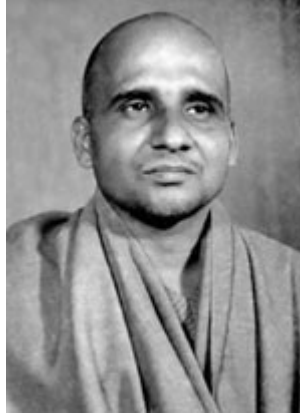




THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

DISCOURSE-24 (22 MARCH 1977)

CHAPTER IV

Second Brahmana (contd)

Now, when the self enters its deepest abode, passing beyond the states of waking and dream, it gets connected with all its natural associates from whom it was disconnected due to its special attachment to the body and its waking individuality. In the waking state we are practically dissociated from all the friends of the universe. We stand alone, unbefriended, due to our intense egoism which identifies itself with the body and assumes a false importance with the erroneous notion that it does not stand in need of anybody's help. This is the principle of egoism, the essence of personality. The universe is a friend, and it is constituted of innumerable types of forces, all of which are our benefactors. But the ego does not want this benefit. It is not intending to take help from anyone outside itself. Nothing can be so unreasonable as this ego. It has no logic except its own, and suffering is the consequence of this sort of dissociation, which is patently seen in waking life. In all the efforts that we make for the purpose of achieving desired ends in life, there is only sweating, toiling and anxiety and a feeling of frustration in the end. It is rarely that people go to bed with a feeling that something worthwhile has been done. The reason is, the tying up of our efforts to the ego which is the ruling principle of the body. The ego cannot succeed, though it does think that it can succeed. This ego is boiled down to an ethereal permeating substance, very very fine and tenuous in the state of dream and even more so in the state of sleep. What happens in this condition of getting down into one's depths, away from the affirmations of the ego and the vehemences of the body, is that the universal *Pranic* energies, forces of Nature themselves become the limbs of one's cosmic body.

The *Pranas* are not only inside our bodies. They are powers which operate throughout the universe. And so, the vital *Prana* that is sustaining the whole world, all creation, becomes part and parcel of one's being, and sustenance comes from all sides, when the ego subsides temporarily. This is what happens when we enter into sleep. It is because of the fact that we dissolve our personality, practically, in sleep and stand open to the reception of energies and powers from outside, that we get up refreshed from sleep, even without dinner, without lunch, without breakfast. Without any kind of nourishing element in sleep, we get up as if we have eaten well. Tired people wake up with a freshness of personality. From where has this freshness come? You have not taken any tonic, any medicine or any food-stuff during sleep. You have only closed your eyes and forgotten yourself. The mere fact of the forgetfulness of yourself has become the source of sustenance and energy to your being. The energy has come not because you had something with you in sleep. You had nothing. The energy has come merely due to the fact that you had forgotten yourself. The forgetfulness of personality is the secret of success. Conversely, the more you affirm your personality, the farther you are from the possibility of success in life. So, the *Pranas* become the wings of the bird of consciousness in the state of sleep, and they become the directive principles.

4. tasya praci dik prancah pranah, daksina dig daksine pranah, pratici dik pratyancha pranah, udici dig udancha pranah, urdhva dig urdhvah pranah, avaci dig avancha pranah; sarva disah, sarve pranah, sa esa neti nety atma agrhyah na hi grhyate; asiryah, na hi siryate; asangah na hi sajyate; asito na vyathate; na risyati abhayarh vai, janaka, prapto'si, iti hovaca yajnavalkyah. sa hovaca janako vaidehah, abhayam tva gacchatat, yajnavalkya, yo nah, bhagavan, abhayam vedayase; namas te'stu; ime videhah ayam aham asmiti.

