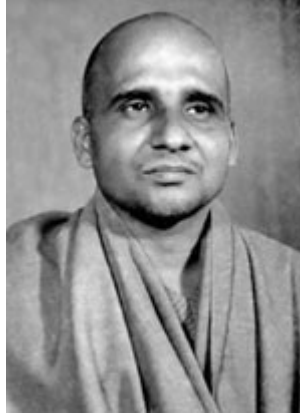




THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

DISCOURSE-29 (4 APRIL 1977)

CHAPTER IV

Fourth Brahmana (contd)

The deepest longings of the human individual are supposed to determine his future. *Sa yathakamo bhavati, tat kratur bhavati, yat kratur bhavati, tat karma kurute, yat karma kurute, tat abhisampadyate.* 'Whatever is your deepest desire will decide the nature of your determination, of the way to act.' The deepest longing of the soul, the desire of the mind or the urges of one's personal nature will influence the will, the volition. The will is nothing but the exoteric function of the desire within. 'As the desire is, so the will is; as the will is, so is the action. And as is the action, so is the consequence, or the result thereof.' Everything seems to be in our hands. Our weal and woe, our future, our destiny is actually operated upon by the deepest mechanism that is inside us. The switchboard of the cosmos, as it were, seems to be inside our own hearts.

Now, the question is: 'What is the cause of bondage?' No one really longs for it. Deliberately, one will not enter the prison house, get caught and be put to hardship of any kind. Why then comes this bondage, when no one likes it? What we reject is exactly what we do not like, but what we do not get is what we are longing for, namely, freedom. The entire teaching the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad has given us up to this place is a philosophical explanation of the circumstances which have led to the bondage of the soul and which make emancipation difficult. The desire of the human being is said to be the cause of bondage. How could such a desire arise which would involve a person in bondage? The reason behind this erroneous urge is a kind of misconception. This subject we have already studied in detail in earlier sections dealing with what the Upanishad calls *Grahas* and

Atigrahas, the senses and their corresponding objects. The senses crave for objects; they search for things of the world; they hunger for contact, and are restless without these achievements which they are deeply longing for. The senses grasp the objects; the *Grahas* catch the *Atigrahas*; and there is a corresponding action from the side of the objects also. There is a tremendous influence exerted upon the senses by the objects which the senses long for. There is a deep desire of the senses to come in contact with objects but the activity does not merely end with this unilateral movement. It is a bilateral action, action and reaction proceeding from the subject and the object simultaneously. So, the more the desire for the objects, the greater the strength of the pull of the objects on the subject. We are put to greater and greater subjection by the character of the objects on account of the desire for them. The greater is the desire, the weaker is the self. And so, the weakness of the self puts the self to further subjection and ultimately places it under the thumb of the objects. It is as if you are going to be drowned in an ocean - a wave dashes over your head, you go into the ocean, and when you are trying to come up, it dashes you once again, so that you are hit again and again until you cannot come out. Such are the objects. It is not merely this. There is a far more unfortunate situation or circumstance involved in the desire for objects. It is not one object that we desire. We actually do not know what it is that we want. When we pin our faith in any particular sense object, we are only experimenting with the capacity of that object to satisfy us. We do not know which object is really capable of rendering that satisfaction. Our whole life is spent in such experimentation. We go to the objects again and again under the impression that they are the things that we need, and for the time being there is a feeling that perhaps this is the one that we actually wanted. The experimentation takes some time, and during this period of experimentation the desire goes on increasing and getting intensified. The object also promises a tentative satisfaction on account of the misconceived affection which the senses have for the object. But no object can satisfy any sense, because the senses are mere agents of the desires that exist inside. The senses themselves are not responsible for our bondage. They are used as tools for the manifestation of an urge within us, but unfortunately this urge or desire is incapable of satisfaction.

