, on the one side, and consciousness, the eater of food, the subject, awareness, on the other side. He is the Director of the drama and also the dramatis personae, at one and the same time. He is also the audience of this drama. Very interesting, indeed. So, He created all these manifest forms, whether they are materially visible outside in the form of objects, or whether they are the subjects that are aware of these objects who wish to come in contact with them. *Aham annam annam adantam admi*, says the Taittiriya Upanishad: 'I am the food, and I am the eater of food. I, who am food, eat the eater of food'. What does one mean by this enigmatic statement of the Taittiriya Upanishad? All these are the majestic

formations of this magnificent Being, whom we call Paramesvara, the Supreme Being.

Anna (food) and *Annada* (eater of food) – both these are He. Here, Agni-Soma, a combination of two principal concepts of deity in the Vedic pantheon, are regarded as representing the subjective side as well as the objective side. Both these are regarded as parts of the Supreme Being. This is the grand creation of God, as has been described up to this time, in all these earlier passages. Grand is this creation, indeed, because nothing can be grander than this. It is perfect in every way, and it is well-conceived. Sukratam (well-done), says the Taittiriya Upanishad. It is said that God created the world and wanted to make an assessment of how he had created it, like an engineer who projects a huge building and wishes to look at it, 'How is it?' Beautiful. The engineer himself says that it is beautiful, because he has built it, and he is identical with it! He is so elevated in joy. And, so, this is a grand creation, indeed. It is grand because it is inscrutable to the human senses of 'I' and 'mine'. Its structure cannot be understood. How is it supported? Nobody knows. How did it come? No one can understand. Why has it come? None can say. Everything is a mystery. He who projected it, He knows it, or does He also not know, say the Veda, in the concluding portion of its Nasadiya Sukta. Such is the miraculous, mysterious, character of this creation of God that, in an ecstatic mood, the Veda says, perhaps He also does not know the mystery of this creation, and who are we to talk about it? So, my dear friend, says the Upanishad, here you have the great glory of God in the form of this creation, and if you know it, you have known Him.

God becomes mortal, as it were, for the purpose of the playing of this drama. For a moment, the genius of a dramatic director can become the fool that he plays in the theatre, for the purpose of fulfilling a part. He becomes all things; He becomes not only all things but becomes the visualiser of the things that He has become. "Whatever variety we see, it is Your Form, and, You deceive us by the shape that You take;" as the actor in a drama masquerades in a form which is other than he is. Thus, when we look at the world, we are not looking at the world. And, I am reminded here of an interesting remark made by Thomas Hill Green, in his great book, 'Why do people cry everyday that they do not see God? What is it that you are seeing before your eyes but God?' If you cannot recognise the one that you see, whose mistake is it? Such is the glory of the manifestation which had the seed implanted within it of a recognition of the Maker thereof. God has hidden Himself in this vast creation of forms, and yet He has given indications through these forms as to where He is present. The Upanishad tells us that every form in this world is an indication of the presence of God, so that, through any form we can reach up to Cosmic Existence. And the manifestations are of name and form. Every effect is isolated from every other. But in every form there is the Cosmic Reality hidden. Invisible is its real nature; yet, by probing into the depths of any form, the presence of this mystery can be discovered, so that, God's presence can be located in any form whatsoever, whichever be the place we are seated in.

This universe which is the grand manifestation of God, which is the miraculous manifestation of Him, was once upon a time, unmanifest; and He was withdrawing all these forms into Himself before creation took place. After the creation, He has become the colours and the sounds and the pageantry of creation. But before that, there was no such visualisation of forms, even as the beautiful painting of an artist can exist only as an idea of the artist before it is cast into the screen for perception by other people.