Tasya praci dik prancah pranah, daksina dig daksine pranah, pratici dik pratyancha pranah, udici dig udancha pranah, urdhva dig urdhvah pranah, avaci dig avancha pranah; sarva disah, sarve pranah: Every direction becomes a vital force for you. Whatever you touch, becomes your friend. And any air that blows from any direction becomes the force that sustains you. The eastern direction becomes the energy that flows to you from the east. It is not merely a direction of space. Empty space does not exist. So, what we regard as empty space or merely a direction in the horizon is not merely that. It is an emptiness only to our incapacitated vision. It is a fullness by itself and aplenty with energy, *Prana-Shakti*. All space is filled with *Prana*. It is not a void or an annihilate. And so, energy begins to flow from the eastern direction; energy begins to flow from the western direction; energy flows from the southern direction; energy comes from the north; from the top and from the bottom. From ten directions, energy enters you the moment you become open to its inflow into your being because of the subsidence of your ego. There is no effort needed on our part to get anything in this world, ultimately. Or, the effort that is necessary is simple, that is, to become open to the inflow of things that are already there, that inundate everything, that

flood all corners and are ready to serve us wherever we are. The universe is never poor. It is always rich. It is never bereft of resources. On the contrary, we seem to be poor, poverty-stricken, emaciated and forsake for faults which are obvious in us, namely, the fault of the ego which affirms its own importance while its value is really zero. Its existence is a strain and great distortion, on account of which it suffers. The ego suffers right from birth to death. It is always in a state of anxiety. But when this ego dissolves, in the deeper abode which it reaches in sleep, leaving the waking condition, the directions themselves become the nourishing and energizing forces. Very strange indeed! You do not require persons; you do not require celestials to come and help you. Even the quarters, even the directions, even space itself will sustain you with the energy which is embosomed in itself. *Sarva disah, sarve pranah*: Every corner, of the world is full of energy, and it is energy that you breathe into your nostrils and withdraw into your own being. Strength incarnate do you become on account of your openness to the inflow of forces outside, once the ego steps aside.

The secret of this is the Atman within, ultimately. Why is it that space should protect you; that *Prana* should flow into you, merely because you descend into the subliminal levels of your own being? The reason is that at the bottom there is the Atman which is the all. It is not the *Prana*, as an independent activity that works. What you call the *Prana*, the energy, the *Shakti*, is nothing but the Atman that works. All energy is *Atma-Shakti*, ultimately, and so it is your proximity to the Atman that gives you the refreshing feeling in sleep. The energy that you seem to imbibe or acquire in sleep, the joy that you feel there, the reluctance to wake up from sleep because of the fullness that you experience there, the feeling of completeness and the feeling of being embraced as it were, by all the friendly forces of Nature, are all due to your proximity to the Atman in deep sleep. That innermost level, you are about to contact in the state of sleep. Why 'about to contact'? You have already contacted it. You have touched it, and it has given you a pleasant shock. That shock is the bliss that you experience in sleep. And what is that principle called the Atman which you are touching in the state of deep sleep, going down below the waking condition of your personality? That, the Upanishad says - *sa esa neti nety atma agrhyah* - nobody can say what it is. No one knows where you have gone in sleep. And it is impossible to say as to how it is that you gain so much of joy and strength from that source. It cannot be described. It can be described only by a negative definition 'it is not this', 'it is not this'. It is not the body; it is not any friend of the world; it is not an object of sense; it is not the *Pranas* as you think of as moving in the physical body; it is not even the senses; not the mind, not the intellect. It is nothing that you can think of. It is something transcendent. That something is therefore other than what you see with your eyes, think with your mind, understand with your intellect; other than anything you regard as existing in this world. It is transcendent Being. So, it can be defined only as 'what it is *not*', and not as 'what it is'. No one knows what it is. We can say, 'it is not this', but we cannot say 'it is this' - *neti nety atma. Agrhyah na hi grhyate*: Who can grasp it? No sense can grasp it; no mind can grasp it; no understanding or intellect can grasp it. It is ungraspable; that is the Atman.

