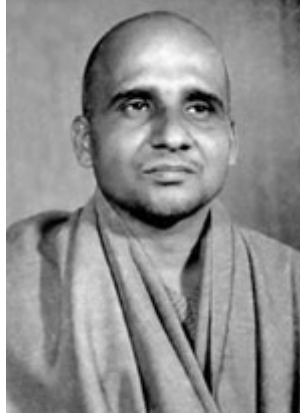




THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

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Third Brahmana

THE TWO FORMS OF REALITY

Another set of meditations is being taken up in the following sections. The five elements, namely, Space, Air, Fire, Water and Earth, are classified into the invisible and the visible aspects of *Brahman*, known as the *Amurta* and the *Murta* features. *Amurta* means formless, without any particular shape, but *Murta* is with form, and therefore visible to the eyes, or sensible in some way.

1. dve vava brahmano rupe, murtam caivamurtam ca, martyam camrtam ca, sthitam ca, yac ca, sac ca, tyac ca.

Dve vava brahmano rupe: Two forms, or two manifestations, as it were, there are of *Brahman*. These two manifestations are *murtam ca*, *amurtam ca*, the formed and the formless, the visible and the invisible, that with shape and that without any particular shape. These are the two ways in which *Brahman* manifests itself in the five elements, *murtam caivamurtam ca*: And, likewise, that which is with form is *Martya*, or perishable. That which is without form is not perishable - it is *Amrta*. That which is with form is limited - *Sthita*. That which is without form is *Yac*, or unlimited. That which is with form is *Sat*, or perceptible. That which is without form is *Tyat*, or imperceptible. That which is *Murta* is also *Martya*; it is also *Sthita*; it is also *Sat*. That which is *Amurta* is *Amrta*; it is *Yac* and *Tyat*. These are peculiar terms used in the Upanishad, representing the immediate and the remote forms of Reality. That which is with

form is limited naturally, and, therefore, it is perishable. Every form has a tendency to outgrow itself and transcend itself into some other form. Forms are limitations imposed upon aspects of Reality, and the limitations naturally tend to outstep their limits in the process of growth, or evolution, because of the fact that no form can stand on its own legs forever. Every form has a particular purpose to fulfil; it has a single mission to execute through the particular medium of that form. Hence when that particular purpose is fulfilled, the form is shed automatically. On account of the fact that the form is for a particular purpose only, it is regarded as perishable, because it has a beginning, and so it has an end. But that which is without a form is not so limited, and, hence, it is not subject to the conditions of limitation, perishability etc., as characterise the things with forms.

So, the five elements - Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether - are classified in these two ways. The point made out in these passages is that Space and Air are comparatively imperishable, whereas the other three elements, Fire, Water and Earth, are perishable, because they are more concrete, more tangible, more formed in their structure. A greater limitation is there upon them than is imposed upon Space and on Air. There is no destructibility in the case of Space and Air in the sense it is visible in the objects constituted of Fire, Water and Earth. The formed objects clash or can come into clash with one another and then break to pieces. They can obstruct or impede the movement of one another, where Space and Air do not impede the movement of each other. They work harmoniously with each other. Space cannot be broken to pieces or affected by the presence of things. So is Air. The presence of objects does not in any way affect the movement of Air. But, the other objects which are more concrete in their nature are limitations, one upon the other. Hence it is said that the lower three elements are formed and everything that is constituted of them also is formed, while Space and Air are non-formed.

2. tad etan murtam yad anyad vayos cantariksac ca, etan martyam, etat sthitam, etat sat, tasya-itasya murtasya, etasya martyasya etasya sthitasya, etasya sata esa raso ya esa tapati, sato by esa rasah.

Tad etam murtam yad anyad vayos cantariksac ca: Everything other than Space and Air is formed; it is *Murta*. *Etah martyam:* It is, therefore, perishable. *Etat sthitam:* Therefore, this is limited. *Etat sat:* Therefore, it is perceptible. *Tasya-itasya murtasya, etasya sthitasya, etasya sata esa raso ya esa tapate, sato hy esa rasah:* Of this entire world, entire creation, which is formed, which is constituted of these three elements, Earth, Water and Fire, which are perishable in their nature, which are subject to transmutation of various kinds, of everything that is constituted of earth, fire or water, the essence is the sun, the solar orb. *Ya esa tapati:* That which shines in front of us in the firmament above as the solar radiance, this can be regarded as the quintessence of these elements.

