



श्री कैवल्योपनिषद्

Śrī Kaivalyopanīṣad

Commentary by

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Foreword

Swami Vidtatmanandaji taught Kaivalya Upanisad to 30 of us in a 3-day retreat during the summer of 2005 in a serene surrounding in Ben Lomond, about 50 miles south of San Francisco. Listening to him so clearly reveal the nature of *Ātmā*, the self, I could not but wish more people had the fortune of seeing the incredible truth about themselves, directly from Swamiji. How clear he is about the subject, how skilled in handling words to convey the vision, how diligently he works to convey the subtle through years of teaching experience.

So I thought that if more people cannot listen to him directly, surely we can capture the unfolding of this beautiful Upanisad in the form of a book. Not just any book, but one that tries to convey the live teaching of a Vedantic master. All the more, since there are so few English language books by him. It has taken some time, but I am happy that the tree of this *sankalpa* is finally bearing fruit.

This has been a wonderful team effort. First, half the audience signed-up to transcribe the audio tapes of the different classes. Then, my job was to meld it all together. In this, I am particularly grateful to Lisa Curren, Kumud Singhal and Phid Simons for the painstaking job of transcription, of obtaining accuracy of Sanskrit words and to ensure that the syntax is good and sentences flow well. Despite best efforts, some flaws may have been left in, for which I ask for the reader's forgiveness and feedback.

My salutations to the entire teacher-student lineage that has enabled this book, and prayers that many will find it worthwhile in the quest for Self knowledge.

Vijay Kapoor - Los Altos Hills, January 15, 2008

Preface

Upaniṣad means Self-knowledge, the knowledge that reveals the identity of *jīva*, the individual self and *brahman*, the limitless. It reveals that the “I” is *brahman*, the whole, the limitless. All the sense of inadequacy and all the desires arising from that inadequacy disappear with this knowledge. All the knots of the heart are cut asunder, all bondage is removed and the aspirant gets established in his or her true nature which is *kaivalya*, the nondual, the limitless. This is the culmination of all seeking, knowing which, nothing remains to be known, gaining which nothing remains to be gained and nothing remains to be done. This is the goal of life and Upaniṣad, Self-knowledge is the only means to reach that goal. The text that reveals this knowledge is also called Upaniṣad and Kaivalyopaniṣad is one among many such Upaniṣads. It belongs to Atharva Veda.

Upaniṣad imparts the knowledge in the form of a dialog between the teacher and the student. The aspirant approaches the teacher with humility, faith and reverence and requests the teacher to impart the knowledge of the Self or *brahman*, and the teacher unfolds the subject matter in response to that request. Upaniṣad intends not only to impart the teaching, but also intends to see that the seeker gains that knowledge and becomes free from grief and delusion. Hence Upaniṣad is a live teaching tradition and even though, the subject matter of all Upaniṣads is same, the methodology may vary. In that sense every Upaniṣad is unique. Kaivalyopaniṣad is in the form of a dialog between the teacher, Lord Parameṣṭhi (Lord Brahmāji) and the disciple Āśvalāyana.

It is a relatively short Upaniṣad consisting of 24 *mantras*, but does justice to the subject matter very well.

The very first *mantra* describes how Āśvalāyana approaches Lord Parameṣṭhi and requests for the knowledge that is the noblest, gaining which the seeker crosses all sins and attains the highest *puruṣa* or completeness. The teacher Brahmājī, at first, gives instruction about the means of knowledge viz., *śraddhā*, faith, *bhakti*, devotion and *dhyāna* contemplation and further says that the Self, that ever reveals itself in the cave of the heart, is not to be gained by *karma* or rituals, *prajā* or progeny, or *dhanam* or wealth, which are means of material prosperity, but rather by renunciation leading to the knowledge of the Self. Those who are of pure mind, who have well ascertained the knowledge of Vedānta, attain this knowledge through renunciation.

The fifth *mantra* provides the necessary instruction for contemplation upon the Self and the sixth *mantra* describes the nature of the Self that is free from all attributes. Seventh *mantra* recommends meditation upon Lord with attributes for those who cannot meditate upon the attributeless Self. Then, the teacher Brahmājī says the same Self manifests as various deities such as Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and others. It is the very substratum of time or death. The one, who realizes one's own self as the self of all, attains the highest. The Upaniṣad makes it very clear that it is the Self-knowledge and that alone, that is the means of liberation. For liberation from sorrow, arising from false notions about the Self, there is no other way.

Then the teacher takes the *mahā-vākya-vicāra*, a discussion on the *mahā-vākya* or the great proposition viz., *tat tvam asi*,

That thou art, where “That” stands for *brahman*, the limitless and “thou” stand for the limited self. With the analysis of the three states of Consciousness viz., waking, dream and deep-sleep states, the teacher shows that the true nature of the *jīva* passing through the three states is the substratum of the three states; it is the limitless happiness, the indivisible Consciousness. From him has sprung up the diversity called the universe, made of vital air, the mind, the sense organs and the five elements. The teacher says, “Oh disciple, that which is the supreme *brahman*, the self of all, the great support of the universe, subtler than the subtle, the eternal- That is thyself and thou art That”. Realizing the truth that “I am *brahman* which illumines the three states and which transcends them”, one is liberated from all bondage.

The last six *mantras* reveal this identity of Self and *brahman* in the form of declaration by the disciple of the vision that he has gained as a result of the teaching. He reveals how he is the pure Consciousness that illumines the three states and is still distinct from them; how he is *brahman*, the nondual, from whom everything is born, by whom everything is sustained, unto whom everything is dissolved. Declaring his transcendental nature, he says that he is without the organs of action and still has unthinkable power, without the organs of perception and still perceives everything, he is beyond merit and demerit and has no birth or destruction.

Concluding the teaching, the teacher says that knowing the supreme Self that abides in the cavity of the heart, that is partless, and witness of all, one attains the pure Self itself.

The Upaniṣad concludes with an instruction on reciting the *śata-rudrīyam* which may mean, either the famous Rudram which is a hymn in praise of Rudra found in Yajur Veda or it can

be the text of this very Kaivalyopaniṣad. The purpose is to remove the past sins which may become obstacle to gaining the knowledge. For a *sannyāsī* or a renunciate, the prescription is to recite the *mantras* all the time and if not, at least, once a day. And that applies to all the seekers also, because even the repetition of the sacred *mantras* brings about purification of the mind and prepares the seeker for the knowledge.

This book is prepared on the basis of classes conducted by me at a retreat in California. A number of students contributed to the transcription of the audio tapes of the classes and Mr. Vijay Kapoor assumed the burden of coordinating and editing the transcribed material. I pray to Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti to bless them all and also bless that this book be found useful to the students of Vedānta in their study and contemplation.

Swami Vidadatmananda

Key to Transliteration and Pronunciation

Since Sanskrit is a highly phonetic language, accuracy in articulation of the letters is important. For those unfamiliar with the **Devanāgarī** script, the international transliteration is a guide to the proper pronunciation of Sanskrit letters.

अ	a	but	ट	ṭ	start*3
आ	ā	calm	ठ	ṭh	anthill*3
इ	i	it	ड	ḍ	dart*3
ई	ī	beet	ढ	ḍh	godhead*3
उ	ū	pool	त	t	path*4
ऋ	ṛ	rhythm	थ	th	thunder*4
ॠ	ṝ	marine	द	d	that*4
ए	e	play	ध	dh	breathe*4
ऐ	ai	high	न	n	numb*4
ओ	o	go	प	p	spin 5
औ	au	loud	फ	ph	loophole*5
क्	k	skate 1	ब	b	bin 5
ख	kh	blockhead*1	भ	bh	abhor* 5
ग	g	gate 1	म्	m	much 5
घ	gh	loghut* 1	य	y	young

ङ्	ṅ	si <u>ng</u> 1	र	r	dr <u>a</u> ma
च्	c	<u>ch</u> unk*2	ल्	l	<u>l</u> uck
छ्	ch	ca <u>ch</u> <u>hi</u> m*2	व्	v	<u>v</u> ile
ज्	j	jo <u>h</u> n 2	श	ś	<u>sh</u> ove
झ्	jh	he <u>d</u> <u>ge</u> hog*2	ष्	ṣ	bu <u>sh</u> el
ञ	ñ	bu <u>ñ</u> ch 2	स्	s	<u>s</u> o
			ह्	h	<u>h</u> um

· ṁ *anusvāra* (nasalization of preceeding vowel)

: ḥ *visarga* (aspiration of preceeding vowel)

*No exact equivalent for these letters.

1 – guttural; 2 – palatel; 3 – lingual; 4 – dental; 5 - labial

List of Abbreviations

AM	Advaitamakaranda
Ai.Up.	Aitareyopaniṣad
Ai.Ār.	Aitareyāranyaka
Br.Up.	Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad
BS	Brahmasūtra
BG	Bhagavadgītā
Chā.Up.	Chāndogyopaniṣad
DS	Dakṣiṇāmūrti-Stotram
Īśa.Up.	Īśāvāsyopaniṣad
Ka.Up.	Kaṭhopaniṣad
Ke.Up.	Kenopaniṣad
MB	Mahābhārata
Mā.Up.	Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad
Mu.Up.	Muṇḍakopaniṣad
Pr.Up.	Praśnopaniṣad
SS	Sanatsujātīya
Śve.Up.	Śvetāśvataropaniṣad
Tai.Up.	Taittirīyopaniṣad
US	Upadeśasāram
VC	Vivekacūḍāmaṇi

Introduction

Kaivalya Upaniṣad is part of the Atharva Veda. The Vedas are the sourcebooks of knowledge in the Vedic culture. Vedas are said to be revealed texts and not written texts. Sometimes the question is asked as to when the Vedas were created. The answer is that they were not created, they were revealed to the ṛṣis, seers. Ṛṣis are called *mantra draṣṭāraḥ*, or seers of *mantras*, and not writers or composers of *mantras*. *Mantras* are revealed to them because of their penance and the purity of their hearts. When their minds are tuned up to Īśvara, the creator, they become capable of receiving this knowledge, and thus we have these revealed scriptures called the Vedas. Also, this knowledge cannot be gained directly by human beings, both because it is beyond the range of sense perception, and also because our intellects are not adequately equipped to receive the knowledge. Vedas are that source of knowledge.

The Vedas can be seen to be segmented into two sections, a section dealing with *karma* and *dharma* and a section dealing with *jñānam* or knowledge of the self. The first section of Vedas tells us about things that we cannot arrive at by our limited means of knowledge. For example, we have no way of proving whether there was a previous birth for the human being or a birth after the death of this body. Similarly, there is no way for us to determine whether heaven or hell exists. These remain *nitya parokṣa*, always

unknown to us, and cannot be verified in this life. The Vedas tell us about afterlife and also tell us what kind of actions we should perform to achieve desired ends. Because human beings desire many ends, therefore the Vedas prescribe means to achieve those ends and what kinds of disciplines to follow—what to do and what not to do—all these instructions we find in the Vedas.

The Vedas also inform us about the basic values of life, what is called *dharma* or the righteous way of life, and the Vedas tell us about duty, about the right action to perform in a given situation. The Vedas prescribe what the duties are for different people, keeping in view a given situation in a person's life, the disposition of the person and the responsibilities. Thus the duties for people with different dispositions—*brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and so on—are detailed in the Vedas. Similarly, what should be the duties given different stages in one's life—*brahmachāris*, *gṛhasthas*, and *vānaprasthas*—are also detailed. All of this is the subject matter of the first section of the Vedas, which is called *karma-kāṇḍa*.

In effect, the first step of our life is to live the right way, to live with discrimination and to live with intelligence. For this we need guidance, because we are blessed with free will, which means that we have the freedom to choose the course of our lives. We have the freedom to ascertain what the goal of life is and the freedom to determine what the means of achieving that goal would be. Thus, we have freedom with reference to deciding our means and ends. This freedom can be appreciated when we compare ourselves to other living beings whose lives seem to be preprogrammed since they do not have any freedom of choice. They don't appear to have any destination in their life, any particular agenda other than to survive and to propagate, whereas human beings are endowed with

an awareness of a certain destination of life. Of course every person has a different notion about what the destination is and how to reach the destination, so the Vedas tell us what the destination is and the way of approaching the destination.

How Vedas help us gain fulfillment

The Vedas tell us that you already are what you are seeking to be. From his or her behavior, it is clear that a human being is seeking something. In fact, he is seeking to be free, to be happy. If you ask him how much happiness he wants, he will tell you he wants boundless happiness. He also does not want happiness to be at all mixed with any kind of unhappiness. Whenever there is dependence on external factors, then in happiness a bit of unhappiness is also mixed up. Man cannot truly accept that; he wants pure, unconditional happiness at all times, at all places, under all conditions. If you were to ask a person, “Do you want to be happy in the morning or the evening? Do you want to be happy inside the house, or outside the house? Do you want to be happy when you are in the company of your friends or your relatives?” These questions cannot make any sense to any human being. Everybody wants happiness, and not only happiness, but happiness without any boundaries, without conditions.

Now, not knowing what that happiness is, what that freedom is, very often people confuse freedom with licentiousness. They think that freedom is to do whatever one wants to do, to say whatever one wants to say, write whatever one wants to write, live wherever one wants to live and so on. Since we do not discriminate between freedom and licentiousness, very often in the process of seeking freedom, we get bound, and in the process of seeking happiness we wind up with unhappiness. Now the Vedas tell us that the true freedom that you are seeking, the true independence that you are

seeking to have, is to be found within your own self, and that can only be discovered when you live a certain way of life. In effect, happiness has to be uncovered, rather than created.

Therefore, the Vedas in effect say that primarily life should become a process of discovery of the happiness, discovery of the freedom that is our true nature. It is the gain of the already gained, where knowledge is primary, rather than the gain of the not yet gained, where *karma* (action) is primary.

Now many people may not be ready to understand this, because they are too preoccupied with strong desires; their minds are crowded with many aspirations, many ambitions. Hence, not everybody is ready to accept this message right away. The Vedas recognize this fact, therefore they say that while we have the freedom to pursue whatever end we want to pursue, we need to make sure that we do not compromise the means for the sake of the end. So the first thing to do in life is to follow the right means. This is what is called *dharma*, righteousness. We should make sure that in the process of achieving our desired goal, we do not trample upon the rights and requirements of other people. Just as I love happiness and freedom, I also recognize that others also love happiness and freedom. Just as I do not want anybody to come in the way of my pursuit of freedom and happiness, others also do not want me to come in the way of their pursuit of happiness and freedom. This becomes the basic value, and all other values have their basis in this.

It is in the the process of following a life of values that the inner growth or inner purification takes place, because following the values requires me to keep under control my impulses of violating the values. There are temptations in my mind, and hence a

tendency to take shortcuts—a tendency perhaps to appropriate something that does not rightfully belong to me, a tendency to hurt somebody in the process of achieving my goal, and so on. These tendencies of violence, dishonesty, falsehood, stealing, hoarding, aggrandizing may be there in my mind, and in order for me to follow the life of values, it is necessary for me to keep these tendencies under check. As Lord Kṛṣṇa points out in the *Gītā*, *kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha*, meaning lust, anger and greed, are likely to be there in me in varying degrees, and in order for me to follow the life of *dharma*, it becomes necessary for me to keep these tendencies under check. I cannot lead a life of nonviolence unless I keep anger under control. I cannot be living a life of honesty unless I keep greed under control. I cannot be living a healthy life unless I keep lust under control. It requires me to keep these harmful tendencies under control in order to live a life of good relationships, to live a life which is amenable to reach out to the needs of other people.

Thus, the Vedas are not insensitive to our material needs. They prescribe means in order to fulfill those needs. If we want cattle, or progeny, wealth, power, or even *svarga*, the heavens, the Vedas say go ahead and try to achieve those, but make sure that you follow the right values. The important thing is that I live the life of *dharma*. When I do that I progressively start becoming free from these negative propensities; that is how the goodness, the purity which is already there, since that is my nature, becomes manifest. Thus, living a life of *dharma* becomes a process of self-purification, and that is how my mind becomes *sāttvika*; it becomes tranquil, transparent, contemplative, objective. On the contrary, when *kāma* (desire), *krodha* (anger), and others arise in the mind, there is a tendency to project, meaning the mind sees things that are not there. When I get angry, my perception becomes

disturbed and I project guilt or offence upon the person who is the object of my anger; I project and see the faults that are not there in that person. In a similar fashion, when I become greedy, then also I project, perhaps unjustifiably so, that I need more than somebody else.

When these tendencies of mind gradually reduce, I become more contemplative, more thinking, and more objective with reference to life around me and with reference to myself. Then the mind is able to discriminate between right and wrong, and to examine the quality and usefulness of my daily pursuits in life. Until then, comforts and pleasure were very important to me. The impulses for success and pleasure were so strong that I never thought about whether or not they were the right pursuits for me. But now I start inquiring whether or not pleasure and success are indeed giving me lasting peace, and whether they deserve to be the goal of my life. I begin to see that life has something more to offer. I realize also that I am seeking something that is much more lasting, that is much greater than what success and pleasure can offer me. I realize that I am seeking the permanent, whereas success and pleasure are impermanent. When this understanding comes, the entire course of life changes.

This is summarized in an important verse in the Muṇḍakopaniṣad,¹ which says “After examining the worlds

¹ परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणः निर्वेदमायाद् नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन ।

तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥

parīkṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇaḥ nirvedamāyād nāstyakṛtaḥ
kṛtena

tadvijñānārthaṁ sa gurumevābhigacchet samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ
brahmaṇiṣṭham || (Mu.Up 1.2.12)

(achievements) gained through actions, may the descriminative person discover dispassion, because *mokṣa*, which is not created, cannot be gained through action. Therefore, to gain the knowledge of *brahman* he must go with sacrificial twigs in hand to a teacher who is well-versed in scriptures and who abides in the knowledge of *brahman*.”

Karmacitān lokān parīkṣya, having examined the achievements that I have made so far by *karma*, efforts, I recognize that whatever I have achieved so far has been limited and that it has not satisfied me. I also recognize that whatever I can achieve in the future through any kind of effort is also going to be limited, because regardless of how great my effort is, it is going to be limited, and therefore whatever it is that I achieve through any kind of effort is also going to be limited. The limited cannot satisfy me, regardless of how wealthy I become, how famous I become, how powerful I become. In spite of possession of that wealth, fame and power, I will still remain a limited person. I will still remain a seeker. I will still not be satisfied with myself. If that understanding comes, not only because Vedānta tells us, but because it has become one's own understanding, then one's search starts for that which is permanent, which is limitless.

Gurumeva abhigacchet, for that knowledge one should approach a teacher. Now the Upaniṣad comes into the picture. The need of this person has changed. So far his need was for success and pleasure, both here in this life and in the hereafter, and for fulfilling those needs the rituals in the *karma-kāṇḍa* along with other efforts were adequate; the setup of means and ends in this life was all right. But now he is seeking the permanent and he recognizes that the permanent cannot be achieved by limited action.

Permanent or lasting is something to be discovered. For this discovery, there is this section of the Vedas called *jñāna kāṇḍa*, which deals with knowledge—call it knowledge of truth, or knowledge of reality, or knowledge of self, or knowledge of God. This section of the Vedas addresses a smaller number of people who, thinking through their needs, have become sensitive to their inner need. Thus, there are these two lifestyles, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, the life of activity and achievement and the life of contemplation. Life of achievement involves thinking about something other than me, something outside of me. The life of contemplation involves thinking about something that is within me, or rather my own self. In some sense, achieving still remains, but the method of achievement has changed because the perception of what has to be achieved has changed. This is the subject matter of the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* of the Vedas. It is also called Upaniṣad.

Thus *karma-kāṇḍa* addresses the first stage of life and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* addresses the second stage of life. *Karma-kāṇḍa* is meant for a *gṛhastha* or householder, and *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* is meant for a renunciate, or a *sannyāsī*. Although technically there are four *āśramas*, or four stages of life, *brahmacārya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*, they can be divided into two stages—a life of activity and a life of contemplation.

Āśramas, stages of life

Brahmacārya is the first stage of life, the life of a student. A *brahmacārī* is the one who approaches the teacher, lives with the teacher, serves the teacher, and studies the Vedas and related texts from the teacher. It is not only the study of scriptures, but also the study of how to live life effectively. The students learned *dharma-śāstra*, the texts dealing with the righteous way of life. They

learned how to perform various rituals and which rituals were to be performed for what purpose. They learned how to recite the Vedas and they were required to memorize them. The teachers also taught them the meanings of the texts. They learned *vyākaraṇa*, Sanskrit grammar, the principles of logic, astrology, and so on. The student's only priority was to gain knowledge, along with the discipline required to pursue knowledge, and keeping oneself fit. It turns out that serving the teacher required enough fitness. The service included going out into the community, begging for food and serving food to the teacher. All that was part of the duties of the students. Sometimes service also included gathering cows and other cattle, taking them out for grazing and taking care of them. If there was a farm, service included participating in raising crops, and so on. One can see that all this gave them sufficient exercise also. This was their life—no political activities, no other kinds of activities at all—this was the life of a student.

The second stage was *gṛhastha*, the life of a householder. Well-equipped with knowledge and training, the student comes home from the *gurukulam* (the teacher's house). He is now ready to lead an active life, a life of pursuing *artha* and *kāma*, success and pleasure both here and hereafter, on the basis of *dharma* or duty, on the basis of righteousness, responsibility, and accountability, wherein there is sensitivity towards the needs of others also. That's the life of a *gṛhastha*.

The life of a householder is a life of duty and a life of pleasure, but not of indulgence. There is a fair amount of self control because indulgence damages a person. When a householder lives life intelligently, when his life turns from being a consumer to a contributor, he gains a maturity; he becomes free from those cravings for pleasure and success. He discovers the inner poise

with which one can live with oneself without the need of external props.

Then one is equipped for the life of *vānaprastha*, life of a “forest dweller.” Now the person goes to a forest, meaning to a place devoid of social activity. Either a man goes alone, or if the wife wants to join, both go to the forest. They hand over all the responsibility of the household to their children and live a life of worship in a secluded place. They live as friends, a life in preparation for *sannyāsa*.

Finally comes the life of *sannyāsa*, or renunciation, when *mokṣa* is the main pursuit. Here the person renounces all possessions and relationships. *Sannyāsīs* do not even have the right to earn money to feed themselves; they depend upon others’ mercy for that. Of course they have no home; traditionally they were wandering monks. If they did stay at one place, it would be to sit at the feet of the teacher and study scriptures, or to teach others.

These are the four *āśramas*, or stages of one’s life, *brahmacārya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*. These days we don’t have *vānaprastha* as a distinct stage of life, and leaving home as a child to stay at a *gurukulam* is quite rare, so we may say that basically there are two stages of life, *gṛhastha* and *sannyāsa*.

Each of the Vedas is made up of four sections: *saṁhitā*, *brāhmaṇa*, *āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣads*. The first two sections, *saṁhitā* and *brāhmaṇa* are mainly concerned with rituals and *dharma*, and address the needs of the *gṛhastha*. *Āraṇyakas* contain meditations and forms of worship which are to be performed in the forest, so this section addresses the needs of *vānaprastha*. Finally, the *Upaniṣads* address the needs of *sannyāsa*.

Upaniṣads are also called Vedānta, because we find Upaniṣads located at the physical end of the Vedas and after the *karma-kāṇḍa*. The compound Veda-anta is defined as *vedānām antaḥ Vedāntaḥ*, the end of the Vedas, therefore they are called Vedānta. Or it can be called Vedānta in another way also. The word *anta* is not just a physical end; *anta* also means the final ascertainment. In that sense, Vedānta can be understood to be the ultimate vision of the Vedas.

Meaning of the word Upaniṣad

Upaniṣad means knowledge, self-knowledge. The word Upaniṣad is derived from the root *sad*, to which the prefixes *upa* and *ni* are added. The root is *sad*, the letter *sa* gets changed to *ṣa* because of a *sandhi* rule, and thus we have the verbal root upaniṣad. To this stem, a *pratyaya* (suffix) called *kvip* is added to convert it to a noun; this suffix is added and dropped. (In English also we find this—the "er" of cooker goes away, leaving us with the word "cook" even though the meaning remains "one who cooks.") On account of adding that suffix, the root upaniṣad is transformed into the verbal noun Upaniṣad. The suffix *kvip* imparts to the noun the sense of agency, therefore upaniṣad, which means knowledge, does something.

The subject matter of the knowledge is indicated by the first prefix *upa*, in the sense of nearness. Hence upaniṣad is the knowledge of something that is near. How near? When nearness is not qualified, it would mean unqualified nearness. So what is it that is THE near? Near, as we know, is a relative word. This table is nearer to me than you are. My body is nearer than this table. My mind is nearer than the body, and my self is nearer than anything else. Therefore,

the word ‘near’ ultimately resolves into the self. Therefore, Upaniṣad is the knowledge of the self.

Ni means *niścitam*, ascertained (knowledge). It indicates a knowledge that is free from any doubt or vagueness. Therefore, Upaniṣad is the knowledge of the self that is free from doubt, vagueness, or error. Doubt is an obstacle to the clarity of knowledge, as is vagueness and outright error of course. Sometimes we have knowledge, but it may be erroneous knowledge. If what is lying in front of me is rope, but I think it is a snake, it is knowledge all right, but it is erroneous knowledge. Sometimes there is a question, “Is it a rope? Is it a snake?” That is knowledge mixed with doubt. That also cannot be called knowledge. Sometimes it looks as though something is there, but I don’t know what it is. Then the clarity is not there. Ascertained knowledge is knowledge that is free from any vagueness. That is *niścitam jñānam*, a clear, abiding knowledge that is free from vagueness, doubt, or error.

Self knowledge is unique

Unlike any other knowledge, here, knowledge of what I want to know is what I want to become. I am seeking to become something all the time, I am seeking to become different from what I am on account of the fact that I am not happy with the way I am. Therefore there is an endeavor on my part to constantly bring about a change in me so that I will be different, and happier, than what I am, acceptable to myself. In Pūjya Swamiji's¹ words, I am seeking to be a pleased self, a happy self, a satisfied self. Why do I want to become a pleased self? Because I am not pleased with myself as I find myself to be. I have a certain perception of myself, and in that perception, I find myself not measuring up to my own

¹ Swami Vidadatmananda's teacher, Swami Dayananda Sarasvati

expectations of myself. In my perception of myself, I find myself to be inadequate, wanting, or lacking, but I am not satisfied being a wanting or lacking or inadequate being. Therefore, I want to be free from any limitation, meaning that I want to be limitless.

When we analyze what it is that we are seeking to be, it will be discovered that we are seeking to be free from every form of limitation. We are seeking to be limitless; then alone we can be pleased with ourselves. In Chāndogyopaniṣhad, Sage Sanatkumāra says to Nārada, *yo vai bhūmā tatsukhaṁ nālpe sukhaṁ asti*.¹ “That which is *bhūmā*, abundant, limitless, that indeed is happiness.” Only limitless can be happiness. *Na alpe sukhaṁ asti*. “In anything that is limited, there cannot be *sukhaṁ*, happiness.” This is a very fundamental definition of happiness given by the Upaniṣad. Happiness can be only in the limitless; there cannot be happiness in anything that is limited. Therefore, whenever I find myself limited or lacking in any way, I become unhappy, because in limitedness there cannot be happiness. Thus when I say that I want to be happy, it amounts to saying that I want to be limitless.

This may not be so understood by most people, because people usually associate happiness with things other than themselves, such as wealth, name, fame, recognition, heavens and so on, and that is therefore what they are trying to achieve, accomplish, or become. But going by the definition of the Upaniṣad, it is very clear that happiness can be only limitlessness, that there cannot be happiness in being limited.

¹ Chā.Up. 7.23.1

I want to be adequate, I want to be happy, I want to be pleased, meaning that I want to be free from every limitation. This is what my endeavor is. It is this endeavor to become limitless that has been making me assume embodiments one after the other from beginningless time. Vedānta says that this desire to become limitless can be satisfied only when I discover that I am limitless. A limited being cannot become limitless. Regardless of what I do with myself, regardless of how much I multiply myself, how much I add things upon myself, I can never *become* limitless. As Muṇḍakopaniṣad says, *nāsti akṛtaḥ kṛtena*.¹ *Akṛtaḥ*, uncreated, cannot be created by *karma* (action). Limitless has to be uncreated, it has to be free of time, and timeless means that which is here right now. What is right now doesn't have to be created, it has to be discovered.

Therefore, the limitless has to be discovered, has to be known, which amounts to saying that what I want to become is what I want to know, because becoming limitless can only be accomplished by knowing that I am limitless. Vedānta says *tat tvam asi*, “that thou art.” You are what you are seeking to be. You are seeking to be limitless. You are limitless, so knowing and becoming is one here, because what I seek is my nature. That is called knowledge, when I spontaneously become limitless, spontaneously own my true nature, which is limitless. That spontaneous, abiding knowledge is called knowledge. There is no need to remember, “Wait a minute, I'm limitless.” That cannot be called knowledge. It may be remembrance for a while until it becomes abiding knowledge, but as long as there is an effort on my part to remain limitless, so long it is not abiding knowledge. Knowledge is called *niścitaṁ jñānam* when it is free from any error or vagueness or doubt.

¹ Mu.Up. 2.2.12

The third element of the word Upaniṣad is the root *sad*. We saw earlier that *kvip pratyaya* imparts a sense of agency. Therefore Upaniṣad, or self-knowledge, does something. What it does is indicated by the root *sad*. According to the *Dhātupāṭha*, the dictionary of verbs, the root *sad* has three meanings, *gati*, *viśaraṇam*, and *avasādanam*. *Gati* means going; this knowledge takes me somewhere. *Viśaraṇam* means loosening; this knowledge loosens something. *Avasādanam* means destruction; this knowledge destroys something.

This knowledge takes me somewhere. Where does it take me? It takes me where I want to be, the limitless. This knowledge takes me to *brahman* by revealing the fact that limitlessness or *brahman* is my very nature. It is not taking me to any place in a literal sense, but it is as though taking me because I feel that I am separated from limitlessness. By removing the distance that is created by ignorance, by eliminating the inhibiting factors, this knowledge enables me to recognize that I am limitless.

This knowledge first loosens and then completely destroys the bonds of ignorance. What is the nature of the bondage? Bondage is nothing but a notion. That I am bound is a notion on my part, it is the result of the false perception of myself. I am bound by my own conclusions, my own opinions, by my own judgments, by my own complexes. Nothing binds me really, other than my own complexes. On account of ignorance, I look upon myself as a limited person. I find myself one among the many, one among the countless. I find myself separated from the rest of the world. I feel that I have to defend myself, protect myself, because I find myself insecure, or fearful. Thus this complex on my part that I am limited, insecure, wanting, lacking, is what binds me. It comes in

the way of my freedom; it doesn't let me be what I want to be. There's always fear behind everything that I do. That fear comes in the way of my free expression of myself. Not that expressing myself as I want is necessarily freedom, but whatever I understand freedom to be, I'm not even that free. I'm always trying to cover myself, trying to protect myself. This need to cover myself, this need to always present myself as acceptable to the world, the need always to seek approval of the world, the need always to please other people, comes in the way of my being myself as I am.

Thus if we just look at the pattern of thinking of our own mind, we will understand what bondage is, how fear is ingrained in everything we do. Occasionally, though, when I know I am not being judged, I experience moments of freedom, as when I sing in the shower; a song comes out and I enjoy myself. This is when I'm not conscious of myself as a limited being. But the moment I look at my nose, or ears, or belly, I instinctively become unhappy. That very sense of being limited is binding.

