When the soul, with the subtle body, is about to leave the physical body, several phenomena take place. The physical body shows a tendency to disintegrate, and the mind shows a reluctance to the maintenance of it. The senses become feeble and they refuse to energise the body, as they had been doing before. Simultaneously, another activity goes on in another atmosphere, in a very subtle and unconscious manner. There is a desire in the soul that departs, to materialise itself in another form. The subtle body accordingly, even before leaving the present body fully, begins to draw to itself the necessary material forces available to it at that particular spot or atmosphere where it can continue its activities and fulfil its desires which are yet unfulfilled.

36. sa yatrayam animanam nyeti, jaraya vopatapata vanimanam nigacchati,
tad yathamram va udumbaram va pippalam va bandhanat pramucyate,
evam evayam purusa ebhyo ngebhyah sampramucya punah pratinyayam
pratipyony adravati pranayaiva.

The subtle body will be wrenched from every limb of the physical body. At present the subtle body has become one with the physical body, like fire getting one with a hot iron ball. If you throw an iron ball into the fire and make it red-hot, the two become one. You cannot know which is fire and which is iron, Likewise, the subtle body permeates the physical body and has got identified with the physical body. That is why we have sensation. If you touch a finger, you can feel the sensation, there is the feeling of touching. The feeling is not of the
physical body; it is of the subtle body only, just as when you touch an iron ball which is hot, what burns you is not the iron ball but the fire. You can say that the iron ball has burnt my finger. But an iron ball does not burn. It is the fire that has become one with the ball that burns your finger. Likewise, the sensation that you feel in the body is not the sensation felt by the physical body. It is the sensation conveyed through the instrumentality of the physical body to the subtle body. So the feeler, the experiencer is the subtle body whose presiding deity is the mind. But, at the time of death the subtle body is withdrawn. During life, it has become one with the physical body in every detail; it has become one with every cell of the body. It has become identified with every limb of the body - with the eyes, with the ears, with every sense-organ. When, at death, it is withdrawn from the physical body, it becomes a kind of painful experience because it is not a natural separation. It is a separation caused on account of unfulfilled desires which the present physical body cannot fulfil. It is not a separation caused by exhaustion of desires. There is a difference between a dry leaf falling from a tree and a green leaf being plucked. The physical body is dropped, not because the desires have all been fulfilled, and there is no further need for a body, but because this body is unsuitable for the fulfilment of the remaining desires. And so, there is a handing over charge by one officer, as it were, to another one. The function is not finished, only the personality changes. After death also, there is a continuity of the same activity of the mind, but there is a little awkward feeling in the middle, when the physical body is dropped.

‘The body becomes thin’. There is an experience of various ups and downs in the physical body at the time of death. As a fruit may be plucked from a tree, the subtle body is wrenched out of the physical body from every limb, from every cell, every sense, every organ, and it departs. It, the subtle body, then gravitates automatically by the law of the universe, to the spot where it can find its new habitation. The elements which are the building bricks of the new body, the future body, get collected by the force of the pull of this magnet, which is the subtle body. The subtle body is like a magnet which pulls the iron filings which are around. The iron filings are the elements - earth, water, fire, air, ether. The necessary part or aspect of the elements is pulled, dragged, withdrawn from Nature’s storehouse and absorbed into its being by the subtle body. It does not absorb everything and anything, only that which is necessary. Individuals vary in their physical form and shape etc., because their subtle bodies differ in their nature. According to the need felt, the quantity of material that is drawn varies in shape and proportion. So individuals differ, one from the other.

The entry into a new body is also a great mystery. It is a gradual condensation of material forces into solidified matter in the way in which it is necessary for the fulfilment of the desires present in the subtle body. And at that time, the Pranas that were withdrawn from the previous body are once again released into action. As in an aeroplane, when it takes off, the wheels are pulled up, and when it lands, the wheels are thrust back once again, so that it may land on the ground, likewise, the Pranas are withdrawn when there is a take-off from the physical body by the subtle body which runs like a plane to the new habitation which it has to go and
occupy, and when it comes to the spot it projects the Pranas, once again, and catching hold of the elements makes them its own in the form of a new physical body. These elements become the new body. That is called rebirth. The manifestation of a new physical form by the gravitational force of the subtle body, which is determined by the intensity of unfulfilled desires, is the process of rebirth.