7. taddhedam tarhy avyakrtam asit, tan nama-rupabhyam eva vyakriyata, asau nama, ayam idam rupa iti; tad idam apy etarhi nama-rupabhyam eva vyakriyate, asau nama, ayam idam rupa iti. sa esa iha pravista anakhagrebhyah yatha, ksurah ksuradhane' vahitah syat, visvam-bharo va visvam-bhara-kulaye, tam na pasyanti. a-krtsno hi sah, pranann eva prano nama bhavati, vadan vak, pasyams caksuh, srnvan srotram, manvano manah, tany asyaitani karma-namany eva. sa yo'ta ekaikam upaste, na sa veda, akrtsno hy eso'ta ekaikena bhavati, atmety evopasita, atra hi ete sarva ekam bhavanti. tad etat padaniyam asya sarvasya yad ayam atma, anena hy etat sarvam veda yatha ha vai padenanuvindet evam kirtim slokam vindate ya evam veda.

It was Avyakrita – unrevealed, unmanifest, undiversified before creation took effect in its fullness. And what is all this creation, in all its variety? It is nothing but name and form. There are only two things in creation, wherever we go – a designation and a formation. There was nothing hidden in this unmanifest condition, and there is nothing visualised by our eyes except these two things. We pinpoint any object, or any form, or anything that is created in this world, we will find that there is a structural pattern, a formation of that object or individual, and there is a name that is given to it, an appel. What else is there? There is a shape given to some material call brick, and then we call it a house. The house is a name that we give to a form that bricks have taken. So, the house is a name. And, name of what? Of a shape. And the shape is of a thing that has already existed. It is brick, or mud, or some substance. So, the substance remains there, unmodified. The brick has never become something else. The brick is in the house; the brick is in the bathroom; the brick is in the temple; it is in the church; everywhere the same brick is there. But, the shape that it has taken is different and the name that we give to it, also is different. Yet, the same thing is present everywhere. Whether it is in the genius or a fool, the same thing is present, but the arrangement is different, and the name that we give is different.

We say, 'this person', 'this thing', 'this object', 'this so-and-so', 'this such-and-such', by designating it, giving it a name – because it has some peculiar differentia – isolating it from the shape of other objects. This is all. So, ultimately, this grand manifestation of God can be reduced to a minimum of variety which is two-fold – Nama-Rupa – name and form. Even now when we speak of a thing, designate a thing, describe a thing, or define a thing, what do we do? We merely give a linguistic description, or nomenclature of the structure of an object. That is all what we mean by designating or defining. We say, 'he is such a person'; 'his

name is Rama, Krishna, Gopala, John', etc. And why do we give such names? Because we want to distinguish this form from other forms, since we see a variety of forms.

Now, the Upanishad tells us, taking us back to its principal doctrine, "Friend, do not be misled by these forms; do not be carried away by the name that you give to this variety of forms, because that eternal Being has entered into the deepest essence of every form, even up to the fingertips; everything is immanent with this stupendous Being. As a razor is kept in its case, as fire is hidden in every object such a wood – you will find that fire is present in every part of wood, it is not in one place, in one corner only of the wood – likewise, is the Reality of this creative Being present in every form, whether it is animate or inanimate from your point of view."

"Nobody can visualise Him; none recognises Him." When you behold a form, you are seeing the eternal Absolute. You have nothing else before you. But, you do not recognise Him. You call Him so-and-so. 'He is my brother; he is my sister'. And you have your own ways of relating yourself to that form according to your circumstances in society, which is an unfortunate involvement of individuals in other individuals. Samsara (worldly involvement) is not actually the taking of birth in a body, but not recognising of the meaning in the taking birth, and the state of not being able to locate the connection of a form with the Reality that is hidden in it. It is said that Samsara, or bondage, is not the perception of the world but the non-perception of God. There is no harm in perceiving the world, but there is great harm in not perceiving God. But, we are not perceiving God while we are perceiving the world. The world that we see is nothing but the form of God, and it is He that is fully present in every form. Whenever we touch any object, we are coming in contact with that Being only. If this awareness could be awakened in a person, at that very moment there could be liberation – here and now.

In every form, the whole of Him is not recognised. This is the reason why we exclude one form from another form. He is present in every form, no doubt; yes, in every form – the word 'every' is to be underlined – not merely in one form, or two forms, or a group of forms. Hence, to evaluate a particular form, or a group of forms, in contradistinction from other forms, would be to miscalculate the presence of the eternal Whole which is entirely present in every form. Every form is equal to every other form. And so, the worship of the whole means worship of all forms; and, hence, sometimes we call it *Vishvadeva*, Cosmic Being.

