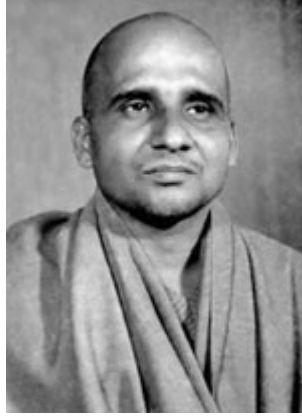




THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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CHAPTER V

Fifth Brahmana (contd)

Passage four is identical with three, except for the word '*Aham*', which replaces the word '*Ahar*'.

The present theme is an attempt on the part of the meditator to unify the objective side with the subjective side. A symbol that is used in this way of meditation is the correspondence or the coordination between the sun and the eye; between the *Purusha* in the sun and the *Purusha* within; between the God above and the soul inside. These two are en rapport; they are coordinated and they represent the universal or the cosmic side and the individual side respectively. One of the points specially mentioned in this particular method of meditation is that while the sense of selfhood or 'I' ness is the main characteristic of the conscious subject, that characteristic is absent in the object. We cannot feel a sense of selfhood in the sun or for the matter of that in anything outside us. The sense of 'I' is identified only with the conscious subject, the *AHAM* or what is regarded as the perceiving individual. It does not occur to any individual at any time that this sense of 'I' ness or the sense of selfhood can be present in others also. Though it may be accepted as a logical conclusion and a tenable position in philosophy, it is not directly cognized in daily activity. The selfhood in others is never recognized. It is not recognized even in God Himself. He is held as an object of contemplation, a kind of form cosmically conceived, fit to be meditated upon by a conscious subject. The 'I' or the self refuses to be externalised. And so, taking this stand the Upanishad tells us that the conscious subject or the *Purusha* within is characterised by the feeling of '*Aham*' or 'I' whereas the attributes which

are superimposed on the sun are anything and everything except the sense of selfhood. So, the term used here is *ahar iti tasyo panisad*. The secret name that we give to the *Purusha* in the sun is *ahar*, the destroyer of sins, the magnificent *Purusha*, the radiant being and so on and so forth, but never do we say that it is the self because the self can only be one. You cannot have two selves. The difficulty of recognising the selfhood in others is that we cannot accept the presence of two selves. It is repugnant to the sense of 'I' that there be another 'I'. So, instinctively we refuse to recognise the presence of 'I' or self in other people and other things, notwithstanding the fact that we can philosophically accept that there is intelligence in others, that there is selfhood in others and that there is a status each one maintains for one's own self, not in any way inferior to the one that is attributed to one's own self. This is a philosophical, rational conclusion, but instinct speaks a different language. The instinct says that the 'I' is the conscious being, that which perceives, that which understands. But that which is understood, that which is thought of, that which is cognized or perceived, that which is ahead of me, in front of me as an object, it has a different name altogether. That which I see with my eyes is not a subject; it is an object; how can I attribute the term 'I' to it? This meditation tries to overcome this difficulty by establishing an inward coordination between the external *Purusha* - the *Purusha* in the sun, and the *Purusha* within, which means to say that the universality of the *Purusha* in the sun should be capable of being identified with the selfhood of the *Purusha* within. This is the secret of this meditation - *anam iti tasyopanishad*. The selfhood that we attribute to our own self should be identified with all the realities that we see in external things. Now, this point is elucidated further on in a very important meditation that is hinted at in the following *Mantra*.

Sixth Brahmana

THE DIVINE PERSON

1. manomayo' yam purusah, bhah satyah tasminn antar-hrdaye yatha vrihir
va yavo va. sa esa sarvasyesanah, sarvasyadhipatih, sarvam idam prasasti
yad idam kim ca.