The Upanishad says, just as when a king leaves his palace and goes out on a journey, the news about his departure is conveyed to various parts of the country, and the officials everywhere get ready to receive him with all the necessities such as boarding, lodging, security and various other needs of the king in that particular place towards which he is moving, likewise, the particular realm of beings, the particular atmosphere towards which the soul is gravitating, gets stirred up into activity because of its impending departure from here. ‘The king is coming. We have to make ready several amenities for his stay etc’. The officials confer among themselves and prepare the things that are required for his reception. Likewise, the forces of Nature begin to act in respect of this soul, which has to materialise itself in a new form, in the particular realm where it is going to take birth.

37. tad yatha rajanam ayantam ugrah pratyenasah, sutagramanyo’nnaih panair avasathaih pratikalpante: ayam ayati, ayam agacchatiti, evam haivam-vidam sarvani bhutani pratikalpante, idam brahmayati, idam agacchatiti.

Now, the word used here is Bhutani which has a double meaning. It can mean ‘beings’ or it can mean the elements. All beings get ready, as it were, to provide to this particular being, that which is its requital, or the due that has to come to it from various quarters of creation. It is not merely a particular locality that becomes active. It is said that everything becomes active. Even the smallest event that takes place in the world cannot be said to be out of the vision of the world as a whole, because everything is subtly connected with purposes, intentions etc. in respect of every other thing also. A philosopher has put it in his own way: ‘At the birth of every event the whole universe is in travail undergoing the birth pang’. The whole universe begins to feel that some event is taking place, and so the necessary contributions are made from every quarter of the universe. Whatever attitude we developed in respect of things, that is paid back to us. That is the requital that is given to us.

The forces that work for the purpose of the materialisation of a new body for the individual that departs from the present body are stimulated by cosmic purposes. It is the whole universe that acts. You know very well, even if a thorn pricks the sole of the foot, it is not merely the foot or the particular locality of the body that becomes active for the purpose of removing that foreign matter from the body; the entire organism becomes active, even to remove one little thorn that has pricked the foot. It is something incredible, but the entire physiological system gets stirred up into activity for the purpose of expelling that foreigner
which has entered into the foot. This sort of activity takes place for good or for bad, for positive or negative purposes, to receive something or to expel something. Whatever be the purpose or the nature of the work that is to be taken on hand, it is the entire organism that acts. So the Upanishad states that there is a universal collaboration of forces which work in unison for the purpose of preparing the necessary atmosphere for this particular dying individual, which receives what it deserves.

What is it that happens after the new body is taken? What sort of body is acquired? What is the kind of experience through which one passes? All these, though they are difficult to understand, can be guessed, to some extent, from the nature of the life that we live in the present world. It is not a totally new atmosphere into which we are taken. It is merely a continuation of the present potentiality. If you know what the nature of the seed is, you can know what the nature of the tree will be that is to sprout from that particular seed. You cannot expect a mango tree to sprout up from a seed of thistles. Any person with a little commonsense can understand the cumulative effect that is produced by one's total attitude to life throughout the period he spends in this world. If you exercise a little bit of intelligence, you can have an idea as to what sort of life you are leading. But the life that we are leading is not, merely, the activities in which we are engaging ourselves. It is also the general perspective of life which we are entertaining in our minds. This is what is going to affect us in the future birth. What you speak with your words and what you do with your hands, that is perhaps not so important. What is important is the general attitude towards things, the basic outlook which you entertain throughout your life. We have some opinion about things, about ourselves, about the world, about many other things. The natural deep-seated instincts and opinions that we have in our own selves, which propel our various types of demeanour and attitude in respect of things, materialise themselves into a form. This is the body that we take, so that we may say that the bodies into which we will be reborn are nothing but our own thoughts which concretise themselves into particular shapes. They are not bodies manufactured by somebody else. It is our own needs, our own feelings, our own desires which are deep-seated, that go to form the new body.

