



THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

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CHAPTER IV

Fourth Brahmana (contd)

The remaining passages of this section in this Upanishad are a sort of reflection on the various theories through which we have traversed up to this time, touching upon different aspects of knowledge and practice. The very first one is a verse that occurs also in the Isavasya Upanishad, and it makes out that the path of one's movement to perfection is a sort of harmony between extremes. It is neither exclusively self-expression nor self-withdrawal. Generally, people are either extroverts or introverts. They express themselves vehemently in public and in society and in their own homes, or they withdraw themselves completely into their own private personal lives. A blend of these two is difficult because it requires some sort of an effort on the part of the mind to bring these two divergent urges into a single harness of action which is neither action nor knowledge in the ordinary sense. It is an inward approach of the soul to the Absolute. This path has been described enigmatically in the Isavasya Upanishad and is also what this Upanishad says in very similar words.

10. andham tamah pravisanti ye vidyam upasate tato bhuya iva te tamah ya u vidyayam ratah.

11. ananda nama te lokah, andhena tamasavrtah tams te pretyabhigacchanti avidvamso' budho janah.

"The person who is extrovertly busy in activity, bereft of the understanding that is to go together with it, reaches the world of darkness hereafter, because

understanding is light, and absence of understanding is darkness.' Any activity in which we engage ourselves without the requisite understanding behind it will lead us to bondage. The world of externality is called the world of darkness because it is totally devoid of the light of the Self. The extremity of extrovert activity, the pressure that one feels to move outwardly alone, to go forward and onward in external society and in space and in time, when exclusively emphasised to the detriment of the internal light that is required to illumine it, would be a binding process, because that great Reality is not an external movement at all. It is a Total Being. The Totality of Being cannot be approached or experienced by any kind of externality of action, because externality is one side of the matter. The other side of it is quite different. So, the Upanishad says, 'Those who are engaged in the adoration of ignorance go to the world of darkness'. Ignorance is a very wide term including erroneous concepts and activities. Naturally, erroneous activities are propelled by erroneous notions. We think wrongly and then act wrongly. So, the whole thing is nothing but a bundle of nescience, ignorance. Erroneous thought is that which is engendered by the notion that Reality is outside. 'Whatever I see with the eyes is real,' you think. The senses unknowingly contact Reality in everyday life but imagine that only the external objects are real and know not the hidden Reality inside. Thus we live in a sense world of activity - physical, social and everything connected with it. But, it is forgotten that externality is not the character of Reality. It is not a spatial expanse; it is not even a temporal movement; it is something different from either of these. And thus, anything that is wholly involved in the spatial and the temporal circumstance, whether it is activity or thought, cannot be regarded as a function of Reality. Hence it is dubbed as ignorance. *Avidya* or ignorance is the concept that the action, the notion and the external movement are all based on the presumption or assumption that Reality is externally present, and can be contacted only through the senses and through externalised activity. This is one extreme movement, and the result of this kind of engagement is supposed to be suffering in future lives on account of entanglement in the urges of the senses, bereft of the knowledge or the enlightenment of the Self.

The other extreme is total withdrawal from externality into internality. This is called introversion. *Tato bhuya iva te tamah ya u vidyayam ratah*: An ethereal knowledge which is bereft of content, you may call it academic knowledge or you may call it erroneous knowledge, whatever that knowledge be, which is divested of its content, remains merely as a featureless transparency, substanceless. It is capable of producing a result much worse than that produced by the ignorance of the person who believes in an externality of activity. That man of knowledge is an egoistic man, generally, because of the presumption that he knows everything. But, what he knows is substanceless. It is mere information. It is a guideline, a map that he has got in his hand, not that which is indicated by the map. A mere map or guideline or architect's drawing cannot be regarded as the material that is indicated by it. So, knowledge which is substanceless, contentless and merely a function inside that is going on within the brain of a person is no knowledge. 'And if one is to regard that as real knowledge, bereft of its content, which is internal of course, then that person, on account of the egoism that is attached to

it, may go to a still worse darkness' - *tato bhuya iva te tamah ya u vidyam ratah.*

