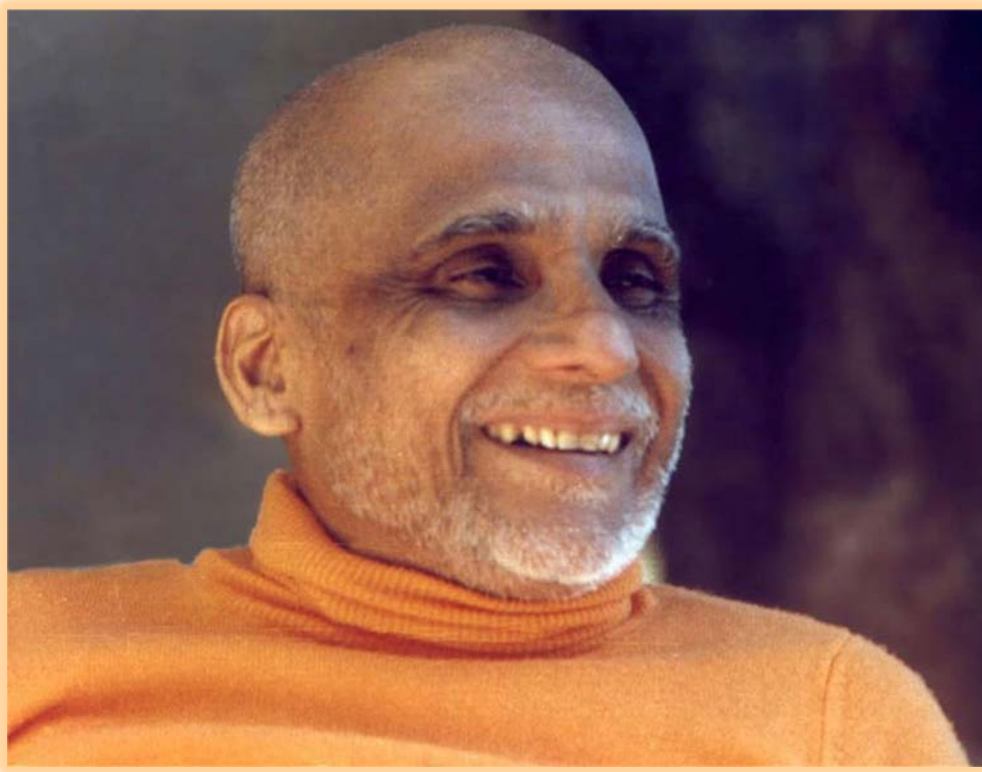


# **THE ESSENCE OF THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD**



**SWAMI KRISHNANANDA**

The Divine Life Society

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## **PUBLISHERS' PREFACE**

The present publication is the quintessence of the Teachings of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, which the Swamiji presented at the conclusion of his exposition of this Upanishad for about four months during the first half of the year 1977.

The importance of this essential purport of the Upanishad is especially in that it provides a magnificent scope for aiding seekers in the practice of meditation in the higher reaches and more advanced forms of spiritual life.

We are particularly indebted to the silent aspirant who carefully transcribed this discourse from the tape-recorded material.

We are sure that here is a unique opportunity for everyone endeavouring to tread the path of the Higher Life.

Shivanandanagar, 27th June, 1977.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

*Ōm pūrṇam adah, pūrṇam idam, pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate;  
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvāsīyate.  
Ōm Śāntih! Śāntih! Śāntih!*

Om! That is Full. This is Full. From the Full, the Full does proceed. Taking the Full from the Full, the Full alone remains.  
OM, Peace, Peace, Peace!

## INTRODUCTION

In all principles which guide human life, there are two aspects known as the 'exoteric' and the 'esoteric'. The routine of daily life is mostly guided by what we call the exoteric principles which have a working value and a validity within the realm of human action. In this sense, we may say, the values which are called exoteric are relative, inasmuch as every activity in life is relative to circumstances.

But, this exoteric mode of living, religious or secular, is based on another principle which is known as the esoteric value of life, because there must be some rationality behind our conduct in life, whatever be that conduct—religious or otherwise. Why do we go to the temple? Why do we go to the church? Why do we worship any god? Why should there be any kind of attitude at all? This is because there is a fundamental rock-bottom of a deciding factor, though it always happens to be inside and never comes outside before the vision of the human eye. The principle of ultimate law is always invisible, though its activity can be seen in outward life. When law acts, we can see how it acts. But law, by itself, cannot be seen with the eyes. Law is a general impersonal principle. This impersonal general principle of living, which is not subject to the changes of time, and which is permanently of a standard value, is known as the esoteric principle of life. And we have, thus, the aspects of exotericism and esotericism, both in religious and secular life, which means to say, there is an internal, secret, guiding principle as well as an outward manifestation of it in every form of life.

Now, primarily, at present, we are concerned with a very important subject, the principle of life which can guide every individual, whether of the East or of the West, of the North or of the South, of today or of tomorrow, under every condition. Is there such a principle? We have in the Dharma-Shastras, or the law codes and ethical mandates, mention made of Dharmas, known as Samanya-Dharmas and Vishesha-Dharmas. 'Dharma' is a principle of behaviour and action, a law, a regulating system. And it is Samanya, general, or Vishesha, particular. The general Dharma or the generally applicable principle of life is called the Samanya Dharma, but that which varies from individual to individual, from one class to another class, from one condition to another condition, etc. is the Vishesha-Dharma.

The laws of life are esoteric and exoteric, even as they are general and particular. All these divisions of law and principle are manifestations of an inviolable principle, that is, the ultimate principle of life which is impossible to grasp easily, inasmuch as our intellects, our minds, our personalities are all involved under certain conditions of living. We cannot extricate ourselves from the circumstances in which we are involved.

Though the invisible and the impersonal principle of life is impossible of grasp by conditioned intellects, yet it casts certain impressions upon every condition in life and it is seen to be working in me, in you and in everyone under every circumstance. So, it is possible for us to reach the impersonal and the ultimate principle of life through the conditions, the circumstances and the vicissitudes. The esoteric can be known through the exoteric. The super-individual can be reached through the individual, and conditions can be broken and the unconditioned reached.

In ancient times, masters and sages sat together in congregation, and discussed the problems of life of here and hereafter. What is life? What is this world? What is our duty? What are we expected to do, and in what way are we to behave, and so on. Is there a life beyond, or, is this life everything? Is this earth the evaluating principle of all,

or is there something beyond? These questions were discussed in great detail, through centuries, right from the time of the Vedas.

We have, in India particularly, a series of records available of such discussions of ancient masters, which are given to us today in the form of what we call the Veda-Rasi or the lore of sacred wisdom, usually known as the Vedas. It is a book of wisdom, or we may call it a group of books of wisdom, records of such discussions, findings, realisations and experiences of various experts who have tried to dive into the depths of 'being' and brought out the pearls from the ocean of existence, and proclaimed the value of it all, and the meaning of it, to everyone.

The Veda-Shastras are classified into the exoteric and the esoteric, as in the case of every religious lore. We have this distinction in Christianity, in Islam, and everywhere—the outward religion and the mystical approach to Truth. The Vedas are, therefore, a general term for this entire group of scriptures, which discuss by a long range of development of thought, every approach to Reality possible, from the lowest to the highest. These layers of approach, recorded in the Vedas, are available to us in the groupings, today known as the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. The Samhita portion of the Vedas is constituted of hymns and prayers to deities, transcendent powers, spiritual forces, which guide the embodiments in the form of created beings. They are the summonings of the soul in terms of the higher spirits which were felt to be present in the depths of contemplation and visions of various kinds. These hymns, known as the Samhitas, in the Vedas, could be applied for two purposes—for meditation as well as for ritual. When they become instruments of meditation or contemplation, they are the contents of what are known as the Aranyakas; and when they become the guidelines for action, ritual, sacrifice and worship, they are called the Brahmanas. So, there are two developments in the Vedic thought—the Brahmanas and the Aranyakas, developed from the Samhitas, branching forth in two different directions—contemplation and action. But there was a time when the peak of experience spiritual culminated in a blend of all these, in what are known as the Upanishads. The Upanishads represent the quintessence of thought, the essence that is drawn out from the Vedic knowledge, and the honey that is sucked, as it were, from the body of knowledge—Samhitas, Brahmanas and Aranyakas—not representing conditioned life merely, but reaching the utmost of effort to discover the nature of the unconditioned Reality.

The seers of the Upanishads were bent upon entering into the kernel of Reality by casting off all vestures which condition human life, and attaining a kind of attunement with it. The unconditioned was plumbed and experienced. So, in a way, we may say that the Upanishadic texts are records of exclamations and experiences of Masters who set themselves in tune with the ultimate Truth. Such are the Upanishads.

It is a very strange word, —'Upanishad,'—which is supposed to mean a secret knowledge, not to be imparted to uninitiates or the common public who are wedded to the exoteric approach only, who are totally conditioned in their life, and who cannot rise above the bias of sense-life and social regulations. Hence, the Upanishadic wisdom was kept very secret. It was never given to anyone except the near disciples who went to the Masters for training and underwent discipline for a protracted number of years, and made themselves fit to receive this knowledge which is unconditioned. That was the greatness of it, and that was also the danger of it—because it is unconditioned.

The Upanishads, therefore, are mystical revelations, secret wisdom; and, as the word denotes, they are supposed to be listened to, heard about, or learnt from a Master by

one's being seated in front of him, beside him, near him—Upa-ni-shad. When the word Upa-ni-shad is split into its components, it is supposed to give the meaning: "A knowledge that is secretly obtained from a Master by one's being seated near him in holy reverence and obedience." "Sit near" ;—that is the literal meaning of the term, Upanishad. Sit near the Guru, the Master and receive the wisdom by attunement, at-one-ment of 'being'. This is the peculiarity of Upanishadic knowledge. It is not like science or art or any other exoteric learning that one can have in a College or a University. It is not a lecture that is delivered, but a wisdom that is communicated to the soul by the soul. That is the speciality of Upanishadic wisdom. It is a communication between soul and soul, and not merely a discourse given by a professor to students in a College. It is a Light that is made to commingle with another Light. So, the Upanishads were kept as greatly guarded secrets.

The texts, known as the Upanishads, are spread out throughout the range of Vedic literature, and each section of the Veda has its own Upanishad or Upanishads. The Brihadaranyaka is the most important of them; it is very rarely studied by people and rarely discussed about. The 'Brihadaranyaka Upanishad' means the great forest of knowledge'. It is really a forest of every aspect of spiritual knowledge. One can find everything there, as one finds in a forest. And this Upanishad, particularly, is never studied by students, nor is it taught by tutors, because of its complicated structure, difficult to grasp, and not safe also to communicate if its meaning is not properly rendered. If its meaning is properly grasped, it would be the ultimate, unfailing friend of a person till death. It will guard you, protect you and save you, and provide you with everything, at all times. But if it is not properly understood, it can be like a sword in the hands of a child. So, this Upanishad has to be studied with great reverence and holiness of attitude, not as some book that you study in a library. It is not a book at all. It is Spirit that manifests itself, and not merely a word that is spoken. Such is the Upanishad, the Brihadaranyaka.

