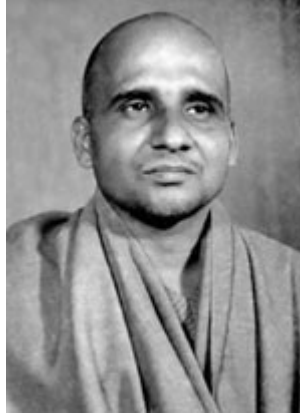




THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

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DISCOURSE-34 (26 APRIL 1977)

CHAPTER V

Fifth Brahmana

THE REAL EXPLAINED

Among the various methods of meditation, a popular one is what is known as the resolution of the effect into the cause. This is a very popular method prescribed in many other scriptures. It is easy to understand too and stands to reason. A suggestion that this method can be adopted in meditation is made in the following section. The method is a contemplation on the process of retracing the steps that are taken in the process of evolution. Evolution is how things come from causes and shape themselves into effects. We have to understand the theory of evolution, creation, manifestation and how the one becomes the many, gradually, by stages. The same stages have to be now contemplated backward. The grossest appearance of manifestation is this earth plane. We individuals inhabit this earth. We have all come from certain substances emanating from the earth. We can thus be resolved back into the earth. The body, for instance, which is constituted of the essence of food is resolvable into the earth element because the substance of food is the substance of the earth. Thus, anything that is in the body, physically, is subject to return to its cause, namely, the earth, as actually happens when the body is cast off at the time of death. The physical constituents return to their original abode which is the earth. The earth has come from water, water from fire, fire from air, and air from ether. And ether is itself an effect; it is not an ultimate cause. It is the first manifestation of *Hiranyagarbha*, *Virat* and *Ishvara*. They are the causes of even this space. The gods, the fourteen worlds, the different levels of existence, all stages of being are manifested in the *Virat*.

And all this manifestation which is tripartite, *Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat* is also in turn resolvable into the Supreme Brahman. That alone is. Hence, even these effects are nothing but the cause appearing in some form. The perception or the effect is not in any way a bar to the contemplation of its relation to the cause which is the true essence, or the contemplation of the existence of the cause in the effect. One of the methods of weaning the senses from the objects of perception is by resolving the very tendency of the senses to move towards objects. The objects are converted into the characteristics of their causes, and these causes are also the causes of the body, the individuality and the senses themselves. Whatever is the cause of our own personality is the cause of the world outside. When one thing is resolved into that cause, the other thing also goes. So, when we contemplate the resolution of the effect into that particular cause, the senses for the time being get cooled down, calmed down, and it becomes possible for the mind, then, to pay attention to the nature of that cause, alone, of which both the object outside and the subject inside are manifestations. Some such thing is stated in this section of the Upanishad.

1. apa evedam agra asuh, to apah satyam asrjanta, satyam brahma, brahma prajapatim, prajapatir devan. te devah satyam evopasate, tad etat tryaksaram: sa-ti-yam iti. sa ity ekam aksaram; ti ity ekam aksaram, yam it ekam aksaram: prathama uttame aksare satyam, madhyato'nrtam; tad etad anrtam ubhayatah satyena parigrhitam satyabhuyam eva bhavati. naivarn vidvamsam amrtam hinasti.

In the beginnig, what was there? There was an undifferentiated, unmanifested, indistinguishable something. *Asit idam tamo bhutam aprajatam alaksanam apradartyam avijyan prabhutam sarvogata*: It was as if there was a Cosmic sleep. It looked as if it was darkness. It was of the characteristic of darkness because there was no light of sense perception. There was no one to see anything. That which was to see and that which was to be seen, both were resolved into that which is now designated here as apparent darkness. How can you designate it except as absence of light, because we always define light as the instrument of perception and perception does not exist there. There were no objects because there was no world. There was not this manifestation. It was like a Cosmic ocean. It was like water spread out everywhere, not the waters that we drink, but a symbolic term applied to designate the undifferentiated condition of matter, the potential state of Being, *Mula-Prakriti* in its essentiality where the *Trigunas - Satva, Tamas, Rajas* - are in a harmonised state. There is *Gunatamya Avastha*; there is a harmonisation of the three Gunas, so that you do not know what is there. Everything is there and yet nothing appears to be there. Such a condition of homogeneity of potential being is usually called, in philosophical symbology, 'Cosmic Waters'. They are called *Narah* in Sanskrit, and one who is sporting cosmically in these Universal Waters is called *Narayanaya*. So *Isvara* Himself is called *Narayanaya*. *Narayanaya* is that Being who sleeps, as it were, in the Cosmic Waters of the potentiality of being. Such was the state of affairs originally. *Apa evedam agra asuh*: So, in all these cosmic, cosmical and cosmogonical descriptions in the scriptures of different religions we are told that

in the beginning there was a universal state of liquidity, as it were, a symbolic way or putting into language the condition of homogeneity of the Ultimate Cause of the universe.