That bondage is not real is to be understood

Vedānta says that it is not something real that binds you. Just the sense on your part that you are a limited being is what is binding, and therefore freedom is nothing but becoming free from the sense of being limited. Being limited is a notion created from ignorance of the true nature of myself, and that notion can be removed by the true knowledge of myself. Thus, this knowledge takes us to ourselves.

It is very comforting to listen to Vedānta because this is one place where we are told that you are limitless, you are beautiful, and you are fine as you are. Nowhere in the world am I told this. What I am used to being told is that I am lacking this or lacking that. This is

the only place where I'm told that you are all right as you are. You are beautiful, you are harmony, you are love, and you are limitless. It is not flattery either; Vedānta provides us the reasoning. It is a statement to be understood rather than simply accepted, because accepting doesn't do anything to me. "Swami says I am limitless, I must be limitless." That doesn't help me. Therefore, the statements of the Upaniṣad are to be analyzed and to be understood.

Understanding the meaning of the statements of the Upaniṣads would amount to understanding the true nature of myself, because Upaniṣads reveal the true nature of myself. That revelation is done in a very simple statement, *Tat tvam asi*, "that thou art, you are limitless." Somebody once asked Pūjya Swamiji, "Swami, suppose tomorrow somebody comes up with a better knowledge, then what will you do? What will happen to Vedānta?" Swamiji said, "I am telling you, you are limitless. Can you improve upon that?" Limitless is not subject to being improved upon.

That is the *tātparya*, the purport of all the Upaniṣads. To understand the statement that is made up of three words *Tat tvam asi*, "you are limitless," or "you are *brahman*," we need to understand the meaning of "you," the meaning of "are," and the meaning of "*brahman*." The whole study of Vedānta is nothing but understanding this one simple statement.

Many years ago, I attended the course on Vedānta taught by Pūjya Swami Dayānandaji. On the third day while unfolding these basics of Vedānta, it was made very clear that this is the teaching of *prāptasya prāptiḥ*, attainment of what is already attained. There is nothing new to attain, there is nothing new to become, it is simply the recognition of what is. Swamiji said, "Look, today I am telling you that you are *brahman*. At the end of

the course also that is what I'll tell you, you are *brahman*. Nothing new is to be told.” That's all. This one sentence alone is being unfolded all along. One may wonder how one can listen to one sentence day and in day out for years. The fact of the matter is that we don't seem to get tired at all. There is ever freshness in that, there's always some new dimension, some new insight coming, because nobody ever gets tired of listening about themselves. It is just like looking at yourself in the mirror. Perhaps looking at yourself the first thing in the morning may be justified, to make sure during the long night nothing has happened. But why again after an hour, why every time you enter the bathroom, and again a last look before leaving? It is because, no matter how our face looks, we love looking at it, particularly when somebody says you're beautiful, you're wonderful; we never get tired of that.

That's all Vedānta says, you are limitless, you are beautiful, there's nothing lacking in you. You don't have to achieve anything, you have to do nothing, just own up what you are, just be what you are. Recognize what you are, that's all, nothing else, and this is something I love to hear, I love this. Somebody once asked me, “Swamiji, did any miracle happen in your life?” I said “Yes, a miracle happened the third day of my attending the course.” That is when I came to know that I am what I am seeking to be. That was the greatest comfort, because I recognized that there's nothing to be done. I love that idea that I need not do anything at all, that I am what I'm seeking to be, without doing anything. That was a great revelation.

The endless seeking of human beings

On the first day of the course, Swamiji pointed out that every human being has desires, so everyone is constantly doing something. Every action is a result of some desire, and the desires

keep on arising in the mind, one after the other. Then we were told that there are two kinds of desires. One is what we call the natural desires; others are what they call cultivated desires. Take hunger and thirst, for instance. These are natural desires, but that I want to eat gourmet food, or that I must have Coca-Cola, those are cultivated desires. Now as far as natural desires are concerned, there's always a solution for them, but for cultivated desires, there may or may not be a solution. On the second day, Swamiji went over the reasons behind every desire. The desire behind the desires is ultimately to become free from every desire, because a desire is an indication of a sense of lack or want. Therefore, basically, I want to become free from every lack, every want. I want to become free from every limitation.

Take for example a person who might have injured his leg and needs a cumbersome set of crutches to walk. After a while, he may feel happier by having a lighter set of crutches. But he is still dependent. His real desire is not to be limited by crutches at all.

Similarly, I want to become limitless. All right, then what's the answer? What do we do? To become limitless, do you perform actions? Every action is limited, so what can be achieved as a result of any action also is going to be limited. A limited outcome which is added to me, a limited being, is still going to keep me limited. Not only one result, but a series of results also will keep me limited. This is how the second day's lecture ended.

I thought, "What will happen now?" On one hand I want to be limitless, and on the other hand nothing can make me limitless. There was really a great concern in my mind about this. Even though the desire for being limitless is natural, so therefore there

must be a solution, where is the solution? There doesn't seem to be any solution, because everything is limited.

Then on the third day, the story of the tenth man was told. When I understood the story, where the tenth man was told, “You are the tenth man that you are seeking,” then the light bulb went on in my mind. I am what I am seeking to be. That was a great miracle!

When one discerns this, one gains a great comfort. As *Pūjya* Swamiji says, psychology cannot solve the human problem, and Vedānta does not see the problem. This problem of sorrow cannot be solved other than to see that it is a notion alone. Regardless of what we do, we can give ourselves some kind of relief for awhile, but the sorrow will come back. It is like the poor water buffalo being bothered by flies on its head all the time. To escape the flies, the buffalo dips its head in the water so the flies fly away, and the buffalo has a certain relief, but as soon as it brings out its head from the water the flies are all waiting. Similarly, as soon as our head comes out, sorrow takes hold of us again.

I am the problem, I am the solution

All that is to be done is to discover that I am what I am seeking to be. All sorrow is the result of my perceiving myself as a limited being. There is no other cause of sorrow. It is not that the world is the cause of sorrow. Nothing is the cause of sorrow except my perception of myself that I am a limited or lacking or wanting being; whenever I find myself lacking or wanting, I become sad, I become unhappy. There is no cause of happiness also in the world, as there is no cause of sorrow. Of course, I can always brand certain things and believe that they are the cause of happiness or sorrow. But the only cause of happiness is when I discover myself

to be acceptable to me; the only cause of sorrow is when I see myself as not acceptable to me.

Self nonacceptance is the cause of sorrow. Self acceptance is what causes happiness. It is not candies, nor pizza, nor air conditioning, nor anything else that can be said to be the cause of my happiness. Similarly, nothing can be said to be the cause of sorrow, not heat or cold, comfort or discomfort, honor or dishonor, or success or failure. Yes, if they can somehow make me feel limited, then they become the cause of sorrow, by triggering in me a sense of limitation. If they cannot trigger that sense, they are rendered ineffective. If the button of self nonacceptance is disconnected, it doesn't matter what they push, because there are no buttons to push. That's what we find in the description of a wise person, how he becomes free from the impact of everything around. In the Gītā ¹ it is said *vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ*, he is free of *rāga*, attachment, *bhaya*, fear, *krodha*, anger. Attachment, aversion, fear, anger, all of these arise on account of finding myself limited. He has discovered himself to be free from every limitation. Therefore *duḥkheṣu*, in the situations that are generally supposed to cause unhappiness or pain, *anudvignamanāḥ*, he is not perturbed at all—not because he is insensitive, but because all buttons have been removed so the external situations cannot provoke him any more.

¹ दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।

वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vīgataspr̥haḥ |

vītarāgabhayakrodhāḥ sthitadhīrmunirucyate || (BG 2.56)

The one who is not affected by adversities, who is without yearning for pleasures, and is free from longing, fear, and anger is said to be a wise person whose knowledge remains.

Later in the Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa points out¹ *samaduḥkhasukhaḥ*, one who takes both *sukha* and *duḥkha* (pleasure and pain) in his stride. How is it possible to do so? *Svasthaḥ*, because he abides in the truth of himself as a free person. *Mānāpamānayostulyaḥ*, one who maintains the composure on mind in *māna* and *apamāna*, honor and dishonor. *Tulyomitṛāripakṣayoḥ*, whether it is a friend or a foe, he maintains equanimity of the mind. *Tulyanindāstutirmauni*, censure and praise, all of these are equal to him because nothing affects him, nothing touches him. The self is never affected by these. So this knowledge removes all the sorrow once and for all and enables me to own up my true nature, which is limitlessness, which is happiness. That is called *mokṣa*—cessation of all the sorrow once and for all and attainment of happiness, unsurpassable happiness, once and for all.

¹ समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाच्चनः ।

तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुति ॥

samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ

tulyapriyāpriyo dhīrastulyanindātmasaṁstuti (BG 14.24)

Alike in pleasure and pain, self-abiding, regarding a clod of earth, a stone and gold as of equal worth, the same toward agreeable and disagreeable objects, calm, and indifferent to praise and blame;

मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥

mānāpamānayostulyastulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ

sarvārambhaparitāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate

The same in honor and dishonor, the same toward friend and foe, habitually renouncing all actions—such a person is said to have transcended the guṇas.

(BG 14.25)

The purpose of Upaniṣad, the self-knowledge, is to reveal the true nature of myself and remove the notions or complexes about myself. To start with, as we expose ourselves to the teaching, these notions start dropping off. That's how the bondage becomes loosened. Ultimately, the notions are destroyed when the bondage is completely destroyed, when I take myself to be my own self. That's the meaning of the word Upaniṣad.

The word Upaniṣad primarily means self-knowledge, but the text expounding this knowledge is also called Upaniṣad in a secondary sense. Kaivalya Upaniṣad, the text under discussion, is called Upaniṣad in that sense.

Śrī Kaivalyopaniṣad

The Kaivalyopaniṣad belongs to the Atharva Veda. Upaniṣads are part of the Vedas. Sometimes people say Vedānta as though it is separate from the Vedas, but that is not so, just as my head is included in my body, so I need not say “my body and my head.” As we saw earlier, Vedānta can either be taken to be the physical end of the Vedas, or a culmination of the knowledge of Vedas.

There are four Vedas—Ṛg Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda, and Atharva Veda—and each Veda contains several Upaniṣads. Traditionally, there are 108 Upaniṣads. Out of these, there are ten Upaniṣads that are popularly called major Upaniṣads. These are: Īśā, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka. The reason for calling them major Upaniṣads is because Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, a revered teacher in the *vedāntic* lineage of teachers, has written *bhāṣyas* (commentaries) on them. Subsequently, other *ācāryas* have also written commentaries on these Upaniṣads. Kaivalyopaniṣad is not one of these ten, but Kaivalyopaniṣad is also a very beautiful text. Even though we don't have the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, we do have the commentary of another teacher, Śaṅkarānanda, who was the *guru* of Swami Vidyāraṇya.¹

Ṛg Veda contains Aitareyopaniṣad. Yajur Veda has two major rescensions or branches, Śukla-Yajur Veda (White Yajur Veda), and Kṛṣṇa-Yajur Veda (Black Yajur Veda). Īśāvāsyā and

¹ Swami Vidyāraṇya is the author of the famous text, Pañcadaśī.

Brhadāranyaka are found in the Śukla-Yajur Veda, and Kathopanishad and Taittiriyaopanishad are found in the Kṛṣṇa-Yajur Veda. Sāma Veda includes Kenopanishad, and Chāndogyaopanishad. Atharva Veda has Kaivalyopanishad, Praśnopanishad, Muṇḍakopanishad and Māṇḍūkyopanishad.

Kaivalyopanishad is a short Upanishad, consisting of only 24 *mantras*, but it is a very beautiful Upanishad, well suited for contemplation. It is prescribed that aspirants should memorize this Upanishad, and should recite it everyday. During the discussion on the last *mantra* of this Upanishad we shall see how even the recital itself is very healing and purifying.

Śāntipāṭha, prayer of the Atharva Veda

There is a śāntipāṭha, or prayer, specific to each of the Vedas, chanted before the study of an Upanishad.

The prayer for the Atharva Veda, which applies to Kaivalyopanishad also, is the following:

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः । भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।

स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवाँसस्तनूभिः । व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ।

स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः । स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।

स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः । स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ।

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

om bhadraṁ karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyāma devāḥ
bhadraṁ paśyemākṣabhiryajatrāḥ
sthirairāṅgaistuṣṭuvāṁsastanūbhiḥ

vyaśema devahitaṁ yadāyuh
 svasti na indro vṛddhaśravāḥ
 svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ
 svasti nastārksyo ariṣṭanemiḥ
 svasti no bṛhaspatirdadhātu
 om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

Om! Oh gods (shining ones) may we hear what is auspicious with the ears¹. Oh gods (fit to be worshipped) may we see what is auspicious with the eyes. With firm limbs may we complete the full span of life allotted to us, in service to gods, offering praise. May Indra, of great fame, be auspicious to us. May the all-knowing Pūṣān (Lord Sun) be auspicious to us. May Tārksya be auspicious to us. May Bṛhaspati bestow auspiciousness upon us.

Om Peace! Peace! Peace!

This is a prayer for the well-being of everybody that is traditionally chanted together by the teacher and the students, therefore, all the verbs are in plural. It is a prayer to Īśavara (Lord) in the form of various gods. In a prayer, there is recognition of the need of grace or blessing. We recognize that we are limited in many ways, that there are many things that are not within our control. This prayer is recited so that this study, or this interaction between the teacher and the student, takes place as it should, that the teacher is able to communicate what needs to be communicated, and that the student or the students understand it in the manner in which the teacher

¹ Normally by the rules of grammar, the third person plural of *karṇam*, ear, would be *karṇaiḥ*, but here the Veda uses *karṇebhiḥ*; this is *chāndasa-prayoga*, or Vedic usage.

intended it. The teacher wants to convey a vision using words, and the students should get what is intended by the teacher. Sometimes, one may have to go beyond the grammatical meaning of the words to convey the vision. Therefore, in Vedānta there is a distinction between *vācyārtha* (literal meaning) and *lakṣyārtha* (implied meaning). When the *vācyārtha*, the literal meaning of words, is not able to convey the intent, then there is a need to resort to *lakṣyārtha*, the implied meaning. What is most important is *tātparya*, the intended meaning that the teaching wants to convey,¹ and where the literal meaning is not adequate, the scriptures resort to implied meaning.

Therefore, there must be a tuning between the student and the teacher so that the student is able to appreciate what is intended by the teacher. In case of the Upaniṣad also, since the teaching is in

¹ *Naiyāyikas*, (logicians) say that words themselves convey the meaning. A Vedāntin says the meaning is not just contained within the words, but rather in the intent of the speaker who uses words. For instance, sometimes, a word can have more than one meaning. For example, the statement *saindhavam ānaya*, means please bring *saindhava*. Now *saindhava* means that which is born or produced in Sindhu. Sindhu again means the sea or it also refers to the country around the river Sindhu (Indus). In the first case, *saindhava* would mean salt produced in the ocean. In the second case, *saindhava* would mean a horse bred in the territory called Sindhu. So in the sentence “*saindhavam ānaya*” the context determines whether it means “Please bring salt” or “Please bring a horse.” If a person uses this sentence while eating his meal, *saindhava* would mean salt. If a person ready to travel long distance utters this sentence, the word would mean horse. From this example it is clear that the word *saindhava* doesn't determine what the meaning is; it is the one who uses the word that determines what the meaning is.

the form of spoken words, *tātparyā niścaya* (the ascertainment of what is the intended meaning) becomes important. When communication takes place in the form of spoken words, then the right environment, in terms of the proper frame of mind between the teacher and students should prevail.

If we analyze the factors that can cause disturbance in our mind, they can be classified into three sources. First, there can be *ādhyātmika* factors relating to my own self, meaning my body and my mind, which can disturb my frame of mind, and come in the way of my understanding. Second, there could be *ādhibhautika* factors relating to the elements in the form of things and beings around us, including other people and animals, which can also come in the way of the serenity of my mind. Third, there can be *ādhidaivika* factors relating to cosmic forces, such as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and so on. Thus, to enjoy peace or serenity of the mind we require a lot of grace—grace of our own self, grace of the environment, and grace of the cosmic forces.

Understanding the Upaniṣad is not simple, and this knowledge is also very valuable, something very rare. Therefore we begin with a prayer. Oh gods, please bless us, so that we hear what is auspicious through our ears. In the present context, it means please bless us that we are able to listen to the statements of the Upaniṣads, the nature of the self, the nature of *brahman*, the nature of truth.

Yajatrāḥ is another word for *devatās*.¹ Oh gods, please bless us so that we see with our eyes what is auspicious. What is auspicious? Īśvara is auspicious, and as Vedānta teaches us, the whole

¹ *Yajñaiḥ trāyante iti yajatrāḥ*, those who protect us by our performance of the *yajña*, or Vedic rituals, are *yajatrāḥ*.

universe is a manifestation of Īśvara. Please bless us so that with our eyes we see Īśvara everywhere. This is reality, but because of my own likes and dislikes, my own ignorance, my own ego, and my own sense of I and mine, which brings about these likes and dislikes, I do not see what really is. Instead, I see things through the glasses of my likes and dislikes. Oh gods, please bless us that our minds become objective and that we may perceive auspiciousness in whatever we see, and we may hear auspiciousness in whatever we hear.

Sthiraiḥ aṅgaiḥ means with healthy limbs. With firm and healthy limbs of the body, *vyāśema yad devahitaṁ āyuh*, may we enjoy the full span of life as allotted to us by the Lord. May our actions be performed in the spirit of service or devotion or offering to Īśvara. *Tuṣṭuvāṁsaḥ* is from the root *stu* in the sense of “to praise,” so *tuṣṭuvāṁsaḥ* means praising, glorifying. *Tanūbhiḥ* means through the Vedas, or through words. Glorifying or praising the Lord with our words, serving the Lord with our limbs, may we spend the rest of our life granted to us by the Lord.

With the ears may we hear what is auspicious. With eyes, may we see what is auspicious. With our limbs, hands and legs, may we do what is auspicious. With the speech, may we speak what is auspicious. Eyes and ears include all the organs of perception—sound, touch, form, taste, and smell are what we experience through the five organs of perception. Oh gods, may we recognize the presence of Īśvara through all the experiences at the level of the sense organs. With organs of perception may we perceive Īśvara and with organs of action may we serve Īśvara. May our whole life be centered around Īśvara.

When we go to a temple, we circumambulate, sometimes once, sometimes three times, sometimes five times. The idea is that Īśvara is kept in the center of our actions and prayers at the temple. Even though we cannot circumambulate the whole day, symbolically we can do so, keeping him in the center.

The second part of the prayer, *svasti na indro vṛddhaśravāḥ*, means may Indra of great fame be auspicious to us. Indra is the king of all the gods, the most famous and the most powerful. There is a presiding deity for every function. Indra is the presiding deity of arms, and therefore he is the god of strength, with which we perform various actions. May we enjoy the blessing of Indra. In the first part of the prayer it was said, “May we perform auspicious actions.” Performance of auspicious actions requires the grace of Indra, because he is the presiding deity of action or *karma*. May Indra bless us so that actions that we perform with our hands are auspicious, in the nature of the service to Īśvara.

Svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ. Another *devatā* is Pūṣā. Pūṣan, the nourisher, is a name of the sun. The sun is the nourisher of the universe because rains are possible only because of the sun. Due to the heat of the sun, water gets transformed to clouds and then comes down as rain. Therefore, the sun is responsible for rain, and from rain comes food, and from food life is sustained and nourished. So among many names of *sūrya*, or sun, one of them is Pūṣan the nourisher. Oh nourisher, Oh sun god, may you shower auspiciousness on us; may you be favorable. Sun is also the presiding deity of the eyes, because only when the sun illumines objects can the eyes see colors and forms. With the grace of the sun may we see what is auspicious.

Svasti nastārksyo ariṣṭanemiḥ. Tārksya is a name of Garuḍa, an eagle, the vehicle of Lord Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa. *Ariṣṭanemiḥ* means one whose flight cannot be obstructed. May this Tārksya, Garuḍa, be auspicious and favorable to us so that there are no obstacles. This prayer is in reference to the study of *brahma-vidyā*; we want the words of the teacher to carry their meaning to us. Garuḍa (eagle) is the vehicle of Nārāyaṇa, meaning that Lord Nārāyaṇa comes to us riding on Garuḍa. So also *brahman* comes to us riding on the words of the teacher, one may say. Just as there are no obstructions to the movement of Garuḍa, so also let there be no obstructions to the words of the teacher, so that we can listen to them and understand without any obstruction.

Svasti naḥ bṛhaspatiḥ dadhātu. Bṛhaspati is the preceptor of gods. He is of great intelligence and is the presiding deity of intelligence and speech. We seek the grace of Bṛhaspati so that we are blessed with intelligence and also so that our speech functions properly. By the grace of Bṛhaspati may we be inspired with right thoughts and words so that we can praise gods and perform right actions.

This is the prayer, seeking the grace of all the presiding deities. A few of them are mentioned here, but the idea is that with the grace of all the gods, may the entire body-senses-mind-intellect complex be favorable to us. We require the favor of our body, our mind, and our personality; only then is learning and gaining this knowledge possible. If the mind does not favor us, we have great difficulty in applying ourselves to the study. The serenity of one's mind and that of the entire personality is only possible when all the presiding deities are favorable to the person. So here we are seeking the favor of the deities, and through them we are seeking the proper functioning of all the resources available to us to learn. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad Gita that our mind can be our friend

or our enemy.¹ We want the mind to be our friend; we don't want it to create obstacles in our path. We want the mind to always be available to us.

Oṃ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ. Let there be peace, peace, peace. May there be no obstacle to peace of mind stemming from the factors relating to the individual personality, the elemental forces, and the cosmic forces. Peace and serenity of mind is prayed for here.

The prayer is for a personality that is composed, that is conducive, and that is fit for study or listening to the teacher.

¹ BG 6.5

Approaching the Teacher

Verse 1

ॐ अथाश्वलायनो भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनमुपसमेत्योवाच । अधीहि भगवन्ब्रह्मविद्यां
वरिष्ठां सदा सद्भिः सेव्यमानां निगूढाम् । ययाऽचिरात्सर्वपापं व्यपोह्य परात्परं
पुरुषं याति विद्वान् ॥ १ ॥

om athāśvalāyano bhagavantam parameṣṭhinamupasametyovāca |
adhīhi bhagavanbrahmavidyām varīṣṭhām sadā sadbhiḥ
sevyamānām nigūḍhām | yayā'cirātsarvāpāmaṁ vyapohya
parātparam puruṣam yāti vidvān || 1||

ॐ अथ - thereafter आश्वलायनः - Āśvalāyana भगवन्तम् - revered
परमेष्ठिनम् - Brahmāji, the grandsire उपसमेत्य - having approached
उवाच - said अधीहि - please teach भगवन् - Oh Lord! ब्रह्मविद्याम् -
knowledge of the self वरिष्ठाम् - the noblest सदा - always सद्भिः - by
the good people सेव्यमानाम् - being resorted to निगूढाम् - secret । यया
- by which अचिरात् - before long सर्वपापम् - all evil, sins (the cause
of sorrow) व्यपोह्य - having discarded परात्परम् - the highest पुरुषम् -
the being याति - goes विद्वान् - the learned one ॥ १ ॥

**Thereafter the sage Āśvalāyana approached Brahmāji, the
revered grandsire and said, "Oh Lord! Please teach me
brahma-vidyā, self-knowledge, which is the noblest and is
always resorted to by the good people, which is the highest**

secret, and by knowing which the learned ones cross all sins before long and reach the highest puruṣa.

We often find that the teaching imparted in the *sāstras* is in the form of a dialog between the teacher and one or more students. This is similar to teaching in the classroom, where the teacher encourages questions so that doubts can be removed and the knowledge becomes clear. In the Bhagavad-Gītā also, the teaching is in the form of a dialog between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, in the style of the Upaniṣads. Specific names of the teacher and students are not always mentioned. Often the teaching is imparted in the background of a story, which may be brief or may be fairly elaborate. In Kaṭhōpaniṣad, Yamarājā, the Lord of Death, teaches a young boy named Naciketā. The story details how the young boy is received by the Lord of death, how his suitability is tested, and how then he is taught by Yamarājā. In Chāndogya, the story is about how Śvetaketu is taught by his father, Uddālaka. Elsewhere in Chāndogya, the heavenly sage Nārada is taught by sage Sanat Kumāra, and so on.

The idea is that the Upaniṣads are not just academic. The dialogues reveal the fact that there were real students who indeed gained self knowledge. The stories sometime also tell us about preparations, such as the right attitude required to understand the subtle truths. The stories give us a certain amount of confidence that we can indeed gain immortality. Here Kaivalyopaniṣad is also in the form of a dialog. The first verse tells us the background of the dialog, how it took place and so on.

Thereafter (*atha*) the sage Āśvalāyana goes seeking *brahma-vidyā*. Āśvalāyana is not an ordinary student. We may not be familiar with the name, but it is well known among those who

know the Vedas that Āśvalāyana was a very learned person, himself a teacher of Ṛg Veda. A person as accomplished and as intelligent as that goes to a teacher seeking self knowledge.

The text begins with the word *atha*, thereafter. “Thereafter” shows that something has happened, following which Āśvalāyana goes to the teacher. Similarly, the sacred Brahmasūtras begin with *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*, “Thereafter, therefore, there is desire to know *brahman*.” It is said there that the desire to know *brahman* arises when appropriate preparations are made.

When a student goes to a teacher, it is indeed a very auspicious thing. “Oh Lord! Teach me the knowledge of *brahman*.” For that kind of question to occur in the mind of a person is rare indeed. Many people approach swamis, but with a variety of requests. Some requests may be for reading palms, other requests may be for astrology. Naturally, people come with things that concern them. When we come to a *gurukulam* (teacher’s home and school) also, we have our own concerns in our lives, and we are seeking solutions for our problems. So naturally the study of an Upaniṣad will be of interest to me provided the Upaniṣad has something to do with my daily life. If it does not tell me something that I can use in my day-to-day life, then it is of no use to me, however great it might be.

But here is a person who goes on his own to the teacher. You can imagine that in those days going to the teacher was not easy; it was not a week-long retreat that you could just go and come back from. Going to a teacher meant that you would be living with the teacher for twelve years and that there would be nothing else to do. Imagine how much leisure they must have had. Here we bring our cell phones and laptops with us just so that we can be constantly in touch with what is going on in our homes or in business or politics.

But there was no such thing there in the *gurukulams*. Going meant gone, totally. As *Pūjya* Swamiji would say, you cross the river in a boat and burn it so that you do not go back. Otherwise, you cannot totally apply yourself to this pursuit. The mind is not fully available for application as long as many concerns are there in the mind. Going to the teacher meant taking *sannyāsa*, becoming a renunciate.

Who is a renunciate?

A *sannyāsī* is one who has renounced not only all duties and responsibilities, but renounced all claims as well. He gives up his home, meaning the warmth and the support that the home and society provides. When can we give up that kind of a secure atmosphere? Only when we have discovered an inner security, otherwise we cannot. An insecure person cannot and also should not give up that which is a source of security; there is no need to give it up. In renunciation, very often, only giving up seems to be emphasized, and not taking up something in its place, like going to the teacher. That is just as important, if not more so. Otherwise we find people renouncing their previous lifestyle and just wandering around and begging; that is not renunciation. Because of renunciation there is a vacuum, and that vacuum must be filled with something that is more important, more fulfilling. Otherwise what is the use of renunciation?

So a true renunciate is a person who has discovered an inner security, an inner self sufficiency. It is not that he rejects or turns away from people of home or society. Instead, he has grown out of the need; he has done everything that is needed to be done; he has fulfilled whatever responsibilities that needed to be fulfilled. In the process of fulfilling those responsibilities, he has lived a mature life and, therefore, discovered in himself emotional maturity.

Emotional Maturity—a prerequisite for renunciation

Emotional maturity means freedom from inner impulses. What impulses? *Rāgas* and *dveṣas*, likes and dislikes. What is important is to become free from emotional needs. We all have emotional needs—we require a father, we require a mother, we require a spouse, we require children, we require friends. Every now and then we require to be patted on our back, we require encouragement, and we require someone's support to wipe the tears from our eyes. These are strong needs. Other needs we can deal with, such as hunger, thirst and other physical needs. But when I am emotionally dependent upon other people around me, then I don't have freedom. So *sannyāsa*, renunciation, is an expression of the freedom that this person enjoys. What sort of freedom? It is emotional freedom that is due to emotional maturity, having discovered from within himself or herself what so far the person had been seeking from others. From others I seek approval, encouragement, appreciation, and acceptance. When I find that approval, acceptance, and encouragement arising from my own self, then I can become free from these needs. That is called maturity.

Atha represents that emotional maturity, or we can call it inner purification, or call it *vairāgya*. *Vairāgya* means freedom from *rāga* and *dveṣa*, freedom from the impulses of attachment and aversion. The most important qualification for *sannyāsa* is *vairāgya*. *Vairāgya* or dispassion is very often thought to be a negative thing, such as just giving up everything. It is not giving up something; it is growing out of a need for something, like no longer needing crutches because the body can hold itself. *Vairāgya* means growing out of emotional need. As the disposition of our mind changes, the nature of the need changes. Basically only one need is there, and that is *mokṣa* or unconditional freedom, but this need manifests in different ways depending upon one's emotional

maturity. In a person who is very immature, it may manifest as simply seeking sense gratification. In persons who are more mature, the very same need may manifest as seeking emotional gratification. In still more mature persons, the need may manifest as seeking ego gratification. When the person further grows, it may then manifest as the need for spiritual gratification.

Who is qualified to gain knowledge?

What are the qualifications for gaining this knowledge? Who is a fit student? The one who has the desire to gain the knowledge; that's all Vedānta requires. Vedānta doesn't say whether the student needs to be a man or a woman, fair or dark, young or old, belonging to such and such caste, having a particular skill and so on. All that is said is that the student should have the desire to know, which calls for a great deal of emotional maturity or self-growth. The desire to know is the main qualification for eligibility as a student.

The text Tattvabodha talks about the four-fold qualifications—*viveka*, *vairāgya*, *śamādiṣaṭkaśampatti* and *mumukṣutvam*. *Viveka* is discernment, the ability to separate the real from the unreal, the permanent from the impermanent. It is basically the ability to discern what one really wants in life. That happens when one inquires or takes stock of one's own life. One begins to ask, "What is it that I am really seeking in life?" That I'm seeking something in my life is very clear. Because of it I find myself pursuing one thing after another. I keep on fulfilling the desires one after another, and new desires keep on arising. Is there a desire behind all desires? This is what one begins to look into. After having inquired into all the achievements that are possible through performance of various types of actions or rituals, a contemplative person gains *vairāgya*, dispassion. Why? Because as we saw earlier, that which is infinite and immortal cannot be created or obtained. Whatever can be obtained through any kind of effort is

limited, so limitless cannot be created, it cannot be attained. Therefore he discovers a dispassion toward everything that is created or that is attainable. That attitude is called *vairāgya*, freedom from passion. I am no longer attached to the wordly pleasures and success, nor do I have any aversion to that. As a result, there is *mumukṣutvam*, or a keen desire for *mokṣa*, or knowledge.

Now some people ask, “Swamiji, on one hand they say that we should be free from desires, but isn’t a desire for *mokṣa* also a desire?” It is, but the fact of the matter is that the desire for *mokṣa* is the only desire that can be fulfilled. No other desire can be completely fulfilled. The desire for *mokṣa* alone can be truly fulfilled because *mokṣa* is an already accomplished fact; it requires nothing but the knowledge of the self, the self that is already free. *Mokṣa* is my own nature, and therefore the desire for *mokṣa* can be fulfilled when I understand that I am ever liberated, I am ever free. That desire for liberation becomes fulfilled in the wake of the discovery of the true nature of my self. No other desire can be truly fulfilled or give me lasting satisfaction, because the desire behind every other desire is only for *mokṣa*. This is called *viveka*, discerning that what I’m seeking is unconditional freedom or unconditional happiness, and it can be attained by the knowledge of the self.