The desire within us is also a confusion. It is not a desire for an object. What we ask for is not a thing of the world. It is something different, but we are not able to understand what it is actually. The understanding is muddled. There is a complete overturning of the cart, as it were, when the intelligence in the individual begins to operate through the senses demanding objects. The real asking of the individual is for permanent satisfaction and freedom. There is a piety and a holiness, if you say, so involved in the activity of the individual. But the instruments used are inadequate for the purpose. The senses cannot contact the object for which their deepest desires are. What we ask for is an infinity of possession and an infinity of satisfaction and a freedom. Such a thing cannot be communicated to us through the senses because they are externalised agents. We have bad friends in the senses, so they mislead us. They take us to objects and tell us, 'Here is what you wanted.' But that is not really what you wanted. Just as we can be taken along bylanes by misleading guides in a big city, the senses put us

off the scent. And then, due to a misconceived longing for an appearance rather than for a reality, which we begin to really believe in, there is a perpetual effort on the part of the mind, through its will, to maintain the duration of the contact with the object for as long as possible. Now the object changes colour like a chameleon and reveals its incapacity to satisfy us at different intervals of time. We get caught in a confusion of circumstance with which we die. The body perishes. Our life is very short. We have not got enough time to experiment with everything in the world. By the time we get fed up with even a few, the body also goes. But the desire has not gone. And the confused desire, which has not been enlightened as to the true nature of what it asks for, remains in that condition even at the time of death. The actions which were performed earlier due to this misconception, having produced results correspondingly, bind the soul once again, so that the body which was shed has gone, but a new body comes. This is the psychology or philosophy of rebirth, the whole difficulty being a misconstruing of the ultimate cause of desire that arises in our minds.

6. *tad esa sloko bhavati:*

*tad eva saktah saha karmanaiti lingam mano yatra nisaktam asya;
prapyantam karmanas tasya yat kim ceha karoty ayam. tasmal lokat punar
aiti asmai lokaya karmanaiti nu kamayamanah; athakamayamanah,
yo'kamo niskama apta-kama atma-kamah, na tasya prana utkramanti,
brahmaiva san brahmapyeti.*

Tad esa sloko bhavati: 'In this connection, a verse has been cited.' *Tad eva saktah saha karmanaiti lingam mano yatra nisaktam asya; prapyantam karmanas tasya yat kim ceha karoty ayam. tasmal lokat punar aiti asmai lokaya karmane:* 'Attached to the sense objects, longing for things of sense, the individual sheds the body, casts off this mortal coil, takes nothing with itself.' When we leave this world, we take nothing with us. All the associations, physical and social, are cast aside as if they do not belong to us. We go singly, independently, alone and unbefriended without any association, any appendage whatsoever. But we take something with us. Like an encrustation that has grown upon us, the forces of *Karma* cling to our subtle body which alone departs when the physical body is shed. *Lingam mano yatra nisaktam asya:* 'The mind which is the ruling principle in the subtle body carries with it the result of its actions, the *Karma-Phala*,' which clings to it like a leech. It will not leave it, wherever it goes. In some other Upanishad it is said that a calf finds its own mother even in the midst of a thousand cows by moving hither and thither in the herd; as it goes to its own mother though the cows may be thousands in number, likewise our *Karma* will find us wherever we are. We may go to the highest heaven, but the *Karma* is not going to leave us. We may go to the nether regions; it is not going to leave us. We may go to any corner of creation, but this is not going to leave us. It will find us. Even as the laws of the government which has long arms try to catch us wherever we are, the laws of the cosmos catch that individual who has been responsible for the particular action. *Tad eva saktah saha karmanaiti:* 'Attached, the soul leaves this body; and together with the *Karma*, it goes.' Where does it go? 'Where the mind has found its habitation, there it goes.' Where is the

habitation or the location of the mind? 'Those features of the world, those conditions or that type of atmosphere where its unfulfilled desires can be fulfilled, there the *Linga-Sarira*, or the *Suksma-Sarira*, or the subtle body, gravitates.' Like a rocket the subtle body moves and finds its place. The cosmic law operates in such a just and inexorable manner that the subtle body is taken to the exact spot where it can fulfil all its wishes. Then what happens further?

Prapyantam karmanas tasya: 'Those *Karmas* which have to be exhausted by experience in that particular place find their completion through experience. Whatever we have done here, the result of it we experience there' - *yat kim ceha karotya ayam*. Then, what happens again? *Tasmat lokat punar aiti*: 'From that world you come again'. To which place do you come? *Asmai lokaya karmane*. 'To this world you come for the purpose of further actions'. Why do you do further actions? For further bondage! You engage again in action because your desires have not been fulfilled and the residue of the *Karmas* has to be further undergone by experience.

