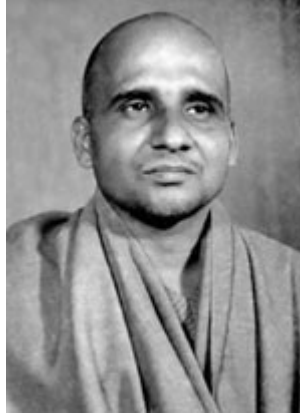




THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

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DISCOURSE-5 (1 FEBRUARY 1977)

CHAPTER I

Second Brahmana

4. So' kamayata dvitiyo ma atma jayeteti, sa manasa vacam mithunam Samabhavad-asanaya mrtyuh, tad yad reta asit, sa samvatsaro' bhavat; na ha pura tatah samvatsara asa, tam etavantam kalam abhibhah yavan samvatsarah, kalasya parastad asrjata; tam jatam abhivyadadat sa bhan akarot saiva vag abbavat.

It willed, or He willed: May I have a second Self.” This is the origin of creation. The world, this creation, this universe is the second Self, as it were, of the Supreme Being. This ‘other’ Self which is this vast creation, is animated by the Supreme Being Himself. It is ‘other’, in the sense that it had not all the characters of the Absolute. Yet, it is the Self. Though it is the ‘other’, it is also the Self. It is called the ‘Other Self’, inasmuch as the Selfhood of the Absolute is transparently present in this creation. The Universal Atman is immanent in the whole universe, in all aspects of creation; and yet, the universe is an ‘otherness’, as it were, of God, an object of God. It is as if the Universal ‘I’ is envisaging a universal object, including all that is visible or sensible – space, time and causal relation. A single Subject encountering a single Object is the state which is described in this passage, a Cosmic Consciousness becoming aware of a Cosmic Object in a peculiar manner, not in the way in which the ordinary individual is aware of an object outside. The way in which God is conscious of the universe, is different from the way in which an ordinary Jiva, or individual, is conscious of an object. This makes all the difference between Universal Consciousness and particularised consciousness.

The object, in an ordinary perception, is segregated from the subject by the differentiating medium of space and of time, so that there is no vital connection between the object that is perceived and the subject that perceives. But there is a living connectedness between the Cosmic Object and the Cosmic Subject. This connection is sometimes described as one of Body and Soul. We know that there is a connection between the soul and the body. This relation between the soul and the body is different from the relation between an individual subject encountering an outside object. The soul and the body cannot be separated from each other. They are organically one. This relation is called Sariri-Sarira-bhava, the relation between consciousness and its embodiment. Thus, we can say that the Cosmic Awareness of the universe, in the case of God-Consciousness, is one of inseparable relation, like the relation of the soul and the body. When we are aware of our bodies, we are not only becoming aware of an object situated in space and time. We can say that this body is an object, because it can be sensed; it can be seen; and it has all the characters of any object in the world, but, at the same time, it is an object which clings to us vitally and organically, not like an object, such as the mountain which is far off in space and, perhaps, in time.

There are three kinds of 'self' distinguished in the philosophy of the Vedanta. These three 'selves' are the three aspects of the conception of the One Self. They are called the Mukhya-Atman, the Mithya-Atman and the Gauna-Atman, in Sanskrit. The Mukhya-Atman is the primary Self, which is uniform and unique in every individual, equally. It does not differ from one person to another person, from one thing to another thing, like space contained in various vessels. It is the same space that is in all vessels, irrespective of the number and size of the vessels, etc. This ubiquitous Consciousness, which is equally present in all beings, irrespective of the distinctions of space, time and cause, is the Absolute Self. That is called the Mukhya-Atman. There is also the Gauna-Atman, or the secondary self which is distinguishable from the primary Self. It is not merely that one has within oneself, immanently present, the eternal primary Self, but there is also another kind of self with which one's individuality is connected. Anything that one loves is also a self. As a matter of fact, all love is a movement of self in a particular direction. When the self moves, we call it 'love'; and when it does not move, we call it 'being'. But, it is the same 'self' that acts, whether it moves or whether it does not move. The movement of the 'self' towards an object for any particular given purpose becomes the cause of affection for that object, and the 'Self' which is primary, is recognised in the object which is secondary. So, in the love of the object we are loving our own self, really, it is not just something else. The object is invested with the character of the 'Self', and then there is an immense affection felt for the object. Every form of love is the love of 'Self'. There is nothing else in any form of affection. The object which is thus invested with the character of one's own Self, becoming the centre of affection, is what is called the secondary self. It is also a self, but it is not the Absolute Self. So, it is called secondary. The third form of self is this body which is temporarily assumed as the 'self' for the purpose of working out certain Karmas done in previous births. The nature of this body is characterised by the structure of the desires expressed in previous