Ta apah satyam asrjanta, satyam brahma, Brahma prajapatim: That condition becomes the precedent to the manifestation of something which we call the Creator of the universe. The Creator of the universe or the Divine Will which projects this whole universe is a blend of this universal potentiality and the great Absolute. That particular state where the Absolute appears as a Will to create or manifest is, for all practical purposes, the original creative condition. That is called Satyam because there the true state of affairs can be seen. The original condition of all those things that are to be manifested are to be found there in their originality, in their archetypal being. It is something like the ideas present in the mind of a painter. The baby has not been projected yet on the canvas, but what will appear on the canvas or a cloth outside is already present in his mind. That ideation which is to project itself externally in the shape of visible objects; that is *Isvara*; that is truth for all practical purposes; that is Brahman itself. It is called *Saguna Brahman*, or *Karya Brahman*. It is the manifested form of Brahman - *satyam brahma*. That creates *Prajapati*, *Hiranyagarbha*, the subtle form of things which as an outline of the future universe to be manifested is visible. In the beginning it is only in a form of thought; only an idea in the Cosmic Mind. Now it is appearing outside as a bare outline like the drawing with a pencil which the painter sketches on the canvas before the actual painting is started. The idea of the painter is visible now in the form of outlines in pencil. They have been projected into a grosser form, yet they have not taken a complete form. That *Hiranyagarbha* becomes *Virat*, the projected universe. The whole painted picture of the universe in its completed form is what is called *Virat*.

From that Being, all the gods come - *devah satyam evopasate*. What are these gods doing? They are contemplating their own origin. The first manifestation in individual form are the celestials. The celestials are supposed to contemplate a Universal Sacrifice. This Universal Sacrifice contemplated in the minds of the gods is the subject of the *Purusha-Sukta* of the Veda. It is a Universal Sacrifice, a sacrifice performed without any kind of external materials. All the materials necessary for the sacrifice were present in the minds of the gods, says the *Sukta*. The gods performed the sacrifice through the materials culled from the body of the *Purusha* Himself, who is the Supreme Sacrifice. 'So the *Devas* performed this *Upasana* in the form of meditation on their own cause, the *Virat*, by attuning themselves to its Being. They contemplate the *Satya*, or the truth which has manifested itself as *Isvara*, *Hiranyagarbha*, and *Virat*' - *devah satyam evopasate*.

Truth is an object of meditation. Here in this Upanishad we have got a very strange suggestion given for contemplation on truth. Just as we were asked to meditate on the literal connotation of the letters of the word *Hridaya*, or heart apart from the meditation on the essence of the heart which is a higher form of meditation, here we are asked to meditate on the letters of the word *Satya*, or

truth, not the meaning, not the implication of the word *Satya* which is a different subject altogether, but on the grammatical implication of the letters of the word itself.

Satya is a word in Sanskrit which means truth. How is this word formed? The Upanishad has its own etymological description of this word. *Tad etat try-aksaram*: 'This word *Satya* is constituted of three letters, of three syllables into which it can be resolved. *Sa ity ekam aksaram*: The first letter is *Sa*. The second letter is *Ti* - *ti ity ekam aksaram*. The third letter is *Ya* - *yam iti ekam aksaram*. *Sa, ti, ya* - these are the three letters which form the word *Satya*'. Now, symbolic is the interpretation of the meaning of these three syllables. The Upanishad tells us that truth envelopes everything and there is that particular character about truth which is encompassing everything. It is present everywhere, in every part of this world, and what you call untruth is a meagre frail existence in the middle of this all-consuming, all-enveloping Being which is truth. Or to put it in more plain language, the phenomenon that we call this creation which is sometimes called the unreal or the relative is enveloped by the real or the neomenon. The neomenon is real; the phenomenon is the unreal. But the phenomenon is enveloped by the neomenon. Reality encompasses the whole of existence. It is present everywhere, it covers untruth from all sides as if to swallow it and to give it only the character of an appearance. Even what you call appearance or phenomenon has an element of reality in it. So the Upanishad says that truth is present even in untruth. The Absolute is present even in the relative; the neomenon is present even in the phenomenon; reality is in the appearance also. If reality were not to be in the appearance, there cannot be any appearance at all because appearance must also appear. If the reality element were not to be present in appearance, appearance will not appear even. Then there would be no such thing as appearance. The relative reality that we attribute or conceive to what we call appearance is due to the presence of a degree of reality in it. So, reality is present everywhere. It covers unreality from both sides, from every side. Likewise, is the import of the syllables of this word '*Satya*'. *Sa* is reality; *ya* is reality; the middle one '*ti*' is unreality. It is a purely etymological derivation and so we must be able to enter into the mind of the teacher of this Upanishad to understand why he conceives the meaning of the word '*Satya*' in this manner.