The desires get enhanced in their intensity the more they are fulfilled. The fulfilment of a desire is not the way to freedom from desire. On the other hand, the reverse is the case. Desires become, fire-like, more and more strong. They are in fact said to be the fuel of satisfaction. As the popular saying goes - *na jatu kamah kamanam upabhogena samyati*; *havis ksnavartmeva bhuya evabhivardhate* - fire is never satisfied by any amount of clarified butter that you pour over it. It can swallow numerous quintals of clarified butter. The more butter you pour on it, the more ferocious does the fire become. So is desire. *Iti nu kamayamanah*: 'This is the fate of the one that desires'. This is the destiny of the individual who desires and longs for things or the objects of sense.

Now, I will tell you something which will give you some peace of mind and some satisfaction to your soul. The Upanishad shifts its emphasis to another subject. If a person does not desire, then what happens? *Athakamayamanah*: Now I speak to you about 'one who has no desire' for objects of sense. *Athakamayamanah yo'kamo niskama apta-kama atma-kamah, na tasya prana utkramanti, brahmaiva san brahmapyeti*: 'A person who does not desire, who is freed from desires, whose desires have gone, whose desires have been fully satisfied, whose desire is only for the Self', what happens to such a person? Now, this gradation mentioned here is very interesting. Only if your desire is for the Self will your desires be fulfilled, not otherwise. You can become *Apta-Kama* only if you are *Atma-Kama*, not otherwise. Desire cannot be satisfied unless it is directed to the Self and to nothing else whatsoever. If your desire is for anything other than the Self, it is not going to be fulfilled because you are asking for that which is not there. Naturally you will not get what is not there. So, it is an *Atma-Kama* only who becomes *Apta-Kama*; the *Apta-Kama* in turn becomes *Niskama*; the *Niskama* becomes *Akama* and *Akama* becomes *Akamayamana*. So, one who has desire centred in the Universal Self is one whose desires are all fulfilled at one stroke, which in other words means that all desires have left him. Why have all desires left that person? Because all desires have been fulfilled, the reason being

that the desire itself has become merged in the Universal Self. Desires leave that person whose desires have been completely satisfied on account of their being centred in the *Atman*. Such a person has no desires because they have gone. Such a person is designated as *Akamayamana*, one who does not desire. If a person is to shed his physical body in that circumstance, without any desire remaining except for the desire of the Universal Being, what happens is that his *Pranas* do not move hither and thither in search of a new location; they do not move. The subtle body does not depart in space and in time; on the contrary they, the *Pranas*, and the senses dissolve like bubbles in the ocean then and there - *na tasya prana ukramanti. Brahmaiva san brahmapyati*: 'He has been contemplating throughout his life on the Absolute Self. He gets identified with the Absolute Self then and there'. This is called in the terminology of the Upanishads and the Vedanta philosophy *Sadyamukti*, instantaneous liberation. It is an immediate salvation of the soul, which is attained on account of freedom from desire that has arisen on account of desire for the *Atman*. This is the glorious destination of the spiritual adept who spends his life in contemplation on the Universal Being.

7. tad esa sloko bhavati:

yada sarve pramucyante kama ye'sya hrdisritah, atha martyo'mrto
bhavati, atra brahma samasnute
iti tad yathahinirvlayani valmike mrta pratyasta sayita, evam evedam
sariram sete. athayam asariro' amrtah prano brahmaiva, teja eva; so'ham
bhagavate sahasram dadami, iti hovaca janako vaidehah.

Tad esa sloko bhavati: In connection with this, a verse is cited in the Upanishad. *Yada sarve pramucyante kama ye'sya hrdisritah, atha martyo'mrto bhavati, atra brahma samasnute*: This verse occurs in other Upanishads, also. 'When all the knots of the heart are broken asunder due to freedom from desire, when the birds of desires whose nest is in the heart fly away and there is nothing left inside the heart, then the mortal becomes immortal at once.'