The Upanishad begins with a startling exposition of the very methodology adopted in the Upanishads. The method of the Upanishad is secret, esoteric and intended to go into the meaning of an action which is otherwise exoteric. The Vedas have one aspect, namely, the ritual aspect, the aspect of sacrifice, performance of religious ceremony, by the application of the Mantras of the Samhitas, as expounded in the section known as the Brahmanas. The Aranyakas go to the contemplative side of the Brahmanas, and tell us that a sacrifice need not necessarily be outward. It can also be inward; and the inward is as powerful as the outward. It can even be more powerful than the outward ritual. The ritual that is performed by the mind, say the Aranyakas, is more powerful in the production of effect than the ritual that is outwardly performed through the sacred fire or in the holy altar. The entire range of the Aranyakas is filled with this meaning, that mental action is a greater action than the external act. Its capacity is greater than that of external activity. Thought is more potent than word and deed. This principle is carried to its logical limit in the Upanishads.

The Upanishads are embodiments of different types of contemplation on Ultimate Reality, and so is the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. The beginning of the Upanishad is a contemplation on the inward meaning of a great sacrifice described in the Brahmanas, known as the Asvamedha Sacrifice. It is an external performance of a religious character for the purpose of achieving higher results in the form of celestial enjoyments, etc; but the Upanishad tells us that the proper approach to the aims of human life, such as ultimate satisfaction, delight, etc. would not be the method of the Brahmanas which is

only symbolic, but there is a deeper approach which can be more easily affiliated to the nature of Reality than is the external action of the Brahmanas. The sacrifice of the Asvamedha—it is a peculiar term which signifies the consecration of a horse in a large ritual performance—was mostly undertaken by princes and kings in ancient times, for the purpose of name, fame, etc. in this world and heavenly rejoicing hereafter. But the Upanishad tells us that its meaning is something quite different. What we see with our eyes and what we do with our deeds are indicative of a deeper aspiration in our minds, and what we actually seek is not pleasure, not satisfaction in the ordinary sense, not power, not name, fame, because all these are transient. Everything shall end, one day or the other. What are these joys in heaven? What is this power in this world? What is this name and status? They are mirages; they are nothing but husk, because they pass like wisp of wind. And how is it possible for the soul of an individual to ask for that which is transitory, perishable and passes like a wind? Will any wise person ask for a perishable joy? How could anyone engage oneself in activities, performances, religious or otherwise, which are capable of promising only transient joys, which will rob us of all our strength, and, then, land us in sorrow most inconceivable? What is the real aspiration of the soul of the individual? What is it that we really ask for? What is it that we need? It is difficult to answer these questions. The child cannot answer the question: 'What do you need?' 'I want a sweetmeat, a sugar-candy, a toy.' What else can the child say? Such seems to be the answer of the untutored mind, the illiterate soul, sunk in the darkness of ignorance, which speaks in terms of name, fame, power, wealth and diversion and gain and pleasures; whether they are transient or not, it cares not. It asks for pleasure, which shall end in a complication from which it is difficult for one to free oneself.

The Upanishad promises us a freedom which is above the turmoil of all earthly existence. It can make us happy perennially under every condition, even after death—not merely in this life. In fact, the Upanishad assures us that death is not a bar, and not a fear. There is no such thing as death as we think of it. It is another kind of process which is intended for the chastening of the soul in its march towards a greater perfection; and perfection is what we ask for, not pleasure. This is what the Upanishads tell us, on which the Brihadaranyaka contemplates in vast detail.

To people who study this Upanishad at random, it may appear to be a hotch-potch of contents, as it incorporates diverse ideas, many thoughts, and several schools of thought are impregnated into the body of this scripture. But, in fact, it is so profound that to discover the sequence of thought present in it one requires some time and also some patience. There is a sequential development of thought of the Upanishad right from the beginning to the end. It is not an irrelevant jumble of various concepts of meditation or philosophical thought put into a single omnibus body. There is, really, no spiritual truth which is not contained in this Upanishad; it is a complete scripture by itself, and every other Upanishad repeats only what this has said in some way or the other. There is nothing new in any other Upanishad that is not found in the Brihadaranyaka. It is really 'Brihadaranyaka'—a great forest of wisdom, a real ocean where you can find any kind of treasure, provided you are able to dive deep into it. If we can arrange all the thoughts of the Upanishad in some sequence, we shall find that the First Chapter of the Upanishad is actually the thesis of the whole Upanishad and the Second Chapter, to some extent, continues the same tradition, so that commentators are of the opinion that the First and the Second Chapters constitute what may be called the



fundamental doctrine, of the Brihadaranyaka. This Section is also called the Madhu-kanda or the book dealing with the essence of the whole scripture.

The next two Chapters, the Third and the Fourth, are a logical development of this thought in a more polemical manner or philosophical way. These are thoughts which are not entirely new, but which have been already explained in a precise form in the first two Chapters, only now elaborated in a philosophical way in the next two Chapters, called the Yajnavalkya-kanda, or the Muni-kanda, as, sometimes, it is also called. So, we have in the first Four Chapters the entire philosophy in its basic sense—the thesis proclaimed in the first two Chapters and argued about in the next two Chapters.

The practical meditations which may be regarded as the natural outcome of this philosophical study are expounded in the Fifth Chapter. The Sixth Chapter is a very essential appendix to the whole body of the Upanishad, so that in these Six Chapters the entire objective of human life, the four Purusharthas, as we may say—Artha, Kama, Dharma and Moksha—all these aims of existence, are beautifully blended in their completeness and told as to how they stand in a mutual relation one to the other, how these objectives of life, Artha, Kama, Dharma and Moksha are four approaches necessarily incumbent upon every individual at some time or the other, in some degree or the other for the purpose of the highest integration which is Self-realisation or God-realisation.

## Chapter 1

### THE ABSOLUTE AND THE UNIVERSE

The First Chapter of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad commences with the description of a symbolic meditation, the famous Asvamedha sacrifice, renowned in the Vedas and the Brahmanas. The Asvamedha sacrifice is a liturgical performance, a ritual of the Brahmana portion of the Vedas, but the Upanishad converts every activity external into an internal contemplation. So the Asvamedha sacrifice is taken here as a symbol for cosmic meditation comparing the universe to a horse and the limbs and bodily structure of the horse to the various structural patterns of the universe;—how we can mentally perform the sacrifice and conceive sacrifice as, ultimately, a contemplation of the universal harmony of things rather than lay too much emphasis on the external performance of it by means of physical objects and oblations, etc. in a literal sacrifice.

The Asvamedha sacrifice which is a visible performance from the point of view of the ritual of the Mimamsa and the Brahmana is the object of meditation, in the very beginning of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, occurring in the Satapatha Brahmana, the most important of the Brahmanas, belonging to the Yajurveda. There is a beautiful symbology provided to us for meditation on the whole universe as the sacrifice itself—a subject that is adumbrated in the Purusha-Sukta of the Veda and certain other hymns of the Veda where God's creation is regarded as a sacrifice on His part, a Self-alienation of God Himself, as it were, by which He has become 'the other'. This is the contemplation in the beginning of the Upanishad, the creative process envisaged as a great sacrifice on the part of God. The Upanishad has some resemblance to the Purusha-Sukta, and what follows from the Purusha-Sukta and certain other Upanishads by way of deduction.

The creative process is further elaborated in the Sections which come after the description of the contemplative Asvamedha sacrifice—how, originally, it appeared as if there was nothing, there was just non-being. This is a famous concept in philosophical parlance, that originally it was a non-being 'as it were'. The words 'as it were' are very important. It is not that something comes out of nothing. Nothing can come from nothing. It is not nothingness that 'was', it is rather an imperceptibility of things. The Nasadiya Sukta of the Veda is a famous precedent to this concept in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, even as the Asvamedha sacrifice contemplation is connected with the Purusha-Sukta. Originally, it was nothing in the sense of an imperceptibility of all things, because space, time and objectivity of things were all comprehended in the bosom of what are called the 'original waters', the 'cosmic waters', a symbology which is familiar to all religious and mystical doctrines.

There was, therefore, nothing visible, because nobody was there to see things. The seer and the seen were clubbed together into a single mass of content, which could not be described in any other way except that it was imperceptible. It was imperceptible not because it was really so, but because it was not an object of the perception of anyone. Neither was it an object of the perception of anyone nor was there any chance of its being perceived by anyone, on account of the absence of subjects, and therefore absence of objects. This supreme imperceptibility was the Supreme Being Himself, who revealed Himself as this creation, gradually, in grosser and grosser forms, in various degrees of manifestation, known to us these days, in philosophy, as Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat, for instance. He became the supreme seer and 'consumer' of everything—to use the word of the Upanishad, Sarvasya Atta Bhavati: God became the

'eater' of all things. The word 'eater' here means the 'consumer', the 'perceiver', the 'experiencer' and the 'being' of everything. He was the Subject of everything; there was no object before Him. As He was the experiencer of all things in an identity of Himself with all things, He could not be regarded as an individual subject, and the objects could not stand outside Him; hence, He was in a position to convert everything into the Subject of experience in the sense of 'Identity of Being'. Therefore, the whole universe was like food for Himself. He is regarded as the Supreme Eater, in a symbolic language. And one who meditates thus, also becomes That, the Absolute Eater. This is how the Upanishad began.

Then we are gradually taken to more subtle subjects and brought nearer to our own selves; from the distant, remote, cosmic creative process, we come nearer to our own selves and to more intelligible forms of manifestation as Prana, mind, senses, etc. It was necessary for the Upanishad to point out the distinction between the cosmic manifestations and the internal personal manifestations. The senses are internally operative, even as gods are externally operative. The gods are the superintending principles over the senses and the mind, etc., of the individuals. If the gods were not to perform their functions, the senses would not act; just as, if the electricity is not to flow from the power-house, the electric bulbs are not going to shine;—this is a very gross example for you. The cosmic forces are responsible for the operation and action of all individual principles including the mind, the Prana, and the senses. But the individual is impotent, as he has lost all contact with the cosmic forces. He has no consciousness of even the existence of these divinities. When we look at things with our eyes, we never for a moment imagine our connection with the Sun, for instance. We are oblivious of the existence of these superintending principles and we are intent merely upon the immediate action of the senses in respect of the visible objects. Why is it that the individual has become so weak, so powerless, so much deprived of energy? This is the subject of the Sections that follow further on, in the form of a story, an analogy.

There was a war that took place between the Asuras and the Devas, the demons and the celestials. There was a battle going on and the Asuras wanted to overcome the Devas, the gods. The gods thought: "We shall contemplate the Supreme Being in the form of Uktha or Omkara, meditate and derive energy, and then overcome the Asuras." So they started this Contemplation. How did they do it? They employed the various senses including the mind as means of contemplation—the eyes, the ears, the nose and the various senses, and finally the mind itself. When these meditations were attempted by the gods through these instruments of action, the senses and the mind, the Asuras came to know of this fact, and attacked them. So the symbology of the story is that you cannot contact Reality either with the senses or with the mind, because of the Asura attack. The Asura is the urge for separation, the impulse for externalisation, the desire of the senses to come in contact with objects, and a complete oblivion of the existence of divinities cosmically precedent to the internal manifestations in the body, and prior to our existence itself.