What we call the vital principle, Prana, it is He only that operates as the Prana. When He functions as the vital energy, we call Him Prana. When He articulates in a particular language, we call Him speech. When He visualises a form, we call Him the eye. We give a name to the function, but the same Being is performing all the functions. The same individual can be a judge, the same individual a collector; one can be any official and perform different functions. But the 'person' does not change; only the functions change. When we hear, we call

Him the ear. When we think, we call Him mind. All these are the names of the functions of that Being. Even our psychological functions are the activities of that Being, and the several objects that we see are the forms of that Being.

So, anyone who clings to one god in contradistinction to the other gods, does not know the truth about God. Anyone who regards one form, one deity, or one finite concept as everything, as distinct from similar other finite forms, does not know the whole truth. When we make comparison or contrast of one with the other, we do not understand the point. No comparison is allowed; no contrast is possible; because everything is related to everything else in a harmonious manner; therefore, judgments are odious.

When we worship God, and if we want to worship the real God, we must worship God as the Self of forms, and not as a form. God is not a form, not even all the forms. If we regard forms as different from the consciousness that conceives or perceives the forms, we err; because He is the Self of the forms. In stating that God is everything, the Upanishad makes out that the Supreme Being is not merely all the forms but also the consciousness of the very existence of all the forms. Therefore, we should not make the mistake of objectifying God as a transcendent, extra-cosmic Creator, outside us, whom we cannot easily reach. To remove this mistaken notion in us, it is said that He is also immanent, i.e., indwells everything. In order to permanently wipe out all wrong notions about the presence of God, the Upanishad says that we should worship Him as the Self of beings – *Atmetyevopasita*. It is a little hard for the mind to conceive what this is, because one can never conceive the Selfhood of a being. We cannot think of the Selfhood of our own selves, too. How, then, is anyone to think of the Selfhood of other people? It is much worse. But, there is no alternative, if religion is to become vital, meaningful, helpful and real. The real religion is, thus, the religion of the Self, and not the religion of a form or a shape. And, any religion which clings to forms, shall vanish in the process of history. It shall be superseded by other forms, but the religion of the Self cannot so fade, because it is the Self of even that which is superseded, and of that which supersedes.

Why should one regard the Self as God, or God as the Self of beings? Because, in the Self, everything is centred. While one form may exclude another form, and, thus, a form may be finite, even many forms can be finite, the Self cannot be finite, because the Self is the principle, the non-objective or non-objectifiable essence, in every form, which is uniform. While the forms differ in their structural patterns, one from the other, the Self of forms cannot change. What we call the Self of forms is the Being, the General Existence of the forms. Existence is the uniform presence every where. The Existence of a cot is the same as the Existence of a pot, though the cot and the pot are two different objects. But the Being of them is identical. The Upanishad says that one should adore the Beingness of objects, the Selfhood of things *Atmatva* – of the variety of forms. That would be the real adoration, and that, perhaps, is what may be called the eternal religion. And here, in this Self, every form is included. When we summon, or invoke the Selfhood of a being, we have summoned everything that exists

anywhere. There is no need to supplicate or approach different forms at different times for different purposes. We have summoned everything, at one stroke, by the summoning of the Selfhood of beings, for all things are here – *Atra hi ete sarva ekam bhavanti*.

Every individual is an indication of everything. This is an ancient declaration of a modern discovery that every atom reflects a cosmic situation, so that every particle of sand on the shore of the sea can become an object for the visualisation of an immense mystery. Every individual can reflect, and does reflect the whole Cosmic Truth. The footprint, as it were, of the eternal is the individual, temporal form. This individual self is the indicative symbol of the Cosmic Self. We can reach 'That' through 'this'. We can know all things through any form. Through any god, we can approach the All-God. And, through the All-God, we can have contact with all the gods.