lives, and the *Karmas* performed in previous lives. A *Karma*, or an action, is a desire that is externalised in respect of an ulterior motive. Every action is desire-propelled. A desire-propelled movement in the direction of an object is an action, and that action produces a reaction, because every action is an interference in the universality of the cosmos. The equilibrium of the universe is disturbed by every action of any individual. This disturbance that is caused by the action of an individual is set right by the balance that is ever maintained by the universe. And this balance is maintained by a reaction that is so set up. The reaction comes back as a boomerang upon the very individual who is the source of that disturbance. This is called the *Karma-Phala*, or the fruit of action. That *Karma-Phala* becomes the seed for the manifestation of a future body. So, this body which we are assuming today, and in which we are embodied, is the result of our past *Karmas*. It is of such a nature, such a character, such a duration of life, etc., as were our previous desires and actions. This body also is an Atman for us. We love it immensely. So it is 'self' but it is a 'false' self. It is not the real Self. So it is called the Mithya-Atman. Thus, the threefold distinction of the Atman is made in this manner – the Mukhya-Atman, the Gauna-Atman, the Mithya-Atman – the primary Self, the secondary self, and the false self. Here, the Universal Being Willed, "Let me have a secondary Self." This is, perhaps, the meaning of this passage of the Upanishad.

You have heard this great passage of the Bible: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Something like this is what the Upanishad tells us here. The Eternal Wisdom was manifest, with the eternal Word, and with this Word the whole cosmos was created. The Word which is with God, and which is God, is not merely a letter, or a sound that we make through our lips. It is an energy; it is a force; it is a vibration, which materialises itself, concretises itself into object-forms. The Word is the Veda, or Eternal Wisdom which is with God, and it is inseparable from God, and so, it is God Himself. The Cosmic Mind projected itself in the form of this Eternal Word, and manifested this universe. In the Manusmriti, and such other ancient texts, we are also told in a symbolic manner that Prajapati, the Creator, conceived the whole cosmos in the pattern of "Om", or the Pranava. The Pranava, or Omkara, is supposed to be the seed of the whole universe. That is the essence of the Word that is Divine. It is also the Veda contained in a seed form. The whole of the Veda is inside "Om". "Eka eva pura vedah pranavah sarva-vangmayah," says Bhagawan Sri Krishna, as recorded in the Srimad-Bhagavata, when he spoke to Uddhava. There was only one Veda in the beginning. It was "Om". We did not have four Vedas like Rik, Yajur, Saman and Atharva. They were classifications made later on by Sage Veda-Vyasa. "Om" is supposed to be a vibration, which is integral in its nature, and that is the Word spoken of. This Word which is Om, is the cause of the whole cosmos. The Mind of the Universe, the Cosmic Mind, Prajapati, got united with this Word, which means to say, Consciousness vibrated through this Word for the purpose of the manifestation of the universe. And, in the Manusmriti, we are told that Pranava splits itself into the Vyahrtis – *Bhuh*, *Bhavah*, *Svah*. These are mystical syllables which are supposed to contain the

inner content of the Pranava. And we are also further told that the three Vyahrtis split themselves into the three Padas, or the quarters of the Gayatri-Mantra which is supposed to be expounded in a greater detail in the three sections of the Purusha-Sukta. These three parts of the Purusha-Sukta become the three Vedas – Rik, Yajur and Saman, and in all their multiplications. So, the origin of this creation is supposed to be a communion of the Cosmic Mind with Cosmic Vibration, which is referred to as the Word, the Veda – Vac, which means speech, the Original Word.