People who are ignorant, with no knowledge, are concerned with things of the world. And so, they are in a state of bondage, and they go to bondage in the world hereafter. But that so-called knowledge which is not real knowledge because of its separation from its contents, as we have today professorial knowledge, for instance, cannot really be called knowledge because it is outside the content of knowledge. Your knowledge of a particular object is not a union with that object. It is only an information; it is a kind of suggestion that is given by the intellect in respect of an existent object. A mere indication, symbol or a suggestion cannot be regarded as knowledge, because what you call Reality is substance; it is solidity; it is completeness; it is a blend of content and illumination. So, where content is divested of illumination and illumination is divested of content there is a movement, wrongly, either on the outer side or in the inner side. Such a person, who is caught up in the meshes of the egoistic presumption of having knowledge with really no content, may go to a worse darkness. Hence, both these are types of bondage. Whether you move outwardly to the extreme or move inwardly to the extreme, you are caught.

The middle path is invisible like the edge of a razor or sword. It is not possible to know what the real path is, because what you see with your eyes is not the path, and what you think in your mind also is not the path. Then, what is the path? No one knows. *Ascaryo vakta kusalo'sya:* It is not for nothing that the Upanishads and the Gita have been crying aloud that it is a wonder indeed to know what it is; a wonder indeed to learn what it is; a wonder it is to teach what it is. It is not easy to know what this path is. It is not what you think of in your mind, not what you see with your eyes. It is neither of these! So, either way you are caught. If you go forward, you are caught; if you go backward, you are caught. To attain freedom of the soul is a great, great difficulty. Hard is this endeavour, invisible is this path. It is sometimes compared to the path of birds in the sky which cannot be seen with the eyes, or the track of fishes in the water, which also is not to be seen. Such is the path of the soul to the Absolute - difficult to comprehend, still more difficult to practise!

Ananda nama te lokah, andhena tamasavrtah tams te pretyabhigacchanti avidvamso'budho janah: 'Non-knowing, unknowing, ignorant, caught up in egoism - such persons go to the world of joyless expanse of thought and action.' There is unhappiness prevalent in that world to which they enter. Darkness and unhappiness, ignorance and sorrow - these are the characters of the regions into which people enter if they are bereft of real knowledge. *Avidyayam antare vartamanah:* Knowing nothing, endowed with no real knowledge - such people having shed this body here, enter into regions of darkness because they do not know what is Truth. They have struggled hard in this life in the wrong manner. So, even this struggle is of no use. What is the use of struggling in a wrong direction? Whatever be your effort, whatever be the energy that you have spent in life for the purpose of achieving the goal, and maybe you have put forth great

effort, it has been all mere toil in the wrong direction. Tales and myths tell us of stories of people who, bereft of understanding, may work hard but get nothing out of it. They thrash husk only and naturally get no grain. Mere effort is of no use. You should not exclaim: 'I am working so hard!' What for do you labour so? You do not know the direction in which you are moving. Effort alone is not going to bring anything unless it is in the right direction. And that direction cannot be known unless you are illumined properly.

12. atmanam ced vijaniyad ayam asmiti purusah kim icchan, kasya kamaya sariram anusamjvaret.

You will not again enter into embodiment and take birth if the proper aim of life has been properly comprehended, if the goal of life is clear to the mind. Most people suffer on account of lack of understanding of the aim of life. The purpose is missed always. Whatever be the effort on your part, the aim cannot be kept before the mental eye, always. It cannot be kept throughout the day before one's eye. It is possible, perhaps, with tremendous energy, to contemplate on it for a few minutes, but immediately it slips from the mind. Once this true Selfhood of 'Reality is known and realised as inseparable from your own being', *Ayam asmiti*, as the Eternal Being, *Purusha*, then you will toil not unnecessarily, desire not fruitlessly, and therefore there would be no pressure exerted on your soul to take a fresh birth, as you will no longer create any binding *Karma*.