The gods could not attempt this contemplation, they were not successful, because the Asuras attacked them in this way, from every side, but they succeeded when they employed not the senses or the ordinary mind for the purpose of this contemplation but the internal Prana which was in tune with the Cosmic Prana, which means to say that we become successful only insofar as we are in harmony with the Cosmic and we are defeated insofar as we are away from it.

When speech, as the Upanishad tells us in this connection, was rid of the Asuric element in it, it ceased to be speech and became Agni or Fire, the Deity itself. Likewise, every sense-organ became the Deity, the 'Pindanda' jumped into the 'Brahmanda', the senses resumed their original conditions as gods, as they were once upon a time in the pristine position which they occupied in the Virat, prior to separation into individuality. The senses, when they are placed in proper position in the Virat-Consciousness, are called the gods; they are themselves the gods. But when they are rid of the connection with Virat, they became ordinary senses running like slaves towards external objects.

The Upanishad tells us, by way of this analogy, that it is no use trying to contact Reality through the senses or the mind; they have to be placed, first, in the context of cosmic universality. This is the meditation to be practised, which means to say that Virat is to be the Object of meditation. Whenever you contemplate an object located as a part of the Body of the Virat, then immediately it assumes a divine character, it ceases to be mortal and it assumes a grand beauty which is characteristic of divinity. This is how we have to meditate really, and not merely look upon some object, as if it is outside. Even spiritual meditations should not be attempted by mere sensory activity or mental function. This is the great truth told us by this analogy of the Asuras and the Devas battling with each other and the gods attempting to overcome the Asuras by means of meditation.

Then we have, perhaps, the most central part of the Upanishad, which is the Fourth Section of the First Chapter, called the Purushavidha Brahmana, a very grand and eloquent exposition of the supreme heights that our ancient Masters reached in their meditations. By means of this Purushavidha Brahmana, the Upanishad gives us a complete description, not only of the nature of Reality, but also of the process of creation upto the lowest limits of manifestation. This is not only a subject for meditation but also for philosophical analysis and comparative study of various religious concepts.

The Purushavidha Brahmana of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is a classical exposition of the famous Purusha-Sukta of the Veda. The very beginning of this section proclaims that there was One Being at the origin of things and It is the Cause for the Primal Will to create. So the 'Will-to-create' is the expression of the Universal Being whose identity with this Will is of an inscrutable nature. Neither can we say that it is identical, nor can we say that it is different. In order to explain the relationship of the creative process and the created individuals with the Supreme Cause, the doctrine of creation is enunciated in the cosmological hymns of the Veda as well as in this section of the Upanishad. The characteristic of the Supreme Being is said to be an eternal 'I' or the Consciousness 'I-Am-That I-Am', 'I-Am-What-I-Am', or, merely, 'I-Am', or, even the word 'Am' is redundant; there is just I, the Absolute. This was the Primary Status of Being.

In order to make us understand our connection as individuals with this Universal 'I', the Upanishad explains how the One tended to become the many in the form of space, time and objects. This is the story of the Fourth Section of the First Chapter—the Purushavidha Brahmana. The One does not suddenly become the multitude. According to the Upanishad, the One becomes two. There is a split of feeling or experience, as it were, which alienates the Self into the subject and the object. It is a peculiar state of consciousness where oneself becomes the object of one's own self. The Absolute is neither the subject nor the object, because these appellations, subjectivity and objectivity, do not apply to a state where Consciousness is not thus divided into two self-alienated aspects. The Supreme, somehow, becomes Its own Object. This is what we

call the state of Ishvara, the condition described at the very beginning of this Brahmana of the Upanishad. It is the Universal Tendency to objectivate that is called Ishvara. The objectification has not yet taken place; there is a potentiality of manifestation, as there is a hidden presence of the vast banyan tree in a little seed of the tree. So was this universe contained in the Seed of the Will of the Absolute. The Seed was the cosmic repository of every manifestation that was to take place subsequently. There was, thus, the beginning of a cosmic subject-object consciousness inseparable one from the other. Now, this split becomes more and more accentuated as time passes, so that there is a greater and greater intensity, and density of this feeling to isolate oneself from oneself, into the object of one's own perception and experience. It is oneself experiencing oneself—the subject deliberately condescending to become an object of its own self for purpose of a peculiar kind of joyous experience, which the scriptures describe as Lila, or play of God. What else can be the explanation for that tendency in one's consciousness where one begins to will the objectivity of one's own Universal Subjectivity?

This is apparently a logical contradiction, but the whole of creation is nothing but that; it is a logical contradiction, indeed; logically it has no meaning, and it cannot be deduced; but, yet, it is there. The relationship between the individual and the Absolute is not logically inferable from any kind of premise, it cannot be deduced from any kind of assumption, nor can we argue it out by any kind of inductive process. But we have to take things as they are. The whole purpose of the story of creation, given in this section of the Upanishad, is to help individuals to return to the Absolute, enable the purpose of the practice of Sadhana. It is not an explanation in the sense of a historical or chronological event that took place in some early periods of time but a practical suggestion given to individuals as to how they can reunite themselves with That from which they have been alienated in consciousness.

There is, therefore, a split of the One into two and the two becomes a multitude with the same creative urge continuing in every part of the manifested individualities; that means to say, there is a tendency to go down and down into greater and greater forms of objectivity. From the causal condition there is a descent into the subtle state and from the subtle there is a descent further into the grosser condition, which we call the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether, and everything that is constituted of these five elements. Thus, we have a cosmic integration with an implied multiplicity or, the other way round, there is a cosmic multiplicity with an implied integration or unity hidden behind it. This is the universe, in its apparent form. The Upanishad tells us that the manifestation was twofold and then it was threefold and then it was multiple. It was twofold in the sense that the Subject became the Object and the whole universe was Its own Body which it opposed to its own consciousness as that on which it contemplated as 'I-am-I'. Then the consciousness of threefold creation came into being; the threefold creation being called, in the language of the Upanishad, the Adhibhuta, or the physical, external universe; Adhyatma, or the internal individual perceivers; and the Adhidaiva, or the connecting link between these two. The transcendent spiritual presence which connects the subject of perception with the object of perception is the Adhidaiva. There is a peculiar principle which operates between the seer and the seen, on account of which this seeing becomes possible, but that transcendent element in the process of perception and external experience is always invisible to the normal ways of consciousness. So, there is a threefold creation—the creation of the outer world or the physical universe; the individual experiences, or Jivas, or souls; and the gods, the

celestials, the divinities who are the Adhidaivas presiding over everything that is external or internal. This is the threefold creation.

Immediately, the Upanishad asserts that none of these celestials is complete in itself. No part in creation can reflect the total Absolute. Yet, the whole Absolute is present in every part. This is, again, a quandary for us to contemplate. The entire completeness of the Supreme Being is present potentially in every atom of creation, and yet no atom, no part, no individual, no human being, no god, no celestial, nothing created ever, can be a vehicle for the Total Reality. The finitude of any particular manifestation is a hindrance to the reflection of the Total in it. To regard a finite object as complete in itself would be just ignorance. Here we have a corresponding enlightenment, a ray of light, thrown upon the subject in the Bhagavad-Gita, in its eighteenth chapter, where we are told that it is the lowest kind of knowledge to consider any finite object as a Total Reality in itself. The whole of truth or reality is not contained in any object, but the ignorance of the individual is so profound that every perception mistakes a finite object for the Total Reality. That is why there is a connection established between a particular percipient and a corresponding object under stresses of emotion, for instance, where the object is taken for the Total Reality. Whenever one gets engrossed in any particular object or a group of objects, there is a mistaken notion of the apparent presence of the Total in particulars, which is not true, says the Bhagavad-Gita. To regard one's own family as everything, to regard one's own group as everything, to regard one's own community or even nation, even mankind as a whole, as everything, is a finitude of perception, because nothing that we regard as complete is really complete. The whole of reality cannot be manifest in anything that is finite, in space or time. This is to the credit of our wisdom which always takes finitudes as infinitudes.

A higher knowledge is that which recognises an interconnectedness of finitudes amongst themselves. This, again, is a proclamation in the Bhagavad-Gita itself. Where we consider one finite object as everything and cling to it as if it is all— this is the worst kind of knowledge. This happens on account of an obsession of consciousness in respect of a particular object due to the capacity of the object to evoke certain sentiments in the person at a given moment of time. But in higher moments of reflection one begins to realise the interdependence of objects, that no finite object is complete in itself, that completeness lies in an interconnection of one thing with another, so that there comes about the philosophy of collaboration, cooperation, sociable and amicable relationship among beings. But this, too, is not the highest knowledge. It is not true that finite objects are complete in themselves; it is also not true that they are merely interconnected and therefore one is hanging on the other. All this is only a tentative concession to our vision of the Supreme Being as reflected in space and time. But what it is when it is not conditioned in space and time, that is the Reality. It is neither interconnected nor related; it has no internal variety and it has no external relationships. This is emphasised further on in the passages of this Brahmana of the Upanishad.

All this creation is the manifestation of the One Supreme Being; nevertheless, not one particular object can be taken as the 'All'. Why? Because, the Supreme Being is the 'I', or the Centre, of Consciousness, known as Selfhood, in every particular object. It cannot be regarded as an object because the Self is not an object. The term Self, or Atman, signifies a peculiar awareness in us which defies any kind of externalisation. The I-ness in me, or the 'Selfhood' in me is of such a nature that it cannot be set aside or set apart or isolated from my own self. I myself cannot become my own object. It is impossible for me to segregate myself into another, as other than what I really am in my

own experience. But this is what one actually does in respect of other people and other objects and other things in creation. If everything is an 'I' from the point of view of everyone, it would be unbecoming on the part of any particular individual to regard other such centres as external objects of perception or mere tools for the satisfaction of oneself. Unfortunately, each person regards every other person, and each thing holds every other thing, as an object outside. This situation where there is a universal objectivity alone and nothing of the Self in anything, is called Samsara or bondage, the world of thralldom.

But everything is a Self in itself from its own point of view. So if the point of view of the Selfhood of every object could be contemplated in one's own mind, there would be an awareness suddenly awakened in oneself of the Universal Selfhood of things. So at one moment of time we can have two types of awareness, as we would like to have them. It can be an awareness of Universal Selfhood or it can be an awareness of utter objectivity, fear and sorrow. We can be at once in hell or we can be at once in heaven, as we would like. The consciousness of the Selfhood or the Atman-nature of everything is called liberation, which is true, because everything is a Self in itself; but everything is an object also from another point of view, the standpoint self-aberration. So, to have an emphasis made on the object-aspect of creation would be to find oneself in Samsara or bondage. One and the same thing is bondage as well as liberation. At one point you can see both heaven and hell. The earth and the heaven are both in one place, cross-sectioned, so that the Absolute and the relative are a single focus of experience. This is a great truth that is revealed to us in very precise passages of this section of this Upanishad.