You know very well that everything of this earth, everything that is formed, everything that is physical is ultimately reducible to the elements in the sun, both from the point of view of science as well as from the standpoint of astronomy and even theology. The sun is regarded as the presiding principle of everything. Apart from the fact that we are told of everything on earth as coming from the sun and everything being merely a chip of the old block which is the sun, there are other reasons also why the sun is regarded as the presiding force over everything that is physical. The quintessence of physical elements is divinity in the sun, in a highly intensified form. High energy formation is the structure of the sun, and it is as if the ultimate principles or the fundamental essences of all physical things are placed in the sky for the sake of superintending over everything that is physical. That is the solar orb above. The sun here is looked upon in two aspects - the physical orb and the inner divinity. Just as the physical body of ours cannot be identified with the soul in us, yet the one is not separable from the other, so is the solar orb that shines as the physical quintessence of all visible objects, the glory internally presided over by a divinity who is regarded in this Upanishad as the essence of the immortal elements. While the mortal features are all condensed in the physical form of the sun as the shining light before us, the non-formed, or the more ethereal aspects of creation, namely, space and air, are transcendent to the physical feature of the sun, and the Upanishad identifies the essence of these two ethereal principles with the *Purusa* in the sun.

3. athamurtam vayus cantariksam ca, etad amrtam etad yat, etat tyat,
tasyaitasyamurtasya etasyamrtasya, etasya yatah etasya tasyaisa raso ya
esa etasmin mandale purusah, tasya hy esa rasah, ity adhidaivatam.

Athamurtam: What is the formless? *Vayus cantaraksam ca*: Air and Space - these are *Amurta*, or formless. *Etad yat*: They are not limited. *Etat tyat*: They are imperceptible. *Tasyaitsayamurtasya etasyamrtasya, etasya yatah etasya tasyaisa raso*: Of these immortal aspects of manifestation in the form of these two elements, the quintessence is that which is inside the sun. *Ya esa etasmin mandale purusah, tasya hy esa rasah, ity adhidaivatam*: There is something inside the sun apart from what we see with our eyes, on account of which there is a living force present in the sun apart from its being merely a hot or boiling mass of circling energy. It is a divinity; therefore, the Vedas regard *Surya*, the sun, as the eye, as it were, of the world. It is the soul, as it were, of all created things - *surya atma jagatas tasthusasca*. Of all that is visible, of all that is moving or non-moving, *Surya Bhagawan*, the sun, is the essence. The divinity aspect of the sun is called the *Purusa*. He is considered as the deity of even these immortal aspects of the five elements, namely, Space and Air. So much about the macrocosmic aspects of these five elements called the *Adhibhuta* (physical) and the *Adhidaiva* (divine). The physical macrocosmic aspect is called *Adhibhuta* and the spiritual macrocosmic aspect is the *Adhidaiva*.

4. athadhyatmam idam eva murtam yad anyat pranac ca yas cayam
antaratmann akasah, etan martyam, etat sthitam, etat sat, tasyaitasya
murtasya, etasya martyasya, etasya sthitasya etasya sata esa raso yac
caksuh, sato hy es rasah.

Now, the microcosmic aspect of the very same truth is being described, as *Adhyatma*. In the same way as the five elements are present in the outer world, they are also present in the inner world, this individual body. The five elements constitute our own being. We have earth, water, fire and also air and space inside our body, and the body is made up of these five elements only. Even as the three elements are mortal and two are not comparatively in the outer world, so is the case with these element in the inner world also. *Athadhyatmam*: Now describe the same truth in respect of the individual. *Idam eva murtam yad anyat pranac ca yas caya antaratmann akasah*: This is the perishable asp of this individual. What is that? That which is other than the vital-principle and other than the space-principle in us. The concrete and solid parts of our bodies are the perishable aspects. *Etan martyam*: This is perishable. *Etat sthitam*: limited. *Etat sat*: perceptible, etc., as before. *Tasyaitasya murtasy etasya martyasya, etasya sthitasya, etasya Bata e raso yac caksuh, sato by esa rasah*: The subtle part of the physical body is supposed to be the eye. It is also believed that when the embryo develops into a physical formation, the first manifestation the form of a limb is the eye. The eye protrudes itself first; every other organ comes afterwards. It is the subtlest and the most sensitive part of our body. It is therefore regarded as the quintessential part or the physical essences of the entire system. So, of all these perishable aspects in this body, which are constituted of earth, water and fire, the quintessence is the eye. Everything that is in the eye is the subtlest aspect of these three elements.

5. athamurtam pranas ca yas cayam antar-atmann akasah; etad amrtam,
etad yat, etat tyam tasyaitasyamurtasya, etasyamrtasya, etasya yatah,
etasya tyasyaisa raso yo'yam daksine' ksam purusah, tyasya hy esa rasah.