Asiryah, na hi siryate; asangah na hi saiyate; asito na vyathate; na risyati: It is a repetition of what has already been mentioned earlier. It is ungraspable, unattached to things and impossible to contact in any manner in the ordinary sense. It does not come into contact with any *thing*. It has no dual outside itself. It has no sorrow. It never knows what sorrow is.

“Janaka! You have attained to this fearless state,” says Yajnavalkya. *Abhayam vai, janako, prapto’si:* “Fearlessness is Brahman, and you have reached that fearless abode of Brahman. By your enquiries, by your studies, by your contemplations, by your searches, by your absorptions and meditations, you have reached that supremely fearless abode of Brahman, O King,” says Yajnavalkya. *Sa hovaca janako vaidehah, abhayam tva gacchatat, yajnavalkya:* “Great Master! May this fearless abode also be a blessing to you.” Janaka is immensely pleased. So he reciprocates the grace that has been bestowed upon him by the sage by saying: “May that fearlessness be yours too. May that Divine Absolute bless us both. *Yo nah, bhagavan, abhayam vedayase; namas te’stu:* Prostrations to you. I am deeply blessed to hear all this from you. *Ime videhah ayam aham asmiti:* Here is the kingdom of Videha at your disposal, and I am here as your servant.” Everything has been surrendered by the disciple to the Guru. “The kingdom is here; you take it, and you take one also as your slave. This knowledge that you have given to me is more than all this wealth that I have in the form of this empire and my own personal self.”

Third Brahmana

THE LIGHT OF MAN IS THE SELF

1. *janakam ha vaideham yajnavalkyo jagama: sa mene: na vadisyati. atha ha yaj janakas ca vaideho yajnavalkyas cagnihotre samudate, tasmai ha yajnavalkyo varam dadau: sa ha kama-pra’snam eva vavre, tam hasmai dadau. tam ha samrad eva purvah papraccha.*

Such is the glorious teaching. But the teaching is not complete even now. It goes on. Yajnavalkya’s instructions to King Janaka unravel mystery after mystery. On a previous occasion when Yajnavalkya met Janaka, the former thought that he would not speak, that he would keep quiet. “I have spoken enough,” he thought. It is said that there was a time when there was a discussion between Janaka, Yajnavalkya and other students on the subject of the worship of *Vaisvanara*, as the Universal Fire, *Agnihotra*, which is described in detail in the Chhandogya Upanishad. Janaka was well-versed in this art. He was a meditator on *Vaisvanara*, and every question that was posed before Janaka was answered by him promptly then and there. Yajnavalkya was highly pleased with the knowledge of Janaka, and said, “Ask for a boon.” Then Janaka said, “May I be permitted to ask questions whenever I please; whenever I want to ask.” That is all the boon he asked for. He should be permitted to ask questions whenever it was his pleasure.

And so Janaka was blessed with *Kama-Prasna* by the sage Yajnavalkya, which means to say, Janaka had the freedom to ask questions whenever they occurred to his mind. So Yajnavalkya could not refuse to teach the king whenever requested.

2. yajnavalkya, kim-jyotir ayam purusah iti. aditya-jyotih, samrat, iti hovaca, adityenaivayam jyotisaste, palyayate, karma kurute, vipalyetiti. evam evaitat, yajnavalkya.

Because of the boon that he had received from sage Yajnavalkya, that he could ask questions, Janaka again asks some questions. Here is the beginning of an important philosophy. Janaka asks: “What is the light which illumines this person?” In this human being, what is the light which illumines itself and illumines others? What is the power depending on which the person works? Ultimately, it is a sort of illumination, an awakening, a knowledge, which can be regarded as ‘the light’. Now, what is this light? How do you work in this world; with the help of what? What is the aid that you have in this world which enables you to perform your function - *yajnavalkya kim-jyotir ayam purusa iti*? Yajnavalkya said: “Well, the simple answer to this question as to what is the light with the help of which people work in this world is that the sun is the source of all light.” He gave an immediate, open and simple answer. “It is due to the light of the sun that people perform actions in this world. If the light of the sun were not to be there, activity would be impossible. So your question is answered.” What is the light with which the people act in this world, perform their functions here? The light of the sun, is the answer. *Aditya-jyotih, samrat, iti hovaca, adityenaivayam jyotisate, palayate, karma kurute, vipalyetiti, evam evaitat, yajnavalkya*: It is due to the existence of the light of the sun that people move about, perform their activities, and appear to be contended. Janaka agreed that this is so indeed.