'This Supreme *Purusha* who is conceived by the mind, meditated upon by the mind and embodied as the Universal Mind on one side and the individual mind on the other side, is radiance is essence'. *Bhah* means lustre, light, luminosity, and the characteristic of this *Purusha* or *Satya*, or truth. Reality is the nature of this *Purusha*, which means to say that what you call the *Purusha*, within or without, is indestructible. That which is subject to transformation or destruction is not called Reality. So, when it is called *Satya*, or real, it is understood that it is free from the trammels of change of any kind. Now, this *Purusha* is 'the smallest of the small and the biggest of the big, the greatest of the great' - *ano' ranian mahato mahian*. Nothing can be smaller than that, and nothing can be larger than that. Nothing is nearer than that, and nothing is more distant than that. If

you are trying to locate it somewhere outside, you are not going to catch it, however much you may pursue it, even as you cannot succeed in grasping the horizon. It is apparently in front of us, but is not capable of being grasped. It recedes as we proceed onward in its direction. It is inward; it is also outward. *Tad antarasya sarvasya*: 'It is inside everything' and yet it is outside everything. It is inside everything because of the fact that it is the Self of all beings; it is outside everything because it is beyond the limitations of the body-individuality. It is that which envelopes the whole universe, and because of this universality of character it is very distant to you. Who can know the boundaries of the cosmos. It is very far, and yet very near. Because of the expanse which it is, because of the largeness of its comprehension, because of its infinitude, because of its omnipresence it is very distant. But, because it is inseparable from what we ourselves are, it is the nearest. 'It is smaller than a grain of rice; it is smaller than a grain of barley - so small!' It is smaller even than these illustrated examples, 'but it is the Lord of the whole universe - *sarvasyesanah sarvasya dhipatih*: It is the controller of all things, and it rules everything' - *sarvam idam prasasti*. One who knows this truth also shall become like this - *yad idam kim ca*.

It is not possible to rule or to become the lord of anything or to become the controller of all things unless one becomes tuned up to the reality of all things. The great point that is driven home to our minds in the Upanishads, especially, is that power is not that which we exercise externally. It is an influence that we exert internally, that is called power. An external coordination and organisation may look like a power, but it is capable of disintegration. Anything that is of a complex nature can decompose itself into its components. Everything is complex in its nature including the constitution of the body. This body is complex; it is made up of different ingredients. So is every type of organisation whether it be social or cosmic. Everything shall come to an end. It is not possible for one thing to control another on account of the absence of coordination between them. It is impossible to exert any kind of influence on a totally external being, because externality is the character of a total isolatedness of existence. If an external being is to be the subject of another who rules it, that power which is exerted on the subject will not last long because the self which exerts the power on the external is different in character from the thing upon which this power is exerted. That which is the Self and that which is recognised as the Self in all, alone can be the source of power. So power is not a force that emanates from one being to another, it is the recognition of one's own being in another. So, ultimately no real power is conceivable or practicable unless the Selfhood which is recognised in one's own self is felt and realised in the object also. That which is the smallest is supposed to be self, this is called the *Atman*. And that which is the biggest is *Brahman*. These are the two great terms in the Upanishads. The two are identified. The extreme of the cosmic is identified with the extreme of the microcosmic. It is the subtlest and the smallest because it is the deepest in us. It is the principle that precedes even the function of the understanding in us. Even the intellect is external to it, though for all practical purposes we may think that the intellect is the internal faculty with which we think and understand. We have a being within which faintly manifests itself in deep sleep when our presence is felt, yet the intellect does not

function. The endowments of the psychic being, intellect, feeling, will etc. are all absent in deep sleep, and yet we do exist. So, we can exist independent of psychological functions. Hence, even the subtlest of rationality in us is external to the deepest in us, which is the *Atman*. Because of the depth and profundity of its reality, it is called subtler than the subtle, deeper than the deep, smaller than the small. It is not small in a mathematical or an arithmetical sense. The smallness that is attributed to it is on account of its subtlety. And the largeness that is attributed to Brahman outside is due to its infinitude.

So, that which is deepest in us, the subtlest *Atman*, or Self in us is the same as the Cosmic Ruler, *Isvara*, or *Brahman*. Thus can meditation be practised. Consciousness which is designated as the *Atman*, the subtlest and the smallest, is indivisible. It cannot be partitioned; it cannot be conceived as having parts within itself; it has not any internal distinctions. This is an essential characteristic of consciousness which is the *Atman*. Whatever be our conception of the magnitude of this consciousness in it, it has to be accepted that it is incapable of partition or division. The consciousness that there is something outside oneself would not be possible if our consciousness were limited to our own body. How could we be conscious of the limitation of anything or the boundary set to anything unless consciousness exceeds the limit of that boundary. We cannot know that something is finite unless we know that something is infinite, because the very awareness of finitude is an implication that we are subconsciously aware of the being that is infinite. Thus we can contemplate the *Atman* which apparently is located in our own bodies as if it is finite, but is infinitude; is consciousness; is *Chaitanya*. Consciousness cannot be finite because the very consciousness of finitude is an acceptance of the fact that it is infinite. Hence, consciousness must be infinite, and this infinitude of consciousness is called *Brahman*, the Absolute. Hence the *Atman* is *Brahman*. In this manner one can meditate.