Even as the officials receive the king when he comes, they also gather around him when he departs. ‘Tomorrow the king is leaving’. On hearing this, people get up early in the morning and are ready to give him a send-off, a farewell. Likewise, when the soul is about to depart from the body, all the energies in the system get gathered up. The distractions of the senses and the Pranas cease, and there is a sort of centralisation of all energy. The faculties of the ears, the nose and the various other senses together with the Pranas, centre themselves in a particular place. As people gather themselves in a hall, as it were, to give a send-off to a departing personage, as people from all places come together at one spot to give a send-off to a dignitary, likewise, there is a send-off, as it were, given to the departing soul. The Pranas do not work in the usual manner. They withdraw themselves from the limbs of the body, and the senses also withdraw themselves from the various organic parts. There is thus a centralisation of activity, and
everything comes together like birds gathering in the evening for the purpose of
resting in their own nests.

38. tad yatha rajanam prayiyasantam, ugrah pratyenasah, sutagramanyo’bhisamayanti, evam evaimam atmanam, antakale sarve prana abhisamayanti, yatraitad urdhvocchvasi bhavati.

There is then an urge to get expelled from this body. The subtle body wishes
to get out of the physical body. That aperture through which it is to go out, gets
opened up by the force it exerts, and the way in which the subtle body seeks exit
from the physical body varies. This exit they call the departure of the Prana for
the Prana is the vehicle of the subtle body. The Prana leaves the physical body.
Through any one of the various orifices of the body, it may find its exit according
to the nature of the destination that it has to reach. The energy of the eyes etc.
gets withdrawn, so that one cannot see properly at that time, one cannot hear
properly, one cannot smell, one cannot taste, one cannot speak, one cannot think,
one cannot understand, because these senses which were placed in various
locations of the body for the purpose of discharging certain duties through the
organs, have fulfilled their duties. The officials are withdrawn to the centre, as it
were, because their work in the outlying areas is finished. This is what happens at
the time when the soul departs from the body.

Fourth Brahmana

THE SOUL OF THE UNREALISED AFTER DEATH

1. sa yatrayam atma-abalyam nyetya sammoham iva nyeti, athainam ete prana abhisamayanti; sa etas tejomatrah samabhyadadano hrdayam evanvavakramati, sa yatraisa caksusah purusah paran paryavartate, atharupajno bhavati.

Sa yatrayam atma-abalyam nyetya sammoham iva nyeti, athainam ete prana abhisamayanti; sa etas tejomatrah samabhyadadano hrdayam evanvavakramati: It is said that all the energies get centred in the heart. The brain also stops functioning. There is no thinking faculty at that time. There is feebleness. The breathing becomes slow. There may be a heaving just at the time
of the exit, but otherwise, there is a slowing of the breath on account of the
withdrawal of the activity of the Prana from the various parts of the body. What
happens when the energies get centred in the heart?

Sa yatraisa caksusah purusah paran paryavartate: ‘The Purusha in the eye
withdraws himself and goes back to the sun.’ The Ambassador goes back to the
centre which has deputed him for a particular purpose. Then what happens? The
connection between the sun and the eye is snapped. Then there is no seeing. So,
even if the eyes are open, there is no seeing at that time. Atharupajno bhavati:
He cannot cognize forms. If people stand before him, he cannot recognize them.
Generally, when a person is about to depart, people get excited over it. They become anxious. They want to know whether he is really conscious or not. So if someone comes near him and asks, ‘Do you know who I am; can you recognize me?’ he cannot recognize. He cannot see, because the force which was in the eye has been withdrawn. Though he is keeping the eyes open, physically, he sees nothing.

2. eki-bhavati, na pasyati, ity ahuh. eki-bhavati, na jighrati ity ahuh; eki-bhavati na rasayati, ity ahuh; eki-bhavati, na vadati, ity ahuh, eki-bhavati na srnoti, ity ahuh; eki-bhavati, na manute, ity ahuh; eki-bhavati, na sprsatī, ity ahuh; eki-bhavati, na vijanati, ity ahuh. tasya haitasya hrdayasyagram pradyotate, tena pradyotenaïsa atma niskramati, caksuso va murdhno va anyebhyo va sarira-desebhyah; tam utkra mantam prano’nutkramati, pranam anutkramantam sarve prana anutkramanti; sa vijnano bhavati, sa vijnanam evanvakramati; tam vidya-karmani samanvarabhete purva-prajna ca.