Sa manasa vacam mithunam samabhavad asanaya mrtyuh: Here the word Asanaya Mrtyuh is repeated once again in order to bring out the sense that creation is an ‘othering’ of God, an alienation, a sacrifice, which is sometimes called the ‘Cosmic Sacrifice’. The Absolute becomes something other than Itself, in order that it may appear as this universe. How does it become other than it is? By the projection of time factor. There is no time in God; it is all Eternity. The moment there is the projection of process, it becomes creation – *Samvatsara*, the time-cycle. *Samvatsara* is the principle of the year, which is time. The moment there is consciousness of time, we are in a world of experience. And in the Absolute, which is durationless Eternity, there is no such process as time; there is no past, present and future. What we call Eternity was the Essence of God Himself, and in the grasp of the Universal Consciousness of God, past, present and future come together in a single comprehension. But, in the individual’s case, this is split into three sections – the past, the present, and the future, which cannot be connected easily. We cannot know the past, we cannot know the future, we are in a very fine split-fact of what is called the present. Every second, the present passes and becomes a past. The past, the present, and the future are not three distinct parts of time, cut off, one from the other. They are a continuity like the flow of a river. But, due to a peculiar effect that the time has upon our minds as individuals, we are unable to conceive of the past and the future, and we are stuck up in the middle, in the present, merely. However, the point made out here is that the factor of time became manifest. Na ha pura tatah samvatsara asa: Before that, there was no time. Before creation time was not, and time and creation are identical. The moment there is creation, there is time, and the moment there is time, there is creation. They are one.

As mentioned earlier, the whole duration for which the universe lasts is dependant upon certain factors, precedent to the creation of the universe. The chronological, geneological, or cosmological descriptions given in the Puranas etc. tell us that the duration of the universe during a particular *Kalpa*, or cycle of time, will be determined by the time taken by the potencies of the individuals who lay unliberated in the previous *Kalpa*. Therefore, it cannot be said that every *Kalpa* is of the same duration. The night of Brahma, as we call the period of dissolution of the universe, is again of that much of duration as would be necessary for the fructification of the individual potencies lying unliberated in the previous *Kalpa*, at the time of the dissolution. Thus, by the manifestation of time, creation becomes possible. This is the point where Virat assumes a complete

Form, and time which has not yet begun to control things starts contemplating, as it were, the control of things. In Virat, time is controlled by the consciousness of Virat, but subsequently time becomes the controller. We have no control over time.

Here is a very peculiar symbolic expression, which seems to tell us that the urge for creation, the outrush of manifestation which is the principle of death, described here as Mrtyu, was not satisfied with creation up to the point of Virat, and wanted to engulf Virat itself in its bosom, so that creation would end with Virat; but, it did not end with Virat. The principle of manifestation was not satisfied with the manifestation of Virat. The One has to become the many, further down. Well; the Virat is the many, no doubt, manifold expression is there in this Body of the Virat; everything can be seen there; everything is found there. So, in a way, we may say, it is the fulfilment of the desire to create. But, the desire was not fulfilled. There has to be a further creation, and so, while the principle of death which is the urge for creation, wanted to swallow the Virat itself in its all-consuming mouth, the Virat resented, as it were. It is symbolic, of course; not that there were two persons acting in two different manners. It is only a way of expressing a fact that the violent onrush of the urge for creation did not get exhausted with the manifestation of Virat. It became more and more violent as it went down, until it saw the complete over-turning of the cart, and the object sat on the throne of the subject, and that was enough. With that, the creative urge, perhaps, was satisfied. The Virat resented the onrush of the urge for creation, which means to say, it did not accede to the idea that creation should end with Virat. The Virat manifested Himself further down, and his resentment is the Vac, which means to say, the principle of speech. Here the speech means, symbolically, the Veda, and the Veda means knowledge, the Word, Vibration, Creative Force; and all that Omkara, or Pranava, symbolises. Then what happens?

5. sa aiksata: yadi va imam abhimansye, kaniyo' nnam karisya iti: sa taya vaca tenatmanedam sarvam asrjata yad idam kim ca, rco yajumsi samani chandamsi yajnan prajah pasun. sa yad yad evasrjata, tad tad attum adhriyata; sarvam va attiti tad aditer adititvam, sarvasyai-tasyatta bhavati, sarvam asyannam bhavati, ya evam etad aditer adititvam veda.