With this understanding, Āśvalāyana goes to the teacher, because one goes to a place that is appropriate to fulfill a given desire. With a desire for food you go to the dining hall naturally, there is no point in going to a teacher. To watch a movie you go to a theater. Depending on what you want to learn you go to an appropriate teacher. Now, as *Pūjya* Swamiji would say, a keen desire for liberation should get transformed to a desire for knowledge. That’s

the next stage of maturity. Everybody is a *mumukṣu*, that is, everybody is seeking freedom, but it is necessary to recognize that freedom can be attained only through knowledge of the true nature of the self. That kind of transformation took place in Arjuna, in the Kurukṣetra. In the Bhagavad-Gītā we are shown, in the first chapter and the first ten verses of the second chapter, how Arjuna underwent a transformation from a *mumukṣu* to a *jijñāsu*, that is, from a desirer of liberation to a desirer of knowledge. Then he submitted himself to lord Kṛṣṇa for the teaching of self-knowledge.

All this must have happened to Āśvalāyana. He must have led a very mature life, an intelligent life. This happens only when a human being lives an intelligent life. Then *rajas* and *tamas* slowly get replaced by *sattva*. The desires arising in the mind are dependent upon the disposition of mind. If the mind is predominant in *rajas*, it will have desire for pleasure, enjoyment, achievement, accomplishment and so on. On the other hand if the mind is predominant in *sattva*, then there will be desire for knowledge. This is mentioned in the Gītā.¹

So “thereafter” means living a life of *dharma*, of *karma yoga*. This is what we would call the intelligent way of living, where I use my free will to see that my life is in harmony with the prevailing order. Upaniṣad says that when the desire for knowledge arises, one

¹ सत्वात्संजायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च ।

प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ॥

satvātsañjāyate jñānaṁ rajaso lobha eva ca

pramādamohau tamaso bhavato'jñānameva ca.

From *sattva* results knowledge, from *rajas* only greed, and from *tamas* nothing but laziness, delusion, and ignorance. (BG 14.17)

should go to the teacher, a teacher who is well versed in scriptures—in *Pūjya* Swamiji’s words, one who is *Sampradāyavit*, (one who is knower of *sampradāya*). *Sampradāya* means the tradition of teaching *brahma-vidyā*. The knower of *sampradāya* is well versed in the scriptures as well as in the art of communication.

Why should one go to a teacher?

Why is there consistent advice to seek out a teacher? Why can I not figure this out by myself? The reason is that I would never suspect that what I think of myself is not right. I see everybody entertaining a sense of limitation about themselves, and nobody questions that; there is no occasion to question the conclusion about the self. The basic conclusion is that I am a limited being. I question everything else, but take for granted that the questioner, the seeker, is a limited being. That part is never questioned.

My conclusion about the world is also not questioned, and my conclusion about God is also not questioned. Taking those conclusions for granted, I set about leading my life. Therefore there is a necessity to go to the teacher who can draw my attention, “Look, what you take yourself to be is not right, what you think about the world is also not right, what you think about *Īśvara* is also not right.” Vedānta addresses these basic realities of life. Life consists of three entities, I the individual, called *jīva*; the universe around me, called *jagat*, and the creator, called *Īśvara*. These three entities make up our life. All that is necessary is to know the true nature of these entities and the relationship between them. That is what Vedānta is all about. Everything else is preparation.

Vedāntic texts deal with these three aspects. For example, if you read and analyze a text such as *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, you will find that the author spends some time with the qualifications of the

seeker, but then proceeds to elaborate on the individual, *tvam pada* (the word “you”) on the world around us, *tat pada* (the word “that”), and the identity between the two, *asi pada* (“you are”). This necessarily requires a teacher, because we have already taken things for granted, just as the tenth man is taken for granted in the sense that he thinks he is not the tenth man. In the very search for the tenth man, there is denial of the truth about the tenth man. Unless I deny my own self, I could not be looking for *mokṣa*. The fact that I am searching for liberation, searching for freedom, searching for happiness, presupposes that I am not happy, free or liberated. It requires a teacher to point that out to me. The teacher says, “What you take yourself to be is not what you are.” Therefore, for that knowledge, one should necessarily go to a teacher, and go to him or her with the right attitude.

The importance of the students’ right attitude

Just going to a teacher does not necessarily mean that he will teach you. The teacher needs to know the qualifications of the student. Toward that end, the student needs to convince the teacher that yes, I am a sincere seeker. Chāndogya Upaniṣad tells us how none other than Indra himself waited for one hundred and one years performing penance before he could gain this knowledge. That tells us how great people dedicated their entire life in pursuing this knowledge and tells us how valuable this knowledge is.

How would the teacher recognize the eligibility of the student? Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “Understand that (which is to be known) by prostrating, by asking proper questions, (and) by service. Those

who are wise, who have the vision of the truth, will teach you (this) knowledge.”¹

Know that this is the method. Go and prostrate to the teacher. What does prostration mean? That you surrender to him; you have complete *śraddhā*, trust in him. *Sevyayā* means serving the teacher. Serve with your actions, serve with your words, and serve with your thoughts. That shows *bhakti*, devotion to the teacher. This enables the student to tune up to the teacher in course of time. When you find that the teacher is pleased with you and recognizes your sincerity, he then consents to your asking questions. All of this is understood to have taken place in the case of *Āśvalāyana*. All of this is indicated by the word *atha*, thereafter.

Upasametya means having approached. *Upa* means proximity; *sametya* means approaching. *Upasametya* means approaching the teacher and being in the proximity of the teacher. Proximity can be in two ways—physically, in as much as the student lives with the teacher, at the feet of the teacher; and emotionally, in as much as the student develops an emotional bond with the teacher. Elsewhere, the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* says, “One who has total devotion to the Lord and has similar devotion to the teacher, to him the secrets of self-knowledge that have been told become clear.”²

¹ तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।

उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ (BG 4.34)

tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā

upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninastatvadarśinaḥ. (BG 4.34)

² यस्य देवे परा भक्तिर्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।

तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥ (Śve.Up. 6.23)

yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau |

tasyaite kathitā hyarthaḥ prakāśante mahātmanah || (Śve.Up. 6.23)

So Āśvalāyana approaches the teacher, who is none other than *parameṣṭhi*, Lord Brahmāji, the very creator of the world. Āśvalāyana, having approached in the manner we described, prostrates to the teacher, serves him, wins his trust and affection, and then asks the question, “Oh Lord, Oh revered Sir, please teach me the knowledge of *brahman*.” The meaning of *adhīhi* is, in fact, to remember. “For my sake, for blessing me, please recollect.” The teacher does not have to remember *brahman* because he abides in that, hence *adhīhi* means please become a teacher to me.

Knowledge of *brahman*, the subject of the teaching

What do you want to know? *Brahma-vidyā*, the knowledge of *brahman*. *Vidyā* means knowledge and *brahman* means the limitless. *Brahman* is a word that is derived from the root *bṛh*, in the sense of growth, in the sense of greatness. *Brahman* means that which is unconditionally great, unconditionally big. Normally, the word “big” or “great” is used as an adjective. For example, we say “a big mountain,” or “a great civilization.” But we can also say “what a big rat!” or “a great person.” There the sense of bigness or greatness is defined by the noun that is being qualified by the word “big” or “great.” Here, however, the word *brahman* refers to big or great as a noun, meaning that which is free of every kind of boundary, meaning limitless.

Therefore, we presume that Āśvalāyana must have known that there is something called *brahman*. That presupposes some stage of preparation also. For *jijñāsā* (desire for knowledge) to arise, one must have some general knowledge. For example, sometimes students ask me “Swamiji, please tell me the meaning of *mahā*

mṛtyuñjaya mantra.” There, it is clear that the student at least knows that there is something called *mahā mṛtyuñjaya mantra*. *Jijñāsā* or desire to know something particular arises when there is a general knowledge. A student asks, as mentioned in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,¹ “Oh revered Sir, what is it, knowing which everything is as well known?” Such a question cannot arise unless there is a background that one has acquired; either in some *satsaṅga*, or in a class, or in an assembly of scholars debating the truth of our existence. As *Pūjya* Swamiji says, reading paperbacks on spirituality can be useful, if not in imparting the precise knowledge, at least in imparting some sense about it, which can lead to further inquiry.

The knowledge of the self is the most exalted among all forms of knowledge

Āśvalāyana uses two adjectives to describe *brahma-vidyā*—*variṣṭhām* and *nigūḍhām*. *Variṣṭhām* means the noblest, the most exalted. Elsewhere in Muṇḍakopaniṣad,² it is said that two forms of knowledge should be gained, *parā-vidyā* and *aparā-vidyā*, the knowledge of that which is superior and the knowledge of that which is inferior, these are two subject matters of knowledge. The subject matter of inferior (*aparā*) knowledge is *mithyā*, the created world that can be objectified. The knowledge of creation, knowledge of life, if properly gained, will become the stepping stone for *parā-vidyā*, the knowledge of *brahman*, the self. The self and nonself are two entities that one should have the knowledge of. Why does the Upaniṣad say we should have the knowledge of the

¹ Mu.Up. 1.1.3

² द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये इति ह स्म यद्ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति परा चैवापरा च ।

dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yadbrahmavido vadanti parā caivāparā
ca. (Mu.Up. 1.1.4)

world? What is that knowledge going to do for us? Why not only pursue *parā-vidyā*? Because it is necessary to understand that the world is impermanent, it is subject to creation, sustenance, and dissolution. Whatever is born is going to perish. Whatever can be objectified, including *brahma-loka* ¹ is also perishable. All achievements in the universe are perishable. We have to understand this clearly.

Mithyā

Mithyā is that which does not enjoy independent reality, which enjoys only a relative reality. For example, take this cloth with reference to cotton. Cotton is the substance from which the cloth is made. Cloth is perishable, in that if we separate all the strands, the cloth will no longer be. But even if we separate the strands, the cotton will continue to be. The strands can also be cut into small pieces. The strands may perish, but the cotton will remain. So whereas this cloth, which is name and form, constantly undergoes change or is subject to change, the reality of the cloth which is cotton does not change.

Similarly, the whole universe is constantly changing, but that change is possible only when there is an unchanging substratum. This is the manner in which we need to know the universe. There is no need to know how many stars there are or how many grains of sand there are or the like. There is no end to that knowledge and no need for it also. The way you need to know the world is that it is *mithyā*, only relatively real. Then there arises the need to know the absolute reality behind the world. It is not that cloth is not there, cloth is there, but it is there because of cotton. The pot is there because of clay. When something is there because of

¹ *Brahma-loka* is the highest of the seven upper worlds, also called Satyaloka.

something else, then that something is not absolutely real, it is relatively real. It derives its reality from something else. The cloth derives its reality from cotton, the pot derives its reality from clay or a wave derives its reality from water.

Pūjya Swamiji says that the human being is always in search of the infallible, that which cannot be wrong, which never fails, that is reliable, trustworthy, that never deceives me, in other words, that which is the truth. This is what you are pursuing. It is only after you gain any object that you recognize that it is perishable, it is changing, that it depends on something else for it to exist. That recognition leads to disillusionment and disappointment, thus there is disappointment with the world.

There is this story of an emperor called Akbar in India. He had set aside a certain time for the subjects to come and meet with him. One day it is said that a *fakīr*, a muslim ascetic, came to see him. The *fakīr*, was made to sit in a room; he was told that Akbar was in prayer and that once he is finished, he will come out and see the *fakīr*. However, as Akbar was coming out after his prayers, he saw the *fakīr* leaving. Akbar called him and asked him why he was leaving, since he had come to seek something from Akbar. “I just heard you praying to the Lord, ‘Please give me wealth, give me power.’ Then I thought, “Why should I beg of you, why not directly approach him from whom you are begging.” Akbar is a relative reality; he is what he is because of God. You cannot trust something if it depends on something else, because ultimately it will return to its source.

If I bank upon a clay pot, someday it will merge into clay; so it makes sense that in our life also we get hold of that which is infallible, which is reliable, which is trustworthy. This whole

changing world points to something that is its substratum, which does not change. Hence, when the Upaniṣad says that we should acquire two kinds of knowledge, the knowledge of nonself and knowledge of self, meaning knowledge of the world and knowledge of *brahman*, it is so that we grow out of the world, that's all. The knowledge of the world becomes a gateway to the knowledge of the self by recognition that because it is changing, the world is *mithyā*, (unreal), and therefore there must be something that is absolutely real. All other forms of knowledge are called inferior; *brahma-vidyā* is called the superior, the noblest, the most exalted, knowing which nothing remains to be known. That is how the Upaniṣad glorifies *brahma-vidyā*.

In the statement of Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, quoted earlier,¹ when the student approaches the revered teacher and asks, “What is it, knowing which everything is as well known?” the student seems to want to know everything. When a person says he wants to know everything, it means he wants to be clear about everything, he wants to be comfortable with everything. One can be comfortable with a thing only when one knows the reality of that. Knowing *brahman*, one knows everything. This is the reason why *brahma-vidyā* is called the most exalted.

The knowledge of the self is the most secret

Why is *brahma-vidyā nigūḍhām*, the most secret? Because it is in a place that nobody would suspect. Whoever is pursuing any form of knowledge—a scientist, a poet, an artist—they are all in search of something fundamental. Each one of them is trying to understand the truth in his own way. There is an inherent desire in the human intellect to know the truth; the intellect is as though wedded to the truth. That search for truth can really come to a

¹ Mu.Up. 1.1.3

conclusion only when the searcher discovers *brahman*. When you are investigating the nature of a cell, you want to know the secret of life. A physical scientist wants to know the secret of matter. Whatever it is that you want to know, ultimately the secret of all the secrets is *brahman*, and you can approach it any way—through chemistry, through physics, or whatever—because *brahman* is the fundamental truth that is behind everything. *Brahman* alone becomes an atom, it alone becomes a molecule, it alone becomes DNA, whatever there is. *Brahman* is the fundamental essence of everything. Lord Kṛṣṇa also says, “Knowing which, nothing remains to be known,”¹ meaning that your desire for knowledge becomes satiated when you know *brahman*. Otherwise, the curiosity to know knows no bounds. The more you know, the more you still want to know, because you do not seem to know what has to be known. But when it comes to the knowledge of *brahman*, the very desire for knowledge gets satisfied, it reaches its fruition.

When it is said there that nothing remains to be known, it also means that nothing remains to be done. Usually after knowing, something remains to be done because knowledge of a thing usually creates a desire to acquire or achieve. When I come to know about the Grand Canyon, having read the description and seen the picture, I want to go there. Usually knowledge of something desirable creates in me a desire to achieve it, to acquire and enjoy it. Knowledge creates desire, and desire creates action; that is how knowledge is not the conclusion. Usually knowledge is a beginning point, but *brahma-vidyā* is a different kind of knowledge; it is both a beginning point as well the end point.

¹ यज्ज्ञात्वा नेह भूयोऽन्यज्ज्ञातव्यमवशिष्यते ॥

yajjñātvā neha bhūyo'nyajjñātavyamavaśiṣyate|| (BG 7.2)

Knowing *brahman* as the self, there remains no need even to achieve anything because as said before, what is really involved is *prāptasya prāptih*, achievement of what is already achieved. That is what Vedānta says, “What you want to achieve is limitless, and that is your own nature.”

When *brahman* is known, it is known as the self; the truth is known correctly when it is known as your own self. As Ramana Maharṣi says in Upadeśa-Sāram,¹ “He (alone) knows God properly when he knows God as his self.” Knowledge becomes complete when there is total satisfaction. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad-Gītā, *Etadbuddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛtakṛtyaśca bhārata*.² “Knowing this, man becomes wise and gains fulfillment.” We gain total fulfillment in life when we know that *brahman* or God is our own self, because even if you know God as infinite but still continue to think that you are a limited being, there is no contentment in life.

Everybody takes for granted that I am what I think I am, truth is elsewhere, and God is elsewhere. Therefore this knowledge remains ever a secret, because as long as we are looking outwardly, so long it always remains hidden from us. As long as the tenth man keeps looking for the tenth man, the tenth man remains undiscovered. Therefore the tenth man is the most secret for whom?—for the one searching for the tenth man. Similarly, the human being is searching for happiness, searching for freedom, which amounts to searching for *brahman*, which is the most secret because it is the very self. How does it continue to remain a secret?

¹ वेषहानतः स्वात्मदर्शनम् । ईशदर्शनं स्वात्मरूपतः ॥

veṣahānataḥ svātmadarśanam. īśadarśanaṁ svātmarūpataḥ. (US 25)

²BG 15.20

Because I have already concluded that I am not *brahman*; I have concluded that I am limited. It's not that the self can ever remain hidden; the self is consciousness, and consciousness is ever manifest, ever evident, ever experienced. So it is not that I never experience myself; I experience myself because without myself no experience is possible. Self is not hidden in that sense; it is hidden only in the notion that I am limited.

Vedānta texts give the example of rope and snake. What is lying in front of me is a rope, but because of poor light or any other reason, I perceive it as a snake. There, the rope is hidden from my sight behind what? It is only hidden behind the notion that it is a snake. It is just the notion of snake that keeps the rope hidden from my sight, nothing else. The rope is lying in front of me but what keeps it hidden from me is my conclusion that it is a snake. So also, what keeps *brahman* hidden from me is my conclusion that I am a *jīva*, a limited, individual being. That conclusion keeps me looking for *brahman* elsewhere and denies me from looking for it where it is, which is my own self. In that sense, *brahma-vidyā* is *nigūḍhā*, is hidden. Knowledge of *brahman* is also a secret because it can be appreciated only by those who are eligible, who are qualified.

Then someone might think that if this is the ultimate secret, then either no one knows, or it is unknowable, or perhaps only a few privileged ones can know it. No, *sadā sadbhiḥ sevya-mānām*. It is pursued, and known also, constantly, by the noble ones, by the learned ones, by those who have gained the purity of mind. By them *brahman* is always known. The knowers of *brahman* behold it in their own heart, as their own self. It is not that *brahman* is not known or cannot be known; the wise ones are always abiding in the knowledge of *brahman*. So the point is that this extraordinary

achievement is not arbitrary or mysterious, many have achieved it and I can, too.

When can I always abide in something? Only when it is my own self. Only when I know *brahman* as my own self can I always abide in *brahman*. As long as God is known as someone different from me, I cannot always abide in God. Again, as Swamiji would say, God comes and goes but the seer remains, because God is thought to be different from myself. As long as my mind is focused on God, so long God is an object of my experience. If the focus of the mind changes, then God is no longer an object of my experience. Understand, the self is not an object of experience; it is my own self, therefore it is ever shining and ever myself. Oh revered Sir, please impart that knowledge of *brahman* being of this nature.

Why should I gain this knowledge?

Why do you want to gain that knowledge? What if it is the most exalted knowledge? What if it is always entertained by the wise? What if it is a great secret? How does it matter to me? There are many great secrets in life, so many great things in life. We don't necessarily bother about them. Then why should I pursue this knowledge? The reason is said in the second half of the verse, *Yathā'cirātsarvapāpaṃ vyapohya parātparam puruṣaṃ yāti vidvān*, "By which a wise person destroys all evil and attains the highest *puruṣa*, who is beyond *māyā*." I want to gain the knowledge not because it is an academic pursuit, but because it is valuable to me.

Basically we are all interested in ourselves. As Swamiji says, ultimately the only interest I have is to be the pleased self. A human being does not want God for the sake of God, he does not

want *brahman* for the sake of *brahman*, and he does not want Vedānta for the sake of Vedānta. He does not want something for the sake of the thing; all he wants is the pleased self, that is all. Man is the problem, and he is the solution. He is the problem because he finds himself not pleased with himself, he will become the solution when he finds himself pleased with himself. That's all. There is nothing else in life. All problems are because I am not pleased with myself. All problems are solved when I am pleased with myself. All the sorrow is caused because I am not pleased with myself, all the sorrow is removed when I discover myself pleased with myself. That's why there is so much effort for so many achievements. Vedānta says that the only way you can be pleased with yourself is by knowing yourself to be *brahman*. By knowing that I am already what I am seeking to be, discovering that limitlessness is already my nature, I am pleased with myself once and for all.

What is evil, and how does knowledge destroy evil?

Sarvapāpāni vyapohya means having crossed all evil. What is evil? Why is it there? These are good questions. Why is there cruelty in this world? Why are there anger, injustice, and exploitation? When you analyze it, all evil is found to be the product of ignorance. If I know what I am, I could never be a cruel or an unkind person. I could never be aggressive; I could never hurt anybody. If I recognize that I am limitless, I am a complete being, there could never ever be a possibility of my being unkind because I include everything as my own self. I can never be unkind to myself. There will be no evil when this knowledge takes place. All evil you see in the creation is the product of ignorance. A cruel person is cruel not by choice, he is helplessly cruel; the terrorist is helplessly a terrorist, and so on. Ignorance, and the false notions and false perceptions born of ignorance, make a person what he is.

As Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “Just as the blazing fire turns firewood to ash, similarly also this knowledge turns all the sins to ashes.”¹ Sin means an action that is unbecoming. Sin can be described as an act that violates the existing order, called *dharma*. When I violate the order of *dharma*, I violate the harmony, so then I violate myself. When I perform an action that is in violation of my own nature, a conflict is created. Conflict is created in my heart when I act in a manner that is in violation of my own nature. This is what ignorance does, or what ignorance makes me do. Because of ignorance, not only do I not know the true nature of myself, but I take myself to be contrary to what I am, meaning that, because of ignorance, I take myself to be a limited being; I take myself to be a doer and enjoyer. “One who thinks that he is the doer of action, agent of action, and another who thinks that he is the object of action, both of them do not know.”² So we are born with these conclusions that I am a *kartā* (doer), I am a *bhoktā* (enjoyer), and therefore we suffer from a sense of guilt and hurt. Because of that, I think of myself as a limited being, a helpless, hapless creature.

The limitless takes himself to be limited, and that is the original *pāpa*. Because of ignorance, there is constant self-denial resulting in self non-acceptance, self-rejection, and self-condemnation. That

¹ यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात्कुरुतेऽर्जुन ।

ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा ॥

yathaidhāṁsi samiddho'gnirbhasmasātkurute'rjuna
jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasātkurute tathā. (BG 4.37)

² य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम् ।

उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

ya enaṁ veti hantāraṁ yaścainaṁ manyate hatam.
ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate. (BG 2.19)

is what Vedānta would call sin (*pāpa*).¹ It is denying myself, imposing smallness upon myself, becoming a beggar. Even though *ānanda* or wholeness is my nature, I become a seeker of happiness. That is insulting myself. It is like a millionaire who goes to a club and drinks a bit too much, and forgets who he is. The man is drunk, lying on the roadside near a gutter thinking he is a pauper, a poor man, and is begging. A wealthy person is begging because he does not know who he is. Similarly the human being is begging, “Please give me happiness, please give me love, please help me, please accept me,” all the time assuming a helpless state of existence. This is nothing but self-denial. This can be called a sin, which amounts to violating my own self. All the external violence originates from the violence that goes on within my own self. The first violence is violating my own self and then that results into violence in my behavior outside, and therefore what we call evil, *kāma* (lust), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), all of these are products of ignorance. It is ignorance that brings about self-denial, and that is what causes all the problems of human beings. That is responsible for whatever pain or unhappiness is around.

Yayā. (by which), by *brahma-vidyā*, we destroy sin completely. *Brahma-vidyā*, knowledge of *brahman*, is the knowledge that I am *brahman*. I am no more a limited being; I am limitless. That knowledge removes all complexes. All negative propensities born of the wrong complexes are removed. All the bondage comes to an

¹योऽन्यथा सन्तमात्मात्मानमन्यथा प्रतिपाद्यते ।

किं तेन न कृतं पापं चोरेणात्मापहारिणा ॥ यसनत्सुजातीय १-३३

yo'nyathā santamātmātmānamanyathā pratipādyate

kiṁ tena na kṛtaṁ pāpaṁ coreṇātmāpahārīṇā.

One who takes the Self that is limitless to be limited, what sin has that person not committed? (Sanatsujātīya 1.33)

end, because bondage is a notion. Bondage is not a reality about myself, it is a notion. Therefore, becoming free does not mean that I have to remove a real bondage, it is becoming free from the notion of bondage.

In the wake of this knowledge all my false perceptions drop off. In the wake of true perception of my self, I see that I am limitless, I am one without the second, I am nondual, I am free from lack, I am boundless. In gaining that knowledge, all sense of smallness disappears, all dissatisfaction with myself disappears, all desire to become someone else disappears. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad¹ asks what desires would remain when one gains this knowledge, because the desirer himself does not remain. In a dream, the dreamer is, and so there is a sense of desire. On waking up, how can the dream desires remain when the dreamer himself is no longer? Desire is there as long as there is a sense of smallness. When that goes away with the knowledge that I am limitless and nondual, then both the desirer and the object of desire do not remain. What remains is one, *pūrṇam eva avaśiṣyate*, one wholeness, completeness alone remains.² That is the perception of the wise person. All negativities, which are the product of false perception, drop off (*vyapohya*) before long (*achirāt*).

1 आत्मानं चेद्विजानीयादयमस्मीति पूरुषः ।

किमिच्छन्कस्य कामाय शरीरमनुसंज्वरेत् ॥

ātmanam cedvijāniyādayamasmiti pūruṣaḥ
kimicchankasya kāmāya śarīramanusañjvare.

If a man knows the self as I am this (*brahman*), then desiring what and for whose sake will he be afflicted in the wake of the body? (Bṛ.Up. 4.4.12)

² Bṛ.Up. 5.1.1

O revered Sir, please impart that knowledge to me. This is a very intelligent request. The student knows exactly what he wants, because he must have really thought about things. In *Kena Upaniṣad*¹ we read, *Kena iṣitaṁ patati preṣitaṁ manaḥ*, “Impelled by whom does the mind go toward its objects?” Most of us would not even think of the question, taking for granted that the mind just thinks, it’s no big deal. But the question of the student shows some prior reflection, that there is perhaps someone or something behind the mind. Who is that? *Jijñāsā*, the desire to know the truth on the part of the student, is very important. Vedānta gives great importance not to questioning, but to asking questions. The *śāstra* very clearly says that this knowledge should not be imparted to one who does not seek the knowledge, to one who does not ask for it.² Why do we wait for that formality of asking for the knowledge? It is not a formality. When a person asks for it, it shows that he has a value for it, that he has thought about it. He must have gone through a lot of inner struggle or inquiry and not found a satisfactory answer, and at the same time he also cannot remain without the answer. Therefore he goes to the teacher. That is why *paripraśna*, the all-encompassing question, becomes very important. Here the student wants knowledge of *brahman* so that he can become free from sorrow once and for all and can attain unsurpassable happiness.

Parātparam puruṣaṁ yāti vidvān, the knower of the truth attains the highest *puruṣa*. The word *puruṣa* shows the identity between *jīva* and *brahman*. It is derived from the root *pṛ*, in the sense of

¹ Ke.Up. 1.1

² नापृष्टः कस्यचित् ब्रूयात् यमनुस्मृतिः

nāpṛṣṭaḥ kasyacit brūyāt (Manusmṛti 2.110)

filling up. Thus *puruṣa* is one who fills up everything, one who is complete, whole, limitless. In that sense it means *brahman*. Or *puruṣa* is derived from the word *purī* which means a city. *Purī śayanāt puruṣaḥ*, one who dwells in the city of the body is called *puruṣaḥ*. In that sense, *puruṣa* means the self, one that dwells in the hearts of all.

If *puruṣa* means whole and limitless, *puruṣam yāti* means he attains the limitless. By this knowledge, burning all his sins, this wise person attains the limitless. As we have seen, the limitless cannot be attained. Whatever is attained is going to be limited. But it is as though we attain it. Sometimes there is a necklace on your own neck and you run around looking for it. Then, after considerable searching, you discover it is right on your neck. It feels as though you got it even though you did not really get it; you already had it. But the feeling that you got it is because you thought it was lost. Here the feeling is that I reached the limitless. The meaning is that the *vidvān* (the wise person) knows the *puruṣaḥ* (the limitless being) as his own self.

Now the teacher replies to the question.

Sādhana and Sādhya (Means and Ends)

Verse 2

तस्मै स होवाच पितामहश्च श्रद्धाभक्तिध्यानयोगादवैहि ॥ २ ॥

tasmai sa hovāca pitāmahaśca
śraddhābhaktidhyānayogādavaihi ॥ 2॥

तस्मै - to him सः - he, the ह - indeed उवाच - said पितामहः - the
Grandsire च - and श्रद्धा - trust (in teaching) भक्ति - commitment
ध्यानयोगाद् by singlepointedness अवैहि- may you know ॥२॥

To him, the grandsire said, "May you know through śraddhā, trust in the teaching, bhakti, commitment, and dhyāna, meditation."

Pitāmaha means grandfather, another name of Brahmā, because he is the creator; all the creatures are his progeny. He is also called grandfather because he created the *Prajāpatīs*, the lords of created beings. The *Prajāpatīs* then created this world, so *prajāpati* is our father and his father is Brahmā, who is therefore grandfather or grandsire.

To Āśvalāyana, who thus requested, the Grandsire responded. It should be noted that the teacher responded to the request from the student, which means that the teacher must have been convinced that here is a sincere and eligible student, along the lines we mentioned before. It is possible that the teacher may ignore or postpone granting the request. There are instances described in *śāstra* where the teacher did not respond right away. In *Praśnopaniṣad*,¹ six learned people go to the *guru* called Pippalāda. The teacher welcomes them but says, “Live here for one year. Live the life of austerity, self-control, and faith for one year and at the end of the year, ask me whatever questions you have. If I know the answers to your questions then I will explain.” The meaning is that they were asked to live with the teacher for one year to prepare themselves. Here, Pitāmaha, Parameṣṭhi replies to the student right away. However, even though the request is for the *brahma-vidyā*, Brahmāji does not start teaching it right away; he first teaches what preparations are required, what means are required, to gain *brahma-vidyā*.

Two kinds of *sādhana*s, means of gaining knowledge

There are two kinds of *sādhana*s, means, in terms of preparing ourselves for this subtle knowledge. One is called *bahiraṅga-sādhana*m, the external means, the other is *antaraṅga-sādhana*m, the inner means. *Karma yoga*, performing actions in the spirit of worship, is called *bahiraṅga-sādhana*m, the external means. Here, however, Pitāmaha skips this step and instead prescribes the three-fold *antaraṅga-sādhana*m. Pitāmaha says may you cultivate three qualities, may your mind enjoy these three dispositions—*śraddhā bhakti dhyānayogād avaihi*, may you know *brahman* by *śraddhā*, *bhakti*, and *dhyāna*.

¹ Pr.Up. 1.2

First is *śraddhā*. This is not quite the same as faith. We often find *śraddhā* being translated as faith and it seems to create an impression that it is like faith of other religions. Here the meaning is somewhat different. As *Pūjya* Swamiji would say, faith is of two kinds, one is believing something that is unverifiable and the other is believing something that is verifiable. Unverifiable belief is believing in something that you can never verify in your life time. Take heaven, for instance. We have to take the existence of heaven on trust, because we can never see it. As long as we are in a human body, we can never see heaven. Or for that matter, that there is God in heaven also becomes a matter of unverifiable belief. Vedānta does not demand that kind of belief or that kind of faith. Vedānta teaches something that we can discover here and now in our own life. I can verify what Vedānta teaches. If not now, I can verify it some day later in this life itself. I can keep on verifying as I proceed, because there are landmarks and I can keep on discovering those landmarks; that is how my faith becomes more and more firm. This faith, or *śraddhā*, or trust is based on understanding rather than simply on blind belief.