The commentators tell us that the middle syllable '*ti*' is called phenomenal, a form of death or unreality because this letter '*ti*' occurs in such words as *Mrtyu*, '*Anitya*' and such other words which denote unreality or phenomenality. So the Upanishad apparently suggests that those who cannot conceive the magnificance of truth, as it is in itself, may do well to contemplate at least the etymological significance of the word, just as those who do not understand what the heart is and cannot meditate on the essence or the meaning of the heart may at least do well to contemplate the etymological meaning of the word '*Hrdya*', as was suggested earlier.

Prathama uttame aksare satyam: The first and the last letters of the word '*Satya*' may be contemplated as the periphery of this universal manifestation of

truth; the circumference as it were; the aspect of reality which covers unreality from both sides, within as well as without. *Satya*, or truth is inside as well as outside. It is only in the middle that it does not appear to be. But even this appearance is made possible only on account of the preponderance of an element of *Satya* in it, says the Upanishad. *Prathama uttame aksare satyam. Madhyato'nritam*: 'Only in the middle there is an apparent unreality'. *Tad etad anrtam ubhayatah satyena parigrhitam*: 'From both sides untruth is covered by truth' as it were, overwhelmed by truth and flooded by truth. So even where you see impermanence, there is permanence hiddenly present. Even where you see transiency, there is eternity manifested. Even in temporality, there is the presence of Absolute Being because even the conception, the sensation, the perception etc. of what is not real is made possible only because of the presence of the real. So, on either side there is truth and in the middle only there is a phenomenal experience which is regarded by us as untruth.

Satyabhuyam eva bhavati: After all, truth is supreme. The whole of creation is inundated with truth. So, in the worst of things and in the least of things; even in the lowest category of existence which we dub as untruth wholly, truth is present. And the Upanishad tells us in conclusion that 'it is abounding in truth'. You cannot have a spot in space or a nook or a corner in creation or even an atomic element in creation where this truth is not present.

Naivam vidvamsam amrtam hinasti: If you can know this fact that truth is supreme and that the ultimate cause is present even in the least of its effects; that the Supreme Absolute is present entirely even in the lowest degree of its manifestation, even in the grossest of its forms and in the most external self of objects; if you can be in a position to contemplate the presence of truth in this manner, untruth cannot harass you. There cannot be trouble to that person from untruth, which means to say that 'the world cannot cause any pain to that person, any sorrow to that person, any kind of grief to that person who is able to feel or visualise the presence of truth in those things which otherwise are usually called untruth or unreality'.

This is a meditation on the abundance of truth in all creation, the presence of God in all things, the 'practice of the presence of God', in the words of Brother Lawrence. This is one of the symbols, one of the methods prescribed for meditation. Very abstract it is to conceive. We require to stretch our imagination to be able to conceive the presence of reality even in the appearances which are philosophically called unreal. Thus you may meditate, and you will find that by deep contemplation and meditation in this manner, you will be able to visualise the presence of God in creation, of truth in objects and of the principle of *Moksha*, or liberation even in this world of *Samsara*, or bondage.

2. tad yat tat satyam asau sa adityah. ya esa etasmin mandale puruso yas
cayam daksine'ksan purusah. tav etav anyo'nyasmin pratisthitau;
rasmibhir eso'smin pratisthitah pranair ayam amusmin, sa

yadotkramisyan bhavati. suddham evaitan mandalarn pasyati. nainam ete
rasmayah pratyayanti.