The Upanishad continues, while it goes on explaining this process of creation, telling us that all the principles of creation in various degrees of manifestation are the one Reality itself. Whether it is in the form of gas, as hydrogen and oxygen, or it solidifies itself into what we call water, or it becomes ice, it makes no difference—it is one and the same thing that appears in all this threefold manifestation. Likewise, the causal, the subtle and the gross appearances are nothing but the appearances of Brahman in space and in time, by means of causal connection.

There was an Awareness, says the Upanishad, at once generated at this stage of creation when Consciousness rose to its status and identified itself with all the multiplicity of creation and knew 'I-am-I'. This Consciousness of 'I-am-I', in spite of the multiplicity of objects, is called Virat; this is Hiranyagarbha; this is Ishvara; this is what we call God, or the Creative Principle.

The Upanishad tells us, by way of caution, that we cannot succeed in our endeavours in this world if we make a mistake in our attitude towards things. What should be our attitude towards anything in this world? The attitude that befits that particular thing! It should not be contrary to the essential nature of that object. If we put on an attitude towards any person or thing, which is not becoming of the essential nature of that person or object, we shall not succeed in our attempt in coming in contact with it, or utilising it, or achieving success of any kind in respect of a relationship with it. What is the essential nature of any object, or any person, or anything, for the matter of that? Again, to come to the same point, Selfhood is the nature of things. And what is Selfhood? This, again, is a hard thing for the mind to grasp.

The Selfhood-concept is a universal one, in the sense that it cannot be external. The Self cannot be manifold; It can only be one, because the Selfhood of Consciousness is asserted by every individual. There is none who has no Selfhood in himself, in herself or

itself; so there can be only a totality of selves, all merging one with the other, as rivers merge in the ocean. And as we have not many rivers in the ocean, there cannot be many selves, too, in this Consciousness. There is one mass of Being, as we have in the ocean a mass of waters, where one does not know which river is where. Likewise, one cannot recognise the distinction of one Self from another, which is a mass of awareness, which is the Total Being, the Absolute. The Self can only be one. If that is the case, how can there be many selves? There is an illusion in our way, and we are not seeing things properly. When we consider any person or object as external to ourselves and put on a utilitarian attitude towards that external something, we are untrue to the nature of that particular thing, whatever that object be.

Then, the Upanishad says, 'Sarvam tam paradat,' everything shall flee away from us, when we regard anything as non-Self. There cannot be success in any walk of life where objects are regarded as non-selves, where we have a suspicious attitude towards things, when we dub an object as not what it really is but as what it is not. No object is an object in or to itself; it is a Self by itself, from its point of view. So, to call it from another's point of view as an object and to treat it as such would be to be untrue to the salt of its nature, and so it shall flee away from such a cogniser. All failures in life, whatever they be, are, thus, the outcome of an erroneous attitude of consciousness towards the external environment. This is another great truth proclaimed in this Upanishad.

Then the Upanishad goes further into the description of the classification of society into what we call the Varnas, in Sanskrit language, which represent the grouping of characters in human society in accordance with their knowledge and capacity, for the purpose of coming together in a harmonious mood, for the purpose of the achievement of a single goal. The whole of society, by which we do not mean merely the human society but the entire creation, is a manifestation in a multiple form, intended for a higher purpose, namely, Self-realisation. The intention of the universe is God-consciousness or Self-knowledge. This urge of the universe towards the All-Self is what we call evolution. From every stage there is an upward urge towards the Self-realisation of oneself in the Universal. So, whatever the stage of a particular manifested being be, whether it is human or subhuman or superhuman, from that particular stage there is an urge to go upward, vertically, as it were, towards a greater harmony and experience of integrality. This is what we know in science, today, as evolution. This is what we also call aspiration; this is what is called the moral urge; and this is what we call desire, in general. This is the pull of universal gravitation.

All the groups of individuals have to work together from the point of view of their own species at least, for the purpose of their ultimate good. The four 'Varnas' mentioned are the four capacities of individuals—the spiritual, the political or the administrative, the economic, and the working groups. The social groups are really not connected one with the other; they are individuals, of course. How can anyone bring individuals into a harmony or a united formation? How can you ask many people to think singly? This is not possible, obviously. So, the Upanishad tells us that God created what is called 'Dharma'. The law of integration is called Dharma; the law that binds multiplicity together in a harmony is Dharma; any cohesive force is Dharma; else, there would be a split of parts into fragments which flee away hither and thither, without any connection among themselves. The parts of creation would apparently have no connection among themselves if Dharma were not to be there as a strong cementing force.



We know, there is always a tendency of things to meet together, to come together and unite themselves in some form or the other, for the purpose of a higher achievement. This tendency is present physically, vitally, subtly, grossly, socially, intellectually, ethically, spiritually, or whatever the way be—this uniting Law is called Dharma. Dharma simply means the law of the Righteousness of the Absolute, and this Law operates in every realm of creation, even the lowest form of sub-atomic structures. Here, too, is the cohesive force working, bringing particles together into a single formation called atoms, molecules, etc. In higher forms of life it is organically visible as the living body, and then there is the social group, etc., all which are indications of the fact that the Supreme Brahman, the Absolute, is operating as an integrating Law, or Dharma, in and through all these manifested varieties, which apparently are disconnected from one another. Thus, there is the creation of the groups of individuals, and the Law of Dharma, at the same time manifested, to bring them together into a harmony. So, the whole creation is complete in itself. It is a perfect constitution which is laid down with all details, right from the top to the bottom, for all times.

Then, there is a set of suggestions given by the Upanishad from the practical point of view. All activity in the world is ultimately futile, if one condition is not fulfilled. We are not going to succeed in any attempt of ours in this world, we are going to be a miserable failure, whatever be our enterprise—you may be a great philanthropist, you may be a loving social worker, you may have big ambitions in life to do great things and magnificent things—all these efforts will go to dust and one will go repenting, achieving nothing of the nature of success in this world, if one essential point is missed. What is that? The Dharma, or the Law of Unity which is present as the Selfhood of all things, the Atman-nature in things, even in the midst of all this apparent variety of activity and experience.

Every activity becomes divine, provided the element of the Atman is impregnated into it. Every activity becomes futile, if the Atman is divested out of it. Every body is alive, if the soul is present in it; every body is a corpse, if the soul is out of it. Thus, the Upanishad very precisely tells us here, again, that we should not weep and cry if we do not succeed in life, for it is our mistake. We have an unspiritual attitude towards things, and this is the cause of our failures in life. We fail at home, we fail in our personal works, we fail in society, we fail even in our higher ambitions, which may be superphysical in nature. Where God is absent, nothing can be a success. Where God is present, everything shall be a success. This is the essence of this practical suggestion given by the Upanishad. When we forget God, we shall be in the throes of misery at that very moment and when we are in the presence of God, when we are able to practise the presence of God, when our consciousness is tuned to universality, then, whatever we touch would become gold, and any enterprise of ours is bound to be a success, whichever be the direction we take. Success will be in our hands and failure will be unknown, if the Atman is our guide, if the Absolute is at the beck and call of our personal experience; otherwise, we are not going to succeed; everything shall be futile.

There are three personal desires in the individual, or we may say, there are three urges in the individual, which are three types of expression of the very same Absolute. The Upanishad tells us that we cannot be completely closing our eyes to these desires in the individual. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is a very complete scripture; it touches every point of psychology and spiritual aspiration. What we call desires and call bondages in life are the blind movements of the same spiritual force. It is God Himself walking, as it were, closing His eyes—that is called a desire; and we cannot call it

undivine merely because it has closed its eyes. It becomes undivine only when it has lost the awareness of its purpose. The movements of the human nature in the form of desires, called Eshanas, or the primal urges of the personality are the gropings of the very same cosmic force, attempting to unite itself with every blessed thing in creation, searching for the Selfhood in things. These are the functions of hunger, sex and renown. Even if one ignores only one of them, there is a sense of incompleteness of being. But, their activity is of a painful nature; it does not lead to success ultimately; it throws the individual into sorrow finally, because its well-intentioned activities or movements are blindly directed. It is an unawakened urge of the Universal, and these are the blind forces of Nature; they are also the Absolute Law working, only they are not conscious of themselves. The Upanishad tells us that it is up to us to render them conscious, awaken them to the awareness of their own purpose, then desires shall become directives of the soul on the path to liberation. The Self is the true world of all living beings.

By Yajna or sacrifice, study of sacred lore, offering of libations, providing boarding and lodging, giving grass and water and the like, tending and non-interfering with domestic animals, birds, etc., even up to such creatures as ants in one's house, the knower of the Self recognises the Reality of the gods, sages (Rishis), ancestors (manes), human beings, animals, etc., respectively, and becomes one with all existence, evoking the love of all beings as they would love their own Self. This is, in essence, the doctrine of creation, as well as of the return of the soul to God, or Brahman, as expounded in the fourth section of the First Chapter of the Upanishad.

The subject of the object of consciousness, is again continued in the further passage by way of description of what the Upanishad calls 'the food of the soul'. We are told that there are seven kinds of food which God has created for the satisfaction of the individuals. The ordinary food that we eat every day, is one kind of food. The milk that comes out from the breast of the mother, is another kind of food, natural to children, whether they are human or otherwise. The sacrifices offered to the gods or the divinities called Darsha and Purnanvasa, the offerings that we make to gods especially during the new moon and the full moon occasions, are two other kinds of food that sustains the gods, because that is the way we establish a connection between ourselves and the celestials.

There is then a threefold food which is psychological in nature, called in the Upanishadic language as speech, mind and Prana. These are the internal apparatus of the individual to come in contact with things outside and therefore they are called the instruments of food. By means of entanglement in this sevenfold food, the subject-individual gets caught up in the object-atmosphere. The objects catch hold of the subjects by attracting them towards themselves and making the subjects depend on them. Anything on which you depend is the food of yours, and all these seven things are mentioned as things on which individuals depend for their sustenance.

The internal or psychological foods—speech, mind and Prana—are further described in their cosmical connotation, and we are told that we are supposed to spiritualise these external forms of manifestation called the foods of the Jivas, and when we spiritualise them, they become universal in their nature. An object when it becomes universal ceases to be an object; it is particularised, and so it looks like an object. The Upanishad proffers certain meditations, or Upasanas, according to which these seven kinds of food, especially the speech, mind and Prana, get cosmically enlarged in their magnitude and become part-and-parcel of Hiranyagarbha-Prana. Anything can become a passage to God, provided it gets universalised in meditation.

Then we are told that, individually, no sense-organ can be an instrument or help in our contacting God. Neither the senses nor the mind can be an aid, but they become aids when they are universalised, when they are united back to their original sources, namely, the Deities presiding over them. If the senses and the mind act individually, as if they are disconnected from their sources, the divinities, then they cannot succeed in their attempts. When they are connected back to their divinities, they become cosmical in their nature, they become part of Virat, they gain their status in the cosmos instead of being located merely in the individual bodies. This is one kind of meditation whereby the individual limbs get transferred to their respective locations in the Cosmic Body.