In knowledge of science the same principle applies. The truth that $e=mc^2$ is not a matter of belief for a student of physics. He has to equip himself with the proper courses, as well as continuous study, so that one day he understands the equation. Until then he has to have *śraddhā* in a verifiable belief.

So a *vedāntin* has no need for faith that is blind, faith that is without understanding. Sometimes it is very convenient for people to have blind faith, “I trust you, so I need not have any responsibility. I am at your disposal so just tell me what to do.” *Vedāntins* do not tell us what to do, they only ask us to understand. If I do something because someone told me to, then it is an

obligation. If my attitude is, “This is how it is said in the Bhagavad-Gītā, and therefore I should speak the truth,” or “Swamiji says I should speak the truth, therefore I should speak truth,” how long can I oblige this way? I cannot oblige even my teacher for a long time. I will oblige as long as it is convenient for me. But when the value of the teacher becomes my value, it is not an obligation. Similarly, here also trust is based on my conviction.

Vivekacūḍāmaṇi¹ describes *śraddhā* as *śāstrasya guruvākyasya satyabuddhi avadhāraṇā*, “The conviction that the words of the *śāstra* and the teacher are true is called *śraddhā*.” What is the response of my mind when I listen to the words of the teacher unfolding the scriptures? If the mind resists or if the mind questions, then it is not a learning mind; it is not favorably disposed to understand what the teacher is unfolding. My mind should be favorably disposed to the unfoldment or the instructions of the teacher. That favorable disposition is called *śraddhā*. As Pūjya Swamiji would say, *śraddhā* is giving the benefit of the doubt. The *śraddhā* that Vedānta calls for is not simply accepting whatever the teacher says. *Śraddhā* is giving fair and due consideration to what the teacher says, because in the end it is possible that I may not agree with what is said.

I is the subject matter of this teaching and I already have conclusions about myself. Ego is a bunch of conclusions, and the ego usually wants to perpetuate itself. Therefore, whenever something is said that goes against the perception of the ego, there is a tendency to resist or a tendency to reject. One cannot learn as long as this tendency prevails. When the student has *śraddhā* and *bhakti* (devotion), the second quality mentioned by Brahmāji, these qualities enable him to identify with the teacher and with the

¹ VC 25

scriptures. The student's identification with the teacher and, through the teacher's identification, with the scriptures, is important, because only then can he become objective to his own self. What is required to be done in learning is to scrutinize the various notions and conclusions I have about myself. I am the subject matter of the scriptures and what is obstructing the right perception of myself are various misconceptions or misperceptions about myself. I can recognize a misconception only when I am objective with reference to that conception. I need to be objective with reference to myself, with reference to my conclusions, by creating a distance. How do I create a distance? By identifying with the teacher and then by scrutinizing or looking at my own conclusions about myself from the standpoint of the teacher and the scripture.

First of all, we do not see a difference between the teacher and the scriptures. We say that the teacher is identified with the scriptures and therefore the teacher becomes our gateway to the scriptures. What we really want to learn is the scripture, the Upaniṣad. But in as much as we do not have the direct access to the Upaniṣad, the teacher becomes our gateway to the Upaniṣad. We accept that the teacher is identified with the scripture and hence our identification with the teacher becomes identification with the scripture. Then, I look at my own conclusions about myself, about the world, about God from the standpoint of the scriptures, and when I find that my conclusions need to be changed, I am willing to change them. That preparedness is all that is required. It is necessary that I understand and see the fallacy of my own notions about myself, and in that understanding the notions are dropped. This is the process of letting go of my notions, and that is called letting go of ignorance.

That happens when there is *śraddhā*, when there is the implicit trust that what the teacher is saying is right, and that he is my well-wisher. There is no reason why the scripture or the teacher should wish me ill or should misguide me. I recognize that the teacher has no agenda. That person alone is ideally suited to be a teacher who has no agenda; he has no personal agenda and no agenda for the student, other than his commitment to make the student see. Other than that he doesn't want anything, so when the student is convinced of this, it is very easy for him to surrender. *Tadviddhi praṇipātena*, "Know that by prostrating (to the wise)." ¹ That *praṇipāta* (a long prostration) is nothing but the expression of faith and trust. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *śraddhāvāññillabhate jñānam*, "One who has *śraddhā* indeed gains knowledge." ² So *śraddhā* is required as *antaraṅga sādhanā* (internal means). We also see that we cannot will *śraddhā*, just as we cannot will ourselves to love. I cannot will to have trust in somebody, it just has to happen.

I often come across the question, "How does one find a *guru*?" Well, somehow it has to click. When one discovers *śraddhā* and *bhakti* for a teacher, which is when I would say it has clicked. It is nothing but the grace of God; it is the grace of our virtuous deeds or *punya-karma*. If we find a lack of *śraddhā* and *bhakti*, then we pray to the lord to grant us *śraddhā* and *bhakti*.

How *bhakti*, commitment helps us everywhere

The second qualification required is *bhakti*. It means *tatparatā*, commitment. Actually, *śraddhā* leads to *tatparatā*, commitment, meaning wholeheartedly applying myself to the pursuit of knowledge. At any moment I am devoted to that which at that

¹ BG 4.34

² BG 4.39

moment is the most important to me. Therefore, as we discussed earlier, when we discover a value for this knowledge, recognizing that every sorrow, every problem is a result of my ignorance, then my commitment to the pursuit of the knowledge becomes natural and abiding.

It should become clear to me that ignorance, and therefore the misconceptions caused by ignorance, are the only reasons for my sorrow. “But Swamiji, how can you say that? Look at this person. See how he behaves? How can I not be upset by that behavior? Is it right to say that my ignorance is the cause of my sorrow?” Well, the world is what it is, and I cannot become sad or unhappy unless I cooperate with the world. Whenever I feel sad, I can ask, in what way am I cooperating? The other person did what he did. “But Swamiji, what about his hurting words and insulting behavior?” Now the question is whether or not I should internalize that, whether I should identify with that. Someone says “you are stupid.” Ok. As long as I leave it where it is, as long as I do not identify with his opinion, it does not bother me. What happens when a person says I am stupid? A chord touches me because part of me feels that I am stupid. In short, people are able to push buttons and provoke those aspects of ourselves which we are not willing to confront. This should become very clear to the students of Vedānta.

Most battles are won when it becomes clear that the only problem in life that causes unhappiness and sorrow is ignorance. There is no other cause. The ignorance causes identification with what I am not, and therefore I take myself to be a mortal being and then there is fear of death. That comes from ignorance. Ignorance causes identification with mind, and therefore I suffer the sense of smallness. Like a wave suffering from a sense of distance from all

other waves and water, and feeling isolated, I feel a sense of separation and isolation from the world. Not because that is the reality about myself, but because I take this body-mind complex to be myself. I take myself to be the doer, I take myself be the experiencer, I take myself to be subject to birth and death. All these are wrong notions about myself and they will go only in the wake of the knowledge of the true nature of myself. The only thing that causes me unhappiness is my own notions, my own complexes, my own judgments about myself, born of ignorance.

What the world does is to act as a trigger. By pushing the trigger buttons they provoke me and these complexes just surface. I would even say that the world is doing me a favor in putting me in a situation where I am required to confront the real issues and see the truth about myself. Whenever I see myself as a limited being, I become unhappy, therefore the only cause of unhappiness is my looking upon myself as a limited, inadequate, wanting, desiring being. All the world can do is push the trigger buttons and bring to the surface the wanting, desiring, inadequate, lacking being. It is by lack of discrimination that I attribute my unhappiness to a situation or a person who pushed the trigger buttons. But really the cause the unhappiness is my seeing myself as an inadequate, wanting, and limited being. If this becomes clear, then there will be *vairāgya* (objectivity). Then I won't blame anybody.

There are some aspects of the world that make me feel good about myself. When someone says, "you are wonderful, you are so good" an so on, I like that. I have a natural attachment to those who make me feel good about myself. Then there are some aspects of the world that make me miserable by reminding me how limited I am. I do not like that at all. Therefore my relationship with the world is one of dislike and attraction. Both of these keep my mind away

from my recognizing the truth about myself. In fact, I should recognize that nobody can make me happy and nobody can make me unhappy. It is I who makes me happy or unhappy, depending upon what kind of complexes I entertain about myself. For this to become clear, we should spend time with our feelings. When you feel happy, it is a good idea for you to spend some time on analyzing that. Why do I feel happy? Probably this is because somebody did this or that for me. OK, so what happened? I thought I was all right. I felt comfortable with myself. In my own perception I felt myself acceptable, worthy, and good. If it requires somebody to tell me that I am worthy, that is a different matter. What makes me happy is when I feel worthy, good, or acceptable in my own perception.

On the contrary when I am not worthy or acceptable in my own perception about myself, then that is the only cause of unhappiness. So whenever my mind feels happy, I should pay attention to what makes me happy and why I become unhappy, why I get to be sorrowful at times. No doubt, something out there triggered the condition, but ultimately what happens is that I do not like myself, I do not accept myself. That is the cause of my sorrow, and as we have seen before, that is nothing but the product of ignorance. If this becomes clear, then the only agenda I have is to get rid of ignorance by knowledge. That is when I become devoted to knowledge, and to whatever is required to gain the knowledge. This means going to a teacher, doing *śravaṇam* (listening to scriptures), *mananam* (reflecting), *nididhyāsanam* (totally devoting myself to the pursuit). If I find that I need to cultivate some qualifications, like *śama* (tranquility of mind) and *dama* (discipline of senses), I will strive to cultivate them. When I do all these, my life becomes directed to one pursuit. This is called *bhakti*, devotion.

When *śraddhā* (trust) and *bhakti* (devotion) are there, then my mind is free from distractions; it is focused upon the self. That is called *dhyānam*. *Dhyānam* can be called meditation or *dhyānam* can be the focus of the mind on what is to be done. When *śraddhā* and *bhakti* are there, then my mind is available without any resistance; it is willingly available for *śravaṇam*, listening to the teacher.

The means of knowledge are *śravaṇam*, *mananam*, and *nididhyāsanam*. *Śravaṇam* is listening to the teacher, meaning listening to the teacher's unfoldment of the scriptures. Listening to the scriptures is listening about my own self, because the subject matter of the Upaniṣad is the self. Even if the Upaniṣad talks about other things, the purpose is only to unfold the nature of the self. Therefore, when I am listening to the teacher, listening to Upaniṣad or Vedānta, it is the unfoldment of my own self. *Ātmā vā* are *śrotavyaḥ*. "Hey Maitreyī, *ātmā*, the self must be listened about."¹ It is during *śravaṇam* that the complexes and false notions get dropped.

After *śravaṇam* is *mananam*. Doubts are resolved with the help of reasoning that is in keeping with the unfoldment of the scriptures. *Nididhyāsanam*, deep meditation, is for being free from habitual errors. *Śravaṇam*, *mananam* and *nididhyāsanam*, the means of knowledge, are together called *dhyānam* here. We are meditating when we are listening. During *śravaṇam*, my mind is focused. Then as the teacher unfolds the scripture, in my mind also the same unfoldment takes place, because I am in tune with the teacher. *Śraddhā* and *bhakti*, faith and devotion, allow me to be completely

¹Br.Up. 2.4.5

in tune with the teacher. Really what happens is that the teacher operates my mind so that I deliberate upon the nature of the self with the help of the teacher. In my own mind an objective deliberation upon the nature of the self is taking place during *śravaṇam*. So *śravaṇam* is not merely listening, it is *vicāra*, deliberation upon the nature of self. The *śravaṇam*, *mananam*, and *nididhyāsanam* together are referred to as *dhyānam* in this context.

Verse 3

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः । परेण नाकं निहितं गुहायां
विभ्राजते यद्यतयो विशन्ति ॥ ३ ॥

na karmaṇā na prajāyā dhanena tyāgenaike
amṛtatvamānaśuḥ | pareṇa nākaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ
vibhrājate yadyatayo viśanti || 3||

न कर्मणा - not by deeds - न प्रजया - nor by progeny (न) धनेन - (nor)
by wealth त्यागेन - only by renunciation एके - some अमृतत्वम् -
immortality आनशुः - attained परेण - higher than नाकम् - heaven
निहितम् - situated गुहायाम् - in the cave (of the heart) विभ्राजते - shines
यत् - which यतयः - the renunciates विशन्ति - enter

Not by deeds, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but by renunciation alone have some people attained immortality. That which the renunciates attain is beyond the heavens, yet it shines in the cave of the heart (the intellect).

As you may know, this and the following *mantra* are chanted when we receive a *sannyāsī* to our house. When a *sannyāsī*, a renunciate, enters our house we receive him with a *pūrṇa-kumbha*, with a pot filled with water, a coconut on the top, a leaf, a plate with rice, and so on. The water is supposed to be for washing the feet, because in the olden days people walked a long distance when they came to your home. *Pūrṇa-kumbha* also symbolizes *pūrṇatvam*, the completeness of my devotion to the one who has come here. But why is this particular *mantra* chanted on the *sannyāsī*'s entry? It is because of the words *yatayaḥ viśanti*. *Yati* means *sannyāsī*, the renunciate. The renunciate is entering my house and therefore this *mantra* is chanted.

Existence, knowledge and happiness, the three-fold basis of all human pursuits

The reason why I cannot accept the death of myself is because I think that death will bring an end to my existence. My resistance or dislike for death is really my dislike for the non-existence of myself, which shows my love for existence. If I knew that death only brings an end to this body but not to the self, then perhaps I might not have that much difficulty in accepting it. But generally death is equated to nonexistence of the self, so my dislike for death is natural, because existence is my nature, immortality is my nature.

My life's myriad pursuits can be reduced to three. One is the pursuit of pushing death as far as possible. This is why I work out in the gym, jog for long hours, do *yoga-āsanas*, *prāṇāyāma* and so on, all the time counting calories, proteins, vitamins, my weight, my cholesterol. All these have to do with prolonging my existence. Naturally, I do not want death, disease, and pain. A large part of

my life is dedicated to avoiding death. I also want my picture taken at every possible opportunity; the idea is that I know my body will not last long, but at least my pictures will provide a substitute for it.

Another thing that I do not like is ignorance. I cannot stand ignorance. I cannot stand being stupid. I love being wise, and therefore I love knowledge, never ignorance. Therefore I spend an enormous amount of time in getting knowledge, being informed. That is why this entire Internet phenomenon is thriving, because people want to know what is happening everywhere in the world. People want to know what is happening in physics, chemistry, or the Discovery Channel, whatever interest one may have.

The third universal human pursuit is a love for being happy. Not only do I want to live, but I want to live happily. Not only do I want to live happily, but I want to live consciously. When I am told, “Swamiji, I will give you an injection, you will be in a coma, you will live and live happily,” I say “No.” No, I want to live, but I want to live happily and live consciously. Thus these three things—“live” is *sat* (existence), “happily” is *ānanda*, “with consciousness” is *cit* (knowledge). *Sat-cit-ānanda* is what I love naturally and I resist anything opposed to that because *sat-cit-ānanda* is my very nature.

This *sat-cit-ānanda*, existence, awareness, happiness (fullness, wholeness) alone is called immortality. One of these three, immortality, is mentioned here in this verse (*amṛtatvam*), but it stands for all three—freedom from mortality, freedom from sorrow, and freedom from ignorance.

That freedom from death and sorrow and ignorance is what some wise people attained. The question is, am I interested in immortality? Suppose some wise people attained immortality, so what? It is very relevant and important to me also because that is what I am seeking in my life. That is, in fact, the desire behind all the desires.

Desire to become free from death, ignorance, and sorrow is the desire. If you look at whatever specific thing you want, you will find that one of these three will be involved. Either I am doing something to avoid or push away death, or doing something to push away ignorance, or listening to music, watching nature or some other pursuit to push away sorrow. One of these three is present in my heart in every action. As in the prayer *asato mā sadgamaya, tamaso mā jyotirgamaya, mṛtyormā amṛtaṁgamaya*, Oh Lord, please lead me to truth from the untruth, to the light from darkness, to immortality from death. This prayer, which is in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad¹ is the prayer that is in the heart of every human being.

Immortality is most important to me, nothing else is even close. If I have this *sat-cit-ānanda* and nothing else, that is all right. If everything else is available and not this, then it does not serve any purpose at all. If that becomes clear to me, then there will be renunciation, *tyāga*, dispassion for everything else because nothing adds anything to me nor does it take anything away from me. With this knowledge I am comfortable with things as they are, where they are; I do not have to acquire them, own them, make them mine.

¹Bṛ.Up. 1.3.28

Notice how we enjoy nature, without any attachment or aversion, without the need to own it. I can enjoy the trees where they are; they do not have to be my trees, but we cannot do that with everything. I do not really enjoy a house, it holds no interest for me, unless it is owned by me. The car has to be owned by me. Some status must be owned by me, and then alone can I enjoy it. But with this knowledge, I recognize that I am sufficient as I am; I am immortal as I am. All that is necessary for me to be happy is just to be. That is all that is required. It does not matter *where* I am; what is important is “I am.” Vedānta teaches us that that “I am” is sufficient.

Significance of *tyāga*, renunciation

When I recognize that immortality, *sat-cit-ānanda*, is what I want and that is all I want, then naturally whatever makes me immortal becomes important to me. Then I recognize that mortality is the product of ignorance and not a reality about me. Then “to become immortal” means to remove the ignorance that creates in me the notion or complex of mortality. That is how the knowledge becomes important. Then the means of knowledge, *śravaṇam*, *mananam*, and *nididhyāsanam* become important. How can I do that? When my mind is free from every other preoccupation, when all preoccupations are given up, that is called *tyāga*, renunciation. So renunciation is the letting go or the dropping off or the giving up of everything other than the self. That is the result of the recognition of what it is that I want.

Some wise people who have *viveka* (discrimination), recognize what it is that they want in life. Then their priorities also became very clear, which the verse also tells us—*tyāgena* (by renunciation). That means they recognize that now there is no need on our part to achieve the various ends in the form of wealth, fame,

name, prosperity, heaven, or anything else, because they can neither add anything to the self nor can they take anything away from it. Therefore, the wise leave these ends where they are and their pursuits of achieving these external band-aids are also dropped. It is like when a person is able to walk well, where is the need to hang on to the crutches? Therefore, all *karma* is given up. *Karma* here means actions that are the means for achieving those ends that no longer have meaning.

The verse says not by *karma* (actions), *na prajayā* (not by progeny), *na dhanena* (not by wealth), which are all means to achieve limited ends. These represent three of the four *puruṣārthas*, (human pursuits)—*dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*. *Artha* is wealth and prosperity, including recognition; *kāma* is pleasure, sense gratification; *dharma* is the attainment of happiness through virtuous deeds; and *mokṣa* is of course liberation. These four *puruṣārthas* are recognized—*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*. My commitment to *mokṣa* becomes firm and single pointed only when the commitment for the other three has gone away. In the wake of this understanding, I recognize that wealth and security, (*artha*) are not meaningful, nor heavens, nor entertainment, nor sense gratification. I become free from all these needs, which are perceived needs, false needs, not true needs. *Karma* means *dharma*, the Vedic rituals, which are the means of attaining heavens. *Prajā* is progeny, *kāma*, which stands for all the pleasures and sense gratifications that one is seeking. *Dhana* is *artha*, which is wealth and prosperity and name and fame. So, it is not by *dharma*, *artha*, or *kāma* that the wise attained immortality; it is *tyāgena*, by the renunciation of these three that they attained immortality.

What is renunciation?

As long as I believe that *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* are important to me, so long the mind will be occupied, habitually thinking of those things even when I am trying to listen to Vedānta. If wealth, name, fame, prosperity, heavens and so on are valuable to me, then now and then they will show up in my mind, and will draw my attention, “Ok, now enough of this study, when are we going back to having fun?” I cannot enjoy a focus or single-pointedness of the mind.

What is meant by renunciation is the discovery of freedom from the need of those ends, so that the mind becomes free from any preoccupation with them. Then the mind is totally available to the pursuit of knowledge. That is the idea of renunciation. Renunciation as a way of life is desirable in the sense that, at least in the Vedic tradition, it meant that the person has no other commitments. As *Pūjya* Swamiji would say, the *sannyāsī* is the only person who has no role to play. Otherwise a person has many roles to play because there are many duties and commitments. As long as there are duties and commitments, one has to play roles; one has to do things that are required to be done, there’s no question about it. Therefore, traditionally in Vedic times, people were initiated to renunciation as a lifestyle by the teacher to free the mind of guilt about not having duties, commitments, and preoccupations anymore. Otherwise one would feel that one has failed to do certain duties. When duties are given up, the mind becomes free from guilt and preoccupation and is available for study and contemplation.

How is immortality attained?

How did they attain immortality? Where is immortality? The second part of the verse says, *yatayaḥ viśanti*, the *sannyāsīs* enter.

Here, entering is discovering one's own self. These sages and renunciates enter the cave of their heart and see immortality. Seeing immortality means becoming immortal, meaning discovering oneself to be immortal, discovering oneself to be what one is seeking.

What is beyond heavens?

Pareṇa nākam means that which is beyond heavens. Heavens have always fascinated people living on Earth, whether in *vedic* times or now; because people are acutely conscious of all the difficulties, pain, and conflicts on Earth. There is birth and death, disease, old age, and conflicts. Humans want to be free from pain, and heaven is the realm that is said to have freedom from all pain. There, we are told, there is no death; there is no old age, no disease, no pain, no problems. Heaven seems to be an ideal place where there is only pleasure and nothing else, and therefore one desires to be there.

Suppose there is indeed such a place, where you can enjoy the pleasures for a great length of time. The *śāstras* tell us that the pleasures in heavens last as long as the *puṇya-karmas* or virtuous deeds last. *Kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokaṃ viśanti*,¹ they return to the world of mortals when their merits are exhausted. Like you can stay in a five star hotel as long as you have money in your pockets, similarly, one can stay in heavens as long as the money in the form of *puṇya-karma* or virtuous actions lasts. When that gets exhausted, you are out. When you enter a hotel, the bellman receives you and carries your bags and escorts you to your room. Everything is nice as long as you keep paying your bills. When they discover that you cannot pay the bills any more, you will be

¹ BG 9.21

sent away unceremoniously. In Heaven also there is relative happiness. It is not absolute, unconditional happiness, it is conditional happiness and there are always some conditions to be fulfilled.

Pareṇa nākam. Here however, it is said that the sages enter what is beyond heavens. That refers to unconditional happiness, happiness that is natural and uncreated, not happiness that is acquired from sources other than myself. Happiness that is not created also does not die; it is timeless. Where is the timeless happiness located? It is in their own heart, as their own self, *nihitam guhāyām*. The wise people enter the cave of their own heart, meaning that wise people discover their own self as the immortality, the unconditional, timeless happiness that they are seeking.

Yad vibhrajate means that which shines. The self is consciousness, ever shining, ever evident, and of the nature of *ānanda* or wholeness; it is *pareṇa nākam* beyond heavens, meaning that which is not created, not destroyed, not attained, which is naturally there, ever shining. Then why do I not experience it all the time? That is because of ignorance and various notions that deny me the experience of my own true self. It is not that I have to achieve immortality, but that the immortality is denied to me only on account of the various notions born of ignorance. The wise people get rid of all of the notions in the wake of the knowledge. Therefore the self, which is the very nature of *ānanda*, is now shining in its total brilliance and the sages are abiding in it. The wise people attain immortality, the *ānanda* (the unconditional happiness) as their own self, not by *karma* nor by other by other means, but by knowledge, which is attained through renunciation.

Verse 4

वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः संन्यासयोगाद्यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः । ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले परामृताः परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे ॥ ४ ॥

vedāntavijñānasuniścitārthāḥ sannyāsayogādyatayaḥ
śuddhasattvāḥ | te brahmalokeṣu parāntakāle parāmṛtāḥ
parimucyanti sarve || 4||

वेदान्तविज्ञान - the knowledge of the Upaniṣads सुनिश्चितार्थाः- those who have well ascertained संन्यासयोगाद् - by total renunciation यतयः - the seekers शुद्धसत्त्वाः - the pure-minded ones ते - they ब्रह्मलोकेषु - in the abode of *brahman* परान्तकाले - in the end परामृताः - being absolute and immortal परिमुच्यन्ति - are totally freed सर्वे - all

The pure-minded seekers who through renunciation have firm understanding of the knowledge of the Upaniṣads, being the immortal and absolute, are all totally liberated in brahman at the time of death.

This verse can be taken in two ways. One way is that it describes the aspirant or the seeker, the other is that it describes the wise person. In both ways the verse is meaningful.

Vedānta is *pramāṇam*, means of knowledge

Vedānta means the Upaniṣads. *Vijñānam* is *viśeṣa jñānam*, the particular knowledge, the unique knowledge that Vedānta or the Upaniṣads reveal. Vedānta is *pramāṇam* or a means of knowledge. Just as eyes are *pramāṇam*, the valid means of knowledge to perceive colors and forms, or the faculty of hearing is the means of knowledge to perceive sounds, so also Vedānta is the valid means of knowledge for knowing the self, which cannot be known by any other means of knowledge. We have the organs of perception, with which we perceive the objects of the world, but the self is not an object. The self is the subject, my own self, so it cannot be perceived with the organs of perception, and therefore it cannot be the object of any other *pramāṇa* such as inference, presumption, or comparison, which are all based on perception. For example, we can infer that there is fire on the hill when we see smoke. Inference is based on some perceptible evidence—we perceive the smoke and therefore infer the presence of fire. So when *ātmā*, the self, is not available for perception, it is also not available for other means of knowledge, like inference, presumption, and comparison, which depend on perception.

Upaniṣad is not a means of knowledge in the usual sense

Upaniṣad is not a means of knowledge in the sense that eyes are a means of knowledge to see this flower, or my faculty of smell is the means of knowledge to experience its fragrance; in that way Vedānta is not the *pramāṇa* for *ātmā*. The eyes reveal the colors and forms, but Vedānta does not reveal *ātmā*. We should know in what manner the word *pramāṇam* (means of knowledge) is used for Vedānta. When we say that eyes are *pramāṇam* for color and form it means that color and form are revealed by the eyes. Without the eyes, one would not be able to perceive color or form. We cannot experience the fragrance of a flower without the faculty

of smell, and we cannot experience the touch of the flower without the faculty of touch. Can we say that we cannot experience the self without the Upaniṣad? No, we cannot say that because we ever experience the self. I do not require anybody to tell me that I am. That I am is a self-evident fact. I am, I shine, I'm conscious, I always love myself. *Aham asmi, sadā bhāmi, kadācinnāham apriyaḥ* ("I am, I'm conscious, I never dislike myself").¹ That I am, that I am conscious, that I never dislike myself, that I always love myself are all self-evident facts about me, and therefore I do not need Upaniṣad to know that I am; I don't need Upaniṣad to know that I'm conscious; I don't need Upaniṣad to know that I love myself.

If Upaniṣad is not *pramāṇam* (means of knowledge) in the sense of revealing the *ātmā*, in what sense is it *pramāṇam*? It is *pramāṇam* for me to know that I am nondual, that I am *brahman*, that I am limitless. For gaining that knowledge, Upaniṣad becomes *pramaṇam*. If we did not experience the self, then there would be no problem at all in life, there would be no *saṃsāra*, because error can take place only when experience takes place. No experience, no error, is it not so? When can I mistake the rope for a snake? Only when the rope becomes an object of my awareness and I do not recognize it as a rope, then I take it to be a snake. We may say that I have the general knowledge of rope, but not the particular knowledge of rope. I see that there is an object, so the isness is known, but the ropeness is not known. This kind of unique condition should obtain for superimposition to take place. If I see the rope, but not as a rope, then my mind will project a snake or something else there. If it were pitch dark and I could not see anything, then I would have neither general knowledge nor

¹ Advaita Makaranda 2

particular knowledge, so no superimposition could take place. On the other hand, in broad daylight I would see the object as rope and have both general knowledge and particular knowledge, so again no superimposition would take place. But in the evening, in a twilight situation or semi-dark situation, when I see the object but do not see the ropeness of it, that is when the superimposition takes place.

It is similar with the self also. I experience myself all right; I have the general knowledge of myself, that I am; without that, there would be no scope for superimposition. In the deep sleep state, when I am not even aware that I am, there's no superimposition, there's no *saṁsāra*, meaning there is no sense of smallness or inadequacy there. In deep sleep we are blissful, blissfully ignorant, because in the deep sleep state there is neither general knowledge nor particular knowledge of *ātmā*. The wise person is the one who is blissful because he has both. He has the general knowledge that he is and the particular knowledge that he is *brahman*, nondual. Everyone else has the general knowledge of being, but not the particular knowledge of being limitless, of being *brahman*; then one takes oneself to be *jīvātmā*, a limited being. That is why Upaniṣad is the *pramāṇam* to reveal the particular aspect that I am nondual; I am *brahman*. Thus, Upaniṣad becomes *pramāṇam* not for revealing the self, but for revealing the particular aspect of the self about which we entertain this error or *adhyāsa* (superimposition). Basically, Upaniṣad statements remove *adhyāsa*, or *adhyāropa*, meaning superimposition, and thus reveal the nature of the self truly as it is.

The *vijñānam*, the particular knowledge that Vedānta reveals, is *tat tvam asi*, you are *brahman*, you are limitless. This cannot be revealed by any available means of knowledge. Vedānta is the

only source of knowledge which tells us and makes us see that I am limitless, I am nondual, I am the self of all, I alone am, there is nothing other than I.

I am that I which does not exclude you. The meaning of the word I changes. It becomes I that does not exclude anything; it's all-inclusive. I recognize that I am all-inclusive, there's nothing apart from me, nothing separate from me. This is what Vedānta teaches us. Only when we recognize that as the nature of the self do we become totally free from every lack, because when nothing is apart from me, then nothing is lacking in me; I am complete in every way. Then there's a total satisfaction about myself. That is the Vedānta-*vijñānam*.

Suniścītārthāḥ are those who have the ascertained understanding about what Vedānta teaches, those people in whom this determinate knowledge has arisen that “This is the knowledge that I want,” which Lord Kṛṣṇa calls *vyavasāyātmikā-buddhi*.¹ Pūjya Swāmiji says that a mature person has no freedom, has no choice. The immature person has many choices. People who do not have that *vyavasāya*, that determination in their life, for them there are many choices, today this, tomorrow something else, and so forth. But for a mature person there's no choice, because a mature person recognizes that all I want is to know myself, all I want is this knowledge. There's no real choice. The only choice is for inconsequential things like whether to eat *idli* or pasta, but for important goals there is no real choice; whatever he does is all directed to the gaining of knowledge. That's called *samādhānam*; the mind is very clear. Take hiking as an example. We know that we want to reach a destination, and then every step leads to that

¹ BG 2.41

destination. You might choose a particular path, either a steep one or one that takes a longer time, but every step is directed toward the destination. So also, a mature person would not waste even a moment, would not waste any opportunity at all, making his whole life a process of reaching his destination. Here, reaching is nothing but knowing and making whatever preparation is required for that knowledge. That's called devotion. That's called commitment. So *vedāntavijñānaśuniscitārthāḥ* are those people who have discovered that commitment for the knowledge that Vedānta reveals, namely that the self is *brahman*.