Likewise, there is the subtle aspect of the other two elements which are compared to the immortal, namely, air and space. *Athamurtam*: Now the immortal side which is formless. *Pranas ca yas cayam antar-atmann akasah*: The ether in the heart, the space within us and the air that is inside, form the immortal aspect in us which cannot be destroyed even if the body is destroyed. *Etad amrtam, etad yat, etat tyam tasyaitasyamurtasya, etasyamrtasya, etasya yatah, etasya tyasyaisa raso yo'yam daksine' ksam purusah, tyasya hy esa rasah*: The subtle body inside us is the quintessence of these two elements. How they are the essence of these two elements is not described in the Upanishad. However, the point made out is that there is some aspect of subtlety comparable with the subtlety of our own subtle body in these two subtle elements, namely, space and air. The subtle body inside us is constituted of physical substances

alone, and for all theoretical purposes we may regard space and air also as physical. In fact, they are regarded as physical, but a comparison is made between the two degrees of manifestation of *Brahman* here as comparatively subtler, more immortal and comparatively grosser or mortal. The subtler aspect which is space and air is supposed to influence the subtle body in us which is the realm of the activity of the mind and the senses and the vital forces. The subtle essence, immortal, is the *Purusa* within the eye, Consciousness beaming forth in perception, comparable to the divinity in the sun, above. There is, therefore, a correspondence between the outer universe and the inner world, the macrocosm, or the *Brahmanda* and the inner world or the *Pindanda*.

6. tasya haitasya purusasya rupam yatha maharajanam vasah, yatha pandv-avikam, yathendragopah, yathagnyarcih, yatha pundarikam, yatha sakrd-vidyuttam; sakrd-vidyutteva ha va asya srir bhavati, ya evam veda. athata adesah na iti na iti, na hy etasmad iti, na ity anyat param asti; atha-namadheyam satyasya satyam iti. prana vai satyam, tesam esa satyam.

Tasya haitasya purusasya rupam: This *Purusa* within us, manifests himself in the subtle body as various colours. Now, these colours mentioned here actually represent the various types of impressions out of which the subtle body is made. It is difficult to distinguish between the impressions of the mind and the constitution of the subtle body. Well, something like the threads and the cloth which are related to each other, the mental impressions and the subtle body are related. The whole range of activity of the mind is what is called the subtle body, like the magnet field of a electro-magnetic installation. It is not a substance in the ordinary sense; it is a limitation set upon the mind by its own activities in the form of impressions of experience. They are compared to colours because they are constituted of the three *Gunas* of *Prakrti* - *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Sattva* is generally said to be white, *Rajas* reddish, and *Tamas* is black. And by mutual permutation and combination of these three properties, we can have other colours also. So, the subtle body is a mixture of these three *Gunas* in various intensities or degrees, on account of the difference in the intensity of the thoughts of the mind, the feelings of the mind and the impressions created by mental activity. *Tasya haitasya purusasya rupam*: Of this internal *Purusa* which is the subtle body, there are various colours as if it is turmeric - *yatha maharajanam vasah*. What is the colour of cloth dipped in turmeric water? Sometimes it looks as if it is yellowish. *Yatha pandv avikam*: Sometimes it looks greyish like grey wool cut from sheep's body. *Yathendragopah*: Sometimes it looks reddish like an insect. Indragopa is a peculiar kind of insect which has a reddish body. Sometimes it is like luminous flame of fire - *yathagnyarcih*. Sometimes it is apparently very tender looking and whitish like the lotus flower - *yatha pundarikam*. Sometimes it flashes forth like lightening - *yatha sakrd-vidyutt*. *Sakrd-vidutteva ha va-asya srir bhavati, ya evam veda*: One who meditates on the inner constitution of the subtle body, internally in one's own self and

externally in the cosmos in this manner as constituted of the five elements outwardly and presided over by a divinity internally; one who practises this *Upasana*, or meditation, this manner, bringing about a harmony between the outer and the inner, in fact constituting one's meditation as a contemplation on the whole cosmos at one stroke, both outwardly and inwardly, to such a person the following result accrues. *Asya srir bhavati*: His glory becomes lustrous like the flash lightning. *Sakrd-vidyutteva ha va asya srir bhavati*: The magnificence of this meditator becomes glorious and luminous, lustrous, shining like lightning itself. *Ya evam veda*: One who knows this as this the result in experience. *Athata adesah na iti na iti, na hy etasmad iti, na ity anyat param asti; atha-nama-dheyam satyasya satyam iti-prana vai satyam, tesam esa satyam*: What can we say about this glory? What can we speak of in respect of this great Reality which appears outwardly as that and inwardly this, which manifests itself as the five elements grossly as well as subtly, except that it is not anything that is conceivable to the mind or visible to the senses - *neti, neti*. It is not anything that is graspable either by the understanding or by the sense apparatus. Therefore, it is 'not this', 'not anything' that one can think of. It has no other definition except in this manner as has been put forth in this passage of the Upanishad. Its name is a secret. What is its name? It is the Truth of truth, Reality of reality, Being of being. It is the Soul of soul; it is the Self transcendent to the self. *Prana vai satyam, tesam esa satyam*: The individual self, of course, is real; anything connected with the individual self also is real. But, this is more real than the individual selves, more real than the mind and the understanding and the *Pranas* and the senses. It is the ultimate Reality; it is the Supreme Being; it is absolutely Real, while others are only tentatively real, workably real and real only from a utilitarian point of view. So, this is a meditation, a means of spiritual at-onement.