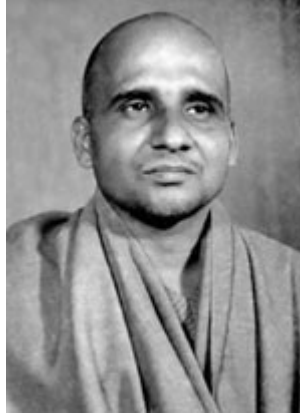




## **THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD**

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### **CHAPTER I**

**Fourth Brahmana (Continued)**

#### **CREATION FROM THE UNIVERSAL SELF**

This section of the Upanishad deals with the story of creation, and touches almost every point in the spiritual evolution of the individual. There are several stages of thought described, commencing from the highest Reality which is Brahman, *Purusha*, the Absolute 'I'. The first concept that is presented is that there was One alone without a second, and this One became the Universal Cause of everything that is the effect in the form of this creation. This single, unitary, undivided 'I', split itself into two and became the cause of further divisions, down to the lowest level of descent, even to the minimum level of inanimate matter. One finds this impulse for division and unification everywhere, as commanded or initiated by the Primary Will, or Urge of the Supreme Being. Then follows the proclamation that, in spite of all this multiplicity and duality and split, upto the lowest level of matter, there is an organic unity among things, which has not been lost, notwithstanding this duality. It does not mean that the creation of multiplicity is the loss of the fundamental unity of things. It is a multiplicity without losing the unity that is present. This is a miraculous type of creation where the cause does not destroy itself in order to become the effect. It remains as it was, in spite of the fact that it has become, apparently, what is 'other' than itself. Then we are told that the two which are the aspects of the One, may be conceived as a threefold reality, to which reference has been made earlier also in our studies, that there is the aspect of the objective, the subjective and the transcendental types which are usually known as the *Adhibhautika*, the *Adhyatmika* and the *Adhidaivika* features, mentioned before.

Every aspect of this Cosmic Being is a deity, a god by himself, or itself. But no god is complete; every deity is incomplete. Not single aspect of the *Purusha* can be regarded as complete, inasmuch as every deity thus conceived is a limb of the Cosmic Being. All that is manifest objectively, also, is really another form of the Supreme Being. It does not mean that creation is something different from the cause thereof, either in quality or internal structure. The concept of the Supreme Unity cannot be arrived at by the analysis of any part. Every part is only an indication of there being something above it, or transcending it. The parts are finite forms, even as deities; they can only be pointers to higher forms, but in themselves not complete forms. So, there is a difference between the satisfaction that comes by contemplation on the Universal Reality and that derived from any type of finite contemplation.

It is not possible to 'possess' anything in this world. This is another great advice that is given to us, further on, in the course of the description. It is not possible to possess anything because everything that is possessed is 'outside'. And the philosophy is that nothing that is outside oneself can be possessed, and, therefore, bereavement, loss or separation is unavoidable in the world. What cannot be lost is the Self alone, and everything else is subject to destruction. If anyone clings to things which are other than the Self, those things shall depart from that person, one day or other. And, so, it is wisdom on the part of people to adore the Selfhood of things rather than the forms of things. In this manner, the Universal Completeness should be conceived in meditation.

Then the Upanishad, in this section, goes on to describe the classification of the groups of individuals, both in the superior realm of the gods in heaven and the lesser realm of human beings, the classification being of what we usually call the social groups, namely, the spiritual, the political, the economic and the working forces. They are sometimes wrongly translated as castes. But the origin of these arrangements is described in the Upanishad as a device towards the unification of diverse individualities for a purpose which is beyond themselves. The blend of these diversities is possible only by a principle which is harmony and unification itself in its character and make. No diversified principle can be a unifying principle. No individual can be a unifying power in this world, because every individual is different from every other individual. So, any kind of unity, whether it is social, personal or otherwise, can be achieved only if there is a transcendent force which brings these diversities together. That force is called *Dharma*, which is the way in which the Absolute is manifest in the world of diversity, and a concept of it is brought forward in this section of the Upanishad.

It is further pointed out that every action is finally useless and futile, if it is bereft of the Consciousness of the Atman. All achievements in this world are going to be dust and ashes. They will bring no result. Every effort will end in failure if it is not connected with the awareness of the Universal Principle, the Atman. Where such knowledge is absent, all effort will end in failure. This is another point that is driven into our minds in the course of the study.