The principle of creation which is Death, contemplated, as it were: “Why should I swallow this Virat and end creation here? That is a very small act, indeed, if I do that. My desire is to go further. I want to consume many more things than Virat, so that multiplicity should exceed, the multiplicity as is available in Virat.” There should be real multiplicity, not apparent multiplicity as in Virat. So the rush for creative activity continued; the vibration which is the force of externalisation pursued its purpose. The segmentation of Virat takes place into the *Adhyatma*, the *Adhibhuta* and the *Adhidaiva*, which is the beginning of multiplicity in the form of the various individuals, as we see here. The One becomes three, and the three become many. So, the Virat did not merely

stop the creative activity, but continued it further, and became many more things, in a more expressed, pointed, and clear-cut, diversified manner. What are the further manifestations?

Whatever we see with our eyes here, everything became manifest. All things down to the blade of grass, even to the atom, even to inanimate matter – all these were created. There are gradations, and various degrees of manifestation in the coming down, one below the other. And, as creation comes down to the level of lower beings, consciousness gets more and more dense. It gets more and more involved in matter, which means to say, it gets externalised more and more. There is no such thing as matter, ultimately. It is only a form of externalisation, getting more and more concretised by involvement of consciousness in space and time. Ultimately, there is no matter; it is only space-time that is appearing as matter. But, it becomes very intense, and the intensity assumes the shape of a concrete object, outside. Till that point, creation took place. Everything that we see with our eyes became manifest.

The Vedas became threefold and fourfold – Rik, Yajur, Saman, Atharvan. Yajnan Praja pasun: The sacrificial processes, human beings, animals, etc. – everything became manifest. Sa yad yad evasrjata, tad tad attum adhriyata: Whatever was created was conceived by the consciousness, and there was an urge to grasp every object. The more one goes down in the level of creation, the greater is the desire for the object. The higher one goes the less is the desire. The violence of desire becomes intense as consciousness goes down and down, until there is an intense feeling of separation of the subject from the object. The intensity of the desire is due to the intensity of the separation, so that when the material form of the object becomes glaringly intense, the feeling of separation, also, becomes equally intense; and then it is that there is this desire of the soul to grasp the object, for union with itself. Consciousness became immanent in all things; it entered everything; it created all beings and became all beings.

All objects become the food for this Consciousness. It grasps them in a variegated manner, right from the Virat down to the lowest animate created being, because the process of the grasping of the object by Consciousness varies, no doubt, in the manner of its expression, but the intention is the same. The intention of the Consciousness moving towards an object, is the absorption of the object into itself. In the case of Virat, they are both identical; the object and consciousness are the same, and they cannot be separated, even as we cannot separate our own body from our soul. It is a kind of identity of being. But, when there is a further movement down in the direction of the separation of Consciousness from the object, then there is not that organic connection between the subject and the object. There is only a desire which cannot be fulfilled, because consciousness cannot, in fact, become an object. They are two different things in character. The object can never become consciousness, and the consciousness can never become an object, inasmuch as it has its own unique nature. So, no desire can be fulfilled, finally. It only acts vigorously in the

direction of objects, with the intention of extinguishing itself, but it can never extinguish itself until the body of the object becomes the body of consciousness. That is the intention, ultimately.

The desire of every individual is to become the Virat. This is the meaning of any desire. Even if we take a cup of tea, our desire is only that; we want to become one with everything. It is a stimulation of the inner psyche towards the unification of oneself with all things. One who knows this mystery can become everything, says the Upanishad, which is a great consolation and a comfort for created beings. If we can understand what all this drama means, how this creation has taken place, how Consciousness has become all things, what desire means actually in its intention, if this is comprehended properly by us, we can become 'That', which has been the cause of this manifestation. One who knows it, becomes 'That'. So is this concluding, solacing message of the Upanishad to every one – '*Knowing is Being*'. If we can know this secret, we can go deep into the secret of self-mastery, so that desire ceases. The assumption by Consciousness that the object is spatially and temporarily cut off from itself is the cause of desire. But, when this assumption is understood in its proper connotation, the desire must cease, because the intention being pious, the mode of fulfilling this intention also should be equally pious, which means to say, there should be identity, which cannot be established as long as there is real separation, and the separation must be there as long as there is involvement of Consciousness in space and time. Space and time are also aspects of Consciousness only. Why should they cause this distinction? This is what is to be understood properly, and where this is grasped, desire ceases, and one can become, 'That', from where one has descended.