3. astam ita aditye, yajnavalkya kim-jyotir evayam purusa iti. candrama evasya jyotir bhavati, candramasaivayam jyotisaste, palyayate, karma kurute, vipalyetiti evam evaitat, yajnavalkya.

But when the sun sets, when the light of the sun is not there, what is the light, with the help of which people perform their functions? That is another question which follows the simple answer which Yajnavalkya gave. *Astam ita aditye, yajnavalkya, kim-jyotir evayam purusa iti*: When the sun sets, and there is darkness everywhere, what is the light, with the help of which people act? Then Yajnavalkya said; the moonlight is the only support for them. When the sun is not there, the moon is there. With the help of moonlight, people may work. *Candrama evasya jyotir bhavati, candramasaivayam jyotisaste, palyayate, karma kurute, vipal yetiti. evam evaitat, yajnavalkya*: All actions are performed by the moonlight if the sunlight is not there.

4. *astam ita aditye, yajnavalkya, candramasy astam ite, kim-jyotir evayam purusa iti. agnir evasya jyotir bhavati, agninaivayam jyotisaste, palyayate, karma kurute, vipalyetiti. evam evaitat, yajnavalkya.*

But if moonlight is not there, if sunlight also is not there, what is light, with the help of which you will work? That is the third question - *astam ita aditye, yajnavalkya, candramasy astam ite, kim-jyotir evayam purusa iti. Agnir evasya jyotir bhavati*: “Fire is the light then.” You light a fire if there is no sun and no moon, and with the light and the warmth of the fire that you burn, you may be comforted, and you may do your work.

5. *astam ita aditye, yajnavalkya, candramasi astam ite, sante agnau, kim-jyotir evayam purusa iti. vag evasya jyotir bhavati, vacaivayam jyotisaste, palyayate, karma kurute, vipalyeti, tasmad vai, samrad, api yatra panir na vinir jnayate, atha yatra vag uccarati, upaiva tatra nyetiti. evam evaitat, yajnavalkya.*

But if fire also is not there, what is the support then? Sun has set, the moon has set, fire also is not burning, for some reason. Then, what is your light, and what is your support? How would you sustain yourself and do your duties? *Astam ita aditye, yajnavalkya, candramasi astam ite, sante agnau, kim-jyotir evayam purusa iti*: When everything goes, and no light is there at all, no torch, not even stars twinkling in the sky, everything is pitch darkness, how do you communicate with people? How do you know where what is? By sound, by speech. “Who is there?” “Are you here?” “I cannot see anything, everything is dark,” people start saying thus when all lights are off. When somebody says; ‘I am here’, ‘it is this’, ‘it is that’, then by the sound of the speech of the person, you locate where what is. So Yajnavalkya says: “When the sun sets, when the moon is not there, and fire does not burn, by sounds and by speech people communicate their ideas with one another. Merely by speech, they can work if everything else fails.”

6. *astam ita aditye, yajnavalkya, candramasy astam ite, sante agnau, santayam vaci, kimjyotir evayam purusa iti. atmaivasya jyotir bhavati, atmanaivayam jyotisaste, palyayate, atmanaivayam jyotisaste, palyayate, karma kurute, vipalyeti iti.*

But suppose there is nobody around you, and nobody speaks, no sound is coming forth, then how will you act? There is nobody around you; no sound comes; there is no gesture of any kind, externally; you cannot locate anything; everything is dark; sun has gone; moon has gone; fire does not burn; what is the light then? What will you do at that time? Your own self is the light; there is nothing else afterwards. You guide yourself, by yourself. You have a special sense in you. You may call it a sixth sense. Apart from the five senses, we have a sixth sense in us by which we act when everything else fails. It is a kind of inward illumination which begins to reveal itself when everything else fails as a support. That light is our own self. Why is it that we should wait for the time till everything

else has failed, before the light within manifests itself to guide us? Is it necessary for the sun to go, moon to go, fire to go etc., in order that we may know that we have a light within us and that we can be a light to our own selves?