Name, form and action are what this world is. The world consists of nothing but name, form and activity. These, when they are externalised, particularised or finitised, become sources of bondage. Again, the Upanishad goes to the technique of universalising name, form and activity. Then they become the name, form and action of Hiranyagarbha-Prana. This is a meditation which, we may say, is the basis for the Karma-Yoga doctrine, according to which every action is supposed to be divinity manifest, and a means to liberation of the soul, provided, of course, names, forms and actions get universalised in the meditation which is to be the background of one's activities in the world. As the Bhagavad-Gita tells us, Karma should be based on Buddhi (Understanding) or Jnana (Knowledge). With this, the First Chapter of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is concluded.

## Chapter 2

### THE SUPREME GOAL OF LIFE

The Second Chapter begins with the famous conversation between Balaki, the learned sage, and the king Ajatasatru, the dialogue actually hinging upon the subject of the conditioned Brahman and the unconditioned Brahman, the formed or the manifested aspect of Reality and the formless or the absolute nature of It; the learned accoster insisting upon the forms of manifestation as objects of meditation and the king who was more educated in this line emphasising, on the other hand, that no form, no particular manifestation can be regarded as complete in itself unless its universal background is also taken into consideration. The whole conversation between these two persons is on the particular theme of recognising the universal in every particular mode of manifestation. And the highest universal is Consciousness whose faint inklings are observable in the state of deep sleep when all externality of being is withdrawn. That is the essence of the discourse between Balaki and Ajatasatru.

There is then the interesting and enigmatic instruction that everything that is cosmic is also present in the individual. What is in the 'Brahmanda' is in the 'Pindanda'. The great Sages Vasishtha, Visvamitra, Bharadvaja, Atri, Jamadagni, Gautama and Kasyapa are in our bodies. They are superintending over the different limbs of our personality. They are situated in our own senses. Even the gods themselves can be located in the eye itself. The various parts of the eye, which is the subtlest manifestation of the body, are presided over by certain subtle divinities, so that in our own selves we can recognise the cosmic realities and God can be realised in our own being. The Upanishad, then, tells us that the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—can be classified into the mortal and the immortal, the Murta and the Amurta, which can be converted into objects of meditation, for the purpose of establishing harmony between the individual and the cosmic, in their forms as well as essences.

The quintessential teaching is given to us in the famous conversation between Maitreyi and Yajnavalkya. This occurs towards the end of the Second Chapter. This is an eternal message that the Upanishad gives us. All loves are loves for God. Every satisfaction is a satisfaction that comes by contact with God, and every affection, whatever be its nature, is a tendency towards God, and no one loves anything except for the sake of this universal Self present in that particular object. "Na va are sarvasya kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati; atmanastu kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati: Nothing is loved for its own sake; it is for the sake of the Absolute Self in it that anything is loved." This is the greatest truth that can ever be proclaimed, but it is also the most difficult thing that anyone can afford to understand. That which we are called upon to visualise as an object of attraction is the Universal Absolute. It is the Infinite summoning the Infinite, as it were, when the subject and the object pull each other for the purpose of personal evaluations. The evaluation is ultimately a universal one. It is the presence and the recognition of the Universal in the particular that evokes satisfaction. But on account of the preponderance of the clamour of the senses and the urges of the lower mind, the activity of the Universal subtly present in this contact of the subject with the object, is missed always, so that the sudden happiness that comes on account of affections is always miscalculated and projected upon an object of sense, because of the inability of the senses and the mind to recognise the presence of the Universal in the particular, which flashes forth in a moment's existence at the time of this contact. The

Universal never manifests itself wholly in the particulars; it is manifest only when there is a forgetfulness of personality. Whenever there is a tendency in you to forget your own self, there is the gravitation of the mind to the experience of happiness. The more you forget yourself, the more are you happy; and this tendency to forget oneself is the pressure of the Universal to manifest itself in the particular. When it is consciously experienced, it becomes Yoga practice; when it is unconsciously experienced, it becomes a rapture of the senses and a desire of the mind, which is binding in its nature. So, Yajnavalkya tells Maitreyi that all affections, all loves, all attractions, all pleasures, all happiness, anything that we like in this world, is ultimately our tendency to like the Absolute, and it is the Absolute casting its shadow on the various objects of sense which we mistakenly see in the vehicles of satisfaction. The Universal has neither a subjective side nor an objective side—“Yatra hi dvaitamiva bhavati, taditara itaram pasyati.” When the Universal is lost sight of, when the particular alone is visualised, then it is that we miss the awareness of the real abode of the happiness that comes out at the time of the contact of the subject with the object. When we are awakened to the awareness of the Universal, we would see that it is neither a subject nor an object—that state of awareness is called Brahma-sakshatkara, the realisation of the Absolute.

At the end of the Second Chapter we have what the Upanishad calls the Madhu-Vidya, or the knowledge of the interconnectedness of things, imparted by the great sage Dadhyanc Atharvana. Usually, consciousness and object are regarded as exclusive of each other. The one cannot be in the position of the other. The perceiver is consciousness and the object is what is experienced by consciousness. The two are categorised as two distinct characters in the field of experience. Where the subject is, the object cannot be; and vice versa. The object cannot be the subject and the subject cannot be the object; consciousness cannot be matter and matter cannot be consciousness. This is our usual notion of things and our practical experience, too. But the Madhu-Vidya gives us a revolutionary idea in respect of what we usually regard as a field of the duality of subject and object.

The Madhu-Vidya is an insight into the nature of things, which reveals that there are no such things as subjects or objects. They are only notional conclusions of individual subjects from their own particular points of view, the one regarding the other as the object, so that there is a vast world of objects to a single individual perceiver, and this is the case with every other perceiver, also. The fact of experience itself is a repudiation of the phenomenal notion that subjects are cut off from objects, as if the one has no connection with the other. If there has been a gulf of difference, unbridgeable, between the experiencing consciousness and the object outside, there would be no such thing as experience at all. The great revelation of the sage Dadhyanc Atharvana is that the Adhyatma and the Adhibhuta are linked together by the Adhidaiva, and a Transcendent Divine Presence connects the phenomenal subject and the phenomenal object, through an invisible force, so that we have a universe of interrelated particulars, one entering the other, one merging into the other, one coalescing with the other, like the waves in the ocean, and not the universe we see with our eyes, as a house divided against itself.

This experience is the revelation of the sage Dadhyanc, a knowledge, Madhu-Vidya, which is supposed to have been imparted to Indra and to the Ashvins, and to the other sages through them. The significance of the word ‘Madhu’ in the term, Madhu-Vidya, is that everything is the ‘essence’ of everything. ‘Madhu’ is honey, which symbolises the quintessential essence of everything. The basic reality of all things is called Madhu, in this Vidya. The essence of everything is, thus, the essence of everything else, also.

Whatever is the basic quality, the reality, the fundamental being of anything, is also the fundamental being of everything else. Thus, there is no prerogative on the part of any particular individual in respect of anything. There is no superior, qualitative excellence in any object or any subject. It is only a point of view that is called a subject, it is also only a point of view that is called an object. So, if the isolated points of view are lifted to a universal point of view, there would be neither subjects nor objects. In a universal expanse of experience certain aspects are isolated from others and each aspect is emphasised from its own point of view. This particular point of view of a particular aspect of the total reality is called an individual subject, to which everything else stands in the position of an object. But this is not a correct point of view, because it is an abstraction from the total.

So, the Madhu-Vidya reveals to us the truth of the immanence of the Reality that is universal in every particular, so that there can neither be an ultimate cause nor an ultimate effect in a world of mutual dependence and correlativity of things. Madhu-Vidya is the knowledge of the correlativity of the subject and the object in such a way that they merge one into the other, cancelling the subjectness and the objectness of each, embracing each other in a union of their particularities and revealing their inner essence called the 'Madhu'. This applies to everything that is outside in the world called Adhibhuta, everything that is inside called Adhyatma, and everything that is transcendent called Adhidaiva. So, from three points of view the sage describes the correlativity of everything in the universality of being. Here is the conclusion of the Second Chapter.

## Chapter 3

### DIVINE IMMANENCE AND THE CORRELATIVITY OF ALL THINGS

The exponents of the Upanishad tell us that the First and the Second Chapters lay down the thesis of the whole Upanishad. They declare the essential content of the whole scripture, while the Third and the Fourth Chapters confirm this thesis by more elaborate discussions which happen to be in the context of an assembly held in the court of the king Janaka, where learned men and sages appeared to have conferred together for the purpose of mutual edification.

The sage Yajnavalkya is the leading figure in this great assembly of Janaka, and he is questioned by various sages. Eight of them are mentioned as principal ones, the first one being Asvala, the chief priest of the sacrifices performed in the Yajnasala of Janaka, who queries Yajnavalkya as to the way in which death can be overcome by those who are really subject to death, namely the performers of actions, the means of action, as well as the goal of action. All these are perishable in the world of space and time; anything that you do has an end, just as you yourself will have an end one day or the other. If everything is to be destroyed, is there a way of escape from this destructibility of things, or is everything doomed to failure in the end, and all will be wiped out of existence? What is the escape? What is the remedy? What is the means? This was the question of Asvala, and Yajnavalkya explained that the mortal becomes immortal the moment it returns to its cause. When the senses and the mind and the means of action and the performer himself—all—get identified in their meditations with their deities from where they come and to which they actually belong and by which they are superintended; when the transcendent divinities which are the realities behind the various functions and organs of the individual are meditated upon as organically connected to oneself, then there is an integral relationship established between the individual and the universal. Then the mortal becomes immortal; otherwise every action is perishable and everything that an action brings as result, also, would be perishable. That was the point made out by Yajnavalkya in regard to the question of Asvala, as to how the mortal can become immortal in spite of the fact that everything is subject to mortality in this world.

Then the next question was from Artabhaga about what the Upanishad specifically calls Grahas and Atigrahas—how the senses are subjected to the influence of objects, so that there is finitude on the part of the subject, which is taken advantage of by every object, and which is also the cause of the attachment of the subject to the object. Every object of sense is an Atigraha and every sense is a Graha. That which catches hold of an object is called a Graha and that which intensifies the attachment of the subject to the object is the Atigraha. So, like a crocodile catching hold of a person's legs in a river and not letting him off, the objects catch hold of the senses which are naturally prone to a movement towards the objects themselves.

Is there a way out of this predicament of subjection to utter suffering by way of dependence on objects which are not only perishable in their nature but also tantalising in their character? Neither do they promise real satisfaction, nor are they in a position to give real satisfaction under any circumstance. So there is a phenomenal attachment of the subject to the object, on account of which there is a mutual destruction of both brought about by the power of death, which cannot be overcome as long as the senses and the mind in their individual capacities remain what they are and depend on the

objects of sense which are in space and in time and are influenced by the objects, so that their attachments get intensified. The only solution, says Yajnavalkya, is the meditation on the Transcendent Being, which is beyond the realm of both the senses and their objects. Just as death consumes everything—there is nothing which cannot be subject to death in this world—there is something which can swallow death itself, and that has to be meditated upon—the Death of death—which is the Supreme Reality, Brahman.