Then it is pointed out that the desires which are the ruling forces in the individual natures are really the urges of the Cosmic, which try to plant themselves in some form or other in the individuals and summon them back to their Origin, so that no desire can be regarded as wholly bad or wholly good. Desire is bad in the sense that it becomes a binding element if it is disconnected from its intent, motive or purpose. But it is good in the sense that it is an indication of the limitations of individuality which, again, are indications of the presence of the Infinite, towards which every individual is moving. So, the section concludes with a gospel that we should live a complete life, and any kind of incompleteness is going to be a source of sorrow. This is the outline of the whole section, of which the commencement was made with the declaration that, originally, the Atman alone was, and outside it, nothing was. And inasmuch as nothing else was outside it, there was no externality or the principle of contact with objects there; and since as it is the principle of the destruction of the evil of the urge for contact, it is called Purusha, or *Purushottama* sometimes.

2. so'bibhet, tasmad ekaki bibheti, sa hayam iksam cakre, yan mad anyan nasti, kasman nu bibhemit, tata avasya bhayam viyaya kasmad hy abhesyat, dvitiyad vaibhayam bhavati.

That Being, the Original Universal Aloneness, began to contemplate Itself in a peculiar manner. This Self-contemplation of the Universal Oneness is the beginning of the Will to create. It felt that It was alone, and willed to be other than Itself. It was dissatisfied with Its aloneness, as it were. This inscrutable dissatisfaction, which we have to read in the Supreme Aloneness of Ishvara, is the cause of the dissatisfaction felt by individuals when they are alone. People, when they are left to themselves, feel dissatisfied. They want somebody else outside them. This is a reflection of the dissatisfaction of the Aloneness of the Universal in the Origin of things. All this is highly symbolic and we cannot understand what actually is the true nature of this dissatisfaction. It is only a point that the Upanishad urges forward to bring to light the cause of creation. We cannot actually understand what it finally means, because, as the Rig-Veda puts it, nobody was there sitting to see what was happening. We never saw what He was thinking; what He was feeling; what actually was the condition which became the precedent for the creation of things. Even the gods came afterwards. Who can know what happened, says the Veda. So, we have to reverentially accept and feel, in a super-physical manner, the meaning behind this declaration of the Upanishad, that the Universal Aloneness became a sort of source for a Universal Dissatisfaction which is the cause for the creation of the universe. It is as if the child wanted to play. Why is the child dissatisfied when it does not play? The child alone knows. There is a dissatisfaction when the child is alone, and, perhaps, on the analogy of the play of the child, scriptures like the Brahmasutra tell us that if at all we have to give a reason for the creation of the world, we have to say that it is a play of God, not that there is a desire in God. Play is not a desire; it is something more spontaneous.

The All-Being was dissatisfied, as it were, and yet, immediately, there was a counteracting Consciousness which removed that dissatisfaction. “How can I be dissatisfied when I am the All,” was the counter-force that arose in His own Consciousness. “Why should I be afraid of anything, and why should I be dissatisfied? The question of fear or sorrow does not arise when nothing external to Me, is.” Therefore, He was supremely happy. Here we have a double statement of the Upanishad in a single passage, where it is said that it was Universal Oneness, and an Aloneness which felt dissatisfied on account of Its being alone without an ‘other’, and yet It became supremely satisfied on account of the counteracting Consciousness which arose in Itself simultaneously that It was the All, and, therefore, there cannot be dissatisfaction. Why is there dissatisfaction? Because there is an ‘other’. That is all.

”Where there is duality, there is fear.” We have fear when there is another next to us. If there is no ‘anotherness’, there is no fear. We are always afraid of someone in front of us, behind us and all that. If there is no one, and we are alone, why should we be afraid of anything? Fear comes from someone other than us. How can we be afraid of our own selves? So, if someone, other than us, does not exist, how can there be fear? There is fear only where there is duality. Where duality was not, there was no dissatisfaction, or fear. Therefore, it was Supreme Satisfaction. That was the Universal ‘I’.

Now, the Upanishad proceeds:

3. sa vai naiva reme; tasmad ekaki na ramate; sa dvitiam aicchat; sa haitavan asa yatha stri-pumamsau samparisvaktau; sa imam evatmanam dvedhapatayat, tatah patis ca patni cabhavatam; tasmad idam ardha-brgalam iva svah, iti ha smaha jajnavalkyah; tasmad ayam akasah striya puryata eva. tam samabhavat, tato manusya ajayanta.

Here, again, a highly symbolic truth is stated to explain the state of affairs after creation was effected. The split which is the cause of creation is a split within the Whole; and it is a split without losing the Wholeness of the Whole. When milk becomes curd, the milk is completely destroyed, and there is no milk afterwards. Not so is the way in which God became the world, because if the milk has already become curd wholly, we cannot ask for the same milk again, because it has already become another thing.