So, we have completed the description of one type of meditation. Now we are told of another kind. How do you see an object? With the help of sunlight. There is thus a connection between the sun and the eye. The light outside and the eye within are connected in a mutually correlative manner. That truth which is in the sun is present also as truth in the eye that perceives. There is a coordinating element between the sun and the eye. The deity of the eye which is the sun, presiding over the eye, has an internal as well as an external connection with the eye. 'The *Purusha* in the sun is also the *Purusha* in the eye. The truth in the sun is also the truth in the eye'. *Sa adityah. ya esa etasmin mandale puruso yas cayam daksine'ksan purusah. tav etav anyo'nyasmin pratisthitau*: The sun connects itself with the eye by the rays that he projects. The rays emanate from the sun and impinge on the retina of the eye. Then the eyes begin to see the brilliance of the light of the sun, and the same light when it falls on an object of sense becomes responsible for the perception of that object through the eye. But, it is not merely the light of the sun that is responsible for this perception of the object outside. There is something inside us without which perception would be impossible. The conscious element within us that peeps through the eyes and receives the impressions of light emanating from outside brings about connection with the form of light outside. It may appear for all precise purposes that light is inert and unconscious and that we are conscious; that the perceiving individual is conscious and that the light that is responsible for the perception of an object is inert, physical. The Upanishad at least does not believe in an ultimate physicality of things. Even the so-called physical objects are ultimately spiritual in their nature, because logic and ratiocination compel us to accept that dissimilars cannot come together and coincide. Consciousness cannot come in contact with that which is dissimilar in its character. Light and consciousness cannot come in contact with each other if consciousness were something different in nature from the light through which perception is made possible. If light is wholly material, unspiritual, or non-spiritual, bereft of the element of consciousness, consciousness cannot come in contact with it. Then there would be no such thing as the perception of an object. So the Upanishad says that the idea that light outside is physical and not endowed with consciousness is erroneous. There is a *Purusha* in the sun as well as in the eye. The consciousness that is responsible for the action of the eye in the perception of an object, the consciousness which actually becomes aware of the presence of an object, is connected with the *Purusha*, or the consciousness in that which emanates the light, or projects the light. 'The *Purusha* in the sun is the *Purusha* within you' - *Daksine'ksan purusah tav etav*: That which is within him, that which is within me, that which is within you and that which is within the sun - they are one. If the two are not one, there would be no connection between light and eye. The connection between the light and the eye and the correlativity of the action of light and the action of the eye implies that there is a similarity of structure, similarity of being, similarity of essence and reality between the sun and the eye. 'So the sun influences the eye

through his rays and the individual that perceives objects connects himself or herself with the sun through the sense-organs, particularly the eye’.

Rasmibhir eso'smin pratisthitah pranair ayam amusmin: The connection between the sun and the eye is explained, and this connection is supposed to be through the rays of the sun. Here in this context, the Upanishad makes a remark. When one is about to die he will not be able to see the sun. The rays will not impinge upon the eye and the eye will not receive the light of the sun. *Yadotkramisyan bhavati suddham evaitan mandalam pasyati:* ‘The orb of the sun will appear not to emanate any ray at all at the time of the departure of the soul from this body’. That is the absence of perception. One will not be able to see things when the light rays do not fall on the retina of the eye. What actually happens is something like a mystery. The sun is continuing to emanate the rays even at the time of the death of a person. He does not withdraw his rays, but the eyes cannot receive these rays. The eyes will not be able to contact the rays of the sun and there would be no such correlative activity between the *Purusha* within and the *Purusha* without. When a person is unable to see the rays of the sun, then they say he is about to die. It is an indication of impending death. ‘I cannot see’ - that means death is coming.

Now, certain interpretators of this passage say that this is a description of ordinary death where anyone will be in this condition, whatever be the spiritual state of that person at the time of death. But others are of the opinion that this is a description of those people who are to pass through the passage of the sun in the process of gradual liberation, or *Krama-Mukti*, when the sun is to embrace you, when sun is to give you passage. This interpretation seems to be the correct one as it is corroborated and substantiated by certain passages that follow. The sun will give you passage. There are about fourteen stages mentioned in the Upanishad along which the soul has to pass. One of these stages is the sun, and the sun is therefore regarded as a very important halting place of the journeying soul on the path to liberation by *Krama-Mukti*. So, at the time of the departure of the soul of that person who has already been meditating in this manner, meditating on the identity of the *Purusha* in the sun with the *Purusha* within; who has been performing *Surya-Upasana* in a spiritual sense, looking on the sun as the gateway to *Moksha*, he will be given an indication of the time of the departure from the body by the sun himself, who will be luminously present before the mind’s eye but his rays will be withdrawn. You have a similar passage in the Isavasya Upanishad towards its end where it is expressed in the form of a prayer offered by the dying soul to the Supreme *Purusha* in the sun. “Withdraw thy rays. Let me see thy true being, O’ Supreme *Purusha* in the sun,” says the dying man in this prayer of the Isavasya Upanishad. So, here again we are given to understand some such situation taking place at the time of the departure of the soul when it is to be liberated and not reborn. What happens at that time? The orb of the sun is seen to glow without any kind of emanation which is supposed to be a hint from the sun that he is ready to receive you - ‘Yes, you can come’. *Suddham evaitan mandalam pasyati. nainam ete rasmayah pratyayanti:*

‘There will be only a luminosity without any kind of projection of rays’ to that person who is to depart and achieve liberation.