*Eki-bhavati*: It becomes one with the centre. That is why this particular function of seeing ceases. *Na pasyati, ity ahuh*: People say; ‘O, he does not see, he cannot recognize me.’ The reason why he cannot recognize and cannot see is because the eye has gone back to the centre. So, its particular function has stopped. *Eki-bhavati, na jighrati ity ahuh*: The olfactory sense also gets withdrawn. So, he cannot smell. The smelling activity ceases. *Eki-bhavati na rasayati, ity ahuh*: The sense of taste also gets withdrawn, and even if you pour sugar into the tongue of a dying man, he cannot feel that taste. *Eki-bhavati, na vadati, ity ahuh*: The force of speaking, *Agni-Tattva*, gets withdrawn into its source, and he cannot speak. Likewise, he cannot hear; he cannot think; he cannot understand. *Eki-bhavati na srnoti, ity ahuh; eki-bhavati, na manute, ity ahuh; eki-bhavati, na sprsatī, ity ahuh; eki-bhavati, na vijanati, ity ahuh*: He cannot touch; he cannot think; he cannot smell; he cannot hear; he cannot understand.

Then what happens afterwards when all these energies, senses, *Pranas*, etc., are gathered up in the centre of the heart? *Tasya haitasya hrdayasyagram pradyotate*: There is a flash of light, as it were, bursting forth through some part of the heart. That is the only consciousness that he has, not the consciousness of body, not the consciousness of sense-activity, not the consciousness of people around, of objects around, etc. There is only a feeble, meagre, failing self-consciousness. He cannot even feel that he exists. That meagre self-consciousness is of the nature of a very fine flame of lamplight, as it were, which illumines a corner of the heart. *Tena pradyotenaïsa atma niskramati*: That burst of light, in a particular part of the heart, which projects itself through some orifices of the heart, is the passage of the soul. Through that, the *Prana* departs. It can depart through any part of the body. *Aisa atma niskramati, caksuso va murdhno va anyebhyo va sarira-desebhyah*: It can rise up through the head, sometimes, or through the eyes or through any other part of the body. The belief is that if the *Prana* departs through the crown of the head, one reaches *Brahmaloka*, if it
passes through the eyes one goes to the sun, and so on and so forth. If it is a vertical movement, it is supposed to be the indication of ascending to a higher region. If it is a horizontal movement or a downward motion, then it is supposed to be a descent to the lower worlds or to this particular world itself. Tam utkramantam prano’nutkramati: When the centre of consciousness, which is in the form of this little light, rushes out of the body, the Prana goes with it. When the Prana goes, all the energies of the senses also get gathered up together and leave with the Prana.

Pranam anutkramantam sarve prana anutkramanti; sa vijnano bhavati: Now this word ‘vijnano bhavati’ has a special sense. It seems to imply that there is a feeble consciousness of the future stage that is Vijnana. There is a total unconsciousness of the previous condition. One loses touch with the earlier body and, therefore, there is no connection with the previous life at all. Inasmuch as the senses have been withdrawn from the previous body, there is no recognition of the previous world, the previous relations, the previous society etc., etc. There is a tendency to recognize the presence of a new atmosphere. That is the functioning of the Vijnana. The intellect slowly stirs into action when there is a possibility of fresh materialisation, that is, the preparation for a new body - sa vijnano bhavati. Sa vijnanam evanvavakramati; tam vidya-karmani saman-varabhete purva-prajna ca: When there is such a departure of the individual, something must be going with the individual. What is it that goes with us when we leave this world and enter the other world? Do we take something when we go? We have a lot of property, many possessions and acquisitions. We have cherished many values in this life. Do they all come with us? The Upanishad has a simple answer to this question. Whatever knowledge has become part of your life, that will come with you, not the knowledge that is in the books or in the libraries. This knowledge is not going to come with you. The knowledge that has become part of your actual daily life, through which you have been thinking and working, that knowledge will come with you. That action that has become a part of your very life itself, not merely an externally compulsive action, but an action that is voluntary, of your own accord, which you have done and you like it, which you feel has a meaning in it, which you feel is your action, which you have done with a purpose, will produce a result in a very fine form. And that form which is very fine is called Apurva, something subtle and invisible. It is of the form of energy. This Apurva comes with you. The impressions which have been accumulated by the mind by various thoughts of perception, cognition, etc., called Vasanas or Samskaras, they accompany the departing individual. It is a psychic complex that actually departs from the body. Whatever is our mind in its complex state goes with its own constituents. Nothing extraneous will come with it. We cannot take anything from this world which has not become a part and parcel of our own minds, our own feelings. That is the meaning of saying, that which has become part of your life will come with you. Nothing else comes with you. Many things there are in this world which cannot be regarded as part of our life. They are extraneous appurtenances. They do not come with us. But that which is absorbed into our own life by the feelings, that will come with us.
3. tad yatha trnajalayuka, trnasvantam gatva, anyam akramam akramya, atmanam upasamharati, evam evayam atma, idam sariram nihatya, avidam gamayitva, anyam akramam akramya, atmanam upasamharati.