If God has already become the world, we cannot ask for God. He is no more there; He is finished. But He is really not finished; He is intact even now; and the *milk* is wholly present, in spite of its having become a so-called *curd*. It is not a *Parinama*, or a complete internal transformation of the Substance of the All that is called creation, but only an *apparent* manifestation. This appearance of manifestation is described. It was the cause of creation in the manner mentioned, namely, a kind of desire or will or wish, an urge to become manifold, the reason for which nothing that is manifold can understand. We are all manifested beings included in the diversity of creation, and, therefore, none can know the reason

behind the manifestation of this creation. But the Upanishad is an authority, and it tells us that It did not wish to be alone. “Let me be many and see Myself as the variety of things.” In order to become the many, It became two, first. Then, perhaps, the two became four, four became eight, eight became sixteen, and thirty-two and millions and millions, an infinite variety, uncountable innumerable in quantity and quality. How did He become two in the beginning? He became two with a severe impulse which is the subject of the chant in famous hymn of the Rig-Veda known as the Nasadiya-Sukta, the hymn of creation.

There was an indescribable stir in the whole cosmos, and this command was felt everywhere, just as, when a parliament passes an act, it is felt in every nook and corner of the country. Something like that, an Act was passed, as it were, by the Supreme Will of the Divine Being, and every minute part of the entire Body of the Virat began to throb with this Will. And what was that urge? It is a very difficult thing to explain – what that Primal Wish is. It is an outrush that we feel when we have a strong desire, for instance. We cannot understand, actually, what a desire is. Though we think we understand it, we cannot know it fully, because if we understand it, it will not trouble us. It troubles us because it cannot be understood. It cannot be understood because it is a contradiction. A desire is a contradiction, psychologically; therefore it is impossible to understand its meaning. We cannot desire an object unless it is outside us. This is very clear; if it is one with us, we will not desire it. And we cannot desire an object which is *really* outside us. This is also a very important point to remember. If it is, in fact, outside us, it would have nothing to do with us. For, where is the point in desiring it? We have already proclaimed, psychologically, that it is *outside* us, and, so, we are not connected with it in any way. If we are not connected with it, we are not going to get it. If we are not going to get it, there is no use desiring it. This is one aspect of the contradiction. But we cannot desire an object unless it is other than ourselves. Look at the contradiction. Here is a miracle of contradiction, *par excellence*. And, such is the desire operating in our individual cases, available in a very minute form, harrassing us from birth to death. No one can understand what it is and how it works. Only a superhuman, divine being may master it. But, the Upanishad tell us that the contradiction was, perhaps, already in the Cosmic Origin of things; otherwise, how could its presence be felt in individuals who are the effects?

The contradiction of desire is of such a character. It may be ostensibly seen in individuals of the male and female species in creation. That is what the Upanishad makes out here. The desire can be seen in the various aspects of psychological manifestation, and, primarily, it can be seen where the species of a particular variety intends to maintain itself by an interaction of its male and female characters. That kind of urge which is available in individuals is, perhaps, a faint indication of what could have happened at the beginning of things, though that must have been very different in nature from what we see in individuals. Yet, in its general form, it was present there; in its particular form, we see it only in individuals. It splits Itself in this manner into the positive and the negative elements – the Cosmic Positive and the Cosmic Negative, we may say. And, that

was the origin of desire. Nevertheless, it remains an indescribable something; we do not know what it is, why it arose and how it could be explained. It had to be split, else, there could be no will or wish. There was a simultaneous urge to become two, and also to become one. Here is the enigma of desire.

The desire is actually a desire to fulfil a desire; and the fulfilment of a desire means the completion of the intention behind the mind or the consciousness to come in union with the object of desire in an indivisibility of 'being'. For that, the indivisibility is first accepted for the purpose of manifesting the desire. So, there was a double urge of rushing outward into the counterpart which is the split 'other', and a simultaneous urge to become one with that part, which is called the satisfaction felt in the fulfilment of a desire. So, there is pain and pleasure simultaneously in every moment of desire. If it is entirely pain nobody would desire. But if it is only satisfaction, there would be no frustration of desire. Thus, there is an inscrutable peculiar character in this form of urge.

The Origin of Cosmic manifestation necessitates the acceptance of an original split which caused a self-contradictory feeling of separation and unity simultaneously, as is there between a husband and wife, for instance. As Yajnavalkya, the sage, says, every individual is only a half; nobody is complete. And inasmuch as every individual is a half, no one is happy. The half wants to be complete by fulfilling itself in contact with the other half, which it has lost.