***Vividiṣā sannyāsa*, renunciation in a secondary sense**

When that *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi*, that determinate knowledge has arisen, then what do you do? Then a person will have no other agenda at all. As we said, his whole life, his soul and heart is only devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. Therefore he becomes a renunciate, *sannyāsī*. That is *vividiṣā-sannyāsa*. *Sannyāsa*, renunciation, taken for the sake of *vividiṣā*, to fulfill the desire for knowledge. That is the most compatible way of life for the pursuit of self-knowledge. It does not mean that one cannot pursue knowledge otherwise, but if you have a choice, you always choose the most compatible way, just as you choose a place of residence which is compatible to your nature. Someone is living in woods and mountains, why? Why invite such discomfort? Because that's where he feels very comfortable, it's compatible to his nature. What kind of job will anyone take up? It would be one that suits a particular qualification. Similarly also, a seeker of knowledge will take up that way of life which is most conducive for the pursuit of knowledge. *Sannyāsa*, or renunciation, is a way of life wherein there is nothing else to do other than just the pursuit of knowledge, *śravaṇam*, *mananam*, and *nididhyāsanam*. Maybe serving the

teacher, maybe going and getting *bhikṣā* for him, obtaining food for him, doing things for him, at the most. That also is not required these days anyway. Now the teachers are feeding the students instead. Whatever way it is, *sannyāsa* means a single-pointed pursuit, that's all.

Whether one wears the ochre colored robes or not might depend upon the situation, because the world might not accept that. India would accept that, but maybe the West would not have sympathy for a life of renunciation because you have to make your living here regardless of who you are, and therefore there might not be a choice. In India there is that luxury because of the society. When people see a person in ochre clothes, they respect him. The *sannyāsi* can get food if nothing else, people will provide you at least some basic needs. If nothing else, you can always go to Rishikesh, because there is free food there; there are *annakṣetras* where *anna*, food, is given free at least once a day. The devotees who visit Rishikesh and Haridwar have a great value for feeding the *sādhūs*. Lots of donations come to the *annakṣetras*, so now and then you have *bhaṇḍārās*, feasts.

Normally, you have *dāl* and *roṭi*. As Swamiji says, morning *dāl-roṭi*, evening *roṭi-dāl*, *dāl-roṭi*, *roṭi-dāl*! That's what you have. But every now and then, because of this kindness of the devotees, you get *bhaṇḍāra*, a feast. You get some special *sabji*, vegetables and things like that. Once or twice a year they may give you an umbrella also, because you need that in rain and heat. Every so often they give a pair of clothes, a bar of soap, a bottle of coconut oil, things like that. For most *sādhūs* that is quite adequate. You need not waste your time looking for all this stuff. At one time, *sannyāsīs* had to spend a lot of time in getting their *bhikṣā*. They'd have to go to the hills, and that could take a lot of time. Therefore

Bābā Kālikambliwālā set up an *annakṣetra*, and then later on many other *annakṣetras* came. So in India, you have the luxury of becoming a renunciate because your basic needs will be taken care of and you can devote yourself to the study, contemplation, or whatever you want.

Yatayaḥ are those whose nature is to strive hard. There is only one agenda now, it's very clear, the agenda is to gain the knowledge, and whatever is required for that purpose. As a part of that you might perform your *pūjā* (worship), do *japa* (chanting), *upāsana* (meditation), or whatever you consider necessary. Study Sanskrit if you want, or study logic (*nyāya*) if you think that you need to equip yourself with the basic texts; do whatever is necessary to pursue the knowledge. People have different kinds of needs, and some people do a lot of *upsāsana* (meditation) and *pūjā* (worship) along with the study.

Śuddhasattvāḥ are those who enjoy a *śuddha* (pure) *sattva* (mind). Purification of mind is in two stages. The first stage is through *karma-yoga*, worshipping Īśvara, the Lord, with *karma*, with actions. The second stage of purification is the pursuit of knowledge. The nature of the purification is the dropping off of the notions in light of the study of Vedānta. That is the fine process of purification. So *śuddhasattva* means the wise, the people of pure heart; the purity being on account of knowledge, in the light of which the false impurities are removed.

What happens to the wise at the time of death? *Antakāla* means time or hour of death. That is the term used to denote the death of an ordinary person. But the death of the wise person is called *parāntakāla*, death once and for all. An ignorant person dies to be born again, because when a person dies, his destination is

determined by whatever it is that he wants at the time of death. Whatever desire occurs in his mind at the time of death is what determines his destination. Until the person gains *mokṣa*, this process continues.

“But suppose Swamiji, I decide not to desire at the time of death?” The answer to that is that there’s no choice. It’s not that I resolve to desire; desire just occurs. Desire is an expression of my needs. Desires will be there as long as I feel incomplete. Therefore, for an ignorant person, it is *antakāla*, death, that is followed by birth. Or, as Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad¹ says, *mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum āpnoti*. He goes from one death to the other death. What is the death of the wise person? It’s called *parāntakāla*, it is death which is not followed by birth. It is not the death of the physical body, but the death of ignorance, the death of ego, that’s called the *parāntakāla*. The word *parāntakāla* has two meanings, of which the meaning for the wise person is that the real death has taken place in the wake of knowledge and that is the death of ego, the sense of individuality, which is due to ignorance. When ignorance goes, the sense of individuality also goes.

Those who have become immortal (*parāmṛtāḥ*), having gained identity with *brahman*, abide in *brahman* (*brahmalokeṣu*). *Brahmaloka* means *brahma eva lokaḥ*, the *loka* or abode that is of the nature of *brahman*. Wise people abide in their knowledge of self as *brahman*.

***Jīvan mukti* – liberation while living**

Parimucyanti sarve means all of them become liberated. Liberation is described as two-fold, one is liberation while a person

¹ Br.Up. 4.4.19

is alive, *jīvan-mukti*, and the other is liberation after death, *videha-mukti*. Vedānta mainly concerns itself with liberation while one is alive. Vedānta is concerned about this life, here and now. We do engage in dialogs with people on life after death, about the law of *karma* and so on, because people are very concerned about what happens after death, about why a given thing happened to them and why something else did not happen. When people get satisfactory affirmations of their concerns, there is a relief and they can move ahead and continue their progress, otherwise you get stuck if you don't get satisfactory answers to your questions. But *vedāntins* don't concern themselves much about next birth and past birth, they are mainly concerned about this birth. They are concerned about what is to be done here, because they want *mokṣa*, liberation, here and now, not after death or in some other realm such as paradise or whatever. What is important is *jīvan-mukti*, liberation while one is alive.

Parimucyanti means they are *paritaḥ*, totally, *mucyanti*, liberated. They continue to live in spite of being liberated because of *prārabdha-karma*, actions whose results are in progress. The body does not die when the knowledge takes place. The ego dies but the body does not, and hence the wise person continues to live, continues to function. The wise person often functions in a similar manner to the past, except that he is now more like an actor—not a real beggar, but an actor beggar—that is how the wise person functions. At the time of the death of the body, because the *prārabdha-karma* has come to an end, then he is liberated once and for all. That is called *videha-mukti*, liberation or deliverance through release from the body.

The first part of the verse has been explained as referring to an aspirant. It can also be explained as describing a wise person. Then the explanation will be as follows:

Vedāntavijñānaśuniścītārtāḥ are those people who have ascertained the *vijñānam*, the knowledge that Vedānta imparts that I am *brahman*, *sannyāsayogāt*, because of which they are *sannyāsīs* (renunciates) in a primary sense. Renunciation that one takes as a way of life is a renunciation in a secondary sense. The renunciation in the primary sense is to discover that I am ever a renunciate, *sannyāsyaham*. I am ever actionless. Real renunciation is called *vidvat-sannyāsa*, renunciation as a result of knowledge that I am *brahman*. Whether the wise wear orange clothes or not, they are *sannyāsīs*, by virtue of knowledge. A *vividiṣā sannyāsī* is a person who has taken *sannyāsa* or renunciation for the sake of knowledge and has to become a renunciate in the real sense, a *vidvat-sannyāsī*.

***Krama-mukti* – liberation in stages**

In some places, Upaniṣads also talk of *krama-mukti*. There are two forms of liberation, *sadyo-mukti* and *krama-mukti*. *Sadyo-mukti* means liberation right now. *Krama-mukti* means liberation in stages. If for some reason a person did not gain total abidance in knowledge, and therefore he was not *jīvan-mukta* (liberated while living) due to some obstacle or the other, then such a person would go to *brahmaloka*. Earlier the meaning of the word *brahmaloka* was given as *brahma eva lokah*, meaning *brahma* itself is the *lokaḥ*, referring to a wise person who is liberated here due to the knowledge of *brahman*. If referring to one who did not quite gain *jīvan-mukti*, the meaning of that word would be *brahmaṇaḥ lokah*, the world of Brahmā, meaning such people would go to the world of Brahmāji. Then the meaning of the word *parāntakāla* would be

the time when Brahmāji's life-span comes to an end. At the end of the cycle of Brahmāji, *parāṃṛtāt*, from the power of *māyā*, *parimucyanti*, all of them become liberated along with Brahmāji. That is the description of *krama-mukti* in some Upaniṣads. But for us, the primary interpretation would be that this is a description of *jīvan-muktas*, the aspirants who become liberated while living here.

The value of meditation

The essence of the Upaniṣad has already been taught in the *mantras* up to this point. But the truth being so subtle, the question remains in a student's mind about how to gain abidance in this extraordinary knowledge, even about how one gains the knowledge. Even for gaining this extraordinary knowledge, it requires that one should constantly contemplate upon the self. Upaniṣad unfolds the nature of the self, and we should be constantly deliberating upon the nature of the self. Some preparations are required for that deliberation, which is called meditation. That is described in the next *mantra*.

Contemplation upon the Self

Verse 5

विविक्तदेशे च सुखासनस्थः शुचिः समग्रीवशिरःशरीरः। अत्याश्रमस्थः
सकलेन्द्रियाणि निरुध्य भक्त्या स्वगुरुं प्रणम्य ॥ ५ ॥

viviktadeśe ca sukhāsanasthaḥ śuciḥ samagrīvaśiraḥśarīraḥ |
atyāśramasthaḥ sakalendriyāṇi nirudhya bhaktyā svagurum
praṇamya || 5||

विविक्तदेशे- in a secluded place च - and सुखासनस्थः - sitting in a
comfortable posture शुचिः - clean समग्रीवशिरःशरीरः - with neck, head
and body in alignment अत्याश्रमस्थः - with a mental attitude of
renunciation सकलेन्द्रियाणि - all the senses निरुध्य - having withdrawn
भक्त्या - with devotion स्वगुरुम् - to one's own teacher प्रणम्य - having
bowed

**(One should be) sitting in a clean, secluded place, in a
comfortable posture, with the neck, head and body in
alignment, in the attitude of renunciation, having bowed with
devotion to one's teacher.**

For meditation, one should choose a place that is secluded, that is free from external disturbances. There are two kinds of disturbances, external and internal. To become free from external disturbances, choose a secluded place if you can find one. You can find many in the United States. I don't know how many you can find in India. "Swamiji, in my house there is no seclusion at all, there is so much noise. Once people wake up in the morning, children start running around and..." OK, then you have to choose a time before other people wake up, and then at least you can enjoy some seclusion. What can you do? You can complain about all the noises around but there's nothing you can do about them. Hence all we can do is to choose a time before the noises start, or choose a time after noises have subsided. But it is necessary that there should be a place and there should be a time where there is freedom from these external disturbances, because we do get disturbed. A time comes when we are not disturbed in spite of what is happening around, then it's OK. But until then you may have to manage. Certainly you cannot go to Times Square or New Delhi Railway station and meditate, because the environment is going to impact you. So we have to find Saylorsburg or Rishikesh¹ or some place like that where you can enjoy the seclusion.

Meditation should be preferably performed while in a sitting posture. Sitting with folded legs is most preferable. Otherwise you could be seated on a chair, but not walking or standing. Incidentally, this is discussed in Brahmasūtra.² There is discussion there as to whether meditation should be performed while sitting or in other postures as well. The conclusion is that

¹ Editor's note: Swamiji is referring to locations of ashrams and retreat centers where the atmosphere is calm.

² आसीनः सम्भवत्। āsīnaḥ sambhavāt। One should meditate while having a sitting posture since it is possible that way alone. (BS 4.1.7)

meditation should be done while sitting, because when you're standing, then a part of the mind is preoccupied with keeping you standing, otherwise you would fall down. While standing there is always a concern of falling down, and while lying down you are prone to fall sleep, and while walking or running meditation is not possible because the movements of the body disturb the mind.

Sukhāsanasthaḥ means seated in a comfortable posture. What is required is a posture where the center of gravity is such that you do not have to make any effort to remain in that posture, whether it's *padmāsana* (lotus posture) or just simple folded legs, or *vajrāsana*, or another posture that is comfortable for you. They say that if you can remain seated in a particular posture for 48 minutes without movement, then you have mastered that posture or *āsana*. That is called *āsana-siddhi*. Basically what it means is that while meditating you do not want your body to draw your attention, to be a distraction. When traveling in an airplane or a bus it is difficult to sleep, because after a while the muscles start getting stiff and sore and draw your attention. For meditation, it is best to be able to sit in a comfortable posture so that the body is not an issue, that's the whole idea.

In *hatha-yoga* the *āsana*, posture, assumes great importance. There the *kuṇḍalinī*, the potential power in the body, is intended to be aroused, and various postures are very important for that. Different postures activate different *cakras*, but that's a different thing. In the Patañjali Yoga Sūtra about posture it is said *sthīra-sukham-āsanam*,¹ your posture must be steady and comfortable. Posture requires much effort and hard labor in the beginning, but when perfected, it becomes steady, without causing any trouble to the

¹ Patañjali Yoga Sūtra 2.46

body. *Āsanam* also means the seat where you normally sit for meditation. You should not keep on changing the place of meditation, or the cloth on which you sit, or the posture in which you sit. This way, the mind also gets used to the place and the surroundings.

Samagrīvaśīraḥśarīrah means keeping the body, the neck, and the head in one line. *Sama* means in one line. Keep the trunk, the neck and the head, all of them in one straight line, as best as you can. If doing so gives you pain, then do not. The idea is that the center of gravity is maintained, otherwise, you may slump down. Therefore, it is recommended that you sit erect. Keep your eyes lightly closed, meaning not closed very hard, but not open either, because if the eyes are open, we see movements, and the tendency of the mind is to follow them. That's the nature of the mind. Sometimes, when a lecture is going on, it's very interesting to see the people in the audience. When somebody gets up from his seat, you find many pairs of eyes follow that person, as though escorting him all the way up to the door. Even though the Swami is sitting here and talking, their attention goes to that person and comes back. This is the nature of the mind; it is habitual, one may not be aware that this is happening. Therefore, it is recommended that eyes should be closed for meditation.

In the Bhagavad-Gītā¹ Lord Kṛṣṇa says that you may focus your attention in the space between the eyebrows. There are certain techniques or methods given to us so that we can steady our mind. They say that if the pupils are steady, then the mind also will become steady. In an unsteady mind, you'll see the person's pupils moving around. Therefore, focusing at a point between the

¹ BG 5.27

eyebrows is a way of steadying the pupils and steadying the mind. But some people get a headache by doing that, so do whatever is comfortable for you. In the sixth chapter of Bhagavad Gītā,¹ Lord Kṛṣṇa also recommends that you focus your attention on the tip of the nose. Sometime they ask you to gaze at a flame, also, just to steady the mind. Sometimes it is said to hold the tongue in the mouth such that it does not touch the palate or the bottom, which will also steady your mind. These are some of the methods for focusing the attention, the idea being that the mind should become steady.

Suchiḥ, clean, pure

The next step is purification of the mind. In the mind, sometimes some *ragas* (attractions) or *dveṣas* (aversions) may arise; some issues may not have been resolved and they may come up when I start meditating. Some resentment I may have for some person, some hurt may be there due to a situation, some anger may be there, unresolved and stored away in the mind. Such things have an uncanny knack of showing up when I don't want them, such as during meditation, because this is a good occasion for them to draw my attention. Usually we keep our mind so occupied that we do not confront these feelings, hurts and guilts, and such. We don't like them and so we avoid them by keeping our mind busy. But now that the mind is not doing anything, those feelings may have an opportunity to draw my attention. Like a child waits while the mother is very busy, but as soon as the mother is done with her

¹ समं कायशिरोग्रीवं धारयन्नचलं स्थिरः ।

सम्प्रेक्ष्य नासिकाग्रं दिशश्चानवलोकयन् ॥

samam kāyaśirogrīvaṁ dhārayannacalam sthiraḥ |
sampspekṣya nāsikāgraṁ diśaścānavalokayan || (BG 6.13)

work and is available, talking to a friend or talking on the phone, he starts pulling the sari or tapping on the arm or something to draw her attention.

When hurts, guilts and the like come up, we should resolve them by *pratipakṣa-bhāvanā*, meaning by deliberately taking the opposite position. Suppose I'm angry at somebody, then *pratipakṣa-bhāvanā* is forgiving that person. Genuine forgiveness will neutralize anger. For jealousy, *pratipakṣa-bhāvanā* is to congratulate that person, try to be happy in the achievement of that person. Thus for every negative feeling, there's also a positive feeling, because a negative feeling arises because I look at a person or a situation from a certain standpoint. By making my mind deliberately look at it from the opposite standpoint, that impulse will be neutralized. It is necessary to neutralize these disturbing feelings or impulses in our minds so that the mind becomes calm, *suchih*, becomes pure, free from impurities such as anger and others.

*Atyāśramasthaḥ*¹ means remaining in the highest order of *sannyāsa*. At the time of meditation, one becomes a *sannyāsī*. While you're meditating, become a renunciate. Who is a renunciate? Pūjya Swamiji says that a renunciate is one who has no role to play. Normally I keep playing different roles of father, mother, son, wife, employee, and so on because every situation demands that I should respond in a suitable manner. But here is a situation where there is no role to play. I have no responsibility. I

¹ आश्रमम् अतीत्य तिष्ठति इति अत्याश्रमस्थः ।

āśramam atitya tiṣṭhati iti atyāśramasthaḥ |

The one who remains having transcended all the stages of life is *atyāśramasthaḥ*.

have no duty. I have no accountability. I don't have to prove myself. I don't have to achieve anything. I become free from all the demands that the world normally places upon me and I place upon myself. I'm not mother right now. I'm not father. I am not son. I am not daughter, nor husband, nor wife. I am not a *brahmacarī*, (student) nor a *grhastha*, (householder) nor a *vānaprastha* (forest dweller, retiree). I am a *sannyāsī*.

What kind of a *sannyāsī* am I? *Sannyāsīs* are also of different categories. Here it means a *sannyāsī* who has no duties and responsibilities. You can say that to yourself. I know one swamiji used to give an orange cloth to everyone attending a camp for a week or ten days. He would say that for the next 7-10 days you all are *sannyāsīs*. A married couple would also wear the orange clothes, and would be renunciates for that period of time. People used to like that idea, because it did something to people. When they put on orange clothes they felt the renunciation and they seemed to be impacted. It seems to create a certain mood. Ideally, you should wear the cloth only if you are a renunciate.

At the time of meditation I have no role to play; there are no expectations, no demands. There is nothing to accomplish, there is nothing to do, and that is the state of a *sannyāsī*. One who has no agenda, no ambition, who has nothing to accomplish, nothing to achieve, that is a *sannyāsī*. If there are ambitions, then one should not become a *sannyāsī*; one should do what is required to fulfill those ambitions. But here, during meditation, I become a *sannyāsī*. I have no claim, no demand, no competition, no agenda, and no ambition, nothing to be accomplished, at least for 45 minutes. One drops off all the roles for 45 minutes; all the responsibilities are given up; all commitments are given up; all anxieties, worries, everything is given up.

Sakalendriyāṇi nirudhya means restraining all the sense organs. It is necessary to disengage the sense organs from their activities. As far as organs of action, such as hands, are concerned, by my will I can restrain them. I can restrain legs. I can restrain speech. But it is more difficult to restrain the organs of perception. Eyes, of course, I can close. Some people put plugs in their ears so that no sounds come. I remember this one *brahmacāri* when meditating in the room, would get very disturbed by the tick-tick-tick sound of a clock. So he would wrap it in a blanket to smother its sound and put it as far away as possible. The interesting thing is that normally you don't even hear the sound of the clock, until you start meditating! What is meant by restraining the sense organs is withdrawing the sense organs from their preoccupations.

Kaṭhapaniṣad¹ also says:

When the five organs of perception come to rest together with the mind, and the intellect too does not function, that state, they call the highest. They consider the keeping of the senses steady as *yoga*.

¹ यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।

बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टति तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ॥

yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha |

buddhiśca na viceṣṭhati tāmāhuḥ paramāṁ gatim || (Ka.Up. 2.3.10)

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामीन्द्रयधारणाम् ।

अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ॥

tām yogamiti manyante sthīrāmīndrayadhāraṇām |

apramattastadā bhavati yogo hi prabhavāpyayau || (Ka.Up. 2. 3.11)

This means that the whole personality becomes quiet and composed. Some little restraint may be there in the beginning, but you can't keep on restraining, that is why purification of the mind is so important. What is meant by the purity of mind is that you are cheerful by yourself; you are happy with yourself, therefore the mind has no reason to run out. That peace with oneself will be established when there is self-acceptance, accepting myself as I am, not fighting with myself. I keep fighting because I want myself to be different from what I am. I don't like myself as I am, I'm not happy with the way I am, and therefore I keep on fighting—"Why am I like this, why am I...?" Stop it. Let there be peace. We must establish a truce with our own self. That's how the whole personality becomes composed, self-centered, or abiding in the self.

Svagururūṁ bhaktyā praṇamya means saluting one's own teacher with devotion. Meditation is best done when there is also devotion in the mind. Devotion can be invoked, that's why we have many different *devatās*. Different forms and names are given to us to invoke devotion in our heart. For somebody, Rāma may invoke devotion; for somebody else, maybe Kṛṣṇa, or whoever. Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, anyone who inspires me invokes devotion from my heart. But a teacher is *pratyakṣa-devatā*, the perceptible god. I am the recipient of his grace, his kindness and love and his teaching. Hence, it is easy to invoke the devotee in me when I think of the teacher, so I remember and salute the teacher so that my heart is full of devotion.

Having covered the preparation for meditation, what to meditate upon is given in the next *mantra*.

Verse 6

हृत्पुण्डरीकं विरजं विशुद्धं विचिन्त्य मध्ये विशदं विशोकम् ।
 अचिन्त्यमव्यक्तमनन्तरूपं शिवं प्रशान्तममृतं ब्रह्मयोनिम् ॥
 तमादिमध्यान्तविहीनमेकं विभुं चिदानन्दमरूपमद्भुतम् ॥ ६ ॥

hṛtpuṇḍarīkaṁ virajaṁ viśuddhaṁ vicintya madhye viśadaṁ viśokaṁ |
 acintyamavyaktamanantarūpaṁ śivaṁ praśāntamamṛtaṁ brahmayonim |
 Tamādimadhyāntavihīnamekaṁ vibhum cidānandamarūpamadbhutam | || 6||

हृत्पुण्डरीकं - the heart in the form of a lotus विरजं - untainted विशुद्धं -
 pure विचिन्त्य - meditating मध्ये - inside विशदं - clear विशोकम् -
 griefless अचिन्त्यम् - unthinkable अव्यक्तम् - unmanifest अनन्तरूपं - of
 endless forms शिवं - ever auspicious प्रशान्तम् - peaceful अमृतं -
 immortal ब्रह्मयोनिम् - the origin of creation तम् - that is आदि-मध्य-
 अन्त-विहीनम् - without beginning, middle and end एकम् - the only
 one (without a second) विभुम् - all-pervading चिदानन्दम् -
 consciousness and fullness अरूपम् - the formless अद्भुतम् - the
 wonderful

In the lotus shaped heart, that is untainted and clear, meditate upon the self that is pure, griefless, unthinkable, unmanifest, of endless forms, ever-auspicious, peaceful, immortal, the origin

of all creation, without beginning, middle and end, the only one, all-pervading, consciousness and fullness, the formless and the wonderful.

In this verse, the self is described in so many words. Why so many words? Because each word addresses one or the other conclusion or complex we have about the self. Each word helps dispel a wrong notion about the self.

These series of words continue on to the seventh verse, at the end of which is it stated, *dhyātṛvā munīḥ gacchati bhūtaṇām*, meditating in this manner, the meditator, or the contemplative one, attains that which is the source of all beings. Meditating in this manner, the sage, or the contemplative one reaches the source of everything. The source is *samastāsākṣim*, that which is the witness of all, *tamasah parastāt*, that which is beyond the darkness of ignorance.

So the idea is that we want to reach the very source, because we have as though deviated from the source—not really, but as though. Like a gold ornament is searching for gold thinking that it is only an ornament. It looks upon itself as just a name and form, “I’m just a bangle, having a certain form and a certain name and a certain use,” and this poor ornament is in search of gold, can you imagine?

Similarly, *jīva* is searching for *brahman*. The search on my part, whether it is for happiness, freedom, or security, is in fact of this nature. I feel as though I am separated from that happiness and freedom which I want, even though it is my own nature. Ignorance creates that kind of a divorce from my own self. Here, the Upaniṣad says that meditating on the self in this manner, one

reaches one's own source, which is also the source of all the beings. The I is the source of all the beings, the truth of all the beings, the essence of all the beings, the essence of everything—from which everything has sprung, by which everything is sustained, unto which everything goes back.

That's what we call the material cause. The material cause is that from which there is birth, sustenance, and dissolution of the effect, like the clay is the material cause for clay pots. The pots have emerged from the clay, they remain in the clay and they merge back into clay. The clay can be called the source, or the self of the pot, because if you take away the clay from the pot, the pot does not remain. A pot cannot be without clay. Clay can be without pot, but pot cannot be without clay. Pot is clay, but clay is not pot. B is equal to A, but A is not equal to B, like an actor playing the role of a beggar; the actor is A and beggar is B. The equation is "B is equal to A, but A is not equal to B." The beggar is the actor, but the actor is not the beggar, meaning the beggar cannot be without being the actor, but the actor can be without being the beggar. Beggar is a superimposition; it is *mithyā*. Actor is the independent reality, *satyam*. We want to reach *satyam*, so the Upaniṣad says that by meditating upon our own self we reach the source of all the beings. That means the self is the source of all the beings. It is called God; it is called the cause; it is called the truth; it is called the self; it is the true meaning of the word I. Thus, these *mantras* here prescribe the meditation upon my true self, and while meditating upon that, by knowing that, by becoming one with that, by being that, I also reach the source of the entire creation. I reach *brahman*, which is the cause or the source of all the beings, of the entire creation.

Hṛtpuṇḍarikāṁ vicintya madhye means meditating upon the self in the lotus of the heart. The physical heart is prescribed as the place of focusing attention. This is also in keeping with the modern discoveries that the heart is a very powerful seat of energy, much more powerful than the brain. The physical heart is said to be of the lotus shape, a closed lotus bud. Focus your attention on the heart, in the thumb-like space in the heart. In the space is the seat of the mind, in the mind is the seat of consciousness. So first, focus attention on heart, then on the space within the heart, then on the mind which is there, and then on the consciousness which is in the mind. Thus, the lotus of the heart amounts to pure mind.

Virajam means is free from *rajas*, or impurities, meaning the mind is free from *rāga* and *dveṣa*, likes and dislikes; it is *viśuddham*, pure. *Madhye*, in the heart, or the mind, *vichintya*, contemplate upon the self.

Meditation upon the meditator

Contemplate upon the self that is *viśadam*, clear, free from any kind of impurity. I am clear, transparent, and placid. Like a pool of water that is free from any impurities, I am clear and free from any impurities of likes and dislikes; that is what I am. These likes and dislikes belong to the mind. The likes and dislikes do exist at some place, but they do not exist where I think they do. Right now, when likes or dislikes arise, I get disturbed because even though likes and dislikes are the states of the mind, I habitually identify with the mind and brand myself as a liker or a disliker. Anger may arise in the mind and on account of identification with the mind, I say “I am angry.” That’s not so. As Ādi Śaṅkarācārya says, *na me dveṣarāgau na me lobhamohau mado naiva me naiva*

mātsaryabhāvaḥ “Aversion and attachment are not mine; greed and delusion are not mine; pride or jealousy, they are not mine.”¹

A distance between I and the impurities needs to be created. Actually, distance does exist; we don’t have to create it. The self is never one with the mind. It transcends the mind, it illumines the mind, it is the witness of the mind, but on account of the identification, we erase the distance that is there. Like while watching a movie, we become so identified with what’s happening in the movie that we become one with it. In reality we are merely a spectator. What’s happening is happening there on the screen and yet on account of my identification with it, I experience the same feelings. There is a distance because I am not the movie or the actor; I am merely a spectator, totally unconcerned or unconnected with it, but I connect myself on account of the identification. That is a false connection. Similarly, there is no connection between *ātmā* and *anātmā*, between the self and the mind, but on account of identification, it appears as though there is a connection and the self has become as small as the mind. If there is impurity in the mind, I think I am impure. If there is anger there, I think I am angry. So here, I recognize the distance that already exists, that whatever impurities are there, they are of the mind. I am not the mind. I am not these impurities. I am not anger; I am not jealousy; I am their illuminator. I am the awarer of them. The awarer is always different from what he is aware of. The illuminator is different from what is illumined. Anger, jealousy and the like are different states of the mind. They are illumined and I am their illuminator, unconnected with them. I am ever pure.

¹ Nirvāṇaṣaṭkam 3

Viśokam means free from grief. Grief belongs to the mind; it is not my nature. Sorrow is not my nature, sadness is not my nature. The mind is agitated, the mind is sad, the mind is sorrowful. Where is sadness? Am I not the knower of sadness? Am I not aware of sadness? If I am aware of sadness, sadness belongs to the mind. I am the awarer of the mind and therefore distinct from the mind. I am the illuminator of the mind, illuminator of the sadness. Sadness is not I. I am griefless.

Further, the attributes or characteristics of self are described—*achintyam*, *Avyaktam*, *Anantarūpam*. All this is description of myself, not of someone else. Hence this is a meditation which is the meditation upon the meditator.

Upāsanā is meditating on the Lord with attributes

Meditation can be said to be basically of two kinds. The first is when I am meditating upon something that is different from myself, and the second is meditating upon my own self.

When I meditate upon something or someone different from myself, visualization is involved in the mind. When I meditate on Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti, for example, I visualize Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti in my mind. For this purpose we have various *vigrahas* (forms) given to us to help us meditate. Either you can meditate upon the form that is Dakṣiṇāmūrti as a form, or you can meditate upon Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti as that which is represented by the form. As for example, the four arms represent all-pervasiveness and the weapons represent omnipotence. In either case, you deliberately entertain a continuous pattern of thought of the same nature (*sajātīya-vṛtti-pravāha*).

In Vedānta, mental worship of the Lord, called *upāsanā*, is recommended as a preparation for the pursuit of self-knowledge. *Upāsanā* means maintaining a flow of thoughts of the Lord possessed of attributes (*saguṇa-brahman*). Mental worship is performed with the help of a form, or a name, or with the help of certain attributes—whatever it is that your mind is comfortable with, whatever it is that you enjoy, whatever it is that invokes in you devotion. In Vedic times, the *upāsanās* (mental worships) were prescribed with the help of *omkāra*, *praṇava*. It is the name of the Lord and is as well a mantra. Today you can do *upāsanā* with whichever name you like. It can be Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, *om namaḥ śivāya*, *śrī rāma*, *jaya rāma*, *jaya jaya rāma*, or any mantra. *Mantra* means a sacred passage or a chant. Or you can visualize a form and perform a mental *pūjā*, visualizing that you are offering a bath to the Lord and then offering flowers and various other offerings. Mental *pūjā* like this is also a way of worshiping.