Then, Bhujyu asks: What are the limits of the worlds? Where do the worlds end? Is there a limit or a consummation for this vast expanse called the universe?

Yajnavalkya says: There is no end. There are worlds within worlds and worlds beyond worlds, until we reach the cosmic border itself which hinges upon the existence of Hiranyagarbha and the end of the worlds is the existence of the Supreme Being, Hiranyagarbha, the Final Existence, and there is no chance of having a knowledge of the limits of the worlds as long as we behold them as if they are outside us. The worlds are intertwined with us. We are a part of the world and the only way of getting an insight into the vastness of the world, as it is, is an insight into one's own experience which is inseparable from the world. Here do go, in the end, the performers of the true horse-sacrifice.

The question, again, is put by Ushasta, as to how the internal Self can be experienced in its essentiality. Yajnavalkya replies that the internal Self cannot be experienced as objects are experienced. It is not an object, because it is the experiencer of things. It is that which sees things, that which hears things, and that which understands things. The Understander cannot be understood, the Seer cannot be seen, the Hearer cannot be heard and the Experiencer cannot be experienced. So the difficulty in the knowledge of Reality is that it is the Subject, par excellence, of every centre of experience. Therefore, the question as to how the experiencer or the real Atman can be experienced is out of point. The Atman cannot be experienced in the ordinary sense of the term, because it is the experiencer himself. You cannot 'know' the Atman as you 'know' things, is the answer of Yajnavalkya. The Atman is Experience.

What happens when the experience comes? When the knowledge of the Atman dawns, what is the consequence? This was another question posed before Yajnavalkya by Kahola. The answer is that when the knowledge of the Atman arises, desire for things automatically subsides. Just as a person who has woken up from sleep is concerned not with all the gorgeous beauty that he saw in the world of dream and the magnificences which he possessed as his properties, there is an automatic rising above the various attractions of things; and, likes and dislikes, which are common to the world of experience, spontaneously get transcended, because of the fact that the Atman is the Self of all. It is the pull of the Atman in the objects that is ultimately responsible for attraction towards objects. It is the Atman that is mistaken for objects and the objects are mistaken for the Atman, in turn. When the Atman is mistaken for objects, there is a transference of qualities taking place between the experiencer and the experienced. It is the presence of the Selfhood of things which is responsible for the mutual connection of the seer and the seen, which fact is missed in the ordinary phenomenal perception of things. The intervention of space between the seer and the seen defeats the attempt on the part of any person to know the secret that is taking place in the process of perception. We are mistaken when we think that the object of experience is outside us. It is not outside because, if it were really outside, it would not have been possible to experience it. It is involved in the very process of knowledge, and as the process of knowledge is involved in oneself, the object, also, is involved in oneself, only. So, it is the



Universal's interference in things that is ultimately the cause of the experience of even the apparent duality of objects. This is the outcome of the answer of Yajnavalkya in the context of how the Atman is realised and what follows as a consequence of the knowledge of the Atman.

Then, Gargi puts the question: What are the limits of things? Where is anything founded? Where is this world rooted and where are the other worlds fixed? Where is the last cause ultimately situated? What is the Cause of all causes?

Yajnavalkya says that the Cause of all things is Akshara, the Imperishable, the Absolute; and It is not rooted in anything, though everything and all the worlds are rooted in It. Under the law of the Absolute, everything moves, everything acts, and everything functions. Even the physical harmony, regularity and system that we observe in Nature is due to the existence of this Absolute. Its very being is the law of all things. It does not command things by word of mouth; it does not speak as we speak through speech. It exists! Its very existence is an influence exerted inexorably on everything. The symmetrical action and movement of things in every realm of experience, in every level of being, in every plane of existence, is due to the operation inwardly, subtly, of the law of the Absolute. It is due to it that the sun shines, it is due to it that rain falls, it is due to it that the earth revolves round the sun, it is due to it that we breathe, it is due to it that we exist, and think, and are happy. So, that is the ultimate Reality and it is not founded upon anything else; everything is founded upon That, says Yajnavalkya. Anything that is done here without a knowledge of this Reality, is a waste, concludes the sage.

Uddalaka asks: What is the Antaryamin, the Indweller? What does one mean by the Indweller, and where does He dwell; what does He indwell? Where is He?

The answer to this question given by Yajnavalkya is that the Antaryamin is the Atman and It cannot be known. While It knows everything, It is not known to anybody. The Antaryamin is the Indwelling Principle of all things. That which indwells an object, knows the nature of that object; but the object cannot know its Indweller at all, because the Indweller is the seeing Consciousness, the experiencing Reality. It cannot be externalised, It cannot be objectified, It cannot stand in the position of a known, and therefore its existence is not known. No one can ever have even an inkling of Its existence, because the highest faculty of knowledge, which are our own mind and intellect, cannot reach even the fringe of this Reality. The mind and the intellect are thrust outwardly, they are extrovert, they are forced to move in respect of things external to them, and so they cannot know what is behind them. The mind, the senses and the intellect cannot know what is transcendent to their own existence. So, the propeller of even the mind and the intellect, the cause of the functions of even the senses cannot be known by these faculties. This is the Indweller.

This indwelling Principle is not merely in me, or in you, but in everything—in physical, in astral and in causal beings. It is in every level of experience. It is outside, it is inside and it is universal, and therefore neither the objects outside can know It nor the intellect and mind can know It, nor even the divinities which are apparently the superintending principles over the senses can know It. No one can know where It is and yet without Its existence nothing can be. Its existence is the existence of everything. Such is what is called the Antaryamin. You cannot know It, you cannot see It, you cannot hear It, you cannot think It, you cannot understand It; because, this Being is the Seer, the Hearer, the Thinker, the Understander, the Experiencer of all; It is the Sarvanubhuh—the Being of everything.

The last questioner was Sakalya who raised various types of queries; some of them being: how many gods are there; what are the presiding deities of the various quarters, and objects, etc., to which all a proper answer was given by Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya mentions that there is a divine principle present in every little bit of things in this world. There is nothing undivine anywhere, in all the physical objects, in anything that we regard as phenomenal, external, anything that is apparently perishable, destructible, mortal, earthly; in all these things there is the hidden divine Reality. On account of the presence of this divinity a thing appears to be there. Even appearance could not be, if Reality were not to be there. The presence of Reality in anything comes into relief not merely when an object is visualised, but when it is viewed in its organic connectedness with its perceiver as well as the deity transcending both.

Thus, all the questions put by the eight sages in the court of king Janaka were answered by Yajnavalkya and finally he himself sums up his discourse by saying that the origin of the human being himself is Brahman. Everything comes from this Divinity. The individual existence of anything is not brought about by the mixture of elements, as scientists would tell us. It is not a chemical combination that is the cause of the physical body or of the mental functions, because they are all inert things. That which is inert or unconscious, cannot produce consciousness. Wherefrom does consciousness in the human beings come? It cannot be due to a conglomeration or a mix-up of physical elements; because that which is not in the cause cannot be in the effect. When the cause is only hydrogen and oxygen, and such other chemical substances, which are inert in nature, how can consciousness come out of them? The consciousness which is the effect, apparently, seen in the individual, has to be traced back to a Universal Consciousness. *Vijnanamanandam brahma raterdatuh parayanam*: Consciousness-Bliss is Brahman, the Goal of all aspirations. This is what Yajnavalkya concluded, in answer to all the queries posed before him. There is one Reality behind everything, which appears as the manifold things in this world. Here concluded the Third Chapter.

## Chapter 4

### THE INNER REALITY

The Fourth Chapter is a direct conversation between Yajnavalkya and king Janaka, which goes deep into the subjects: How the practice of meditation can be faultless, how it could be integral, how the various instructions Janaka received from some teachers were partial, they were aspects of reality, and they were not definitions of the Total Reality; what happens to one in waking, dream, sleep and Moksha, or final liberation.

Whenever Janaka told Yajnavalkya that he was initiated by such and such a person into such and such a method of meditation, the sage immediately retorted it was only one-fourth of the Reality, and so not complete. What was it that was lacking in it? The three-fourths were wanting, and the sage supplied the three-fourths by saying that the divinity behind things and the transcendent superintending principles rising above the visible forms of things, as well as the experiencing consciousness or the meditating principle, are also to be taken into concentration, apart from the actual form of the object which we usually take as supports in meditation. This applies as a uniform law in respect of any kind of meditation on any object or concept. It is incomplete when the object alone is thought of. Everything that is responsible for its appearance is also to be considered in order that the meditation may become complete; otherwise, there would be distraction of mind. Every object is connected to various other factors which are invisible. Every object has a transcendent nature, apart from its physical quality. It is external, it is internal, it is also universal. So, all these aspects of a thing have to be duly considered before meditation is to become final, says Yajnavalkya in answer to the importunities of Janaka.

Then the sage goes deep into the questions of waking, dream and sleep, which are indications here of the presence of a vaster reality than is apparent in either waking, dream or sleep. It is the Light of lights—Jyotisham jyotih. The Great Being which is the Supreme Reality, Brahman, is the Light with which everything is known. Our knowledge does not depend upon sunlight, moonlight, the twinkling of the stars, or the light of fire. Nothing of the kind! These lights are not the causes of our knowledge. Real knowledge is a new light altogether, which is internal, which is conscious and self-sufficient, which is self-luminous—that is the real Jyotis, Luminosity—and when every light fails, this Light will shine, and that is the Atman of things. It cannot be known because it is not outside; it is not an object of the senses. It is not anything that can be comprehended by the faculties that are available to us. Thus it is that we are a failure in our attempts at the knowledge of the Atman, while we are a success at everything else in the world.

The highest knowledge is also the highest happiness; this is a point which is driven home into the mind of king Janaka by Yajnavalkya. All our attempts, all our enterprises in this world are towards the acquirement of happiness, and no happiness in the world is permanent; it is all evanescent pleasure that we have here. It is evanescent because it passes away with the passing of the objects with which it is connected, with which it is identified. Our happiness is tied to the objects of the senses. We always try to find happiness in certain external things. Thus, when the objects pass away, the happiness also passes away. So, one cannot be really happy in this world. How can there be permanent happiness when there is nothing permanent anywhere? Everything upon which we pin our faith has to go one day or the other; not only does the object in which

we put faith go, but we ourselves have to go. Naturally, then, there is a final catastrophe awaiting everyone some day. How can there be happiness ultimate in this world?