We have been studying again and again, in various verses here, that birth is the cause of suffering, and that birth is caused by desire which has been directed wrongly, outwardly to non-Self, to things of sense, and to the fulfilment of the senses. 'If this misdirected desire were not there, why would there be any kind of endeavour? If the Atman is known, if the Self is recognized in every object, then the object ceases to be an object.' You do not say 'the self of an object' because that epithet cannot apply when the true recognition of the Self is made. *Atmanam ced vijaniyad*: If the Self is known as It is in its own essential nature, which means to say, '*Ayam asmiti*, non-separate is your being from this Selfhood,' how can you isolate your Selfhood from your own being? You know the connection between the two. There is not even a connection; it is not a relation; it is just identity. So, if this identity of Self which you feel with your own being is to be recognized in a similar manner, in a similar intensity in respect of other things also, there would be a sudden illumination of what you call Universal Selfhood. This is liberation; and then, there is no further embodiment.

13. yasyanuvittah pratibuddha atmasmin samdehaye gahane pravistah, sa visva-krt, sa hi sarvasya karta, tasya lokah sa u loka eva.

'One who has awakened himself to this knowledge, who has risen to the consciousness of his pristine nature, freed from this entanglement of the body, freed from this dangerous embodiment called the physical tabernacle, becomes a friend of all things. He becomes not merely that, but a *Visva-krt* - a person capable of effecting anything, not merely by thought or action, but by mere being.

He becomes a maker of all things, a performer of so-called miracles, a supreme performer'. Sometimes one with such an achievement is called *Maha-karta*. He is a great doer. There is nothing which he cannot do, and so he is called *Maha-karta*. He is also called *Maha-tyagi* - 'there is nothing which he cannot renounce'. And there is nothing that he cannot enjoy, so he is called *Maha-bhogta*. He is a 'supreme enjoyer', a 'supreme renouncer', and a 'supreme doer'. These are the three great characteristics of a realised soul. 'He becomes commensurate with the Reality of the universe' - *sa visva-krt*. And he becomes a 'wonder maker, a wonder worker' - *sarvasya-karta*. The world becomes his. He does not long for things; he does not crave for the things of the world, and he does not have any kind of external relationship with the world, even as he has no relationship with his own self. He does not have to contact himself for getting anything from himself. He need not have to speak to himself; he need not have to exert in respect of himself, because he knows the identity of his being with his Self. Such is the attitude he will have, incomprehensible though it be, in respect of things outside. The world becomes his, in the same sense as your body becomes yours. You can lift your finger without anyone's help because it is you. Such is the work that he can do through the things of the world. 'He becomes united with the being of the various things in the world' - *sarvasya karta, tasya loka*.

It is not merely that the world becomes his. *Sa u loka eva*: 'He is the world itself'. The reason why he is capable of working spontaneously in the world is because the world is not outside him. It is only a name that is given to the phenomenon of his own being. It is an expanse of his own self, and so it is not a work that he does in the world. It is a work that is going on spontaneously within himself. It is not someone doing something somewhere. It is not like that. It is a non-doing of anything anywhere. It is just a spontaneous experience of the - expanse of being, which outwardly appears to be an activity of a person in the world outside, but inwardly or rather universally it is not activity; it is not a thought; it is not an achievement; it is not something that is moved; it is a mere experience. This is the consequence of Self-knowledge, namely, the realisation of the Absoluteness of Being.

14. ihaiva santo'tha vidmas tad vayam, na cet avedir mahati vinastih.
ye tad viduh, amrtas te bhavanti, athetare dukkham evapiyanti.