Seventh Brahmana

BRAHMAN AS LIGHTNING

1. vidyud brahma ity ahuh; vidanad vidyut, vidyaty enam papmanah, ya evam veda, vidyud brahmeti, vidyud hy eva brahma.

Here you have another *Upasana* prescribed. We can meditate on the flash of lightning, the radiance which projects itself through the clouds when there is a clap of thunder or a heavy downpour of rain. It is a mystery by itself; it is a great beauty. You can wonder at the beauty of nature by the perception of the flashes of lightning and the thunder that you hear during the pouring of rain. And the beauty of nature in the monsoons is, of course, something which needs no explanation. One can contemplate even the beauty of nature as representing God's beauty itself. 'The flash of lightning can be taken as an object of *Upasana*', says the Upanishad. And in meditation we are supposed to have flashes of this kind. We have visions, and visions come like flashes of lightning. So, the

similarity between the inward flashes that we experience in meditation and the outward flashes of lightning in the sky is that they are both flashes. With this comparison in mind, one can contemplate the flash of lightning as an object, so that through this finite symbol of the flash of lightning one can raise one's conception to the larger one which is the flash of reality itself in meditation.

Just as a flash of lightning pierces through the darkness of the cloud, so is this flash of consciousness which breaks through the darkness of ignorance. *Vidanad vidyut*: 'That which breaks through darkness of any kind, that which dispels that atmosphere where we cannot see anything, that can be regarded as *Vidyut*, or lightning'. Just as lightning outside dispels darkness caused by the clouds or by the absence of the sun in the darkness of the night, so this lightning or flash of consciousness within, in meditation, dispels ignorance in respect of one self as well in respect of others.

There are two kinds of ignorance - the external and the internal. In technical language, we call external ignorance *Sthula-Avidya* and internal ignorance *Mula-Avidya*. *Sthula-Avidya* is the ignorance that covers the objects outside on account of which you cannot perceive them. The perception of an external object is made possible by the flash of an external light, but the internal being cannot be seen like that unless the *Mula-Avidya*, or the root ignorance is dispelled. It can be done only in deep meditation. So, the capacity to dispel darkness is common to both lightning inside and outside. With this commonness in mind, one can meditate on the flash of lightning, *Vidyud brahmeti*, 'where lightning is *Brahman*'.

Vidyud brahma ity ahuh; vidanad vidyut, vidyaty enam papmanah: 'This light of consciousness breaks through not only the darkness of ignorance, but also breaks through the fortress of sins'. All sins are destroyed when this flash takes place inside, just as all the errors that you commit in dream are incapable of production of any effect when you wake up. Even the worst of sins that you commit in dream have no effect when you wake up, merely because you have woken up, not that you have done something else to counteract the sins in dream. It is not one action that counteracts another action. It is mere illumination that counteracts all actions. This is the case with any sin, any action for the matter of that which is otherwise regarded as binding. No action can bind if illumination is there, just as no action in dream can bind you once you have woken up from the dream. But if you have not woken up, you have to reap the consequences thereof as the law of *Karma* operates. No law of *Karma* can operate where there is awakening from the realm where this law operates.

So, it is this flash, this resplendence of consciousness which destroys not only the darkness of ignorance, but also sins of every kind. 'One who knows this secret is afraid of nothing. He becomes a flash to every one else. He becomes a light to others. He illumines the lives of other people also'. Thus meditate, therefore, on 'lightning as *Brahman*'. This is one *Upasana*.

Eighth Brahmana

THE VEDA SYMBOLISED AS A COW

1. *vacam dhenum upasita tasyas catvarah stanah; svaha-karo vasat-karo hanta-karah svadha-karah; tasyai dvau stanau deva upajivanti, svaha-karam ca, vasat-karam ca; hanta-karam manusyah, svadha-karam pitarah. tasyah prana rsabhah, mano vatsah.*

Now the Upanishad goes to another kind of meditation, the meditation which requires the identification of the Veda with a cow. 'The Veda is like a cow', says this Upanishad. What is this cow? The cow has four udders, or nipples through which the milk oozes out. Likewise is the Veda with four nipples. It exudes milk, the milk of knowledge, just as the milk of nourishment is given by the cow through its nipples. This is a symbol. If you cannot think of anything abstract, you can think of your own cow and compare its function of secreting milk with the capacity of the Veda to secrete knowledge. *Vacam dhenum upasita*: The 'Veda is to be meditated upon as the cow'. *Tasyas catvarah stanah*: 'There are four nipples for the Veda, like those of the cow'.