6. So'kamayata, bhuyasa yajnena bhuyo yajeyeti, so' sramyat, sa tapo'tapyata: tasya srantasya taptasya yaso viryam udakramat prana vai yaso viryam; tat pranesutkrantesu sariram svayitum adhriyata, tasya sarira eva mana asit.

This passage simply repeats what has been told earlier, in a different way. He Willed: "May I sacrifice myself in more and more multifarious forms. May I become the many. Let me sacrifice myself in every form." The sacrifice of Consciousness in form is the creation of the universe. "May I do this act more and more, in greater intensity, in further diversity?" By that Will to become many, He got exhausted, as it were. Then, He concentrated Himself on the very Act. The Will to create is the concentrating activity of Consciousness, and when the Creative Will becomes successful in projecting a world outside in space and in time, and when that which is projected becomes something other than one's own Self, that becomes divested of Self; the object is bereft of Self. Well; even if the object is bereft of Self, it assumes a self, it becomes a secondary self when one is intent upon that object. Thus was, perhaps, the case at the beginning of creation when, though the universe that was externalised was bereft of the Consciousness which is of God, it assumed a consciousness in the secondary manner; it became

a secondary self of the Supreme Being, because the mind of the Supreme Being was there.

It is, as it were, the Cosmic Mind contemplated its own Self in the object which is created, namely, the universe. So, the universe assumed a life. There is activity, energy, force and vitality in everything in the universe. That is because of the projection of the Cosmic Mind into this matter, which is the externalised form in space and in time. This happens in every form of perception involving emotion. An emotion is a form of concentration of consciousness on a particular object, and when that concentration is affected, the self moves to the object and enlivens the object in a particular manner. Then, because of the enlivenment, it becomes a part of itself; the secondary self does it become. As the individual object becomes a secondary self of an individual subject by way of emotional movement of self towards the object, so did it happen originally, also. The Cosmic Consciousness contemplated on the cosmic externality, which we call Prakriti, and thus the universe assumed life, as if it is consciousness itself, just as the body assumes a form of consciousness. Our body has life, no doubt. We can feel sensations throughout the body, but the body has no life, really. The corpse has no consciousness, it has no life, no sensation, though it is a body, still. The features of the living body can be seen in a corpse, also. But, what happened to the life? This shows that the body is not the living principle, but it assumed the character of a living principle on account of the animation conducted to it by another principle altogether. Likewise, is the energy of this universe. There is nothing substantial in this universe which is mere emptiness, a hollow, like a balloon: it looks big, but there is nothing inside, though it assumes a reality due to an impregnation by Consciousness which has been responsible for the creation. By a symbolic transference of process, as it happens in an individual case, the Cosmic Act is described in the Upanishad – that the universe assumed life, on account of the animation of it by the Cosmic Mind.

7. So' kamayata, medhyam ma idam syat, atmanvy anena syam iti; tato' svah samabhavat, yad asvat, tan medhyam abhud iti tad evasva-medhasvasa-medhatvam; esa ha va asvamedham veda, ya enam evam veda, tam anavarudhyaivamanyata; tam samvatsarasya parastad atmana alabhata: pasun devatabhyah pratyauhat, tasmad sarva-devatyam proksitam prajapatyam alabhante; esa ha va asva-medho ya esa tapati: tasya samvatsara atma, ayam agnir arkah, tasyame loka atmanah; tav etav arkasvamedhau, so punar ekaiva devata bhavati, mrtyur eva; apa punar-mrtum jayati, nainam mrtyurm apnoti, mrtyur asyatma bhavati, etasam devatanam eko bhavati.