Worship is very good. It has the effect of healing the mind, purifying the mind, and tuning the mind to the Lord. *Upāsanā*, meditation or worship, is a process of tuning up. *Karma-yoga* also is a process of tuning up with the Lord, but with *karma-yoga* an external action is involved. *Upāsanā*, mental worship, is the next stage; what one was doing through actions is what one is doing now through *bhāvanā*, worshipful thoughts in the mind. We prefer meditation where God is involved, because then there is an added advantage of devotion, which is purifying, healing. Not only is meditation or worship an aid to concentration, but it is also an aid to purification of the mind.

The other kind of meditation is the meditation upon my own self. This mediation is different from *upāsanā*, already described, in

which the duality between the meditator and the meditated is maintained. When meditating on the self, we seek to remove that duality. This meditation is subtler than the earlier meditation. Now the role of meditator also is sought to be dropped. In the first type of meditation, dropping all the other roles I assumed the one role, that of a meditator. Now, in meditating upon my own self, even the role of meditator is sought to be dropped. Therefore, every word that is used in this verse means the self that is formless, without attributes or qualities.

There is only one thing in the world that is formless and free from attributes. That is the self. Everything else has a form. Everything else has attributes. But the one that illumines the forms, illumines all the attributes, that illuminator—the self—is free from names, forms, and attributes.

Meditation on the self is not an experience

Thus here, in the meditation upon the self, there is no visualization. In this meditation, there is seeing of what is and not visualizing something. It is not that I visualize that I am free from sadness, because I cannot, and need not, visualize myself. It is *acintyam*, unthinkable, in as much as I cannot become the object of my own thoughts. I am beyond thought, in the sense that I am the illuminator of the thought, and therefore I should not make an attempt to visualize myself. While meditating upon the self, I should not attempt to feel or visualize or experience, because in that case, unknowingly I am creating a duality. I must be an experiencer for me to experience something that is different from myself. When I try to experience, automatically I assume the role of an experiencer and create a distance between the self and what is experienced. Therefore it is said that self-knowledge is not an experience in as much as it does not involve the duality between the experiencer and the experienced. But still many people like to

use the word experience in the sense of an intimate knowledge, and if that is what is conveyed then it is all right, as long as it is understood that the self is *acintyam*, it is not a thought. I is not a state of mind. I am the illuminator of the thought; I am the illuminator of the state of mind.

How is it that I cannot be an object of thought? Because I is *avyaktam*, meaning unmanifest. *Vyakta* means manifest. *Avyaktam* is unmanifest. Manifest is that which can become the object of sense perception. Whatever objects I can hear, touch, see, taste, and smell are in the category of *vyakta*. *Avyakta*, the unmanifest, is not the object of experience by the sense organs, naturally, because it is the illuminator of all the sense organs. For example, through a telescope I cannot see my eyes, because it is the eyes that see through the telescope. So also, various sense organs are like various telescopes through which I perceive various objects. I am the perceiver who perceives through the sense organs, and therefore I cannot become the object of my own perception. What it means is that I should drop any attempt to perceive myself, to see myself, to visualize myself. It cannot be done, because whatever I see or visualize is bound to be different from myself.

Anantarūpam is one that is of infinite or countless forms. On one hand, the self is formless, as we will be told later, and on the other hand it has countless forms. Is that not contradictory? Not really, because it appears to assume forms on account of association with countless names and forms but by itself it is formless, just as gold is essentially formless, even though it can assume the form of various ornaments.

Śivam, I am *śivam*, I am auspicious. I am ever pure. *Śivam* means Lord Śiva. *Śivam* also means the auspicious, that which is good.

Lord Śiva is shown to be seated in a cremation ground, in the midst of ghosts and goblins, but aloof from them. Goodness in the midst of all evil and impurity, the goodness or purity that cannot be tainted by impurities, *śivoam* is what I am. Understand each one of these words releases me from one or the other complexes.

Prasāntam, I am ever tranquil. There is no disturbance, no distraction in I. All disturbances are in the mind but I, the illuminator of the mind, is *prasāntam*, ever tranquil, ever silent. *Amṛtam*, immortal I am. *Amṛtam* also means ambrosia. Ambrosia gives joy or happiness, it means *ānanda*. Immortal I am or *ānanda*, or happiness I am. Each one of these aspects of the self may help address a particular state of mind. When I feel unhappy, I remind myself *amṛtosmi*, I am immortal, I am ambrosia, I am *ānanda*.

Brahmayonim. *Yoni* means the cause, the source. Hence *brahmayoni* can mean either the *yonī* or cause of Brahmā, *saguṇa brahman*, or it can mean *brahman* that is the *yonī* or the cause of everything. Hence, I am the cause of Brahmāji, meaning the cause of *saguṇa brahma*, or I am *brahman* that is the *yonī*, the cause of all the beings.

The source of all beings is *brahman*, and that is my self. Consciousness is the source of all beings, that from which all the beings emerge. It is the source of all beings and the source of my thoughts also, because the world is not different from my thoughts. What the world is at any time is nothing other than my thoughts. What we are actually watching is the thought, which reflects the outside world. Consciousness, from where thought emerges, where the thought abides, and where the thought merges back, is the source of all thoughts. What is there before the thought arises and what is during the thought, is consciousness, and what remains

when the thought merges and before the second thought arises is also consciousness.

Thoughts emerge from consciousness and merge back into consciousness, and therefore a thought is nothing but consciousness. Thought corresponds one-to-one with the objects of the world, and therefore, consciousness is the source of the universe. The universe emerges from consciousness, remains in consciousness, and merges back into consciousness. Therefore, one recognizes the self as consciousness that is the very source of the entire universe. This is very important. Not only do I recognize myself as consciousness, but I recognize myself as the source of the universe; then alone is the oneness with myself and the universe established. That alone helps the thoughts of duality to be erased.

Ādi-madhya-anta-vihīnam means devoid of beginning, middle and end. The I has no beginning or birth because it is the consciousness that illumines all the changes taking place in time, even birth and death, and is therefore unaffected by time. When there is no birth, there is no question of other modifications such as growth, decay, disease, and death. I am devoid of all changes and modifications. I am changeless, immovable, ever the same.

Ekam, one. The changeless consciousness that is I, is indeed one, nondual. Duality exists at the level of names and forms, in the body-sense-mind complexes, but not in the self that manifests through them. Muṇḍakopaniṣad explains the unity obtaining in the diversity with the example of fire and sparks, “As from a fire fully ablaze, fly off in their thousands sparks that are akin to the fire, so also good looking one, from the Imperishable originate different kinds of beings and they merge again into It.”¹ It appears

¹ Mu.Up. 2.1

as though the fire is divided into many sparks because each spark looks different from others, but what separates them from one another are the carbon particles flying off from wood. On account of association with these particles, fire seems to be divided into many, but from the standpoint of fire, which is really nothing but heat and light, there is no division. The essence of every spark is heat and light, which is also the essence of fire. It is not a form that is called fire, it is the principle of heat and fire that is called fire, and that is formless and indivisible. Similarly, self that is consciousness is formless and indivisible, and it appears as though it is divided into many sparks of consciousness, each *jīva* (living being) representing one spark. But the division is only in names and forms, in the body-sense-mind complexes called upādhi, which create an appearance of manyness in consciousness.

Vibhum means all-pervasive. Consciousness is all pervasive. Just as space is all pervasive and accommodates all objects within it, so also consciousness is all pervasive. The divisions of time, space, and object are all within consciousness, sustained by consciousness, illumined by consciousness. Nothing whatever is apart from consciousness that is the self.

Cit is consciousness; self is consciousness; I is self-effulgent. Everything other than I can shine only when illumined by consciousness. The objects of the world are illumined by the organs of perception; they in turn are illumined by the mind, which in turn is illumined by consciousness that is the self-shining witness and the very self.

Ānandam is happiness or fullness. The self is of the nature of happiness. Whenever I experience happiness, I may feel that it came from the object that I was experiencing, but the fact of the

matter is that an inert thing cannot give happiness. Only the self is consciousness, and that alone is the source of happiness. By fulfilling a desire an object makes the mind inward-directed, and what the mind experiences is the self. An object becomes an apparent cause or pretext to bring to manifest the happiness that is the self. That happiness is always shining, but the experience of it is obstructed by the cloud of desire or grief. A desirable object becomes a cause to momentarily clear this cloud, and the sun of the self shines and is experienced as happiness. This experience, however, turns out to be fleeting, because another desire or grief arises soon and one again finds oneself seeking happiness.

The experience of happiness becomes abiding when the mind abides in the self in the wake of knowledge. Then one discovers that one is happiness that is uncreated and boundless. Boundless happiness is *ānanda* which is the self. I am *ānanda*, wholeness.

Arūpum means formless. Just as space appears to assume the form of many enclosures such as pots and rooms, so also the self appears to assume the forms of the *upādhis*, (body-sense-mind complexes). Forms belong to the *upādhis*, whereas the self manifesting through them is formless. I am *arūpa*, formless.

Adbhutam is a wonder. What a wonder I am! I thought I was mortal, but in fact I am immortal. I thought I was ignorant, but I am of the nature of knowledge. I thought I was limited, but I am limitless happiness, and happiness that is self-shining, effortless. I am independent and free, quite contrary to what I took myself to be all the while. That is the greatest wonder.

The sixth *mantra* gave us meditation upon *brahman*, or self without attributes. The seventh *mantra* gives us the meditation

upon *saguṇa-brahma*, or *brahman* with form and attributes. Since the mind is always accustomed to dwelling in the realm of names and forms and attributes, meditation upon the formless may not be easy at first. That is why the Vedic culture gives us many names and forms, which become a stepping stone for ultimately seeing that which is beyond names and forms. The seventh *mantra* is a typical meditation of the first kind, upāsānā, where the meditator and meditated are different. It is a meditation upon *saguṇa-brahma* in the form of Lord Śiva.

Verse 7

उमासहायं परमेश्वरं प्रभुं त्रिलोचनं नीलकण्ठं प्रशान्तम् । ध्यात्वा मुनिर्गच्छति
भूतयोनिं समस्तसाक्षिं तमसः परस्तात् ॥ ७ ॥

umāsaḥāyaṁ parameśvaraṁ prabhuṁ trilocaṇaṁ
nīlakaṇṭhaṁ praśāntaṁ | dhyātvā munirgacchati
bhūtayoniṁ samastasākṣiṁ tamaśaḥ parastāt || 7||

उमासहायम् - the consort of Umā परमेश्वरम् - the highest Lord प्रभुम् -
powerful त्रिलोचनम् - the three-eyed नीलकण्ठम् - the one with blue
neck प्रशान्तम् - ever tranquil ध्यात्वा - meditating upon मुनिः - the
contemplative one गच्छति - he reaches भूतयोनिम् - the source of all
beings समस्तसाक्षिं - the witness of all तमसः परस्तात् - beyond
darkness (of ignorance)

Meditating upon (Lord Śiva) the consort of śakti, the highest Lord, the powerful, the three-eyed, the blue-necked and ever tranquil, the contemplative sage reaches Him who is the source of all beings, the witness of all and who is beyond all darkness (of ignorance).

Umāśahāyam means one who is the consort of Umā. Umā refers to Pārvatī, who stands for *śakti*, the creative power—śiva and *śakti*; *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is the conscious principle; *prakṛti* is matter. We know that whatever there is in the creation is the product of the union of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, spirit or consciousness, and matter.

Parameśvaram means who is *parama* Īśvara. Īśvara is Lord, ruler, and *parameśvara* is the highest Lord. The creation has many rulers; every *devatā* (deity) is a ruler in his jurisdiction. For example, the wind-god is the *devatā* of strength and therefore controls the functions requiring strength; the Sun-god is the deity of light and rules that realm. *Parameśvaram* is the ruler of all these other rulers. He is the ruler of everything, himself not ruled by anybody or anything. Even our local rulers are rulers all right, but they are also ruled by somebody. You might think of a dictator, who doesn't seem to be ruled by anybody, but even he is also ruled by somebody. If not by a person, he is at least ruled by his own likes and dislikes and his own passions, whatever is the cause that he stands for. Even he is also ruled by something, because everybody has an agenda.

Īśvara has no agenda

But Īśvara has no agenda at all. He rules everyone and everything, but himself is not ruled by anyone. That is a very difficult

condition to be in, even though it sounds very good. How nice would it be if I were the ruler of everybody and not answerable to anybody? But that is very tough, because if he has free reign, he is not answerable to anybody, which then gives him that much more responsibility. Then his rule must be just. Normally there are checks and balances and at least there is somebody to question the ruler and correct him; in Īśvara's case there is nobody. That means that he must be his own checks and balances. He must be fair, then alone can there be rule, and that can be only when he has no agenda at all; when he has no likes and dislikes; when he has no wants, no lacks, no needs, no expectations, no personal agenda at all; then alone can he be a fair ruler. That can be only when he is complete in himself; only then is there no lack, no want, and no need at all. When he is non-demanding, when he has no need at all, then what he does will not be for fulfilling any personal needs. Otherwise, if he is needy, then what he does will in some way or the other be related to fulfilling some needs. When there is some agenda, either an open agenda or a hidden agenda, whatever one does will in some way or the other be to fulfill that agenda. Therefore a wanting, lacking person can never be totally fair, and if there is not justice or fairness in the universe, there cannot be order in the universe. The fact that there is order in the universe, that there is harmony, shows that there is fairness.

How Īśvara rules the world

The way Īśvara rules the world tells us how to manage things ideally. Who can be an ideal ruler, an ideal leader? It is one who is himself non-demanding, who has no need, who has no expectation. There's nobody like that in the world except for Īśvara. Parameśvara is the supreme Lord, the supreme ruler, who is *svatantra*, totally independent, because he does not really rule in the way we might visualize a ruler. The truth is that everything gets ruled by his very presence. Don't think that he is ruling the world with a scepter or a thunderbolt in his hand. Ruling that way

will not work, because the world is so vast. If he looks one way, something happens elsewhere and if he looks that way, something will happen here. How is he going to rule? However, the ruler represented by Lord Nārāyaṇa, who is shown as reclining on a serpent bed, is in *yoganidrā* (a state of half contemplation and half sleep) and he doesn't even open his eyes. How is it possible to rule that way? It is possible only when everything happens in his presence. There is no effort on his part to rule anything. One example is a powerful magnet; in its presence the iron filings move. They are ruled, but the magnet simply rules by its very presence, without any effort on its part. Similarly, Īśvara rules by his mere presence, and what a powerful presence Īśvara must be. The presence is one of fullness, completeness, *ānanda*.

We should not imagine God, Parameśvara, as the supreme ruler who needs to exercise his power and who gets angry or who punishes. Some religions say that God will get angry if you don't do this, that, or the other. Some other people say that God also judges everybody, and that everyone will have a day of judgment. When you judge somebody, there has to be an agenda. But here is a nonjudging, nondemanding Īśvara; the truth has to be like that. Īśvara means truth. Ultimately Īśvara cannot be *saguṇa brahma* (*brahman* with attributes), he has to be devoid of every attribute. He has to be of the nature of truth, fairness, and justice; and truth, fairness, and justice have no attribute; they have no form. We use these words all right, but ultimately these words will resolve into attributelessness, formlessness.

Prabhum means the one who is *samartha*, powerful, capable of creating, sustaining, and dissolving, and ruling the entire universe. Regarding the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe, don't think Īśvara actually acts like a potmaker who takes clay and

creates forms. It is said that Brahmā, the creator, had a whole heap of clay and from that he made different forms. That's OK as a children's story. But for creation, sustenance, and dissolution, all it takes is the mere presence of the Lord. In the Bhagavad Gītā,¹ Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *mayā adhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram*. "It is in my mere presence that *prakṛti* or *māyā* creates, sustains, and dissolves." Ultimately, Īśvara is of the nature of presence, presence that is complete, full, and so powerful that everything automatically takes place. Presence is enough. If he needed anything more than that, if he needed even to bat his eyelid, he would get tired some day, isn't it? Even if a slight effort were needed on the part of Īśvara to create and rule, someday he would get tired. Wherever there is change, there is effort, there is some expenditure of energy, and someday he'll perish. Imperishable can be only when there is no activity, no *vikāra*, no change. Therefore, Īśvara, the truth, ultimately has to be changeless. It has to be just the presence, presence in which everything takes place. Just as in the presence of a magnet, things happen; just as the mere presence of gravitational force keeps all the heavenly bodies circling, so also with *māyā*, *prakṛti*, *umā*, or matter—in the mere presence of śiva, the consciousness, everything automatically happens.

Trilocanam means the three-eyed Lord. As the story goes, Lord Śiva has three eyes. The third eye opened when Kāmadeva, the lord of passion, was trying to disturb Lord Śiva from his *samādhi* (absorbed meditation). Lord Śiva is often in *samādhi*. Once he goes into *samādhi* he stays in it for thousands of years; to meet him you have to wait until he wakes up. While he was in *samādhi*, it happened that there was a terrible demon, by the name Tarakāśura, who just could not be subdued by anybody. Neither

¹ BG 9.10

Viṣṇu nor Brahmā, nor any other god could subdue him. The *Devatās* (gods) were in a quandary about what to do. Brahmāji, the creator, told the *devatās* that if Lord Śiva begets a son, that son would be able to kill this demon Tarakāsura. Lord Śiva is in *samādhi* and Pārvatī is performing penance so that she can get married to Lord Śiva. The *devatās* wanted Lord Śiva to wake up and accept Pārvatī. So the marriage could take place, they would have a son, and then this demon would be killed. They wanted to hasten this process, so they had to wake up Lord Śiva from *samādhi*. What would wake him up? When a disturbing thought, a thought of *kāma* (desire or passion) arises in the mind, then *samādhi* will be disturbed, so they wanted to create that kind of a thought in Lord Śiva. Therefore, the *devatās* sent Kāmadeva, Cupid, the lord of passion, to disturb Lord Śiva from his *samādhi*. Kāmadeva went with his whole entourage—the spring season, music, and *apsarās*, (divine damsels). Taking all these with him, he approached Lord Śiva. Kāmadeva himself stayed hidden behind a branch of a tree and shot his arrow, which was made of flowers. Lord Śiva got disturbed in his *samādhi*. He opened his eyes in his anger and said, “Who has disturbed me?” He saw Kāmadeva hiding behind the branch of the tree. His third eye opened and the fire emerged from that and Kāmadeva was burned to ashes there and then. Lord Śiva smeared those ashes on his body. This symbolically shows how *kāma*, or desire, becomes an ornament in the wake of knowledge.

Kāma is the first product of ignorance—first *avidyā* (ignorance), then *kāma*, then *karma* (action). Here, the burning of *kāma* stands for the dispelling of ignorance in the light of knowledge. The third eye of Lord Śiva is the eye from where the fire emerges; that’s the fire of knowledge. The right eye is sun, the left eye is moon, and the third eye in the forehead is fire. Sun, moon, and fire are the

three eyes of Lord Śiva, hence *trilocanam*, the three-eyed one. Sun, moon, and fire also symbolize *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*, existence, awareness, and happiness. Sun, the principle of light, dispelling darkness, stands for awareness, which is knowledge. Moon is the pleasing one; it stands for *ānanda*, happiness. Fire, which cooks and sustains, stands for *sat*, or existence. Thus, *sat-cit-ānanda* also is the *svarūpa*, the nature of Lord Śiva. Sometimes the three eyes are explained as representing the self in three states, the waker, the dreamer, and the deep-sleeper, both at the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels, and Lord Śiva is *turīya*, the fourth, or their substratum.

Nīlakaṇṭham is one with the blue neck. This blue mark in the neck of Lord Śiva is considered a mark of beauty. How did the blue mark come about? That is because Lord Śiva drank the poison that emerged when the gods and demons were churning the milky ocean in order to bring out the ambrosia.

As the story goes, once upon a time the gods and the demons were fighting and the gods lost the battle. The demons were very strong; they did not allow any *yajña* (fire ritual) to take place. Only when a fire ritual takes place do devotees make offerings to the *devatās* and the *devatās* get their food. *Yajñas* are their source of nourishment. The demons stopped the performance of the *yajñas*, so the *devatās* stopped getting nourishment and they became emaciated. So the *devatās* went to Lord Nārāyaṇa and asked for his advice and help. He told them, “If you drink ambrosia, you will get all your strength and vigor back, and become immortal.” “How do we get ambrosia?” “You churn the ocean.” “But we are so weak we can’t churn the ocean.” “Take the help of these demons, they are very strong.” “But they won’t help us!” “Sure they will help you. Make a deal with them, that when the ambrosia comes out,

you will both share it.” The *Devatās* went to the leader of the demons and made a deal, and the churning started.

In the process of churning, many jewels emerged from the ocean, such as the wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpa-vrkṣa*), also the wish-fulfilling cow (*kāma-dhenu*), *apsarās* (damsels of the heavens), the moon, Lakṣmi (the goddess of wealth), wine, and others. A total of fourteen jewels emerged. One of them was poison. The poison emerged all of a sudden and it started spreading and it looked like it would destroy the whole universe. This created panic among both the demons and gods, and they scurried around seeking help from the different *devatās*. Indra, Brahmā, and Viṣṇu all said they would not be able to help. Then they went to Lord Śiva. Lord Śiva did not hesitate for a moment. He immediately rushed to the spot and took the poison in his palm and drank it. Pārvatī had accompanied him. She saw Lord Śiva drinking the poison and was concerned that he would perish. So she rushed and pressed his neck, so that the poison would not go down. It got stuck there, thank God. If it went down, it would destroy the heart. If it went up, it would destroy the head. It stayed right in the middle, so Lord Śiva is called *nīlakaṇṭha*, the blue-necked one. This story points to the compassionate nature of Īśvara, that wherever there is any distress, immediately he rushes to help his devotees.

Prasāntam means ever tranquil. In the midst of the ghosts and goblins dancing around, lord Śiva remains unaffected, always abiding in his own nature. *Svātmārāmaṁ muditavadanaṁ dakṣiṇāmūrtimīde*.¹ Dakṣiṇāmūrti is *svātmārāmaṁ*, one who abides in his self, which is *ānanda*, and that *ānanda* is evident as a

¹ Dakṣiṇāmūrti dhyāna śloka 1

gentle smile on the face. *Praśāntam*, one who is tranquil and absorbed in *ānanda*.

Dhyātvā muniḥ gacchati bhūtayonim. Meditating upon the self in this manner, the contemplative sage, the meditator, attains the source of all the beings. We have seen that the cause of the entire creation is nothing but consciousness that is *asti bhāti priyam* or *sat-cit-ānanda*. The meditator recognizes that the source of the entire universe is nothing but his own self—that from I the universe arises, in I the universe is, and in I the universe merges back. I am *samastasākṣim*, the witness of all, *tamaśaḥ parastāt*, beyond the darkness of ignorance.

Here a question can arise. If the self is of the nature of consciousness, how can ignorance coexist with it? The answer is that two completely opposite entities enjoying the same degree of reality cannot coexist, just as darkness and light cannot co-exist. But two entities enjoying different degrees of reality can coexist, just as the rope and snake can coexist, because the snake is *mithyā*, a false conclusion, whereas the rope is real. Similarly, consciousness is the truth and therefore real, but ignorance or *māyā* is *mithyā*, so they can coexist. Just as the *mithyā* snake does not in any way affect the rope, similarly ignorance does not in any way affect the consciousness or substratum. Hence just as one may say that the rope is beyond the snake, similarly also it is said here that *brahman* is beyond *tamas*, which means darkness. Darkness is ignorance, ignorance is *māyā*, and self transcends *māyā*, is the substratum of *māyā*, free from the influence of *māyā*. This idea is also conveyed by the blue neck. The blue stands for ignorance and the blue-necked Lord transcends the ignorance. That is what the *muni* recognizes as his own self.

The self that I am is the self of all. The next *mantra* explains that.

Verse 8

स ब्रह्मा स शिवः सेन्द्रः सोऽक्षरः परमः स्वराट् । स एव विष्णुः स प्राणः स
कालोऽग्निः स चन्द्रमाः ॥ ८ ॥

sa brahmā sa śivaḥ sendraḥ so'kṣaraḥ paramaḥ svarāṭṭ | sa
eva viṣṇuḥ sa prāṇaḥ sa kālo'gniḥ sa candramāḥ || 8||

सः - he ब्रह्मा - Brahmā शिवः - Śivaḥ सः इन्द्रः - Indra सः अक्षरः - the
immutable परमः - the ultimate स्वराट् - self-effulgent सः एव - he
alone विष्णुः - Viṣṇu प्राणः - prāṇa कालः - time अग्निः - fire चन्द्रमाः -
the moon

**He is Brahmā, he is Śivaḥ, he is Indra, he is the immutable,
the supreme and self-effulgent. He alone is Viṣṇu, he is prāṇa,
he is time and fire, he is the moon.**

Notice that now the gender changes. In *acintyam avyaktam anantarūpam*, there was neuter gender. The same truth now is referred to as *saḥ*, in the masculine gender, meaning that gender has no relevance here. "Swamiji is God he or she or it?" The answer is that God is he or she when worshipped with specific attributes, but God in his entirety transcends all ideas, and hence you can call him whatever you want.

God is father, mother, and also child. If God is only he, which means God is not she, then we are reducing God to an entity within the creation and fighting about him. The Upaniṣad here uses different genders deliberately, perhaps even indiscriminately, meaning that gender doesn't have any significance. Gender belongs to the physical, gross body; it doesn't even belong to the subtle body. That's the reason why the subtle body can go from one gender to the other. Who knows, a person who claims to be a woman in this birth was perhaps a man in the last birth, or the other way around.

Sa Brahmā sa Śivaḥ sa Indraḥ. That self, *brahman*, alone is the self of all the *devatās*, celestials, the self of all the beings. It is *bhūtayonim*, the cause of all beings, the source of all the beings, the self of all the beings.

Here names of certain *devatās* are mentioned. All of these are described in the Vedas and the *Purāṇas*, and the people who are familiar with Vedic culture know these *devatās*. They are mentioned here to convey that this meditator knows himself as the self of all of these *devatās*. I recognize myself as Brahmā, as Śiva, as Indra, as *paramaḥ*, as *svarāṭ*, that's what I am. Brahmā is the creator, Śiva, the destroyer, and Viśṇu the preserver. Īśvara, when identifying with *rajoḡṇa* becomes the creator, with *satvagūṇa* becomes preserver, with *tamogūṇa* becomes the destroyer. I am the creator. I am the sustainer. I am the dissolver. This is what the wise person says. But is it logical? How can an individual create the world? He cannot create the world through this *upādhi*, but here he's saying this in identification with *brahman*. Brahmā, the creator, I am. Śiva, the destroyer, I am. Indra, the Lord of all the *devatās*, I am. *Parama*, the supreme, I am, meaning that I am free

from the limitations of time, place and conditions. *Akṣara*, imperishable, immutable, I am. *Svarāt*, the self-effulgent, I am.

Sa eva viṣṇu, he alone is Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu, the preserver, I am. *Sa prāṇaḥ*. The *prāṇa* also I am. *Prāṇa* is vital energy. That which keeps the entire universe alive and moving, which keeps the entire universe running, that is called *prāṇa*, the cosmic vital energy; that's what I am.

Kāla, which means time, death, and the principle of change, also I am. *Kāla*, time, devours everything; death robs everything of its life. The principle of change also I am; because of me change takes place. Creation, sustenance, and dissolution all take place in time; that *kāla*, the principle of time, I am.

Agniḥ, fire, is another *devatā*. The fire god that burns everything, that illumines everything, that fire I am. *Candramāḥ*, the moon, which pleases everyone, which showers nectar at night and pleases all the living beings, that *candramā* also I am. Now it's very interesting to see that *agni* means fire I am, on one hand, and on the other, *candramā* or the moon also I am. The principle of burning I am, and the principle of cooling also I am. The principle of creation I am, and principle of destruction also I am. Preservation also I am. I alone am, in the form of all the *devatās*, or all the cosmic forces; I am the very self of the entire cosmos. All of this is nothing but my manifestation. I alone am manifest as the whole universe, including all the various *devatās*.

Knowledge is the only means

Verse 9

स एव सर्वं यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यं सनातनम् । ज्ञात्वा तं मृत्युमत्येति नान्यः पन्था
विमुक्तये ॥ ९ ॥

sa eva sarvaṁ yadbhūtaṁ yacca bhavyaṁ sanātanam ।
jñātvā taṁ mṛtyumatyeti nānyaḥ panthā vimuktaye ॥ 9 ॥

सः - he एव - is in fact सर्वम् - everything यद् भूतम् - whatever is past
यत् च भव्यम् - whatever is in future सनातनम् - timeless ज्ञात्वा - having
known (knowing) तम् - him मृत्युम् - death अत्येति - crosses over न
अन्यः no other पन्था - way विमुक्तये - for gaining freedom

**He is in fact all that was, and all that will be, the timeless one.
Knowing him, one crosses over death. There is no other way
for gaining freedom.**

He alone is everything. *Yad bhūtam*, whatever was in the past, *yat
ca bhavyam*, whatever will be in the future, and therefore whatever
is in the present. Thus whatever was in the past, whatever is in
present, whatever will be in the future, all that is he alone, or I

alone. So Īśvara, or *brahman*, or the self, alone, is that which is all in the past, present, and future, because upon one substratum all of these various superimpositions are made. Just as one water manifests as all the various waves, so also one self, alone, manifests as whatever there is.

It will be said later that self is both the material cause and the efficient cause of everything. As the material cause, I am all-pervasive, I am the self of all, and therefore whatever was the past I alone am. It's not that I was in the past; whatever was in the past I am. Whatever is in the present I am. Whatever will be in future I am. We do not change the "I am" to "I was" or "I will be." There can only be "was" and "will be" in I. When you look at the I, there is no notion of time in I. Time is at the level of mind. Change and everything else happens at the level of mind. I, the consciousness, illumines the mind and thus time, because time is a concept of mind. Therefore, in I the consciousness, there is no past, there is no future, there is only present.

Truth of time

What is meant by present? What is the duration of present? Does present mean one year? Six months? One month? Thirty days? One day? Twenty four hours? One hour? One hour also has a beginning and end, so what is present? One minute? No, that also has a dimension. One second? No, that also has a dimension. One millisecond? One nanosecond? Any unit in time, even a miniscule infinitesimally small length also has a beginning and an end. So what is present? Present is where the very concept of time disappears. When you keep dividing time into smaller and smaller fractions, what does it resolve into ultimately? It resolves into dimensionless time; that is the present.

The present cannot have a dimension. The moment there is a dimension, there is beginning and there is end. No matter how infinitesimal the dimension is, it is going to have beginning and end. That means the present is that which transcends the concept of change. The past, the future, all of these represent change; they are all concepts in time. Past is a projection; future also is a projection; there is only the present. What you call past was the present at some time. What you call future will be the present at another time. What there is, is nothing but present. Present or presence, that's all it is. Therefore I alone am everything, past, future, or present, meaning that it is I, the substratum, upon which the superimpositions of past, present, and future take place. I am the substratum upon which the creator, the sustainer, and the dissolver are all superimposed. Upon me, the very substratum, upon I as the platform, all this play of the creation, sustenance, dissolution, the past, present, future, all this takes place without affecting me in any way. Just as upon the substratum of the rope, the different plays of the snake and the garland all take place without affecting the rope in any way, similarly whatever was past, whatever will be in the future, and what is in the present, I alone am. I alone impart the *sattā* (existence) and *sphūrṭi* (intelligence and awareness) to everything. The principle of existence and intelligence and awareness I am.