In this very body you can realise this. You need not quit the body for the purpose of this realisation, because the body itself is not the bondage. It is your attitude towards the body that is the real bondage. The idea that it is an embodiment or a conglomeration or a complex or a spatio-temporal form which is connected with us personally is what is the bondage. The segregation of this body from other bodies, and the feeling of your consciousness being inside this little location all alone, is what is called bondage. The body is not the bondage. It is the connection of the consciousness with the body in an erroneous manner that is bondage. So, in this very body itself we can know it. The body can become a temple instead of becoming a prison. The same building can be a prison or a

temple, according to your viewpoint about it or the work that you perform in it. There is hardly any external difference between a jail and a church. They are identical from the point of view of structure, made of the same brick and mortar. But the function, the thought, and the attitude are different.

So, in this very body, this self can be awakened provided it (the body) is harnessed as an instrument for effort towards Self-realisation instead of an instrument for the satisfaction of the senses. *Ihaiva santo'atha vidmas tad vayam, na cet avedir mahati vinostih*: Life is meant for this purpose only. This body has been given to us to be utilised as a noble vehicle for movement towards God, towards the Supreme Being, towards liberation. This vehicle, this instrument, is not intended for any mischief. It is not meant for any kind of ulterior purpose, action or motive. And if it is not used for the purpose for which it is intended; if this body, if this mind, if this psycho-physical complex is misused, abused and not used for the purpose of the realisation of the Self; if you are not going to recognize this life on earth as a link in the chain of the development of the soul to God; if you are not able to recognize that you are a pilgrim in this journey; if you think that this world is the all; if you think that here is the halting place and there is no movement further; if you are under a wrong impression that this is a world of enjoyment and not a world of duty and activity; if you think that there is no hereafter and everything is complete here, and this body is the all, this world is the all, the things are the all; if this is your notion, then there is really a great loss - *mahati vinastih*. If the purpose of life is not realised in this birth, then we may well say that life has been wasted. If the life that has been given to us here through this body is not to be put to proper use, verily we may say that it has been misused and put to wrong use; then great is the loss. You have only wasted your time. It is a waste of time because it has not been used for a higher step in the progress towards God. If it has been used for the proper purpose for attaining God, life has been lived properly. Then only its purpose has been fulfilled; otherwise, its purpose has not be fulfilled. *Na cet avedir mahati vinastih*: 'Great is the loss incurred by that person who has misused this instrument of the body for purposes other than Sadhana for Self-realisation'.

Ye tad viduh amrtas te bhavanti: 'Immortality is what you are going to attain if this Truth is known to you'. *Athetare duhkham evapiyanti*: 'If this is not known by you, sorrow is the consequence.' You have to suffer, suffer not merely here, but also hereafter. So, there will be a long chain of sorrows, one following the other. And, what is the cause? The cause is a misapprehension of all values. Hence it is essential for us to struggle hard to get proper a perspective of life. Our vision of life should be correct. If our vision is not correct, action also will not be correct because thought precedes action. You cannot act rightly unless you think rightly. If the thought is wrong, how can the action be correct? Hence a proper vision of life, a proper perspective of life, is the first and foremost duty of a human being. The whole thing must be clear to the mind. Then you will know what is your duty, with this vision before you. If you know what is before you, you can also know how to conduct yourself in respect of it. So, knowledge precedes action. It is

useless to engage oneself in activity under the impulsion of wrong notions and wrong knowledge, for naught but sorrow will result - *duhkham evapiyanti*.

15. yadaitam anupasyati atmanam devam anjasa,
isanam bhuta-bhavyasya, na tato vijugupsate.