The body which is bereft of life is Medhya, which means to say, it is impure. We do not like to touch a corpse; but, we have no objection to touch a living body. What is the difference between a living body and a corpse? Both are bodies. We regard a living body as holy, but a dead body as impure. So, He Willed, as it were: "May this universe that I have created, which is my Body, but which is without

life, may this universe which is thus impure, bereft of consciousness, bereft of life, assume purity. That is possible only when vitality is injected into it. So, what might have happened? Idam medhyam syat, atmanvy anena syam iti: I become this Universe. Just as a mother loves her child, God loved the universe. The Energy of God permeated throughout His creation, and it assumed a great meaning and significance, just as a dead body can assume a significance the moment life enters into it. This is the Asva; this is the horse of the Asvamedha Sacrifice, says the Upanishad, again, to go back to the great symbology of the Asvamedha Sacrifice. The Asva is very holy, highly sanctified. It is sanctified for the purpose of the Asvamedha-Yajna, and in our symbology here, it is the universe, which is the horse. Asvah samabhavat, yad, asvat, tan medhyam abhud iti tad evasva-medhasyasva-medhatvam: Thus, the conception of the Asvamedha Sacrifice is philosophically and spiritually explained.

Esa ha va asva-medham veda, ya enam evam veda: One who knows the Asvamedha Sacrifice, knows God also, that is, one who knows this universe, knows the Creator of the universe, also, because He is present, wholly there, reflected. As from a reflection, one can move to the original, through the universe we can move towards God. Though the universe is not God, because it is the reflected form, yet He is implanted there as a reflection, and therefore, through the symbol which is the universe, we can move towards Him, who is the substance. Esa ha va asva-medham veda, ya enam evam veda; Knowing the Asvamedha, knowing this horse, knowing this universe, is knowing God. One who knows this secret, knows the true Asvamedha Sacrifice.

Here, the second Brahmana of the Upanishad concludes by telling us that we can overcome this urge for self-expression, for creativity, for desire, which is the principle of Death, by becoming the Self of Death. Death is overcome by that person who becomes the very Self of Death itself, just as, whenever we become one with someone, that someone becomes our friend. Even the worst of things can be our friend, provided we become the Self of that thing. Now, how is it possible? What is the meaning of saying that we can become the Self of Mrtyu, or Death? We have to become one with the process of Creative Activity. Then Creative Activity does not harm us. The world is a great trouble for us, inasmuch as we are outside it, and we are unfriendly with it, therefore. As we are outside it, naturally, it is outside us. We are cast aside, as it were, into the winds by the creative urge. We are helpless victims of the Creative Activity, and so we are unconsciously driven in the direction of creativity. But, if consciousness can be well-trained, this consciousness can attend upon this activity itself, every process becomes, then, a Selfhood. Action becomes Knowledge and Being. Perhaps, we have the seeds of Karma-Yoga here, that principle that activity can become the Atman, provided the Atman is felt to be present in the activity. Generally, an action is a movement of the self, outside, in space and time. This is ordinary action or Karma. But, when space and time are also contemplated as being parts of Consciousness, activity becomes naturally a part of Consciousness. It becomes a part of this Consciousness, because nothing can be anywhere outside this

Consciousness. It is Infinity itself. How can there be anything outside the Infinite? So, how can there be a Will of God against our will? Our will and God's Will should harmonise between each other, and our will is nothing but a vibration in a tiny form of the Universal Will. So, the question of any independent assertion does not arise, such as 'I do', 'you do', and feelings of that kind. There is no such thing as 'I do', 'you do', really. There is only the One Thing that does all things. If this awareness can rise in our self, we shed our individualities and individual wills, and for the time being, set aside all creative activity and agency on the part of the ego. That is, the assertion of agency in action is given up. The will individual becomes the Will Universal. Then, there is no fear of death and birth, because the universe does not fear death. There is no such thing as birth and death for the cosmos. Everything is a process within itself, like the movements in the ocean. Thus, one who knows the secret of this Asvamedha Sacrifice, the beginning and the ending of the process of the Asvamedha, how the horse came about, which means to say, how creation came about, one who knows the presence of the Eternal Reality in every act and every process of the Creative Will, he becomes the Atman of the very process. He becomes the Self of the very principle of destruction, which was responsible for the reversal activity, which was the originating factor in creation. Everything becomes the Self – the subject as well as the object – also the process of the reversal of the subject into the object, and even the movement of the self towards the object – all becomes one. If this contemplation could be possible, Death can be overcome, because one becomes the very Soul of Death itself; how can Death trouble anyone, says the Upanishad.