This is an explanation by the way. The point made out in this section is that to meditate on the sun is not a gazing at the sun physically but a contemplation on the spiritual essence of the sun as the glorious energizer, sustainer and the producer of all living creatures on earth, an emblem of God Himself. *Surya prakaksh devata*: Surya, or the sun is regarded as the emblem of God in this world, because none can be so glorious as he, none so indispensable as he, so resplendent as he, and so complete in every respect as he. This is spiritual *Surya-Upasana*.

3. *ya esa etasmin mandale purushah, tasya bhur iti sirah; ekam sirah, ekam etad aksaram; bhuva iti bahu; dvau ete aksare; svar iti pratistha; dve pratisthe dve ete aksare. tasyopanisd ahar iti; hanti papmanam jahati ca, ya evam veda.*

Ya esa etasmin mandale purushah, tasya bhur iti sirah: You can expand this meditation on the sun by certain further elucidations thereof. This verse that follows gives some more details of the same meditation. The sun is supposed to be the deity of the *Gayatri Mantra*, which is the principal *Mantra* of the Vedas. And the essence of the *Gayatri* is what is known as the *Vyahrti*. *Bhur, Bhuva Svah* - these three symbols, letters or words are regarded as the quintessence of the *Gayatri Mantra*. Now, one can contemplate on the literal meaning of these *Vyahrtis*, not necessarily their philosophical or spiritual meaning. The literal meaning of the *Vyahrtis*, *Bhur, Bhuva, Svah*, the essence of the *Gayatri Mantra* is also indicative of a meditation on the *Purusha* in the sun. What sort of *Purusha* is this in the sun? You can imagine the *Purusha* in the sun in this manner through the *Vyahrtis*. *Purusah tasya bhur iti shah; ekam sirah*: The word *Bhur* is representative of all physical creation. You can imagine that the whole of physical creation is comprehended in the symbol *Bhur*. ‘This is the head of the *Purusha* or the being in the sun.’ You can contemplate in this manner. *Bhur* is one letter; and head also is single - *ekam sirah*. *Ekam etad aksaram*: ‘The letter is one and the head also is one’. That is the similarity between the two. *Bhuva iti bahu*: *Bhuva* is the astral or the atmospheric region which is above the earth. This word *Bhuva* consists of two letters, *Bhu* and *Va*. They can be identified with the two arms of this *Purusha*. ‘The arms are two and the letters of the word *Bhuva* are also two’. That is the similarity between the two, the *Purusha* and the letters of the word - *bhuva iti bahu; dvau bahu, dve ete aksare*. Now, you have the third word of the *Gayatri*, *Svah*. *Svar iti pratistha; dve pratisthe*: You can imagine *Svah* as the legs of the *Purusha* on which his whole body is supported. ‘Two are the legs; two are the letters of the word, *Svah* - *sv, ah*’. That is the similarity between the letters of the word and the legs of the *Purusha*. So, the head, the hands and the feet may be imagined in meditation as representing or as represented by the meaning of the three words in the *Vyahrtis* of the *Gayatri Mantra*, *Bhur, Bhuva* and *Svah* - *dve pratisthe dve ete aksare*.

Tasyopanisad ahar iti: Upanishad means the 'secret meaning'. What is the secret meaning of this *Mantra - Vyahrti*. Its secret is also the secret of the *Gayatri Mantra*. There is one word in the *Gayatri Mantra* which is supposed to be indicative of the destruction of all things. *Bhargha* is the word. There is a word called *Bhargha* in the *Gayatri* which means the destroyer of all things; and the character, the capacity, the function of the sun is to destroy all things. 'Day' that is the effect of the rise of the sun is also indicated by a word which is suggestive of destruction of sins - *ahar*. In Sanskrit, *Ahar* means daylight and daylight emanates from the sun himself. Now '*Ahar* is a word that is derived from the root, *hr* which suggests the destruction, of sins'. 'So the sun is the destroyer of sins, even as the *Vyahrtis* which are the essence of the *Gayatri Mantra* are capable of the same effect. So, how do you contemplate the sun? As a Supreme *Purusha* or a divine being who is the deity of the *Mantra* of the Veda of the *Gayatri*, of the three *Vyahrtis* and as the supreme destroyer of sins. He who contemplates on the *Purusha* in the sun as the destroyer of sins, destroys all sins. No sin can touch him. *Hanti papmanam jahati ca, ya evam veda*: 'One who knows this becomes pure like the sun and free from sins in every respect'.