Mortality is a condition that is imposed upon the spirit due to the encrustation of desire. It is in its essential nature. We are not mortals, essentially. Our essential nature is that of immortality, deathlessness, eternity, that of a durationless Being. If we were really mortal, we would not be capable of becoming immortal. There is no such thing as one thing becoming another thing. What a thing is, that it shall always be. We are not essentially bound beings. We are free souls. And we are going to assert the freedom of our real nature by uncovering it through the practice of Yoga. The mortal does not become immortal, really. The immortality that has been hidden under the cover of mortality gets revealed or manifested. That is actually what happens when it is said that one becomes immortal. It is by transcending mortality that one reaches immortality

Yada sarve pramucyante kama ye'sya hr̥di sritah: Sarve - 'All desires must depart'. There should be no desire for anything - not merely for a thing, but even for a certain condition of the mind, a particular circumstance or even an enjoyment of a celestial nature. All these desires also should go. Only then there is real freedom. Then, at once the mortal conditions are cast aside and the immortal nature becomes manifest, like the sun shining behind the clouds in the sky is seen when the clouds dispel and the whole firmament becomes clear at once. *Atha martyo'mr̥to bhavati, atra brahma samas̥nute*: Where do you attain Brahman? Not in some distant place. It is not that you have to move from place to place for the reaching of Brahman. It is not a graduated ascent. It is not movement in space at all, because it is not a place as such. It is not a geographical location. It is a circumstance of consciousness. It is an unravelling of the Truth within. It is an attainment here itself. Here, under your very nose, lies that which you ask for. That is where lies eternity.

Iti tad yathahinirvlayant valmike mr̥ta pratyasta sayita, evam evedam sariram sete. athayam asariro amrtah prano brahmaiva, teja eva; so'ham bhagavate sahasram dadami, iti hovaca janako vaidehah: 'When a freed soul attains its original status, liberation is attained. The body is cast off, as a snake sheds the slough of its body. Lifeless does the body stay here, while the Spirit attains its Universal nature'. The body is not in any way going to limit the Universality of the Spirit when that freedom of consciousness is attained. And what one experiences on the shedding of the body, after the attainment of this knowledge, is the state of Brahman, the Absolute, which is radiance superb. That Eternal Light is the goal of life. This is the message, this is the instruction, this is the lesson which sage Yajnavalkya imparts to emperor Janaka. Janaka is delighted beyond measure. In order to express in a small way the great happiness that he experienced after receiving this lesson, the lesson for the freedom of the soul, *so'ham bhagavate sahasram dadami, iti hovaca janako vaidehah*, he offers the gift of a thousand cows once again to the great Master Yajnavalkya, as he has been doing whenever he felt immensely satisfied with the lesson that was imparted to him.

8. tad ete sloka bhavanti:

anuh pantha vitatah puranah; mam spr̥sto' nuvitto mayaiva, tena dhira api yanti brahmavidah svargam lokam ita urdhvam vimuktah.

This path of the Spirit is very subtle. It is not like a beaten track or a national highway where you can drive closing your eyes. Very subtle is this path. *Anuh pantha*, says the Upanishad. The path to the Eternal is subtle, invisible to the eyes, incapable of being grasped by the senses, impossible to understand with the reason or the intellect. Going even by the subtlest of logic, it would be difficult for us to know the way to the Spirit. It is so subtle. Our intelligence, our logical understanding is capable of grasping only objects of sense, and not the way of the Spirit. And so, it is not the senses that lead us to the Spirit. It is not even our understanding or the intellect that is going to be of any help to us. It is a subtle path which is spread out everywhere. Very interesting indeed! It is everywhere

and yet it is so subtle. That which is everywhere should be a vast thing, naturally. It should be capable of perception by everyone, if it is everywhere. But it is incapable of perception, notwithstanding the fact that it is everywhere. It is everywhere, and yet, cannot be seen by anyone. It is *vitatah* - 'all-pervading', 'most ancient' - *puranah*, and yet, very subtle indeed - *anuh pantha vitatah puranah*.

Mam sprsto'nuvitto mayaiva: One feels great joy at the time of the liberation of the soul. The Upanishad tells us here that one begins to feel: 'After all, I have reached the goal of life. After all, the destination has come. I have been crying for ages together through all these incarnations that I have passed through, and I have reached, after all. I have contacted the Eternal. Great joy indeed is this that after all I have come to my goal - *mam sprsto' nuvitto mayaiva*. *Tena dhira api yanti brahmavidah svargam lokam ita urdhvam vimuktah*. It is this path that has been trodden by others too who followed this very way. This path that I have trodden is the path of others, too. It is the way that has to be trodden by everyone.