But our very aspiration for permanent happiness is a symbol, an indication of its existence somewhere. It would not be possible for us to aspire for it, if it is not existent at all. Our mistake is that we seek it in places where it is not. It is not in the objects of sense. It is reflected in the objects but it is really not there, just as our face is not in the mirror. We can see our face in the mirror, but it is not really there inside the mirror. Just as the face is seen in the mirror, but it is not in the mirror, and we can mistake it for the reality of the face, likewise, happiness does exist, but it is not in the objects. It is only reflected in the objects on account of certain prevailing circumstances. We have to extricate the original from the apparent reflection and then we shall see that we have made a great mistake, a blunder in visualising the reality in the reflection, and clinging to the reflection as if it is the reality. The permanent happiness that we are aspiring after, the great bliss that we are seeking in this world, is not where we are seeking; it is elsewhere, behind us. It is not outside us, external to us. It is just another name for Universality of Being, the absoluteness of Reality. That is true happiness, Brahman, and for the purpose of the elucidation of the nature of happiness in its various levels, or gradations of manifestation, we are told that superior to the highest kind of human happiness conceivable, there is the happiness of the Gandharvas; beyond that is the happiness of the Pitris; beyond that is the happiness of the Devas or the celestials; higher than the happiness of the celestials is the happiness of Indra; higher than the happiness of Indra is the happiness of Brihaspati; still higher is the happiness of Virat; higher than Virat is Hiranyagarbha; higher than Hiranyagarbha is Ishvara, and then the Supreme Being, Brahman. So, one can imagine where we stand. Our happiness is a little fraction, a finite reflection, a distorted form of the great ocean of Reality, which is Bliss itself in its essence. It is Sat, Being; It is Chit, Intelligence; It is Ananda, Joy.

In this Reality, the ordinary conventions, morals, rules, laws, principles, get transcended, for It is All-Inclusive Being.

Thus, we have, in outline, the Fourth Chapter of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, which also concludes, once again, with the Maitreyi-Vidya, the conversation between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi, as it was studied in the Second Chapter.

## Chapter 5

### THE PRINCIPLES OF MEDITATION

The Fifth Chapter is entirely devoted to various descriptions of symbolic meditations. We are told here that different symbols can be taken as helps in meditation on Reality, just as we can reach the ocean through any river in the world. In as much as the whole of Reality cannot be envisaged by the senses, or conceived by the mind, some visible form of It is taken as a prop in meditation. But the object of meditation chosen is not the end of meditation; it is only a means to a transcendence of the quality of meditation through that object. We have to rise gradually from the external symbol, the form of the object chosen, to its deeper implications which are subtler than the visible gross form of the symbol and subtler even than what we can conceive as the subtle reality behind it. It has a transcendent form and when it reaches its highest state, it ceases to be an external object. The more we go deep into the nature of an object, the more do we realise its affinity with our own existence. But the more we conceive of its externality and grossness of form, the more also remote does it appear to be from us. The grosser is our concept of an object, the farther it is from us and the more difficult it is to come in contact with it. But the deeper we go into it by insight, the more does it reveal its connection with us in its essentiality, even as we go into the depths of the ocean and realise the background of all the waves on the surface which are apparently different, one from the other. This is the principle behind these symbolic meditations. The items mentioned are: ether, heart, truth, creativity, sun, mind, lightning, Vedas, Vaishvanara-Fire, austerity, Prana, Power, and the Four Feet of the Gayatri-Mantra. In fact, anything can be such a symbol, provided the principle of the technique is not missed.

We are also told in this Chapter that there are three great obstacles to spiritual approach and they are the weaknesses of personality, whether it is celestial, human or demoniacal. Every personality has defects of its own, a characteristic weakness, which has to be overcome by great effort; otherwise, the finitude of that personality would get emphasised by the repeated acquiescence in its weaknesses. These have to be overcome by deep meditation, the principles of which have been described in the symbolic methods mentioned.

The passion of the mind to run after objects of sense is one weakness. It is characteristic of everyone. The mind rushes to objects outside and it cannot rest quiet without them. The mind is always thinking of something outside—this is the weakness of a superior quality. Everything else comes after it. This weakness has to be tackled properly. Why does the mind run after objects? What is its secret? What does it expect from the objects? While history has shown that every attempt at contact with objects has ended in the misery of the individual, why is it that there is a repeated attack on the object by the senses and the mind? This is the organic weakness of individuality.

The other form of finitude or weakness is greed, the desire to appropriate everything to one's own self. People have no desire to share anything with others. The more one would like to have, the better it is. Each one is fond of one's own self, much more than one is attached to anything else. When the test is made, it will be found that one loves one's own self much more than anyone else. Finally, one would try to save oneself only, as when a catastrophe threatens a person. This is the principal greed, the love of one's own self, which manifests itself as greed for objects outside—wealth, property, acquisitions, etc. The more you have it, the still more do you want to have of

it. It is an irrational trait in the individual to appropriate things, even those things which may not belong to oneself, justly.

The third weakness is the finding of joy in the suffering of others, the inflicting of pain upon others, cruelty of any kind, harm done to others. This is the demoniacal instinct, whereby we get enraged and commit violence upon other living beings. The tendency to wreak vengeance, do harm or injury, bring about destruction in respect of others, is a weakness—the worst one. Greed by which one appropriates things to oneself is a weakness, and attachment to things, the great passion for objects, is another weakness. As long as these weaknesses preponderate in oneself, spiritual aspiration is out of question, God-realisation is far from one's reach. So the Upanishad, by way of an anecdote, or a story, tells us that the Creator, Prajapati, Himself told the celestials, the humans and the demons that they should restrain themselves (Damyata), that they should be charitable (Datta), and that they should be compassionate (Dayadhvam). These were the instructions given by Prajapati to his children—the celestials, the humans and the demons.

In connection with the injunction of meditation on the Gayatri-Mantra, it is enjoined upon the meditator that the first foot of the Mantra should be identified with the three worlds—earth, atmosphere and heaven; the second foot with the three Vedas, —Rik, Yajus and Saman; the third foot with the three vital functions—Prana, Apana and Vyana ; and the fourth foot with the sun. The result of such meditation is mastery over the worlds, proficiency in the higher knowledge, control above all living beings, and transcendent spiritual excellence. This Mantra is called 'Gayatri' because it protects (Trayate) one who recites it (Gayan). Thus, the Gayatri is all the worlds, all the Vedas, all beings, nay, Reality Itself. Whatever one wishes through it, that does take place.

## Chapter 6

### THE SPIRITUAL AND THE TEMPORAL

The stages of the evolution of man's desires and aspirations may be said to rise from his economic needs (Artha) to his vital urges (Kama), from these two, further on, to the fulfilment of the Universal Law (Dharma) and, finally, the liberation of the self in the Absolute (Moksha). The last-mentioned, the longing for spiritual freedom, is, again, constituted of certain stages of approach to Reality. From the ordinary impulse to the doing of selfish actions, there is an onward, rather an upward, ascent to the performance of unselfish activity (Karma-Yoga), and then through the more inwardised stage of devotion, adoration and worship (Upasana), one finds the culmination of one's aspiration in total spiritual absorption by means of the higher knowledge of Reality and meditation on It (Jnana).

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad purports to be a compendium of instruction on every one of these stages of the ascent of the soul to the Supreme Being. While the first four Chapters are confined pre-eminently to the elucidation of the nature of Reality (Jnana) and Its Law as operating in the Universe (Dharma), there is a predominant emphasis on internal worship (Upasana) in the Fifth Chapter, to which subject it is entirely devoted. There is reference interspersed in different places, in some degree, to ritualistic performances as well as concrete meditations in practically all the Chapters of the Upanishad.

The First Section of the Sixth Chapter is, again, a discourse on worship and adoration, the objects here being the supreme Prana, the speech, the eye, the ear, the mind, etc., in their universalised forms. The superiority of the Universal Prana over everything else is emphasised. The second section of the Sixth Chapter deals with the famous Panchagni-Vidya, or the doctrine of the Five Fires, as taught by king Pravahana Jaivali to the Brahmana sage Gautama, in answer to the great questions: (1) Where do people go after death? (2) From where do people come at the time of birth? (3) Why is the other world never filled up even if many die here repeatedly? (4) How do the liquids offered as libations rise up as a human being? (5) What are the paths of the gods and the manes?

The Five fires of the universal sacrifice mentioned here are the celestial realm, the atmospheric realm through which rainfalls occur, the physical earth or the world of living beings, the male, and the female, with all which, gradually, by succession, the souls, when they reincarnate, are supposed to get identified until they enter the womb of the mother; i.e. the first urge for rebirth or the impulse to descend into grosser forms is supposed to originate in the super-physical realms, and then it grossens itself by greater and greater density through rainfall, the foodstuffs of the earth, man's virile energy and a woman's womb. On birth and after appreciable growth there is the natural tendency to work for ulterior gains, which produces effects (Aparva) causing the rise of the soul to other worlds after death here, only to bring about its descent to the lower worlds once again on the exhaustion of the force of the works done here.

However, those individuals who practise meditation on the Five Fires as universal forces and do not regard them merely as natural phenomena, getting subjected to them, go to the higher worlds through the path of gods (known also as the Northern Path), until they reach the region of the Creator. But those who do not perform such meditation, and are ignorant of the universal relatedness of all phenomena in creation

and perform merely the so-called good works and charities known in this world as virtues, go after death through the path of the smoke (known as the Southern Path), only to return to the lower worlds on the exhaustion of the force of their merits. It is also added that those who do not go through either of these paths get reborn as animals, insects, etc., whose lives are either of utter ignorance and instinct or of immensely short durations.

The third section of the Sixth Chapter is devoted to certain mystical rites, explained in detail, intended to acquire earthly prosperity, wealth and glory, in this world. Through the successful execution of these ritualistic performances coupled with a sort of meditation as would be required in the context, the performer is expected to fulfil his desires for wealth and earthly glory (Artha). The fourth section, which is the conclusion of the Sixth Chapter, elaborates the mystical rites connected with the various stages of the procedure and process of childbirth, which includes a fairly detailed touch of the spiritual implications or the diviner aspects of ordinary love-making or the manifestation of the usual relationship between man and woman (Kama). Uninformed students of the Upanishad hold the erroneous opinion that the section dealing with the way of acquiring wealth and the romantic periods in one's social existence are unbecoming of an Upanishad which is expected to deal with the nature of God, or the Absolute. The criticism arises from quarters having no knowledge of the connection of the temporal with the spiritual or the inter-relationship of every stage in evolution with every other stage, the higher stage at every level being implicit in the lower and the lower one getting illumined in the higher by the spotlight of knowledge. The spiritual is the vitalising value in the secular, which is what enables the latter, at the proper time, to evoke the deepest levels of even the mightiest genius. As stated earlier, the Upanishad is a comprehensive text explaining the ways of an integrated life, pointing to ultimate perfection, as is abundantly made clear in the doctrine of the Five Fires—Panchagni Vidya—wherein the importance of every stage in creative integration is visualised in its relevance to the realisation of complete being.



## CONCLUSION

The Brihadaranyaka is a great Upanishad. The secret of life is revealed in it in various stages. It is a great meditation by itself, and it is an exposition of the internal meaning of the Vedas; it is real Vedanta. The other Upanishads are expository in their nature; in fact we shall find that what is in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is all-in-all. What is here, is elsewhere; and what is not here, is not anywhere.