The perception of an object, when it is driven by a strong desire, is really a perception of a counterpart of that desire. This is why there is such an urge in the mind towards that object. What one lacks in oneself, one sees in that object; otherwise, the mind will not move towards the object. The lack felt in one's own self is supposed to be completed by the character of the object which is outside, and, so, no one can love *everything* in the world, and no one can hate also *everything*. There are only certain sections of objects which can attract and repel, on account of the peculiarity of the psychological structures of individuals. Yajnavalkya proclaims that every individual, whether it is human, sub-human or super-human, whatever it is, every individual is only fifty-percent. The other fifty-percent is the object thereof. And, therefore, every individual is forced to go towards the object, to complete itself by communion with that object which is its exact counterpart, which it will find instinctively without any logical examination.

Everyone is like an empty hole inside, like a space without content. Therefore, one feels unhappy. Whatever be given to that person, he is not satisfied. There is some want, a kind of emptiness, vacuum, felt in each individual, because it cannot be fulfilled by anything other than that which it lacks, which is the content of that whole. So, satisfaction cannot come to any individual unless the exact counterpart of that lack is provided. Any other attempt is not going to satisfy the subject. There is this rationality behind creation, cosmically as well as individually. Thus are all beings born due to the Primary Impulse. Men were born, and everything else was born – Manusya ajayanta.

4. sa heyam iksam cakre, katham nu matmana eva janayitva sambhavati, hanta tiro'saniti; sa gaur abhavat, rsabha itaras tam sam evabhavat, tato gavo'jayanta; vadavetarabhavat, asva-vrsa itarah, gardhabhitara gardabha itarah, tam sam evabhavat, tata eka-sapham ajayata; ajetarabhavat, vasta itarah, avir itara, mesa itarah tam sam evabhavat, tato' javayo' jayanta; evam eva yad idam Kim ca mithunam, a-pipilikabhyah tat sarvam asrjata.

Here, again, we have a fine analogy which tells us that the split part, the other of the 'Being' which became two, was in a very unenviable condition. It did not know what to do. The object does not know what to do at all when it has come from the Supreme Subject Itself. What is this object? It is nothing but the 'other' of the True Subject. They are correlatives of each other. They are brother and sister, come from the same parent. So, the blood of the original parent is found in these two aspects, and they are unable to understand the relationship between themselves. 'A' and 'B', which may be supposed to be the two aspects of the Supreme Being, the split parts, are in a very delicate position. So, 'A' is trying to grab 'B' which is the object of 'A'. 'B' is feeling very disconsolate. 'How is it possible that I be grabbed by 'A' when I am only the counterpart born of the same parent?' The object is afraid of the empirical subject. 'Why should I be possessed like this? Why should I be hunted? Why should I be eaten, swallowed? I come from the same origin from which 'A' has come, and, therefore, I enjoy the same status, as 'A'. It is really indecent on the part of a subject to run after the object, as if the object has no status of its own. But this is what happens.

The object, the other side of the split part, felt delicate in itself and wanted to escape the notice of 'A'. But this 'A' would not leave it like that. It did not keep quiet. It assumed the form which was taken by 'B' for the sake of escaping the notice of 'A'. What is meant by escaping the notice? A taking of another shape. One goes from one place to another place, or changes one's feature. But, 'A' put on the same feature as the feature of 'B,' which was assumed by the latter for the purpose of extricating itself from 'A'. And whatever feature, form or structure was assumed by 'B', 'A' also assumed. Thus, there was a communion between 'A' and 'B', the subject and the object, in all the species of creation, right from the highest celestials to the lowest creatures as ant.

Now, the Upanishad in this section tells us that all things – animal, human, super-human, sub-human – everyone became the effect of this Cosmic Will for creation on account of the irresistible nature of this Urge. It is impossible to resist its force because it is cosmically present and propelling. No desire is capable of being resisted until it is intelligently fulfilled in the way in which the Upanishad will describe further on.