Through the footprints of a person one can know the whereabouts of the person. By the footprint of an animal we can know the presence of the animal. From this footprint of the Absolute, which is the individual form, we can know the character of the Absolute – where It is, what It is, how It is. One becomes glorious as this Supreme Being is, by this knowledge. One becomes supremely renowned and applauded everywhere, as God Himself is great.

Now, it is said that this great God who is the Self of all beings is the dearest object of all beings. We all love Him the most, and we love nobody else.

8. Tad etat preyah putrat, preyo vittat, preyo' nyasmat sarvasmat, antararam, yad ayam atma. sa yo' nyam atmanah priyam bruvanam bruyat, priyam rotsyatiti, isvaro ha tathaiva syat. atmanam eva priyam upasita, sa ya atmanam eva priyam upaste na hasya priyam pramayukam bhavati.

This Self, about whom we have been speaking just now, this Self is dearer than children whom people hug so affectionately. This Self is dearer than all the wealth that one can possess anywhere. Why? Because it is nearer to one than anything else. Children are not so near as this Self; wealth is not so near as this Self. It is not possible that children and wealth can be so dear as this Self. When we love children, wealth, etc., we are reflecting the character of our Self hood on these objects which are instrumental in the invocation of the love of the Self, which is Supreme, and yet, not known. It always escapes our notice. In every form of affection, the Self is involved, but is not recognized. It is the nearest and the dearest, and it is the innermost principle. It is inner to the body, inner to the Prana, inner to the senses and the mind, inner to the intellect, inner to the highest causative principle within us. It is the deepest Being, the deepest Essence, the profoundest Reality, and, thus, it is the Ultimate Subjectivity in us.

If anyone clings to something which is not the Self, as an object of endearment, and if someone says that this object shall be lost one day, it shall be

so. Any object to which one clings, other than the Self, shall be the object of sorrow, one day or the other. That which is not the Self is also that which can be lost, and, therefore, to pin one's faith in things which are not the Self is to court sorrow in this world. No one can be free from sorrow as long as affections are pinned on things that are transient and perishable. Anything that is outside the Self is an object that can be lost. There is only one thing that we cannot lose, and that is the Self; and, so, there is only one thing which cannot cause sorrow – that is the Self. There is only one thing that we can really love, and is our dear friend – that is the Self; no one else. Nothing else is dependable or reliable in this world. If any one foolishly, wrongly, unknowingly, indiscretely clings to things which are externalized in space and time, as objects of the senses, not knowing the Selfhood of beings, verily, those objects shall be lost; there will be bereavement. And, on account of clinging to forms, rebirth can take place, because rebirth is the effect of the desire to cling to forms, and the inability to possess the forms inspite of the desire for them. Hence, the Upanishad again hammers the same idea on our minds – *atmanam eva priyam upasita* – adore the Self alone as dear. Do not regard anything else as dear. No one can save you except the Self. No one can protect you except the Self, and no one is your friend except the Self. And, this Self is, again, to mention, not yourself, or myself, this particular self, or that particular self, because it has already been said that all these so-called individualities are inadequate to the purpose. That alone is the Self we are speaking of, which is equally present in all, inconceivable to mortal minds.

The object of possession will never be lost, and we shall not be bereft of it, and we shall not be in sorrow, we shall not lose the object of our desire, if that object of desire is this Self. But, if the object of desire is the non-Self, we would lose that object. If we are to be eternally possessed of the object of our desire, may that object be the same as our Self. “May you love the Universal Being; love not anything else, because all these objects of affection are included in the Universal Self.”

9. tad ahuh, yad brahma-vidyaya sarvam bhavisyanto manusya manyante, kim u tad brahmavet, yasmad tat sarvam abhavad iti.

It is said that people who acquired *Brahma-Vidya* as their endowment, who were well-versed in the knowledge of Brahman, the science of the Self, possessed everything. We have been told that the knowledge of the Absolute is, veritably, possession of the Absolute. It is said that people in ancient times had this knowledge, and through this knowledge they became the All, possessed the All, and were immensely happy. And, they possessed everything as the Supreme Being Himself possessed all things. But what was that knowledge with which they were endowed? What was that endowment which enabled them to know the All, become the All, be the All? What is the superiority of this knowledge? What do we mean by *Brahma-Vidya*? What is the science of the Self, or *Atma-Vidya*? The Upanishad again iterates the same truth in another way for the purpose of recapitulation.