Jñātvā tam, knowing him as my own self, *mṛtyum atyeti*, one crosses death. Knowing the self in this manner one transcends death, transcends time, because as we saw, what is present or presence is nothing but consciousness, nothing but existence, and existence or consciousness has no dimension. Just as present has no dimension, existence has no dimension, has no attribute. Consciousness has no qualification, it is unqualified. Unqualified present, unqualified existence, unqualified consciousness I am.

Knowing me in this manner, I go beyond time, I go beyond death, because death belongs to the body, death belongs to the mind, death belongs to the *upādhi* or personality; it doesn't belong to I.

Meaning of immortality

What is meant by crossing over death? One becomes immortal. Becoming immortal means one recognizes the self as immortal. Again, immortal doesn't mean some great length of time. However great the length of time, it will still be limited. As Naciketā says, *api sarvam jīvitam alpam eva*. "However long is the duration of life, it is still limited with reference to infinite."¹ Therefore, *mṛtyum atyeti*, one crosses death means one becomes free from the very concept of time, and therefore free from birth, death, or change. One becomes immortal. As we saw in verse three, by renunciation, some seers attained immortality; that is what is referred to here. Knowing him as my own self, one transcends death, meaning one becomes immortal. *Jñātvā tam*, having known him one becomes immortal. Knowing the self one becomes immortal.

Understand that by knowledge you do not become anything. Knowledge simply reveals what is. Knowing the people sitting in front of me, I do not become something. No change takes place in me or in the people. Then what can knowledge do? Knowledge can only dispel ignorance, and the notions created by ignorance also get dispelled in the wake of knowledge. For example, where there was an error or projection of snake, knowing that it is only rope, the fear born of snake goes away. Now knowledge doesn't remove fear. What knowledge does is it removes the notion of the snake. It is the notion of snake that has created fear, and therefore, knowing

¹ Ka.Up. 1.1.26

the object as rope, the fear that was the product of ignorance also goes away. Similarly, knowing the self one becomes immortal means that mortality is a product of ignorance because knowledge only dispels ignorance. Light only dispels darkness, it doesn't do anything else. When it was totally dark, I could not see anything, and as soon as a light is switched on, I see the people. The light has not created the people; it has just made evident what is. So also knowledge makes evident what is. If knowing the self I become immortal, then it means I have always been immortal. On account of ignorance, I've been taking myself to be mortal, taking myself to be changing, subject to time, subject to birth and death. In the wake of the knowledge, I recognize that "I am mortal" was a notion, and that notion, born of ignorance, also drops off. Therefore, it is not that one crosses death, one recognizes that I am always beyond death.

Nānyaḥ panthā vimuktaye, for liberation there is no other means; there is no means other than knowledge. Thus this Upaniṣad very clearly says that for liberation, for immortality, for freedom, for happiness, for whatever is the goal of our life, there is no path or means other than knowledge. What does knowledge do? Knowledge merely brings to light what is, and therefore, if there is no means other than knowledge for liberation, what it means is that I am always liberated. Only when I am already liberated, and I take myself to be bound, can knowledge bring about liberation by merely removing the notion of bondage. Knowledge doesn't remove bondage; knowledge removes the notion of bondage. It doesn't remove mortality; it removes the notion mortality. It doesn't remove sorrow; it removes the notion of sorrow.

Bondage is a notion

If bondage were real, then there would have to be a real means of removing bondage. But bondage is a notion, purely a product of ignorance, and therefore it is not that we have to become free, we just have to become free from the notion that we are bound. “Swamiji, still, why is there ignorance and why is there bondage?” Who says there is bondage? “But I feel I am bound.” That is the wrong feeling. That’s not the truth of yourself. Therefore, it is not that you have to become liberated, it is that you have to become free from the notion that you are bound.

There is a story to illustrate this. Once a lioness was pregnant and was shot down by a hunter and died. In the process she delivered this baby lion. The cub was lying there unattended when a shepherd happened to pass by and saw this little lion cub and out of pity took it with him. The little lion cub started growing in the company of lambs. It naturally took itself to be a lamb. It would do everything that the lambs do, including the sounds that they make. One time a real lion came near them. All the lambs, as soon as they smelled the lion, started running. The lion cub was part of the herd and it also started running. The lion saw the lambs running away including the lion cub. He wondered why the cub was trying to escape, so he caught hold of the cub, and let the others go. The lion cub was shivering and pleading not be killed because it was just a poor lamb. The lion said “You are what? Come with me.” He led the lamb to a pond of clear water and said, “OK, how do I look in the water? Look at me. Now look at yourself in the water. Are you not like me, a lion? Now roar. Hear me roaring. Are you not a lion?” The young lion roared and stopped taking himself to be a lamb. Because of identification with lambs this lion cub thought he was a lamb and suffered from the sense of being a lamb.

That is called bondage. So what’s the bondage in this example? The bondage of the lion is the notion on his part that I am a lamb. A notion is very powerful. It creates the same effect that a real

thing creates. If what is lying here is a rope and I have a notion that it is a snake, that notion creates in me the fear of snake. There need not be a real snake; all that is necessary is just my conclusion or notion that there is a snake. It has the same effect on me as though it were a real snake. Similarly, the conclusion on my part that I am a *jīva*, I am a helpless, hapless creature, has the same affect as though I really were a helpless, hapless creature. That is why the teacher says that you are brahman. This Upaniṣad will say later, *sa tvam eva tvam eva tat*, “that is you and you are that.”¹

Aham brahmāsmi. I am *brahman*. Here *brahman* is in the place of the lion and the *jīva* is in the place of the lamb (lion cub). In the story, the lamb is asked to look at its own reflection in a clear pool of water. Here the *śruti* asks us to look at our reflection in a mind which is tranquil or clear. In that mind look at your reflection. How do you appear? I appear happy, *ānanda*. Who are you? I am *ānanda*. I am not sadness. This is how it is necessary to do what we call *viveka*, discrimination. There is identification with this body-mind equipment and becoming free from identification, seeing one’s true nature, one becomes free from all the complexes born of identification. Just as the lion became free instantly from all the complexes of being a lamb and all that goes along with that complex, the wise man becomes free from all complexes. He has burned all his bondage. How can the bondage burn if it is real? If he were a real lamb, then even if he kept on screaming “I am a lion,” he would not become a lion. He is lion and that is why he could roar. Bondage is all a projection of the mind, and that notion goes in the wake of the knowledge of the self, that I was never bound. “I” is ever free. A wise person does not say “I am liberated.” What he says is, “I was always liberated.” If I am liberated now, that means I was bound earlier. The bound can

¹ Kaivalya-Upaniṣad verse 16

never get liberated for the simple reason that a thing can never change its nature.

A thing cannot become different from what it is; its true nature cannot change. This is a fundamental rule.¹ Therefore, if bondage is my true nature, there is no way that I can become liberated because the true nature cannot change. But the second rule also is that a thing is always comfortable with its nature. Therefore, if bondage were my nature, I would be comfortable being bound. If limitation were my nature, I would be comfortable being limited. If sorrow were my nature, I would be comfortable being sorrowful. But I am not. I am not comfortable being sorrowful, I am not comfortable being bound, I am not comfortable being limited, because it is contrary to my nature. Therefore, the wise person's knowledge is not that I am liberated, it is that I was never bound; it is a recognition that bondage was a notion.

Knowledge removes ignorance that causes the notion

As far as the attainment of what is already attained is concerned, knowledge is the means. *Karma*, action, is the means for attaining what is not attained. Just as in the case of the tenth man, what will bring him the tenth man? Only knowledge. Because it is ignorance that deprives him of the recognition of the tenth man, who is his own self, the knowledge reveals what is. Here also, I am already what I am seeking to be. I want to be the pleased self. I want to be happy. I want to be free. I want to be limitless. Vedānta says

¹ न भवत्यमृतं न मर्त्यममृतं तथा ।

प्रकृतेरन्यथाभावो न कथंचिद्भविष्यति ॥ मान्डूक्य कारिका

na bhavatyamṛtaṁ na martyamamṛtaṁ tathā |

prakṛteranyathābhāvo na kathañcidbhaviṣyati || Māṇḍūkya Kārikā (3.21)

(PJS: Need the English if you include this. Did Swamiji quote this in the lecture?)

that's what you already are and therefore that you are limited is a notion born of ignorance. Knowledge removes ignorance and the notion born of ignorance.

What is real can never go. What is real would also not bother me; it is unreality that bothers me. If bondage were my nature, I'd be happy with bondage. See, heat is the nature of fire; fire is very comfortable being hot. Coolness is the nature of water; water is comfortable being cool. Only when we heat the water does water become uncomfortable, because that is not its nature. It struggles to get rid of that heat. I am struggling to get rid of the bondage. That shows that bondage cannot be my nature. So knowledge just reveals the true nature of my self. In the wake of knowledge of myself, I recognize that I am always liberated. For liberation there is no other way. For being wealthy, you do work. For being famous, you perform action. For being strong, you perform an action. For appeasing hunger, you perform an action. For going to heaven, you perform an action. For attaining all those unattained things, action is the means. Vedānta does not say that action has no role in our life; it definitely has a role. Whenever we want to achieve something that is not achieved already, then action is the means. But for achieving what is already achieved, knowledge alone is the means. *Nānyaḥ panthā ayanāya vidyate*,¹ there is no path other than knowledge for liberation, for attaining the goal of our life.

This thought is continued in the next *mantra*, also.

¹ Puruṣa-Sūktam 7

Verse 10

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
सम्पश्यन्ब्रह्म परमं याति नान्येन हेतुना ॥ १० ॥

sarvabhūtasthamātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani ।
sampaśyanbrahma paramaṁ yāti nānyena hetunā ॥ 10॥

सर्व भूत स्थम् - obtaining in all beings आत्मानम् - the self सर्वभूतानि -
all beings च - and आत्मनि - in the self सम्पश्यन् - clearly seeing ब्रह्म -
Brahman परमम् - the ultimate याति - goes न - not अन्येन - by other
हेतुना - means

Clearly seeing one's own self in all beings and all beings in one's own self, one goes to brahman, the ultimate—not by any other means.

We see a similar verse in the Bhagavad Gītā also,
Sarvabhūtastham ātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani, “the self
existing in everything and everything existing in the self.”¹

Sampaśyan means *samyak paśyan*, clearly seeing; clearly seeing in the mind's eye. Understand that nonduality is not to be seen with the eyes. It is not that the wise person sees nonduality with his eyes. No transformation or change of perception at the level of senses happens by the knowledge of the self. One may have some

¹ BG 6.29

different experiences, but basically the wise person perceives the same world that we perceive. It is not that something happens in the world that he perceives nonduality. The nonduality is to be perceived in the mind's eye. It is to be perceived as myself, understand, not even that I see nonduality in my mind. "Swamiji, I can visualize nonduality." No, it is *acintyam* (not a thought), *avyaktam* (not an object of perception). It is my self.

If I can't experience my self, then how do I know my self?

"Swamiji, how can I know myself when the self cannot be perceived?" The answer is, "How do you know yourself now?" Do you know yourself now? You do know that you are a limited being. You do know yourself that way, don't you? You know that you are and that you are a limited being. How do you know? Do you perceive yourself as a limited being? How do you know yourself? Rather than struggling with how to know the self, let us recognize that we already know ourselves, because self is self-effulgent, it is self-revealing, self-shining, and therefore no effort is really needed to experience the self or to see the self. I already know myself today except that I know myself as a limited being. How is that? It is because the limitations which belong to the body-mind complex are superimposed upon the self.

The self shines as awareness and the body-mind complex also shines as awareness. They are lumped together even though they belong to two different loci. Therefore there is lack of *viveka*, or lack of separation as to where limitation belongs and where the self belongs; I take them to be one. Please understand, self is already shining as *brahman*. I don't need to make myself *brahman*, it is shining as *brahman*, as the limitless. At the same time, the mind-body complex also shines, but it shines as object, whereas the self shines as subject. But due to not recognizing the distinction

between the subject and object, they're lumped together. This is called *aviveka* (nondiscrimination). Therefore Vedānta teaches us *dṛg-dṛśya-viveka*, a separation between *dṛk* and *dṛśya*, seer and seen, subject and object. When I recognize the object as object, and no longer lump it with the subject, then the subject, the self, remains without the superimposition. It is not that I have to know the self that is unknown to me; I have to know correctly the self that is wrongly known, that is all.

It is not that an unknown self is to be known; then it would never be known. If the self were unknown, I would not have any complexes, also. There cannot be any complexes about that which is not the object of my knowledge. As we saw before in the rope-snake example, there could not be a superimposition upon the rope if the rope were not the object of my awareness. Had there been pitch darkness and I did not see the rope at all, there would have been no superimposition of the snake and I would not have had a wrong notion about the rope. Of course, if I had seen the rope in the broad daylight, then also there would not have been delusion. Only when I see the rope as an object, but I do not see it as a rope, can there be even a false notion about it. There can be a false notion only about something that is an object of my experience. The fact that I have all these false notions about myself is because I am always the object of my experience, meaning I am, I shine. Therefore it is not that an unknown *ātmā* has to be known. In that sense we say that Upaniṣad is not a *pramāṇam* like the eyes and ears, as we saw in the discussion of verse four. Eyes and ears make me know something that is so far unknown. Upaniṣads do not make me know the unknown *ātmā*. Upaniṣads enable me to know the self correctly. The self which is incorrectly known is made to be known correctly by removing what is nonself. Thus nonduality

is not to be seen; it is to be known as my own self, a self-shining, self-existing, self-evident fact.

Sampaśyan (clearly seeing) *ātmānam* (oneself) *sarvabhūtaṣṭham*, (in all the beings) means clearly seeing myself as the self of all. Just as I am the consciousness in this body-mind complex, so another is the same consciousness in that body-mind complex. When the distinction between the self and nonself is very clear with reference to myself, then seeing the self in others follows seeing the self in myself. When the distinction between the self and the nonself is clear, in my own self I no longer lump together the self and nonself and I clearly see myself as consciousness. When I have no identification with this body-mind complex, then I have no likes and dislikes at all. The likes and dislikes, the attachments and the aversions arise only when I equate myself with this body. In consciousness there are no likes and dislikes. Then names and forms don't matter to me. Today name and form matter. This is good, this is not good; beautiful, not beautiful; likable, unlikable; agreeable, disagreeable; desirable, undesirable. Whenever I look at the world through this body-mind complex as an individual, it is natural that I am going to have these opinions, and therefore I cannot be objective with reference to what I perceive; I always judge others as limited beings separate from me. When I stop judging myself as a limited being then I also don't judge others. Then I see the same wholeness, or limitlessness, manifesting in all names and forms. Like the same water manifests as the waves and bubbles and foam, so also the same consciousness manifests as the world of names and forms.

It is like a bangle recognizing that it is gold. First of all the bangle has settled the account with itself that it is gold. Then it sees that all ornaments are also gold, that every ornament is name and form,

but the *vastu*, the essence, is really gold. When the ornament sees itself as gold, then it can also see other ornaments as gold. If it sees itself as a bangle, then it sees others as earrings and other ornaments. I see everybody else as I see myself. Seeing the self in all the beings, and seeing all the beings in the self—this is nonduality—seeing myself as the self of all, seeing everything as never apart from myself.

The Value of living simply

Which I is that? When I see myself as a simple person, I am (*asmi*), I shine (*bhāmi*), and I never dislike myself (*priyam*). I am, I shine, I am dear, *asmi bhāmi priyam—sat-cit-ānanda*. I understand myself as a simple being when nothing else is joined or added to the self. Right now, when I use the word “I,” a lot of things are included in that. The mind comes in, the sense organs also come in, the body also comes in, a lot of things come in. Like when a child comes to visit the grandparents, all kinds of things come with it—there are some toys and some clothes, you know, all kinds of things come along. So also, along with I, all this procession comes. The mind also comes, intellect also comes, sense organs, body, everything. The child brings everything with it; wherever it goes it must have all that. Sometimes people grow up and still they have huge teddy bears with them. Similarly, I carry all this baggage with me. So the verse says leave the baggage where it is.

That is why simplicity in life also becomes a *sādhana* (means) to recognize that I am a simple, conscious being with no forms, no names, no attributes, no conditioning, nothing. So my life also should be simple, with minimum needs. That’s a *sādhū*, who lives a simple, non-demanding life at the personal level. In order to function in the world, you may keep whatever you need, that is OK. “To function in the world, Swamiji, I must dress in a certain

way.” That’s all right. “I must have a certain kind of a car.” OK. “Swamiji, a certain kind of house is required.” All right. Do what you need to do because you have to live in the world. At the personal level, I can always be simple, non-demanding. When you’re in Rome, live like a Roman. Outwardly you’re a Roman. Inwardly you are a *vedāntin*, a simple, non-demanding person.

“But Swamiji, what will people think? If I become non-demanding everyone will take advantage of me.” All right, then outwardly appear to be demanding. Outwardly you act in a manner that the situation calls for; that’s called a pragmatic way of living. But we should not identify with that. Inwardly, I should retain my identity as it is. What I am saying is that “I” is so simple, so unassuming, so non-demanding, so unmanifest, so non-claiming that it is not even seen, not even recognized. But it is always there and that alone is the truth; everything else comes and goes. Truth is changeless; everything else is changing. The body, sense organs, mind, everything changes. In all these changes, what does not change is the true nature of myself. Thus, when one sees oneself truly as one is, there is appreciation of nonduality—I am the self of all and nothing is separate from me.

Nānyena hetunā, by no means other than this knowledge can we attain *brahman*. *Brahman* means limitless. We can never attain limitless other than knowing that I am limitless, I am nondual.

Śravaṇam

Thus the truth has been unfolded by the Upaniṣad; this is *śravaṇam* (listening to the teaching). The Upaniṣad still continues in case this *upadeśa* (teaching) has not resulted in the knowledge on the part of the student, which means that further deliberation is

required. Therefore, in the next several *mantras*, the Upaniṣad presents another way of deliberating upon the nature of the self. What we need to do is deliberate upon who I am, and the next few *mantras* provide us a method for doing that. One way of looking at the arrangement of the text is that up to this point there is *śravaṇam*, and the next few *mantras* are for *mananam* (deliberating and resolving doubts). That's one way of looking at it. Or, at this point the teacher has unfolded the truth, and in the next few *mantras* he's giving us further methods to deliberate upon the self. That begins from the eleventh *mantra*.

Mahāvākya Vicāra

(Contemplation upon the great sentence)

Verse 11

आत्मानमरणिं कृत्वा प्रणवं चोत्तरारणिम्। ज्ञाननिर्मथनाभ्यासात्पाशं दहति
पण्डितः ॥ ११ ॥

ātmānamaraṇim kṛtvā praṇavam cottarāraṇim |
jñānanirmathanābhyāsātpāśam dahati paṇḍitaḥ || 11||

आत्मानम् - the I sense अरणिम् - the lower sacrificial block of wood

कृत्वा - having made प्रणवम् - *Omkara, brahman* च - and उत्तरारणिम् -

the upper block of sacrificial wood ज्ञान – contemplative inquiry

निर्मथनम् - churning अभ्यासात् - by repeatedly doing पाशम् - bondage

दहति - burns पण्डितः - the learned one

By making the individual I-sense as the lower sacrificial block of wood and brahman as the upper block of wood, and (as though) repeatedly churning by the rod of contemplative inquiry, the wise burns all bondage as a result of knowledge obtained by the churning.

As pointed out before, the student is being told about the process of abiding in the startling truth about the self. First, the words of the *śruti* are to be listened to, through a competent teacher. At this point, if the student has been well prepared due to efforts in either this life or previous lives, meaning he or she is an *uttama-adhikārī* (most highly qualified person), then the truth is grasped right there and then. But such a person is very rare indeed. Generally, the *śravaṇam* is to be augmented by continued *vicāra*, which means taking this truth and systematically removing one's doubts about it. This is called *mananam*. Here, a very interesting model is given to us to do *mananam*.

Araṇi is a wooden block in which a hemispherical hollow is carved out. Imagine a square wooden block. In the middle there is a hemispherical carving. There's another block, similar to the first one, which again has a hemispherical carving. The two blocks are held one above the other. Now a wooden rod is held between the two, and then with the help of a rope, the wooden rod is churned. As a consequence, the rod rotates in the hemispherical bearings and friction is created, and from that sparks are generated. That spark is caught on a thread to burn a piece of cotton, which is then used for kindling the fire in an altar. This was one method of lighting the fire in the *vedic* times. Even though match-sticks are now available, this traditional method is often used even now. This is a very sacred method, wherein there are particular specifications for where the wood should come from, how it should be taken, and so on. The wooden blocks are sanctified and *mantras* are chanted even while churning the rod and the fire is generated. That is the analogy, or imagery, that is used here to explain the process of generating knowledge.

Just as the fire is generated by churning of the rod, the *śruti* says that we can do similar churning by which the fire of knowledge is generated. Here the lower block is called *araṇi*, and the upper block is called *uttara-araṇi*. The Upaniṣad says *ātmānam araṇim kṛtvā*, let *jīvātmā*, the *ahaṅkāra*, the ego, the individual, be the lower block. *Praṇavam ca uttarāraṇim*, let *praṇava* be the upper *araṇi* (block). *Praṇava* means *omkāra*. *Omkāra* is the name of *brahman*. Subsequently all these *purāṇic* names like Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and Śiva appeared, but in the Vedic period the most famous and most sacred name of *brahman* or Īśvara was *om*. *Om* is also called *praṇava*. Make *praṇava*, *om*, the upper block.

A word and its object cannot be separated

A thing cannot be separated from its name. *Abhidheyam* and *abhidhānam*, the word and the meaning, always occur together; you cannot separate one from the other. The moment the word flashes in the mind, the meaning also flashes in the mind. When the word “apple” is uttered, then the meaning of the word apple will flash in the mind. When the object apple is seen, immediately the word “apple” will occur in the mind.

But suppose there is a strange object whose name I don’t know. Then what? Well, when you come across something unknown, strange, something new, then your mind will think “strange,” and thus a word will still be there. The mind will respond to anything with a concept that is appropriate to that thing. A word is a sound symbol to express a concept. For example, the word pot is a sound symbol which expresses a concept that is pot. Word disappears leaving the meaning in its place. Thus a word and its meaning cannot be separated. That is why there is so much emphasis on repeating the Lord’s name, such as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, and others. That is why saints always prescribe the repetition of the

name of God. The idea is that with the name you have one part of God, and since God is the meaning of that name, sooner or later that will come. The word will convey the meaning only when the mind has the right preparation. For example, the word “pot” will convey the meaning, “object pot” when the mind has preparation in terms of language, familiarity with the object and so on. That’s called *saṁskāra*. When the mind has the proper *saṁskāra*, then the word conveys the appropriate meaning.

Now, when you hear the word *brahman*, it does not seem to convey the meaning. Why is that, when in fact the word and the meaning are always connected? It is because what is required is *saṁskāra*, orientation, preparation. That’s why we go to schools and colleges. We learn new concepts. The preparation of the mind and learning takes place as we go ahead; that’s how we learn new things. As we learn physics, chemistry, mathematics and so on, new terminologies keep coming and then we understand them, provided the “technical” preparation of the mind has taken place. Preparation of mind is also a requirement for the word and the meaning to occur in our mind. What is the preparation of mind for self-knowledge? It’s called *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. What we require is a *śuddha-antaḥ-karaṇam*, a mind which enjoys purity and serenity. Secondly what is required is *śravaṇam*, listening to the scriptures. When we listen to the scriptures with a mind that enjoys purity or serenity, then with the right *saṁskāras*, the words will convey the meaning. Then the word *brahman* will become a live word for the prepared student; it will not remain just a sound. Today, for example, “pot” is not just a sound, it conveys a meaning. Therefore, one must continue to work until the word *brahman* conveys its meaning.

The need for constant exposure to knowledge.

That is why the *śāstra* says *punaḥ punyeṇa śravaṇam kuryāt*, listen to it again and again and again, to create the *saṁskāras* in the mind. There are actually two types of *saṁskāras*. One is *saṁskāras* in terms of the mind becoming pure or free from the impulses of likes and dislikes, and the second is *saṁskāras* in terms of orientation of the mind toward nonduality. Since the mind is much conditioned with the idea of duality, the idea of nonduality doesn't create an effect, and therefore we listen to Upaniṣads or Vedānta again and again. Day in and day out we are told, "you are *brahman*, you are nondual, duality is false, *jagat* is *mithyā*." In different ways, the *śāstra* conveys the same message with different models, different arguments, and different methods. Then even a relatively thick-headed mind slowly starts to absorb it. All this works when there is *śraddhā*, *bhakti*, and *dhyāna*, which stand for purity of mind. As the Upaniṣad said in the beginning, may you have *śraddhā* (faith), *bhakti* (devotion), and *dhyānam* (focus). In a mind enjoying *śraddhā*, *bhakti*, and *dhyānam*, one should keep on accumulating impressions or *saṁskāras* of nonduality.

In the beginning, impressions don't last. It is like writing in water; as you write, it disappears. Slowly it becomes more like writing in sand; it remains for awhile, but when wind comes, it blows the writing away. Slowly it becomes like writing on rock; regardless of what storms come, it remains there. That's what we call abiding knowledge. In the beginning, knowledge may be like the writing in the water; it's there, but goes right away. It then becomes like writing in the sand; it's there for some time, but is impacted by some strong forces, like identification with the body. Finally it becomes writing on the rock; it doesn't matter what storms and rains come. Therefore we have to keep on exposing ourselves to

the teaching, meaning that this constant orientation to nonduality is required, because of our ingrained *saṁskāras* of duality.

As Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the 15th chapter of the Gītā¹, this duality, like the deep-rooted *aśvattha* tree, is so deeply rooted that it takes time to uproot it. So we should have patience and perseverance, constant effort and dedication. Then the words of the *śāstra* will create the desired effect and the job will be done. Until then, we will be devoted to listening and contemplation.

Repeating the name of the Lord

This is how repeating the name of the Lord is effective. It works in two stages. First we repeat the name, *om*, Rāma, Hari, or some other name of the Lord, and repeat it with devotion. That is why devotion becomes important. If someone were to ask how to cultivate devotion, we say that if you want to discover devotion for any given deity, say Rāma, then keep on reading the Rāmayaṇa. Listen to the glories of Rāma, listen to his greatness. If Kṛṣṇa is your deity of choice, then listen to the Bhāgavatam, listen to his glories, his greatness. That's how one discovers the reverence and devotion for the Lord. With that devotion, the name becomes more effective. Repeating the name first brings about purification of mind, and then knowledge.

Having seen how a word and its meaning are connected, let us go back to the verse, which states, *Praṇavaṁ ca uttarāraṇim*, let *praṇavam* be the upper *araṇi*. *Praṇavam* is the sound symbol *omkāra*. The sound *om* emerges from silence, it remains in silence, and merges back into silence. Silence is formless, free from attributes or qualifications; it is called *amātra*. The transcendental,

¹ BG 15.3

unqualified, unconditioned *brahman*, which is the truth, is represented by the *amātra*, the silence obtaining between two utterances. When the mind now becomes contemplative, the *omkāra* becomes the means of knowledge. So far I was repeating “*om, om*” with devotion; now I analyze *omkāra*.

Oṃkāra is *akāra* (A), *ukāra* (U), *makāra* (M), representing the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep; or creation, sustenance, and dissolution; or three worlds (earth, intermediate worlds, and heavens); or three deities (fire, air, and sun); or creator, sustainer, destroyer. The three *mātrās* of *omkāra* among them represent everything that is manifest, which ultimately resolves into the *amātrā* (unmanifest). *Akāra* resolves into *ukāra*, that into *makāra*, and finally *makāra* into *amātrā*. That’s the method that Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad employs, and *omkāra* or *praṇava* becomes the means of knowledge. At the first stage it becomes the means for purification of the mind. At the second stage it becomes the means of knowledge. This is what is intended here also, because Kaivalya-Upaniṣad belongs to Atharva Veda, as does Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad as well as Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad, therefore you find similarity of ideas there. Therefore, in the subsequent *mantras* you find the analysis of the three states of consciousness—waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, which analysis you find in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.

Jñānanirmathanābhyāsāt means repeatedly contemplating upon the nature of the self with the help of the *Upaniṣads*. What’s the nature of myself? What is the abiding reality of myself? Now I am a waker, then I am a dreamer, then I am a deep sleeper. When the waker is, the other two are not. When the dreamer is, the other two are not. One excludes the other; each one of these is mutually exclusive. Is there something that these three do not exclude? For

example, a bangle excludes an earring because bangle is not earring, and earring excludes a chain because an earring is not a chain. These three mutually exclude each other. Is there something that they do not exclude? That is gold. So, while one name and form excludes another name and form, the very essence that is the self is not excluded. What is it that is not excluded by the waker, dreamer, deep-sleeper? That is the essence, and that is the nature of my self, which one arrives at by letting go of all the changing aspects and focusing on that which does not change. What is changing? It is the waking experience. That goes away when I become a dreamer. The dreamer goes away when I become a sleeper. The sleeper goes away when I become a waker again. In and through these changes, what is it that sustains the changes? What is it that connects the changes? What is the connecting thread? As Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*,¹ it is like an invisible thread that holds a garland of flowers. Each flower is different from the others, but there is that *sūtra*, the thread, that holds all the flowers together. What is the thread that holds all the changing states? That thread is the very essence, that's the self.

Jñānanirmathanābhāsāt. In this repeated churning, the intellect is the rod and the *Upaniṣad-mahāvākya* (*aham brahmāsmi*—I am brahman) is the rope, using which you perform deliberation (*vicāra*) in the intellect. On one hand we have the *jīva-ātmā*, the individual self, on the other hand we have *brahman*, the *parama-ātmā*. The *Upaniṣad* reveals that *jīvātma* is none other than *paramātmā*. *Jīva* is none other than *brahman*, *tat tvam asi*. It reveals that *aham* is *brahman*; *aham brahma asmi*.

¹ मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ।

mayi sarvamidam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva | (BG 7.7)

Churning is *vicāra*, not taking my conclusions for granted

I am *brahman*. This is the vision of the scriptures. One who takes oneself to be a limited being is in fact *brahman*, the limitless. This is what the scriptures reveal. Am I really what I take myself to be? Am I really *ahaṅkāra*, the ego, which I take myself to be? Do I have a justification in taking my self to be a small limited person? I have taken for granted that I am a small, limited, insignificant being. I have taken this for granted without having subjected this conclusion to the scrutiny of an inquiry. We have never really looked into the validity of this conclusion that I am a *jīva*, meaning that I am an ego, that I am a small or limited being. Has anybody seen the I to really say that I is a limited being? It cannot be proven that anybody has seen the I. What I see is my body; what I see is my mind, what I see is my thoughts. Looking at this limited personality of this body, mind, intellect and so on, I draw conclusions about my self. Isn't that strange? It is like looking at my reflection in a distorted mirror and drawing conclusions about my face. Just because the face that is reflected looks distorted in a distorted mirror, I conclude that my face is distorted. Or just because the reflection looks fat, I conclude that I am fat. Similarly, I am looking at my body and I conclude that I am a human being, that I am a man, or I am a woman, I am tall, I am short. I derive these conclusions by just looking at the body. That means I have taken for granted that this body I am. I look at my mind. When the mind is happy, I conclude that I am happy. When the mind is unhappy, I conclude that I am unhappy. Thus I keep on drawing a variety of conclusions about myself, not by looking at myself, but by looking at something other than myself. This is called *tādātmya*, identification.