There is an activity, as we observed, taking place in the other realm at the time of the departure from this body. This is compared to the activity of a caterpillar or a leech when it moves from one leaf to another or from one spot to another on the same leaf. What it does is, it thrusts its hind part forward and then projects its fore part forward. Then it fixes the fore part on the leaf and withdraws the hind part, bringing it forward. Then again it projects its fore part. Like that, it goes on moving. It will not lift the hind part unless the forepart is fixed. Likewise - 

- tad yatha trnajalayuka, trnasvantam gatva, anyam akramam akramya, atmanam upasamharati, evam evayam atma - 

- the old body is not left unless proper arrangement is already made elsewhere. When you go on a journey, you do not suddenly go. You find out where you are going and what arrangements have to be made there for your stay by correspondence and enquiries, etc. Likewise, even without your consciously thinking of the destination, forces of nature begin to work for you. They spontaneously work, and that preparation that is being made there to receive you to another realm is the foot that you have kept there already before you lift the other foot from this world. It is not a physical foot that you have placed, but a feeler which has connected you with the future realm in a very subtle manner. This shows the interconnectedness of all things. We are not cast into the winds by forces of which we have no knowledge. Everything is connected with us, and all the forces of nature keep an eye over us. Exactly in the manner in which it is necessary for us to have experiences in the future life, in that particular manner alone do the forces of nature work -

- idam sariram nihatya, avidam gamayitva, anyam akramam akramya, atmanam upasamharati.

4. tad yatha pesaskari pesaso matram upadaya, anyan navataram kalyanataram rupam tanute, evam evayam atma, idam sariram nihatya, avidym gamayitva, anyan navataram kalyanatarn rupam kurute, pitryam va, gandharvarn va, daivam va, prajapatyarn va, brahman va anyesam va bhutanam.

Just as a goldsmith takes a little gold from here and a little gold from there and puts these pieces of gold into a melting pot, boils the pieces making them into one lump and gives a new shape to this lump, even so a new body is formed out of the ingredients collected from nature.

The goldsmith does not create new gold. He only creates a new shape of the gold after melting it in a furnace. That is how he prepares ornaments, etc. Likewise, the material forces, earth, water, fire, air, and ether are the elements out of which bodies are formed. The present body is made up of these elements. The future body also will be made up of these elements. A carpenter can arrange pieces of wood in such a way that these pieces form a chair. Or he can arrange these pieces of wood in another manner to make a table. He can convert these
pieces into a box, and so on. The carpenter can arrange these pieces of wood in various ways according to the need or the requirement of the time. But the wood is the same. It is not new wood that he is using. Likewise, they are the same elements that work wherever you go, whatever be the birth that you take, and whichever be the shape the soul assumes in whichever realm, in its new incarnation. Even if it is in a very highly elevated state like that of a Gandharva, or a Pitr or a celestial in paradise, even if such a lustrous body is to be assumed by the soul, it is made of nothing but this same material. It is formed of these elements only in their finer essences. When they are gross, they look like the bodies we have. When they are fine, they begin to be transparent like glass, for instance. You know, even glass is made up of matter. It is as much material as a lump of iron or a hard brick. But the glass shines. It is transparent. Light can pass through it because of the fineness of the structure, notwithstanding the fact that glass is made up of the same matter as a hard brick. So, one can take any form; one can be reborn in any shape, may be a Gandharva, a celestial, or any other being. You may even go to the realm of Hiranyakagarbha assuming the subllest form of matter known as the Tanmatras. Any form, the soul can take. It can adjust and readjust the material elements according to the need which is indicated by the nature of the mind that actually reincarnates.