10. brahma va idam agra asit, tad atmanam evavet, aham brahmasmiti: tasmāt tat sarvaṃ abhavat, tad yo yo devaṇāṃ pratyabudhyata, sa eva tad abhavat, tathā rsiṇāṃ, tathā maṇuṣyaṇāṃ. taddhātāt paśyaṇ rṣir vama-devāḥ pratipede, ahaṃ maṇuṣyaḥ suryaś ceti, tad idam api etarhi ya evaṃ veda, ahaṃ brahmasmiti sa idam sarvaṃ bhavati; tasya ha na devaś ca nabhūtya isate, atma hy eṣaṃ sa bhavati. atha yo anyāṃ devatāṃ upaste, anyo' sau anyo' haṃ asmiti, na sa veda; yathā paśuṣu, evaṃ sa devaṇāṃ; yathā ha vai bhavaḥ paśavo maṇuṣyaṃ bhunjyuh, evaṃ ekaikaḥ puruṣo devaṇāṃ bhunakti; ekasminn eva paśav adiyamane'priyaṃ bhavati, kim u bhavatu? tasmād eṣaṃ tan na priyaṃ yad etāṃ maṇuṣya vidyuh.

Brahman, the Absolute, alone was; nothing else was; there was no object. And, It knew Itself alone. That knowledge of the Absolute, when It alone was, is the object of Brahma-Vidya. God knowing Himself is the final Aim of Brahma-Vidya, in one sense. When God knows Himself, what does He know? That is the Goal of Atma-Vidya. What God knows would be the knowledge which can save all, and enable one to become powerful like God. What was it that God knew? We know many things. We are efficient in the various branches of learning. We are experts in the sciences and the arts of the world. We have much knowledge, as we say. What was the knowledge which God had? What was the science which He knew, and what was the branch of learning in which He was specialised, or proficient in? What did God know? Can you tell us? To this question, which the Upanishad raises, it itself gives the answer.

God knew only Himself; nothing else. Not anything other than He was there, and, therefore, no chance of knowing anything other than He could be there. Brahma-Vidya is the knowledge of God, the science of Brahman, the Absolute. But it is not knowledge of something. The word 'of' is to be eliminated in this sentence. Our language is inadequate to the purpose. We cannot express this knowledge in language because our sentences are split into the subject and the predicate. There is a subject connected by the verb to its predicate. There is no such possibility here, of describing this knowledge by the subject-object connection through a verb. There is no verb in the sentence if we are to use a sentence for describing what God knew. When we say, God knew Himself, it is not that God as the subject knew Himself as the object; hence a sentence is not apt for the purpose of describing what the state of affairs was then. It was not someone knowing something, or something knowing something else. It was not the state where one can use a sentence with a transitive verb. There was no object for the verb in the sentence, 'It knew Itself'. It was a union of the knower and the known. It was Awareness of Being. It was Being which became aware that It was. The Being that was, became aware that it was. It was Being-Consciousness, or the Awareness of Being Itself may be said to be God-Consciousness. That is Absolute-Consciousness; and this is the meaning of 'God knew Himself', 'It knew Itself', '*tad atmanam evavet*'. It knew Itself only, and if we, too, can know only the Self in the way It knew Itself, that would be the greatest knowledge that we can have. But, we must know ourselves in the same way as 'It knew Itself', not as we think

that we are, in the present state of individuality, because that is a knowledge of the Subject of knowledge, which included within Its Existence, every object that It has to know, so that the usual process of knowledge does not exist in this act of knowing the object. There is no process of knowing between the Pramata (knower) and the Prameya (known). As they say, there is no Pramana (knowing) linking the two together. It is at once, a simultaneous Being-Consciousness. This is what the Vedanta terminology often designates as *Satchidananda*, i.e., Pure Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

He knew, 'I Am the All, the Absolute'; and whoever knows thus, becomes the All. This is the essence of Brahma-Vidya, the highest wisdom of life.