There is only one way to the Spirit, and that is the way which has to be walked by every individual because the destination is the same. Though the path is spread out everywhere, the movement towards this goal is of a uniform nature. The discipline that is necessary, the practice that is required of us, and the meditations that we have to undergo are of a uniform nature ultimately, though they appear to be different in the initial stages. Finally, it is a single mode of the mind, a single attitude of conduct that is responsible for the liberation of the Spirit. 'All have passed through this single gate, and I am also in the same place at that gate alone, the strait gate as they call it, and every one in the future too will move through this path alone.'

9. *tasmin suklam uta nilam ahuh, pingalam, haritam, lohita ca
esa pantha brahmana hanuvittah tenaiti brahmavit punyakrt taijasas ca.*

Variegated is this path, some people think, but uniform is this path, really, in its essential nature. On account of the difference in the temperaments of people, the way to liberation appears to be manifold, just as we have what is known as the fourfold path of the practice of Yoga. It is actually not four parts of Yoga, but a single part that appears to be fourfold on account of the difference in our endowment or capacity. It is white or it is blue or it is coloured, we say, as it were, according to the nature of our minds and according to the temperaments of our individualities. Sometimes there is an emphasis laid down by us through the reason, or the intellect, sometimes through the will, sometimes through the emotion, or awakened faculty. But, the uniformity of this path comes into relief when we consider that it is not any single faculty alone that is going to be of help to us in our liberation, but a blossoming of the whole personality.

In the beginning, a particular faculty is resorted to for the purpose of meditation. But, this single faculty which we resort to eventually draws the entire

personality behind it. It is not a single faculty that operates in meditation, not the intellect alone, not the emotion alone, nor the will alone, but all put together converged into a single focus of attention. When you begin, the paths look variegated. You argue within yourself, you do *Vichara*, you ratiocinate and you finally come to a conviction about the way that you have to tread in the practice of Yoga. The preponderatory faculty may be rational, volitional or emotional, and according to that particular preponderance of nature you emphasise a particular attitude of your mind in the practice. But once this attitude is taken up as the sole guide, it draws along the entire force and energy of your personality so that when you finally get absorbed in meditation, it matters mighty little whether you are a devotee of the emotional path, of the ratiocinating path, or of any other path. You get absorbed; that is all. The whole being is one with the object.

Certain others think that the various colours mentioned in this verse of the Upanishad represent the various divine lights, sounds, and touches, etc., which one experiences on account of the operation of certain nerve currents within us. In a certain other portion of the Upanishad we were told that there are thousands of nerve currents within us, all which appear to be coloured on account of a serum that passes through them which takes on different hues due to the presence of different qualities or properties, *Sattva*, *Rajas*, etc., in varying permutations and combinations. The lights and sounds etc., that we experience in meditation are caused by that effect of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* in us. We are not wholly *Sattvic*; wholly *Rajasic* or wholly *Tamasic* we are not. None of us is constituted entirely of one quality. We are an admixture of one, two or three in different proportions. According to the proportion of admixture of these properties of *Prakriti* - *Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas* - we have different experiences in meditation. We sometimes see yellow, sometimes white or blue or green, etc., hear sounds of various types and intensities, feel touches or various other sensations, all mentioned in the Yoga Shastras. They are not indications of any final achievement, but only symbols of our having attained some success in deep concentration of the mind. One should not mistake visions of colours and auditions, etc., for achievement of Brahman, *Brahma-Sakshatkara*, or liberation. They are only symbolic of your concentration of mind. You have succeeded to some extent in fixing your attention upon the object, and so a particular quality of yours has come to the fore. When it acts, it produces these experiences. They are sort of light posts which only indicate what is happening to you on the way, and are not signs that you have actually reached the goal.

‘This *Pantha*, this path is the one that is trodden, ultimately, by all seekers of liberation. The knowers of Brahman, through philosophical reasoning, by study of scriptures and by deep meditation as well as those who perform unselfish actions in the world - all attain to this single goal of life.’