Here is the foundation of Indian culture, we may say, which lays down that life is to be envisaged as a completeness and never merely in its partial aspects. The great message of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad in every one of its passages is that our sorrows are due to a partial vision of things and we cannot be happy as long as we are unable to entertain a total vision of anything. When we look at an object, we have only a limited vision of that object. When we look at our own selves, too, we have only a finite vision about our own selves. When we look at the world astronomically, physically, biologically, or chemically, we do not, even then, have a complete view of things. The Upanishad tells us that everything has an external character, an internal nature and a transcendent reality. None of these can be ignored in the evaluation of that thing. When we ignore any aspect, then it cannot be called an insight into the nature of the thing. The plumbing into the reality of any object would be to enter into the basic essence of it, so that we shall realise in the end that the reality of anything is the reality of everything. If we can know one thing, we have also known everything, and we cannot know any single object in this world, ultimately, unless we know the whole of creation. There is no such thing as real knowledge which is partial; any true knowledge is complete, it is integral, it is totality of experience, and knowledge is experience. One of the points stressed here is that knowledge is to be a complete vision, and not a partial outlook; the other point is that knowledge is not information, it is not a function of the intellect, it is not a ratiocination of the understanding; but it is direct experience. Knowledge and experience are identical. That which has not become part of our being, cannot be called our knowledge. Knowledge is Being. This is the final message of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

## NOTES

### Chapter One

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad announces in its First Chapter the very renowned prayer which it calls Pavamana-Abhyaroha, meaning thereby an 'Elevated Chant'. This prayer, or recitation, is as follows : Om Asato ma sad gamaya; Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya; Mrityor ma amritam gamaya. The meaning of this Mantra is obvious: 'Lead me from the unreal to the Real; Lead me from darkness to Light; Lead me from mortality to Immortality.' The prayer is supposed to be a regular meditation to enable the soul to reach the Supreme Being.

In the context of the Purushavidha-Brahmana, it is stated that the Supreme Reality should be meditated upon as one's own Self (Atmetyevopasita) for herein, the Upanishad says, all beings are centred in the One, which is all the gods, all names and forms, as It is the Self of all. One should meditate upon the Self alone as what is the dearest, for anything else which one may regard as dear, as external to oneself, will naturally be subject to bereavement.

In this connection it is also pointed out by way of a hint that it would be wisdom on the part of oneself to properly propitiate the lesser gods in the various levels of manifestation, before one attempts to meditate on the Absolute, since an unceremonious enterprise to skip suddenly to the Absolute is likely to be thwarted by opposition from lesser realities, which are all divinities in their own way.

### Chapter Two

The presence of Deities in one's own body is stated to be of the following nature: The gods Rudra, Parjanya, Aditya, Agni, Indra, the Earth and the Heaven rule over the different parts of the eyes. The right and the left ears represent the Sages Gautama and Bharadvaja; the right and the left eyes represent the Sages Visvamitra and Jamadagni; the right and the left nostrils represent the Sages Vasishtha and Kasyapa; Speech represents the Sage Atri.

One who meditates in this manner is regarded as being capable of converting everything in Creation into one's food, that is to say, the Universe does not stand outside such a person but gets organically involved in his own being.

### Chapter Three

The Antaryamin-Brahmana has the following passage which clinches its essential purport: "He who is in all beings, Who is the innermost reality of all beings, Whom all beings do not know, Whose body are all beings, Who controls all beings from within—this is your Self, the Indwelling Essence, the Immortal."

The questions of Sakalya involve many interesting facts concerning the number of gods, the method of meditation in an integral manner, etc.

The thirty-three gods referred to by Yajnavalkya are the eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Adityas, Indra and Prajapati. The eight Vasus are Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether, Sun, Moon, and Quarters. The original text, however, substitutes the Stars for Water. The eleven Rudras are the Ten Senses, and the Mind. The twelve Adityas are the twelve Solar presiding principles of the Sun corresponding to the twelve months of the year (here one may refer with benefit the description of this theme in the twelfth Book of the

Srimad-Bhagavata). Indra is identified with the Rain-god, and a Source of indomitable Power. Prajapati is associated with Yajna, or Sacrifice, as That which compels everything to be subservient to It as what are fit to be sacrificed to It. The three gods are Earth, Atmosphere and Heaven. The two gods are Matter (Anna) and Energy (Prana). The one God is Cosmic Energy (Prana).

The injunction of Yajnavalkya that every meditation should be comprehensive and no object of meditation should be considered as an isolated something is brilliantly stated in the following descriptions:

Every object of meditation has a Form (Sarira), an Abode (Ayatana), an Eye (Chakshus) of cognition, a Light (Jyotis), and a Deity (Devata), all which have to come together in the Integral Concept of meditation. 1. The Personal Body of an individual which is the Form has the Earth (Prithvi) as its Abode, Fire (Agni) as its Eye, the Mind (Manas) as the Light, and the Immortal Antaryamin as the Deity. 2. The Desire-Body which is the Form has Desire (Kama) as the Abode, the Heart (Hridaya) as the Eye, the Mind (Manas) as the Light, and one's Sexual Counterpart as the Deity. 3. The Purusha in the Sun which is the Form has Colour (Rupa) as the Abode, the visible Eye (Chakshus) as the Eye, the Mind (Manas) as the Light, and the Eye of Virat as the Deity. 4. The Power behind reverberations of sound which is the Form, has Ether (Akasa) as the Abode, the Ear (Srotra) as the Eye, the Mind (Manas) as the Light, and the Quarters as the Deity. 5. The Phantom-Body (Chhayamaya-Purusha) seen by the senses, which is the Form, has Ignorance (Tamas) as the Abode, the Heart (Hridaya) as the Eye, the Mind (Manas) as the Light, and Death (Mrityu) as the Deity; because the attraction of the senses to external objects is the way to death. 6. The Imaginary Person seen in a mirror, which is the Form, has reversed Perception (the right becoming the left and the left becoming the right) as the Abode, the visible Eye (Chakshus) as the Eye, the Mind (Manas) as the Light, and Love of Life (Asu), or the hope of the senses as the Deity. 7. The Person as seen reflected in water (as in the mirror), which is the Form, has Water (Apas) as the Abode, the Heart (Hridaya) as the Eye, the Mind (Manas) as the Light, and Varuna as the Deity. 8. The Urge for progeny (Putramaya-Purusha), which is the Form, has Virility (Retas) as the Abode, the Heart (Hridaya) as the Eye, the Mind (Manas) as the Light, and Prajapati as the Deity.

The Deity of the East is the Sun, who is rooted in the Eye of Virat, which is rooted in the perception of Form, which, again, is rooted in Intelligence or Feeling. The Deity of the South is Yama, whose Abode is rooted in Sacrifice, which is rooted in the Hope for reward of the Sacrifice, which is rooted in the Faith of the Heart in the efficacy of the Sacrifice to produce results. The Deity of the West is Varuna, whose abode is Water, whose essence is the Virile Seed (Retas), which is rooted in the Heart, for Desire is a quality of the Heart which ushers in every endeavour at its fulfilment. The Deity of the North is the Moon (Soma), the attainment of whom is rooted in the religious Vow (Diksha), which is rooted in Truth (Satya), which is a characteristic rooted in the Conscience (Hridaya). The Deity of the Above, or the Fixed Direction overhead, is Agni (because of the brilliance of the light in the sky above), which is rooted in the Speech of Virat, which is rooted in the Feeling (Hridaya) for the perception of Name, Form and Action. The Feeling, or the Heart, is identical with one's own Self.

The Body and the Mind are rooted in the Prana, which is rooted in the Apana, which is rooted in the Vyana, which is rooted in the Udana, which, again, is rooted in the Samana.

Thus are the Great Comprehensive Meditations.

## Chapter Four

Yajnavalkya's instruction to Janaka that the latter's meditation constituted only one-fourth of the essential position, and there should be actually four aspects for every fact is illustrated as follows, in respect of the different objects of meditation mentioned:

1. Speech is the Abode (Ayatana), the Undifferentiated Ether is the Support (Pratishtha), the Consciousness involved in expression is the Mode of meditation (Upasana), and Fire (Agni) is the Deity (Devata). 2. Prana is the Abode, the Undifferentiated Ether is the Support, Self-Love is the Mode of meditation, and Vayu is the Deity. 3. The Eye is the Abode, the Undifferentiated Ether is the Support, Truth (rootedness in the Eye of the Virat) is the Mode of meditation, and the Sun is the Deity. 4. The Ear is the Abode, the Undifferentiated Ether is the Support, the Endlessness of Direction is the Mode of meditation, and the Digdevatas (Divinities presiding over the Quarters of Space) are the Deity. 5. The Mind is the Abode, the Undifferentiated Ether is the Support, Happiness (for which one woos the objects of sense) is the Mode of meditation, and the Moon is the Deity. 6. The Reality in the Heart is the Abode, the Undifferentiated Ether is the Support, Stability as the Selfhood of all things is the Mode of meditation, and Brahman is the Deity.

Yajnavalkya, following his description of the Supreme Consciousness as operating through the senses in their perceptions of waking life, diverts further to the phenomenon of dream as an effect produced by the experiences of waking life, and regards deep sleep as a virtual merger in the Absolute, where, if only one were to be endowed with Consciousness, there would be transcendence of all relativistic values and experience of the Undivided Ocean of Reality. While, here, one does not appear to see anything or know anything, because there is nothing outside Oneself, there is a real seeing and knowing of the Absolute as the All.

In the Attainment of Liberation, one perceives no existence except the Self (Atman), loves nothing but the Self (Atmakama), has all desires fulfilled (Aptakama), is without any desire (Nishkama), is free from desire (Akama), and so does not have any desire (Akamayamana). Here, every subsequent position is said to be the result of the preceding one.

## Chapter Five

The Invocatory Verse of this Upanishad, namely, "That is Full, This is Full," etc., occurs at the beginning of this Chapter, suggesting that the Infinite, which appears to permit all the changes in the Universe, is Itself changeless, and there is really no change anywhere at all, even in the apparently changing Universe.

## Chapter Six

The different stages of the ascent of the soul through the Northern Path to Brahma-Loka are said to be the Deities of the Flame of Fire, the Day, the Bright Half of the Lunar Fortnight, the Six Months during which the Sun moves in the North, the Year, Air, Sun, Moon, Lightning, Varuna, Indra and Prajapati. It is at the stage of the Lightning that a Superhuman Being is supposed to visit the soul on its way and lead it onwards to Brahma-Loka.

The Upanishad states that the so-called delicate tendencies of life are really the incentive of a spiritual pressure for self-transcendence, as is taught by the Sages

Uddalaka-Aruni, Naka-Maudgalya and Kumara-Harita, who pity the fate of those that suffer by mistaking the invisible Universal for the visible particular, due to ignorance of the meaning which is hidden behind the mask of form. The form is the vehicle of the Universal, and it has to be adored as such in one's encounter with the form through which the principle of life has to ascend as a wholeness of being in every stage, as a tree grows through a fullness of structure at all the levels of its development.