Svaha-karo vasat-karo hanta-karah svadha-karah: These are all peculiarities of the application of Vedic *Mantras* in sacrifices. When a *Mantra* is chanted in a particular sacrifice, it is concluded with a particular colophon. This colophon, or completing part of the *Mantra* is fourfold. *Svaha*, *Vasat*, *Hanta* and *Svadha* - these are the ways in which a *Mantra* is concluded when it is utilised for the purpose of offering oblations in a sacrifice. *Indra-e-svah* etc. means, these oblations we give to Indra. According to the nature of the recipient, the colophon varies. To some it is *Svaha*, to certain others it is *Svadha*, *Hanta* or *Vasat*.

Tasyai dvau stanau deva upajivanti: 'Two nipples of this cow are connected with the gods, the celestials in heaven'. *Svaha-karam ca, vasat-karam ca*: When any oblation is offered in the sacrifice towards gods, then *Svaha* or *Vasat* is the word used to complete the chant of the *Mantra* in the sacrifice. So, '*Svaha* and *Vasat* are the two nipples of the cow of the Veda which have correspondence with the gods in heaven', in paradise. *Hanta-karam manusyah*: 'But, when an offering is made to a human being, the word *Svaha* or *Svadha* is not used. What is uttered is *Hanta*'. You offer anything to a human being by recitation of a particular *Mantra*. For instance, when a sacred offering is given to a guest, a particular chant is taken resort to and it concludes with *Hanta*. It implies a sentiment of sympathy or readiness to serve or to give hospitality to people who have come as guests - *hanta-karam manusyah*. *Svadha-karam pitarah*: But if you offer any oblation to the ancestors, the forefathers, not to the gods, not to the human beings, then the *Mantra* ends with *Svadha*. So, '*Svadha* is the term used for *Pitrs*'. All the *Mantras* in the Veda are of this kind. Either they are used for offering to *Pitrs*, to human beings or to the gods. So, these four ways of chant

endings are like the four nipples of the cow of this great reservoir of wisdom which is the Veda.

Tasyah prana rsabhah: The cow is associated with a bull. The bull is always with the cow and cow is with the bull. So, this cow has a bull with it, and 'this bull is the *Prana*'. Just as the ox, or the bull is responsible in some way for the secretion of milk from the cow, *Prana* is responsible for the chant of the *Mantra*. It is the *Prana* that actually comes in the form of the chant. If the *Prana* is not to operate there will be no chant of the *Veda*. So, in certain parts of this Upanishad we have been already told that *Veda* is nothing but *Prana* manifest in some form. A particular modulation of the voice is the *Veda*, and what is modulation of the voice but a particular manifestation of *Prana* itself. So, you can say that it is the *Prana* that vibrates through the *Mantra* of the *Veda*. The force of the *Mantra* is nothing but the force of the *Prana*, ultimately. Hence the bull of the *Veda* is *Prana* and the *Veda*-cow is taken care of, protected and enabled to secrete the wisdom or the Vedic knowledge by its very presence. *Mano vatsah*: 'The calf is the mind'. If the calf is not there, the cow will not yield milk. It will give a kick. What is this cow? The *Veda* is the cow. Who is the bull? The *Prana* is the bull. Which is the calf? The mind is the calf. Just as the connection of the calf with the udder of the cow becomes responsible for the secretion of the milk through the udder, so the thought generated in the mind at the time of the chant of the *Mantras* of the *Veda* becomes responsible for the manifestation of knowledge. If the mind is absent, knowledge will not manifest itself in spite of the chant. So, this is a beautiful combination for the purpose of contemplation. The bull, the cow and the calf, the *Prana*, the *Veda* and the mind - these three have to be combined in a blend as one organic force for the purpose of the realisation that we expect through these processes of contemplation.