Ordinarily, there are external temptations and stimulations from outward sources. The light within, gets attached to these stimulants from outside. It may be sunlight, it may be any object of sense. Our selves get absorbed in the objects outside and become totally dependent on externals. We appear to have some sort of an independence and a capacity to exist by ourselves, only when everything external fails. Normally, we feel that we require many external appurtenances to sustain us from outside. We require a bungalow; we require many other facilities to exist; we require friends and servants; we require food and water; we require so many things. Without these things, we feel, we cannot live. But if nothing of this kind is there, still we will exist. And that capacity to exist, when everything goes, reveals itself only when everything goes, not before, because of the dependence and the hope that the self pins upon the objects of sense outside, due to their presence. That you have a light of your own; that you have a worth of your own, that you have a status of your own, you cannot realise as long as you are dependent on things outside. We look like nobodies as long as we are just one in the crowd. But we are not really one in the crowd; we have a status of our own. But that status is never known to us due to our sense of dependence, a habit of hanging on to something else, which we have cultivated right from childhood. We have been brought up in an atmosphere of dependence. Always, we are depending on somebody or something - on parents, on teachers, on society, on bosses, on money, on wealth. All sorts of things are there on which we hang for our support. But there can be circumstances when we are deprived of all supports. When we are deprived of every kind of external assistance, the self that we are; the strength that we are; the status that we have, comes to our relief and begins to act. It is impossible to imagine what that light is and what that strength is. We have got maximum power within us. We are mines of strength. We are not poor weaklings as we appear to be. We appear so on account of certain defects in our personality. One of the defects is the habit of depending on things; the other defect is our intense desire for objects of sense. Every desire draws energy from the body, from the *Pranas*, the senses and the mind, and pours it upon the objects which we are contemplating. We get depleted of all strength due to contemplation of objects. Secondly, there is also an inward feeling that we cannot exist without these objects. So, for these reasons the light within gets stifled and smothered and it is not seen. It is like a light inside a bushel, as they say, and its existence remains undiscovered. *Atmaivasya jyotir bhavati, atmanaivayam jyotisaste, palyayate, karma kurute, vipalyeti iti*: You depend on your own self when everything else goes. This is what Yajnavalkya says. Your self is your light; your self is your knowledge; and your self is your strength; your self is your sustenance. There is nothing except your self when everything else fails.

But what is this self? You are telling us that the self is the ultimate support, light, strength etc. What exactly do you mean by this 'self'?

THE DIFFERENT STATES OF THE SELF

7. *katama atmeti. yo' yam vijnanamayah pranesu, hrdy antarjyotih purusah sa samanah sann ubhau lokav anusancarati, dhyayativa lelayativa, sa hi svapno bhutva, imam lokam atikramati, mrtyo rupani.*