This great life that you are aspiring for is not far off. It is not in a distant space. It can be visualised within yourself. It is an immediate presence to you. It is not an object which can be contacted through the senses, or the mind, or the intellect. It is not visualised as you visualise objects of sense. Such words are inapplicable here. Language cannot express the truth of this situation. It is not a perception; it is not an inference; it is not a vision in the ordinary sense. It is an enlightenment from within in respect of what is within you, namely, what you yourself are. 'And the moment this awakening takes place, you begin to visualise that which was past and future at one stroke'. Just as a miraculous surprise is sprung upon you, as it were, when you wake up from a tedious dream, you will be sprung a surprise when you wake up from this dream of the world. Suppose you are absorbed in a very painful dream, and seem to be undergoing much hardship in this dream, and then you wake up into the consciousness of this world which is true for you, which is totally different from the world of suffering in which you were in dream; what would that wonderful feeling be like? You will feel a sense of tremendous freedom and say, 'O, the tedious suffering has gone'. Such would be the great wonderment of the realised soul when this mind, which is limited to the mere hair's breadth of the present, cut off from the past and the future, is suddenly awakened to a blend of consciousness which knows all the past and future at one stroke' - *Isanam bhuta-bhavyasya*. You become at once one with all things in a similar manner as when you have awakened to a reality quite different from the hazy notions that you have had in dream. Then what happens? *Na tato vijugupsate*: 'You have nothing to ask for; you have nothing to fear from. Neither do you turn away from anything, nor do you ask for anything'. Everything is all right. Everything looks all right because everything was all right and shall be all right. It did not look all right in the middle on account of the maladjustment of your mind with the arrangement of things in the world. Your mind was turned out of tune from the universal arrangement of creation, and so you saw chaos everywhere, confusion everywhere, ugliness everywhere, error everywhere, injustice everywhere, suffering everywhere, and experienced death and rebirth. All this is the experience of that mind which has become out of tune with Reality. It is not that the mind is going to bring about a transformation of the nature of things, but what happens is a proper attunement or a proper coming in harmony of the mind with the arrangement of things already there. When God created the world, He never made a mistake. It is not true that we are going to improve upon His creation. Well, no one will really say that he is wiser than God. But what happens is that you become awakened to the consciousness of the harmony that exists between your way of thinking and the Will of God. Now everything looks chaotic because of the isolation of your will from the Divine Will, but when there is harmony of your will with the Divine Will, perfection and illumination results.

Then in that Grand condition you ask for nothing and 'shrink from nothing' - *na tato vijugupsate*.

16. *yasmad arvak samvatsarah ahobhih parivartate, tad deva jyotisam jyotih ayur hopasate' mrtam.*

Time is transcended here. Symbolically, the verse says: 'It is above the whole process of duration called time'. What you call year with all its days and nights which is the symbol of transciency, which is the indication of what you call time, above that this stands, which means to say it is transcendent to time, it is durationless eternity. It is not a movement in time, it is not a going to some place at some time. It is not some place because it is spaceless. It is not some time because it is timeless. Whatever be the stretch of your imagination, you cannot know what spacelessness is. You cannot also know what timelessness is, and therefore you cannot know what objectlessness is. The freedom of the mind from thinking in terms of space, time and objects is real freedom. But now we are caught into a compulsion of thinking only in terms of space, time and object. Who can be he, the best genius, imagining anything that is not in space, not in time and not an object! But freedom is that which is freedom from these three meshes. These are the *Granthis*, as they call it. These constitute the real bondage. So, It, so to say, puts down the whole process of time. 'This Reality is transcendent or above time - *yasmad arvak samvatsarah ahobhih parivartate*.

Tad deva jyotisam jyotih ayur hopasate' mrtam: 'It is the Light of all lights'. The senses are a kind of light. When there is no eyesight, we say that there is no light. When the senses do not function, it looks as if there is no light in the world. You cannot hear; you cannot see; you cannot touch; you cannot taste. Well, it is then all a world of darkness. So when the senses function, it appears that there is light. But that is the Light of this light. You are able to see because of a Light which is different from the light of the eye, also in respect of the other senses, even the mind and the intellect. The gods which the mythologists speak of are nothing but the senses, the mind and the intellect, and they are the light for us. They are the guide posts; they are the indicators; they are our teachers; they are our masters. We act according to their injunctions. But this Reality, this Truth is beyond time and space and, therefore, beyond the senses. So, it is the 'Light of lights' - *jyotisam jyotih*. It is contemplated in a kind of meditation as eternal longevity. There are various meditations prescribed in the Upanishads. These meditations are called *Vidyas*. All types of *Vidyas* are described in the Upanishads, in the Chhandogya and the Brhadaranyaka particularly. Here is one *Vidya*, one method of meditation - contemplation on durationlessness, contemplation on timelessness. How is it possible? If it is at all possible, it is one type of meditation. Reality is not a process of time because it is not in space. It is not an object of the senses. It is therefore eternal longevity. *Ayur* means eternity and 'longevity of an endless character'. This is one kind of Upasana prescribed as 'meditation on the immortal essence which is timeless, durationlessness Being'.