As we have already observed, these are methods of meditation. These are symbols. They do not represent in themselves the goal that is aspired for through meditation. Just as the road is not the destination, the symbol is not the goal. But the road is necessary to reach the destination. Likewise, the symbol is necessary to drive the mind along this path of contemplation to the realisation of the ultimate goal.

Ninth Brahmana

THE UNIVERSAL FIRE

1. ayam agnir vaisvanaro yo'yam antah puruse, yenedam annam pacyate yad idam adyate; tasyaisa ghoso bhavati yam etat karnav apidhaya srnoti, sa yadotkramisyan bhavati, nainam ghosam srnoti.

Now, the Upanishad tells us that we can also contemplate on the great *Vaisvanara* present in our own selves. The great *Vaisvanara*, the Supreme Being, performs a unique function in our own bodies as the fire that digests food.

The gastric fire is God Himself working. It is a mysterious force within us. It is connected with a particular *Prana* within us called *Samana*. It is centred round the navel in the stomach. What that heat is, we cannot understand. From where does this heat come? It generates great energy in us and digests any kind of food that we take. You know very well that a corpse cannot digest food. The corpse also has a stomach; it has a mouth; it has a tongue; it has teeth; it has an alimentary canal; it has intestines; it has everything. But the corpse cannot digest food. What is lacking in the corpse? Some peculiar thing is lacking in it. That thing is what we call life. You may say it is *Prana*. It is *Prana*, no doubt, but what is *Prana*? It is the Universal Divine Energy that works in an individual.

This *Vaisvanara*, this *Agni*, this Fire in the stomach produces a peculiar sound. A rumbling sound is produced in the stomach. It is not the sound that is produced when you have any trouble in the stomach, but it is a psychic sound which can be heard only when you close both the ears and the nostrils through the performance of a *Mudra* called *Shambavi Mudra*. It is practised as an exclusive method of meditation by certain seekers. Close the eyes, close the two nostrils, close the two ears also, and then observe very carefully what is taking place inside your body. You should not hear any sound from outside because your hearing of the sound from outside will disturb your attention on what is happening inside, nor should you see anything with the eyes outside because the eyes will distract you by drawing your attention to other objects, nor should you have the distraction of breathing. Every distraction is stopped at the time of this meditation. Close the nostrils, close the eyes, close the ears and then you will hear the sound. A very beautiful, mellow, rumbling sound like that of an ocean wave is heard inside us.

Ayam agnir vaisvanaro yo'yam antah puruse, yenedam annam pacyate: 'The fire inside the stomach is the Supreme *Vaisvanara* Himself. He is the *Purusha* within. By Him the food that is taken is digested' - *tasyaisa ghoso bhavati*. 'The sound that is made by the fire inside is heard when - *yam etat karnav apidhaya srnoti* - you close your ears and hear it properly'. Closing the ears one can hear this sound, not by opening the ears. *Sa yadotkramisyan bhavati, nainam ghosam srnoti:* 'When you are about to die, this sound will not be heard'. So, they say that one can apprehend the time of one's own death by observing the presence or absence of this sound. If you are about to pass away from this world, this sound will stop. The *Vaisvanara* will withdraw Himself. Just as when war takes place, ambassadors are withdrawn by governments, so when some catastrophic thing is to take place, *Vaisvanara* withdraws its force. So close the ears and see if you hear any sound, then you can find out how long you are going to live. If no sound is heard, be prepared to quit. This is what the Upanishad tells us. But, if the sound is heard in a very sonorous way, very melodious manner, it means that your health is alright.

You know very well how doctors find out the condition of health of a person by hearing the sounds of the heart. Everyone has some sound in the heart, but various types of sound are produced by the heart under different circumstances

of health. By the very sound the doctor can find out what is wrong. Likewise is the sound here inside, produced by the great Divine Being in us. Now, contemplate in this manner. This is one of the *Upasanas*. Close the eyes, nostrils and the ears and hear the sound inside. Gradually the mind will get absorbed in this *Anahata*. It is a sound that is not produced by the contact of two things like the stick and the drum, for instance. The sound that is produced by the contact of stick and drum is *Ahata*. *Ahata* means produced by contact, but this is *Anahata* because it is not produced by contact of one thing with another. It is an automatic sound. So, this *Anahata Muni*, or the spiritual sonorous sound or vibration within, can be heard and converted into an object of meditation. This is *Anahata Upasana*, one of the important meditations.