5. Sa va ayam atma brahma, vijnanamayo manomayah pranamayas caksurmayah, srotamayah, prthivimaya apomayo vayumaya akasamayas tejomayo tejomayah kamamayo kamamayah, krodhamayo krodhamayo dharmamayo dharmamayah sarvamayah tad yad etat; idammayah adomaya iti. yathakari yathacari tatha bhavati, sadhukari sadhur bhavati, papakari papo bhavati; punyah punyena karmana bhavati, papah papena; athau khalv ahuh; kamamaya evayam purusa iti, sa yathakamo bhavati, tat kratur bhavati, yat kratur bhavati, tat karma kurute, yat karma kurute, tat abhisampadyate.

In the first half of this passage, the Upanishad gives, in its own beautiful style, the way in which the soul can assume various forms, psychic as well as physical. First, there is a manifestation of the intellect. That is the Jiva-Bhava or the individuality in us. The root of individuality is the intellect, and it grossens itself into the mind, the Pranas, the senses, and lastly the physical body. It is not the physical body that is manufactured first. It is the intellect that is manifested first. The cause comes first, the effect afterwards. The subllest cause is the intellect principle. Then there is the grosser one - the mind; then the still grosser one - the Prana; then the senses; then the physical body. All this takes place in a very inscrutable manner. It does not mean that the intellect is there, clearly observing things as it does when it is very active in a physical body after rebirth. It is in a potential state, just as the tree is present in a seed. Its manifestation is supposed to be prior to the manifestation of other things, namely, Pranas, body, etc. So there is first Vijnana or the intellect, then the mind, the Pranas, the senses, and only lastly the physical body constituted of the gross elements - earth, water, fire, air and ether - prthivimaya apomayo vayumayas, akasamayas.
But if you take birth in a subtle realm like paradise, perhaps you are reborn in Indraloka, then you get a body shining like fire. It will not be a gross body like this. It will be a very subtle body. It is Tejomaya, lustrous, and is ethereal in its form. The subtle body, whether it is reborn in the physical world or in any other realm, has certain desires, and so it can be said to be Kamamaya. It is filled with desire of some kind or the other. It may be a necessary desire or an unnecessary desire; it may be a liberating desire or a binding desire; it may be a visible desire or an invisible desire; that is immaterial, but desire must be there; otherwise, the individuality itself cannot be there. These desires get withdrawn at the time of fulfilment, and then Kamamaya becomes Akamamaya. You appear to have no desire when it has been fulfilled by acquisition of its corresponding object. But if the desire is not going to be fulfilled, if it is going to be frustrated by the impediment imposed by certain external factors, then it becomes Krodhamaya.

You get angry. You get annoyed because some obstacle is coming in the way of the fulfilment of your desire. When the obstacle is removed, your anger subsides. Then you become Akrodhamaya. There is no anger at that time. Then, once again you develop your usual normal attitude. It is the cause of your Dharmamayatva or Adharmamayatva. The virtuous way or unrighteous, vicious way in which one lives depends upon the way in which one’s desires operate in the world, or whether they work in a constructive manner or a destructive manner. If they are constructive, then the individual is Dharmamaya, full of virtue; but if they are destructive, then one’s life is Adharmamaya, characterised by viciousness. It is everything - Sarvamaya, Idam-maya, Adomaya. The individual has potentialities for anything. There is nothing which this individual personality does not contain. It is a miniature of the entire creation. Whatever you can find anywhere in the whole cosmos, you can find inside this body in a subtle form, in a seed form. This individual is veritably a great marvel. The whole mystery of creation is revealed in a microcosmic form in this individuality.

This whole miracle of life is carried forward each time in the process of reincarnation - births and deaths. ‘Whatever one feels, that one thinks; whatever one thinks, that one speaks; whatever one speaks, that one does; whatever one does, that one reaps.’ This is how the Upanishad sums up its doctrine of ethical conduct and the psychological effect which our present way of life has upon our future incarnation. Yathakari yathacari tatha bhavati, sadhukari sadhur bhavati, papakari papo bhavati; punyah punyena karmana bhavati, papah papena; athau khalv ahuh; kamamaya evayam purusa iti, sa yathakamo bhavati, tat kratur bhavati, yat kratur bhavati, tat karma kurute, yat karma kurute, tat abhisampadyate. Whatever is your inclination within, whatever direction your feelings take, that will be the kind of experience that you will have in the future life.