Katama atmeti, is the question. *Katama atmeti, yo'yam vijnanamayah pranesu, hrdy antarjyotih purusah*: You ask me, "What is this Atman which is your light, which is your support and which is your power?" It is that which twinkles through your reason and understanding and intellect. It does not fully manifest itself in you under ordinary conditions. It peeps through your intellect. You can infer the existence of this light through the activities of the understanding. You cannot directly perceive it. You can only infer its being. It cannot be perceived because it is the very self that perceives. It is the seer, therefore it cannot be seen. You have already been told this elsewhere in the Upanishad. The Atman cannot be contacted by any ordinary means, but it can be inferred. If the light of the intellect is to be regarded as an essential property of the intellect only, how is it that we seem to be full and complete in every respect in the state of sleep when the intellect does not act? How is it possible for us to be so refreshed and so happy in a condition where the means that we employ, called the intellect, for purposes of satisfaction, does not operate? What is that which we employ in waking state for the purpose of gaining out desired ends? The means that we employ is the intellect. It is the ruling principle in our waking life. When that ruling guide, the great factor of dependence, our reason itself, fails in sleep, naturally everything should get abolished. But that does not happen to be the case. Something in us continues sleep. We do not experience in sleep any sense of weariness, fatigue, exhaustion and sorrow. On the other hand, we *wake up* into the sorrow when we regain consciousness of the world outside. It is the world outside that causes sorrow to us, not the state of the absence of consciousness of the world outside. It is impossible that the sleep condition can be abolition of all values. Therefore, it must be a false belief which takes for granted that values are there only in the waking world. It is a futile attempt the part of people to run after things in the waking life, under the impression that values are deposited in the objects of sense outside. It is the impossibility to gain what we seek in waking life that drives back to our own self in sleep.

Every day we are tired by the search for that which we cannot get in the world of objects. Every day we are experimenting with different objects sense and trying to see if we can discover in that object, that which we really want. The whole of the life of a human being is nothing but a series of experiments with things for the purpose of discovering whether what is required is there or not. But the experiment always fails. The days that we pass thus, wear away our senses, wear out our energies, and then we go back for rest to our own home, as it were, which is the state of sleep. Just as people go to the factory and office, get tired of work, and go back to their homes in the evening, so, as it were, the self wanders in this desert of *Samsara*, in the world outside, searching in the mirage for a little water

to drink and not finding it there, goes back to its mother in the state of sleep and says, 'I have found nothing there; I have come back'. And the Mother embraces the returned child. The great Father embraces you. The very source of friendship, affection, all vitality, energy and support, becomes your real friend in the state of sleep. How can you regard sleep as a state of unconsciousness? How can it be inert as it is generally taken to be? If it is not inert, if it is consciousness, naturally it should be a wider source of that consciousness than what we discover in the little modicum of its expression in the form of this intellect in the waking state.

This Atman is manifest partially in the intellect, *Vijnanamaya*, and in the senses - the eyes, ears etc. It is the activity of the self that is responsible for the activity of the senses. It is the energy of the Atman that is ultimately responsible for the working of all the faculties, intellect included. *Sa samanah sann ubhau lokav anusancarati, dhyayativa lelayativa, sa hi svapno bhutva, imam lokam atikramati, mrtyo rupani*: Fatigued with all that one sees in the waking up world; fed up with all the search that one makes in the waking life, one goes back to the other world as it were, where the roots of being are to be discovered and contacted. The self, after its daily wandering in the world of *Samsara*, in the waking life, goes to the state of dream where it hopes to be free from the trammels of sense, which are veritable forms of death. The Upanishad says here - *mrtyo rupani* - the things that you see in waking life are forms of death. They are there like devils there to devour. They are not your supports. The senses mistake the objects for supports, for sustenance. But the objects are destroyers because they sap the energy of the senses. They drain away the strength of your personality, and make you empty as it were, of all that you regard as yourself. Ultimately you get nothing from this world. Inasmuch as the objects outside draw out the senses of the person, and become responsible for his death and rebirth, they are called forms of death - *mrtyo rupani*. Transcending this world of death which is waking life, the individual self, with the instrument which is the mind, goes to the world of dream, and then passes on into the state of deep sleep.

This is the daily routine of the human personality, but due to some mysterious obstruction which prevents the recognition of oneself in deep sleep, there is a return of the mind once again to the waking life. It wants again the repetition of the same old routine of getting fatigued with the objects of sense due to its not finding what it seeks there, and then again going back to the state of sleep. Not discovering consciously what the state of deep sleep is, there is a return once again to the waking condition. This cycle continues, and this is *Samsara Chakra*, the wheel of earthly existence.