17. yasmin panca panca-janah akasas ca pratisthitah, tam eva manya
atmanam, vidvan brahma mrto'mrtam.

'The five senses together with their objects are all located in this Reality'. They are not outside and It is not outside them. The Real that we are speaking of and aspiring for is not only a transcendent presence. It is not even an immanent being. It is that which includes the external as well as the internal. 'The five senses which are our light, as well as their corresponding objects; earth, water, fire, air, ether, and everything that is constituted of these five elements; all these objects externally, and the senses which cognize or perceive the objects; the whole creation, as it were, is contained in an atom, you may say, in this vast expanse of Reality. This is the Self' - *tam eva manya atmanam*. So, the Self is not a little lamp that is shining in your own little physical heart. It is a universal conflagration and radiance which is not physical. This Atman that the Upanishad speaks of is not your Atman, yourself or myself. It is not a grammatical self, as when we say, 'I, myself, have done it,' or 'you, yourself, are responsible'. Such words of self are used in ordinary language. This is a very meagre apology of the real Self. The real Self is a container of even the vast creation. It is not merely an indicator as a light within the physical body of an individual. It is not a little candle flame shining in the darkness of your heart. It is universal resplendence, not merely light which illumines some other object like sunlight falling upon something else. It is not merely an ethereal light or a transparency. It is not merely an illumination which helps you to know something outside you. It is itself the light and the object, also. That is the Self. 'One who knows this becomes immortal'. He becomes Brahman, the Absolute - *tam eva manya atmanam, vidvan brahma'mrto'mrtam*.

18. pranasya pranam uta caksusas uta srotrasya srotram, manaso ye mano
viduh, te nicikyur brahma puranam agryam.

It is the substance out of which everything that we are made of is made. It is the original of which we are duplicates, as it were. It is the archetype and we are merely the external symbols of it. Whatever we have within us - the *Pranas*, the senses, the mind, the intellect - are only feeble expressions of that Total Being which is the original, of which we are meagre parts. Sometimes it looks as if we are parts; sometimes it looks as if we are reflections. Either way, That is far superior. And, as a whole is not complete without a part, the part also cannot be peaceful without its relevance to the whole. So is this situation. Without us it is incomplete, and without it, we are incomplete. It is this Totality that we have to conceive in meditation as *Pranasya pranam*. 'It is the Life of life, the Supreme Sense above all the senses, the Eye of the eyes, Light behind all the possible visions we can have through our eyes. It is the Ear of the ear (*Srotrasya srotram*), and the Mind of the mind because it is the Cosmic Mind'. It is the Cosmic ocean of thought, of which we are like small drops. Our little thoughts, our little cognitions, our cogitations, our understandings and rationality are insignificant little invisible bubbles in the ocean of the radiance of Cosmic Being that is Cosmic Mind.

Manaso ye mano viduh, te nicikyur brahma puranam agryam: It is those who can comprehend this Truth in this capacity that can bring to light in their daily activity the vision of the Eternal, and live in this world as if they are living in the Eternal Itself. This very world, this world of *Samsara*, becomes a radiance the moment you wake up from dream. When you wake from dream, you are not going to some other world. You are in the same spot, in the same place, and are the same person. Nothing has happened to you, but a sudden transfiguration has taken place in the way of thinking. That is awakening from dream. Likewise, in this very life, in this very existence, in this very world, at this very spot where you are sitting, this radiance of Eternity can be unravelled, provided the mind is transfigured by deep meditations as are prescribed in the Upanishads.