Everything was created by this one Being, up to the lowest of created beings, and all these are the dramatic appearance of that one Being; That becoming the subject; That becoming the object; That becoming the process of the urge called desire – a real drama, indeed. Then what did It feel after having completed this creation? 'I am satisfied'. The director of the drama is very pleased that the

enactment has been well done – beautiful! ‘I have wonderfully worked this creation’. ‘I am all this creation’. There was a Desire, Wish, Urge, to become the All in the multiplicity of forms; and having beheld all these forms as identical with Itself, It was deeply satisfied with the conviction that after all, ‘all this that I have created is Me, and none else’. ‘I am seeing Myself; and even the process of seeing is I alone. It is not that some other instrument is there which becomes the procession of Me as another, in the form of the objects outside. I am the All’. Creation is an inscrutable play which is beyond reason and intellectuality, because reason is the art of splitting things and then uniting things, which is a function that has come about after the process of creation, after the assumption of space, time and causality.

5. so’vet, aham vava srstir asmi, aham hidam sarvam asrksiti; tatah srstir abhavat, srstyam hasyaitasyam bhavati ya evam veda.

So, what did God know? He knew only Himself as all this creation. The, Absolute knew Itself; and that was all. ‘I have become this All, and I am the All. I see Myself as the All, and the Supreme satisfaction is Me only, My own Being’. His Being was His satisfaction. One who knows this truth, becomes highly satisfied as the Supreme Being Himself was in creation. How can we be satisfied, as the Supreme Being Himself was? Provided we can think also as the Supreme Being thought. If we can contemplate, assume the status as the Supreme Being assumed at the origin of things, identifying Itself with all creation, feeling Itself in all forms, if this contemplation could be affected, we, also, can be so happy as the Supreme Being Himself was at the beginning of things; and we shall have all that It had, and all the powers that It wielded. Everything that It was, we shall also be.

The process of creation is complicated. The Upanishad, and scriptures like the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, throw some side-light on the pattern of creation. It is said that God willed to be the many, and suddenly He became the many. That is one theory. ‘Let there be light, and there was light’. He simply willed, and there was everything, all at once. This is a sudden creation of all multiplicity at one stroke, not gradually, stage by stage, one after another. But there is also a doctrine which holds that creation is a graduated manifestation from causes to effects, until it became the lowest of manifestations. There are others who think that there is no contradiction between these two doctrines. Both are true. That is, there was a fiat of God, Isvara; He Willed to be many; suddenly He became the All. But this act of suddenly becoming the All was conditioned by certain factors. What was the type of the All that He became? The variety varies from creation to creation, according to certain theories. The particular shape which the universe takes in a particular cycle (Kalpa) of creation, depends upon the potencies of individuals who are left unliberated at the time of the previous cycle. So it does not mean that every creation is identical with the prior one in every, detail. Though the process of creation, the mould of Primal Impulsion may be the same, the pattern, the shape, the contour and the mode of operation of individualities are not the same.

The Upanishad, here, mentions that creation began in a particular fashion, in an ordered form. The celestials were created first, simultaneously with human beings; then came the creation of plants, and the five elements – Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth. This tallies with the creation theory of certain other Upanishads, also. Agni, Indra, Vasu and Pushan – these are supposed to be the celestials who were created first, representing the presiding principles over the social group that is mentioned afterwards, namely, the spiritual group, the political group, the economic group and the working group. These classifications seem to be in the heavenly region also, and they are supposed to be wherever individuals are. The creation of human beings is, perhaps, simultaneous with the creation of the gods in heaven, as we would be told in other scriptures.

The Puranas go into greater detail and tell us that the One became two in a peculiar way, a detail which we cannot find in the Upanishad here. A little indication of it is given in first chapter of the Manusmriti, also. The One Being produced an image which is called the Brahmanda, or the Cosmic Egg. Here was a complete totality of things. We conceive it as a kind of egg, cosmically – as Hiranyagarbhanda, as Brahmanda. And, this Cosmic Egg split itself into two, which did not affect the unity of the One; these split parts are called, in the Puranas, Manu and Satarupa, the First Man and the First Woman, the Adam and the Eve of creation, one may say. Thus, in the creation, various species were formed. And the species are not confined merely to animate beings, but extend also to inanimate structures or organisms, for there is no such thing as the inanimate, ultimately. All things are a condition of Being which withdraws in different degrees the conscious element in it into Itself, so that there is in matter existence only, minus consciousness, as consciousness has been absorbed into It. In inanimate matter like stone, there is only the existence-aspect of God, not the consciousness-aspect or the bliss-aspect. But in individuals like human beings, there is the existence-aspect and also the intelligence-aspect revealed, but the bliss-aspect is withdrawn, and so men are not adequately happy, in spite of their having intelligence, because, here, *Rajas* and *Tamas* cover the activity of *Sattva* which last is necessary for the manifestation of happiness. Thus is this beautiful creation, whose description goes on to a further detail in the Upanishad.