I am identifying with something that I see, such as the body, even though I am a witness of the body. I am quite clear that this table I

am not, this flower I am not, this book I am not. All of these things I am not. I know that they are all objects of my knowledge and I know I am different from what I know. But somehow this *viveka* or discrimination seems to fail me when it comes to this body, even though this body also falls in the category of something that is known to me. Lord Kṛṣṇa said, *Idaṁ śarīraṁ kaunteya kṣetramityabhidhīyate*, “Hey Arjuna, this *śarīraṁ* (body) is called *kṣetram* (the field)”¹ meaning that it falls into the category of that which is known to you.

Like with the body, the *viveka* (discrimination) does not remain when it comes to my mind. I become one with my mind; I identify with my mind and I take myself to be as good as the mind. It’s like watching a movie and becoming so identified with it that I start crying because somebody is crying in the movie and I start laughing because somebody is laughing there. This fellow in the movie wins a million dollar lottery and I jump with joy. I haven’t got even a penny and still momentarily I seem to experience the joy of winning a lottery of a million dollars. This is what we call identification. There is self-forgetfulness on one hand and becoming something that I am not on the other. Something like that is going on here, too. Even though I am not the personality in the form of this body-mind-intellect complex, there is identification with it and hence this conscious person has as though become as small as this personality.

Three-fold limitations of all things, including my personality

This personality is limited in every way. It is limited in time because there is birth and death; it is limited in place, because at a given time it is in one place and not in other places; it is limited in attributes, because it possesses only these attributes and not any others. The person who identifies with the personality also feels

¹ BG 13.1

the same sense of limitation. I feel a sense of limitation and at the same time I cannot accept it, so naturally I struggle constantly to become free from that sense of limitation. This is *saṁsāra*. It is a struggle, and this is a struggle that can never end, because I can never get rid of the limitations as long as I keep identifying myself with this personality. So the way to become free from limitations is not to try to *become* limitless, but to *understand* that this *viveka* (discrimination) is required between the self and the nonself. This is called *jñānanirmathana*, churning with the rod of knowledge or the rod of inquiry.

Pāśam dahati paṇḍitaḥ, the wise burns all bondage. *Paṇḍa* means wisdom about the self; the one who has attained it is called *paṇḍitaḥ*, the wise, the knower of the self. The knowledge that I am *brahman* is called *paṇḍa*, and one who has gained that knowledge is called *paṇḍita*, a wise person. Just as fire generated from the friction between the two wooden blocks burns all the combustible wood, so also this fire of knowledge, which is generated by churning the rod of *viveka* or *vicāra* (inquiry or deliberation), burns all the *pāśas* (fettors or bondage).

With this introduction, now in the next *mantras* we see the analysis of the three states of consciousness and what the substratum of the three states is. It is called *avasthātraya-vivekaḥ*, the discrimination based on the three states of experience, *jāgrat*, *svapna* and *suṣupti*, waking, dream, and deep sleep states. The question is, if you say that *ātmā* is the self of all, I am *brahman* and I am one nondual, how did I become a *saṁsārī*? How does a limitless self become a limited being? How does he become the one subject to birth and death and sorrow? How does it happen? This kind of an inquiry is now being performed in the subsequent *mantras*.

Verse 12

स एव मायापरिमोहितात्मा शरीरमास्थाय करोति सर्वम् ।
स्त्रियन्नपानादिविचित्रभोगैः स एव जाग्रत्परितृप्तिमेति ॥ १२ ॥

sa eva mājāparimohitātmā śarīramāsthāya karoti sarvam ।
striyannapānādivicitrabhogaiḥ sa eva jāgratparitṛptimeti ॥
12॥

सः - he एव - alone is मायापरिमोहितात्मा one who is deluded by mājā
शरीरम् - body आस्थाय - identified with करोति - does सर्वम् -
everything स्त्रि - woman अन्नपानादि - eating and drinking विचित्र -
varied भोगैः - objects of pleasure सः एव - he alone जाग्रत् - waking
state परितृप्तिम् - full gratification एति - obtains

The self alone deluded by mājā is the one who, identified with the body does all actions in the waking state, and obtains full gratification through the varied objects of pleasure such as woman, food, and drink.

It is natural for one to wonder why, if one is limitless *brahman*, one feels the sense of limitation. If I am in fact *ānanda*, happiness, how come I feel sorrow? You say I am immortal, how come I feel like a mortal being? You say that *brahman* is one, nondual, and limitless. How can a limited creation come out of the limitless *brahman*? If nonduality is the only reality, how come I experience

duality? Why am I sorrowful? Why do I feel limited? The expectation is that just by reasoning the problem will be solved. The fact is that just by pursuing reasoning the problem will not be solved, because the problem happens to be illegitimate. An illegitimate problem cannot be solved by legitimate arguments, no matter how hard one tries. It can only be solved by recognizing that the problem is illegitimate. As Gautama Buddha said, if an arrow is stuck in your back, don't waste time analyzing where the arrow came from, who shot the arrow, what kind of poison is in the arrow; just pull out the arrow and treat the wound. Therefore, he did not entertain these kinds of questions. But still these questions will arise in our minds. We feel that if we have satisfactory explanation of why we feel the way we do, then we can proceed further.

Vedānta says the problem appears to be real due to *māyā*. Why does the limitless feel limited? It is because of *Māyā*. How does one appear to be many? *Māyā*. How does the actionless self appear to be the agent of action? *Māyā*. How does one who is free seem to be bound? Again, *māyā*. What is *māyā*? Inexplicable, or indefinable, *anirvacanīya*. It is inexplicable only in the sense that it neither is nor is it not; it cannot be called *sat* (existing) or *asat* (nonexisting). Hence nothing in the creation lends itself to being absolutely defined, because it is *anirvacanīyam*.

Māyā is a model actually. *Māyā* means an illusion of magic. In Sanskrit, *yā mā sā māyā*, that which is not really there is *māyā*. The magician is called *māyāvī* and the magic is called *māyā*. A magician, Īśvara, by the power of magic, creates a world that is an appearance, that is not really there, but for those who are under the spell of magic, that creation appears to be real. This is what a

magician does. For example, he takes a piece of paper and shows a \$100 bill. There is no \$100 bill there, but it appears to be there. That is called *mithyā*. The cause is *māyā*, or magic, and the effect is *mithyā*, an appearance. The *vedāntin* says that's how Isvara's creation is.

“How come I feel limited?” Who says you are limited? That's what the *vedāntin* will ask. Why is there sorrow and grief? As the teaching begins in the Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna, *aśocyān anvaśocastvam*.¹ You are grieving for something that does not deserve to be grieved for, because there is no cause for grief at all. The *vedāntin* says that in fact there is no *saṁsāra*, even though it appears to be there. There is no bondage but bondage appears to be there. There is no duality but duality appears to be there. There is no creation but creation appears to be there. There is no limited being but he appears to be there. However, for those who are under the spell of magic, whatever they perceive appears to be real. The dream world appears to be real when you are under the spell of dream; the pleasures and pains of the dream world are very real at that time. Real tears are coming from the eyes in the dream. Only when you wake up do you realize that the dream was *mithyā*, but not while you were dreaming. Hence, just because something appears to be real does not mean it has to be real. The *jagat* (the world) is *mithyā*, duality is *mithyā*, limitation is *mithyā*, and the cause is *māyā*.

What is *māyā*? It is basically ignorance. Ignorance has two powers, *āvaraṇa śakti* (veiling power) and *vikṣepa śakti* (projecting power). For example, when we see the snake on a rope, two things are happening there. One is that I do not know the rope as a rope; the

¹ BG 2.11

true nature of rope is veiled from me. The other is that I see a snake where in fact there is a rope; that is the projection of snake. So two aspects are involved; veiling and projecting. *Māyā* is the projecting power. *Māyā*, ignorance, creates this projection. I do not know who I truly am and therefore I take myself to be a limited being. This is merely a projection on my part coming from ignorance. The limitless self is deluded by *māyā*. Just as a mind deluded by ignorance sees a snake on the rope, the mind deluded by *māyā* sees a limited *jīva* in the limitless *ātmā*.

We have a gross body, a subtle body, and a causal body. In the waking state there is identification with all the three bodies. The gross body functions because of the subtle body. Both the gross body and the subtle body are there because of the causal body, which is ignorance. In the waking state, identification with the gross body can be there only when there is identification with the subtle body, and that can be there only because of the causal body. In short, in the waking state there is identification with the causal, subtle, and the gross bodies, but identification with the gross body is predominant.

How identification becomes a burden

In identification I forget the true self and become something that I am not. When I identify with the body, I say I am a human being. I'm a man. I'm a woman. I'm father, I'm son, I am tall, I am short, I am dark, I am fair, I am handsome, I am ugly. All these complexes constitute *saṁsāra*. "Swamiji, but to feel that I am handsome is fine. Why is that *saṁsāra*? To say that I am ugly may be *saṁsāra*, but that I am handsome is wonderful." Even to think that I am handsome or that I am beautiful is also a burden. As *Pūjya* Swamiji says, when a woman becomes Miss Universe, it means she is declared the most beautiful woman in the whole

world at least during this year. So you'd think she must be the happiest person and now she must be convinced that she is the most beautiful and therefore has no need to wear makeup. However, so far she was spending an hour and a half on makeup every day, but now that she's declared Miss Universe, she must spend two and a half hours to retain that title. Thus, to think that I am successful, to think that I am beautiful and so on also has a burden of its own, because then you'll need to retain the stature. When you are studying in school, say in the sixth grade, and happen to score first rank out of all the various classes within the grade, you should be happy if next year you should score first, even if it is in your own class. But if you score second among all classes, people start asking "is that all?" So when I was scoring fifteenth rank there was no problem. Now that I scored second rank, it is as though I failed. Thus every complex has its own burden, its own problem. If I say, "I am King," it has its own problems, and "I'm a beggar" has its own problems. Both these fellows are not getting sleep. The king in his comfortable bed doesn't have sleep because he is worried about his kingdom. The beggar also doesn't have sleep because he doesn't know where his next meal will come from. So every role, every complex, is a burden. Whether it is a superiority complex or an inferiority complex, it is a burden. This is indeed bondage.

Vicitra-bhogaiḥ, by varieties of objects of pleasure the jīva gains experiences in the waking state. In short, the limitless self on account of *māyā* or ignorance, through projection and identification, identifies with the personality and takes himself to be a small and limited personality; this is the sense of limitation. He is busy fulfilling the perceived needs. "I need to be happy" is a perceived need. "I need to have a luxury car" is a perceived need. Most of the needs are perceived needs. He projects all kinds of needs and he is busy from morning till evening and from womb to

tomb trying to fulfill those needs. This is the story of the waking state.

Verse 13

स्वप्ने स जीवः सुखदुःखभोक्ता स्वमायया कल्पितजीवलोके । सुषुप्तिकाले सकले विलीने तमोऽभिभूतः सुखरूपमेति ॥ १३ ॥

svapne sa jīvaḥ sukhaduḥkhabhoktā svamāyayā
kalpitajīvaloke | suṣuptikāle sakale vilīne tamo'bhibhūtaḥ
sukharūpameti || 13||

स्वप्ने - in dream सः जीवः - the person सुखदुःखभोक्ता - the experiencer
of joys and sorrow स्वमायया - by (the power of) self-delusion
कल्पितजीवलोके - his own created world सुषुप्तिकाले - in deep sleep
सकले - the entire (projection) विलीने - having been merged तमः -
darkness (of ignorance) अभिभूतः - having been overcome सुखरूपम् -
the nature of happiness एति - attains ॥ १३ ॥

The same person experiences joys and sorrows in the personal dream world created by the power of self delusion. In the state of deep sleep, when everything is merged, he is overcome by the darkness of ignorance and attains the nature of happiness.

Then there is the dream experience. Like the waking state, the dream is also the result of the past *karma* or action. When the past action that is the cause of giving me the experience of the waking state fructifies, the experience of the waking state comes about. Now arises *karma* that is the cause of the dream; then I have the experience of dream. Again *karma* arises to wake me up. So all the experiences that come and go are due to past *karma* or action. The dream experience happens when all the senses and part of the mind are resolved. The identification with the gross body is given up and the identification with the subtle body continues, even though not the entire subtle body. Understand that in the dream, the body that the jīva possesses is not the gross body of the waking state. As Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad describes, the self makes the waking body unconscious and creates a dream body for himself. For gaining experience in any given realm, I should have the *upādhi* that is compatible with that realm. For example, if I go to heaven, this gross body won't work there; it must be a body that is compatible with the objects in heaven, for one thing a body that does not decay.

Dream is a realm different from waking, and there the objects are subtle so we need a different kind of body. That's why the self makes this waking body unconscious and creates a new body for himself so as to gain the experiences of dream. So this gross body, these organs of perception, these organs of action, and this Earth are not there in the dream. The sun and the moon that you see in the dream are created in the dream. The eyes and ears that you see in the dream are all created in the dream. They are dream eyes and ears and not the waking eyes and ears, so it is possible that a person who is blind might see things in the dream. Supposing a sighted person has become blind; when he dreams it is quite possible that he is a sighted person there because of past *saṁskāras*, but in the dream a different set of sense organs is

created. In the dream this *jīva*, the self, creates his own world with his own projecting power. Just as Īśvara has created this waking world with *māyā*, his projecting power, so also the *jīva* creates the dream world with his projecting power. What is the basis of dream projection? The *saṁskāras*, the impressions left in the mind from previous experiences. It is said that the dream experiences have their basis in the waking experiences because each experience in the waking state leaves a certain *saṁskāra*, impression.

The *jīva* might not be able to fulfill some of his desires in the waking world, but in the dream world he may be able to do that. The unsatisfied desires could give rise to a dream. In the waking state I am not allowed to eat sweets, let us say. The doctor has said, “Swamiji, sorry already you are too sweet and therefore no more sweets.” Now generally the hosts know this beforehand, but Indian hosts feel that their meal is incomplete unless they serve sweets, so they prepare sweets anyway. There are six people sitting at the dining table, Swami is also one of them, and there is a whole heap of sweets. The host says, “Swamiji, just one?” I say, “No, I can’t have it.” Whether I want to have it or not, at least this is my declared position, that I don’t eat sweets. So I watch everyone else have a wonderful time and inside I am suppressing a desire for sweets. I could not fulfill this desire for eating sweets during the waking state, but when I go to sleep, you should see how many *rasagollās* I consume in the dream.

Strong impressions create a dream world where the *jīva* expresses his *vāsanās* or *saṁskāras*. Unfortunately, we don’t have the freedom to create the dream world of our choice; the dream world just gets created. Please understand, the creation of the dream world is not under our control, otherwise we would create the dream world of our liking. The pillowcase says “sweet dreams” but mostly the dreams are not sweet. Whatever impressions there are,

pleasant or painful, they will decide what the dream will be. Therefore, in dream also the poor fellow is a *bhokta*, experiencer of pleasure and pain. In the dream, the *jīva* is only a *bhoktā* (experiencer), and not a *kartā* (doer), as in the waking state. The dreamer appears to perform actions in dream, but that is governed by the *karma*. There is no deliberate or premeditated action in dream, therefore the *jīva* does not earn any new *punya* or *pāpa*. He just exhausts the *karma* that was responsible for giving rise to the experience of dream. Ultimately, he gets tired of that experience and lets go of that also.

The third experience is deep sleep, *suṣupti*, where the identification with the subtle body is also given up. All that remains is the identification with the causal body. Everything is resolved; everything is merged into the cause, ignorance. In deep sleep the whole personality merges into ignorance, which is the cause of any projection in the first place. The identification of the gross body is already given up, that of the subtle body is also given up, and the whole personality merges into the causal body, which is ignorance. In waking and dream, there is both the veiling and projection, whereas in deep sleep, there is no projection. There is just veiling, the cover of ignorance.

In the sleep state the person doesn't die. Nothing is destroyed; everything remains intact except that it becomes unmanifest. There is no manifest world like in waking and in dream. Everything remains unmanifest. Overpowered by *tamas* (ignorance), the *jīva* attains the state of *ānanda* or happiness. In fact, in the deep sleep state we merge into *brahman*. In deep sleep, nothing other than ignorance is separating me from *brahman*. Therefore, in deep sleep there is experience of *ānanda*, total happiness; my true nature is experienced.

What prevents me from experiencing my true nature in the waking and dream states is the strong identification with the body. In the waking state, because of the identification with the gross and subtle bodies, various notions and complexes are created. They deprive me of the benefit of my true nature. When I am looking at a rope and the conclusion is that it is a snake, what deprives me of the experience of a rope is only my notion that it is a snake. So also, in the waking and dream states what deprives me of the experience of my true nature is the notion that I am a *jīva*, I am so and so. All of this goes away in the deep sleep state. There is no awareness of the gross body, there is no awareness of the mind, and no awareness even of the ego, because there is no identification. Therefore, in the deep sleep state, the self becomes free from all identification and hence free from all complexes, all inhibiting factors that deprive him of the experience of his own self. He experiences his own self, that is *ānanda*, in deep sleep, except that there is a blanket of ignorance, darkness of ignorance. Therefore he is not aware that he is experiencing *ānanda*. In the state of deep sleep I experience profound happiness all right, but my mind is totally merged in ignorance, and that's the reason why at that time I am not aware that I am experiencing this happiness. Were that not the case, if I were aware of *ānanda* in the deep sleep state, nothing else would be required in life; all that we'd need to do is just to fall asleep. If during sleep we were aware that we are the profound happiness or that we are experiencing profound happiness, that would be wonderful. Unfortunately, in the state of deep sleep there's a total blanket of ignorance and therefore we are not aware. When the person wakes up in the morning he says, "I slept well; I did not know anything."

Thus the Upaniṣad briefly describes waking, dream, and deep

sleep states. Deep sleep is the experience when there is only identification with the causal body, ignorance; dream is the experience when there is the identification with the subtle body and the causal body; and waking is the experience when there is identification with the subtle, causal, and gross bodies. The waker in Vedānta is called *viśva*. *Viśva* means whole, entire, because the complete personality is manifest in the waking state. The dreamer is called *taijasa*, the shining one, the illumined one or the effulgent one. *Tejas* means light. The whole dream world is a world of thought, which is shining in awareness. The deep sleeper is called *prājñah*, which means one who is essentially ignorant or one who knows well, both the meanings are given. *Prājñah* is one who knows everything well because deep sleep is the causal state, which is the seed of the other two states and therefore, in that sense, the sleeper knows everything. A corresponding situation obtains even at the cosmic level. When the whole cosmos goes to sleep it is called the state of dissolution, *pralaya*. The cosmic self is called *Īśvara*. Consciousness identified with the totality of ignorance or *māyā* is called *Īśvara*. Consciousness identified with the totality of subtle bodies is called *hiranyagarbha*. Consciousness identified with the totality of gross bodies is called *virāt*. Corresponding to *prājñah* at the individual level is *Īśvara* at the cosmic level; corresponding to *taijasa* at the individual level is *hiranyagarbha* at the cosmic level; and corresponding to *viśva* at the individual level is *virāt* at the cosmic level. This is just for general information.

Now what makes the *jīva* wake up and what is his true nature? That is said in the next *mantra*.

Verse 14

पुनश्च जन्मान्तरकर्मयोगात्स एव जीवः स्वपिति प्रबुद्धः। पुरत्रये क्रीडति यश्च जीवस्ततस्तु जातं सकलं विचित्रम्। आधारमानन्दमखण्डबोधं यस्मिँल्लयं याति पुरत्रयं च ॥ १४ ॥

punaśca janmāntarakarmayogātsa eva jīvaḥ svapiti prabuddhaḥ | puratraye kṛīḍati yaśca jīvastatastu jātaṁ sakalaṁ vicitraṁ | ādhāramānandamakhaṇḍabodham yaśmiṁllayaṁ yāti puratrayaṁ ca || 14||

पुनः - again च - and जन्मान्तर - in past life कर्मयोगात् - because of deeds सः एव - the same जीवः - jīva स्वपिति - (as though) dreams/sleeps प्रबुद्धः - awake पुरत्रये - in the three cities क्रीडति - sports यः - who च - and जीव - jīva ततः - from whom तु - indeed जातम् - is born सकलम् - the entire विचित्रम् - varied आधारम् - substratum आनन्दम् - joy अखण्डबोधम् - unbroken consciousness यस्मिन् - in whom लयम् - dissolution याति - goes पुरत्रयम् च - and all the three cities ॥ १४ ॥

Again, because of deeds done in past life, the jīva comes back to the dream or wakefulness. The being who (thus) sports in the three cities, and from whom the entire varied diversity has

sprung up, is the substratum, the indivisible consciousness and joy, and in whom alone all the three cities dissolve.

Once again, on account of past actions, the same one who is the limitless self, wakes up. On account of identification with the gross body he is the waker, on account of identification with the subtle body he is the dreamer, and on account of identification with the causal body he is the sleeper. This is his life story. What else is there? If you want to write your autobiography, this is it. In that you can write whatever details you want but essentially it is waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. Next day again the same, again and again and again. If we don't gain the knowledge, we go from womb to tomb and gain the next body and again the process goes on.

What wakes me up? Deep sleep is such a pleasurable experience that nobody would want to wake up. Most people are reluctant to come out of sleep. When the alarm rings, the first impulse is to stop it and pull the comforter over my head. That's the first reaction. Nobody wants to give up that experience of the deep sleep state because in fact it is the experience of happiness. But I am forced to get up. It is my past *karma*, it is my unfulfilled desires or ambitions or duties or preoccupations that force me to wake up.

It is my *karma* that wakes me up because when I go to sleep at night, all my desires and ambitions are still there in sleep, in the causal or seed state. They don't get destroyed in the deep sleep state. Therefore, the fellow who went to sleep with whatever ambitions he had is the one who wakes up, and those desires, which were in the causal state or seed state, sprout. Just as the seed that is put in the ground takes a little time to germinate and sprout, so also the desires that are in the seed state during the deep sleep

state germinate and want to sprout and they wake me up. Hence I wake up the next morning because of desires that want to be fulfilled. Sometimes you go from deep sleep to dreaming and then to waking and sometimes you go from deep sleep to waking; sleep is not a continuous experience. This is the process that goes on day in and day out.

What do we learn from this? Why does Upaniṣad describe this? It is to make a point that the one who is the waker alone is the dreamer and that alone is the sleeper, and that alone is the waker again. The experiences in the three states are all different from one another. The waker has no entry into the dream, the dreamer has no entry into sleep, and the sleeper has no entry into the world of waking. Thus each state excludes the other two. The waker is not the dreamer and the dreamer is not the sleeper. But there is some continuity. When I wake up in the morning, I know that I who was sleeping have woken up. That much awareness we have, is it not so? When you wake up in the morning, how do you feel? Hey, a new person is born today? No. Sometime I wish that were the case, but that's not really so. There is a continuity of existence. That is why I recollect that the one who was sitting on the dais and talking yesterday is the one sitting and talking today. In all these changing and discontinuous experiences, there is a continuous thread and that is what is important to us.

The *sāstra* draws our attention to the fact that in all these changing experiences there is a changeless thread. The same *jīva*, the self, sports in three different cities, waking, dream, and deep sleep—the three realms. We know that one who sports in the city is different from the city. Today we are in Ben Lomond, but tomorrow we might be in San Francisco. Maybe three days later we might be in New York, thus sporting in different cities. But when can I go from

one city to another? When I am not the city. San Francisco is not close to New York City. San Francisco is where it is and New York is where it is. One who is neither San Francisco nor New York can go from one city to the other. The fact that I travel from one state of consciousness to the other shows that the waking world I am not, the dream world I am not, the deep sleep world I am not. Even the waker, dreamer, and sleeper I am not. I am someone who connects all three and who transcends all three. We can learn this much from our experiences and when we learn that, then it does not matter what the experiences are.

Right now we are so preoccupied with the experiences themselves and the details of the experiences that it takes all our attention and what needs to be attended to escapes our attention. What we should have been doing is to pay attention to that thread, the changeless thread, that connects and informs all the changing experiences. Buddha said that everything is momentary (*sarvam kṣaṇikam*). Vedānta says that if you say things are momentary, that they change constantly, there must be a changeless entity with reference to which can you say there is change. There must be a reference point with reference to which you can measure the distance or change. Suppose you are indifferent to the changes, that is called dispassion, *vairāgya*. Why is *vairāgya* so important for this knowledge? It's important so that we are not bothered about what doesn't matter. What happens in the three states doesn't matter. Some people spend a long time thinking and analyzing dreams; their life centers on dream. They have all kinds of experiences, good or bad, and they seek consultation to understand their meaning. Instead, the real value of dream is that we can apply its lessons to develop proper attitude toward the waking world. Just as we can be indifferent to the dream, knowing it is *mithyā*, we can also be indifferent to the waking state, which is also *mithyā*. In

fact, the experience of dream helps us understand the reality of waking, and the example of deep sleep helps us understand *mokṣa*.

In the Upaniṣads, the description of dream is given not so much to explain the details of the process and the mechanism of dream as it is to explain the reality of dream. When you wake up from a dream, you know that it was just a projection, an appearance. That much you know, that the dream was not real. It is said that when the dream experience happens, the *jīva* is solely located in a very fine nerve, which is finer than anyone's hair; that is where all the experiences of the dream take place. There is no room there for mountains and trees that you see in the dream. One reason that the dream cannot be real is that there is no room to accommodate all these objects and the second reason is that when I am dreaming, the dream is within me but at the same time I think the dream world is outside me. When I am experiencing dream, I think that the trees and mountains are outside me, other than me. But when I wake up, do they remain by themselves or do they all get merged in me? Before I went to dream, I alone was; when I wake up, I alone am; and in between there is a whole dream world. Where did the dream world arise from? It arose from me alone because I alone was before dream. Where does it merge? It merges into me because I alone remain after the dream. Therefore, in between it is only I and nothing else. When I wake up I realize that the dream was within me, but when I was dreaming it appeared as though it was outside of me, and that is false. So there are these two reasons—even though the dream world is within me, while I am dreaming it appears outside me, and the place where I am dreaming has no room for accommodating the dream objects—that prove that the dream is a projection, it is *mithyā*. When I wake up the dream world is negated, it is falsified.

So dream is a beautiful example to illustrate what is *mithyā*. The author of Pañcadaśī¹ says that the appearance of an object that is nonexistent is *mithyā* such as that of an elephant seen in dream. So dream experience is cited to explain *mithyā*. The experience of deep sleep is cited to explain *mokṣa*. In deep sleep there is experience of *ānanda* without any external source of happiness. That shows that the self is of the nature of *ānanda*, which is experienced when all the identification is given up. When all identification is given up consciously, then there is awareness of one being *ānanda* and ever-free, ever-liberated, which is *mokṣa*. The difference between deep sleep and *mokṣa* is that there is darkness of ignorance in one and the light of knowledge in the other.

If it is clear that the dream is *mithyā*, an appearance of what is really not there, then we can look at the waking state. In which way is waking really different from dream? In dream also I was talking to an audience; all of you were there in my dream, sitting here amidst all these beautiful trees and mountains and I was sharing with you this Kaivalya Upaniṣad. A similar setup was there also—subject-object duality was there in dream also. How is the waking state different? You might say that the dream objects are fleeting and the waking objects are stable, but from the standpoint of reality, what is the setup in dream? Subject and object setup. What is the setup in waking? It is the same subject-object setup. If the whole dream world is *mithyā*, then the subject-object setup also is *mithyā*, please understand. Wherever the subject and object setup is, it is *mithyā*. In waking also the subject and object setup happens and so it is *mithyā*. So we can say this much—just as dream is *mithyā*, the waking is also *mithyā*—and

¹ Pañcadaśī 2.70

we can let it go. Once it is understood as *mithyā*, then it is possible to let go of it. As long as waking is thought to be real, it will hang on. That is why understanding of *mithyā* is so important. If it is understood as *mithyā*, it can be let go; it won't bother me any more. I cannot have likes or dislikes for *mithyā*. I cannot have any reaction to *mithyā*. I can have reaction only to something real. As long as an apple is real on the dining table it attracts me, my mouth is watering when I am hungry because I love apple. When I approach it and pick it up and discover that it is a wax apple or a wooden apple, I put it back. Now that apple doesn't matter to me. Even if someone takes it away, it doesn't matter to me. Until now I was waiting for a chance, thinking, "Let me grab it before anybody takes it." As long as it is real, it can cause attachment, aversion, and all reactions. With the knowledge of it being *mithyā*, there is no reaction.

Vedānta teaches that the whole waking world is *mithyā*. Then you need not be bothered about it. Let it be where it is, you be where you are. All emotional attachment goes away because it is *mithyā*. How much emotion can there be for holding on to what ultimately is *mithyā*? You remain an emotional person but you will not be controlled by emotions. Once the clarity comes, you start to view the waking world as you would view the dream world when you wake up from the dream.

As the Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram says, "The universe, like a city seen in a mirror, is within oneself. But one sees the world as though it is created outside, while all along it remains in the substratum of the self, just as in a dream."¹ When I wake up from

¹ विश्वं दर्पणदृश्यमाननगरीतुल्यं निजांतर्गतं

पश्यन्नात्मनि मायया बहिरिवोद्भूतं यथा निद्रया ।

a dream, I realize that the dream world was a manifestation of myself and all the duality resolves into the self. Similarly, when I wake up to the reality of my true nature, I realize that all that is here is one consciousness. One self alone is manifest as the whole waking world, one nondual. The whole variety of the universe is born from the self that is the true nature of the *jīvā* that sports in the three cities of waking, dream, and deep sleep. Just as the dream world was born from me, so also the waking world is born from me. Therefore, the self that sports or transmigrates from one state to the other state alone is, in fact, the substratum of all experiences, or the substratum of the entire universe.

Ādhāram, substratum; *ānandam*, joy; *akhaṇḍabodham*, indivisible consciousness. What is the nature of the self? What is the nature of I that passes through all the experiences, that informs all the experiences? It is the connecting thread; it is the substratum, *ādhāram*, of all experiences. It is *ānandam*, the wholeness, happiness, *akhaṇḍa*, undivided, *bodham*, of the nature of knowledge. The undivided awareness, which is boundless, is of the nature of *ānanda* and that's what I am, the common denominator in all the experiences. Every experience is different from every other experience. What is the common denominator of every experience? *Asti bhāti priyam*, *sat-cit-ānanda*, supporting every experience. It shines as awareness, *akhaṇḍabodham*, undivided consciousness. The objects of consciousness are divided, but the consciousness itself is undivided, boundless. Consciousness is the nature of the self, which is the common denominator, the undeniable, non-negatable substratum. Everything else is changing and therefore subject to being negated or displaced and excluded

by everything else. It is like the gold, which is not excluded by all the ornaments. What is not excluded or denied or negated of all the experiences is *ādhāram*, *ānandam*, *akhaṇḍabodham*. From that all the three worlds emerge and into that all the three worlds merge. On what platform does the play of waking, dream and deep sleep take place? On the platform of the self that is the substratum, that is undivided knowledge, that is *ānanda* or happiness.

Now these three states of experience are described with reference to the individual self. But Upaniṣad says understand that you are not the individual self, you are the universal self. In what way is the individual self the universal self? The next *mantra* describes that.

Verse 15

एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च । खं वायुज्योतिरापः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी ॥ १५ ॥

etasmājjāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca । khaṁ vāyurjyotirāpaḥ pṛthivī viśvasya dhāriṇī ॥ 15॥

एतस्मात् - from this जायते - is born प्राणः - the life force मनः -

themind सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च - and all organs खं - space वायुः - air ज्योतिः -

fire आपः - water पृथिवी - the earth विश्वस्य of all धारिणी - support ॥

१५ ॥

From this is born the life force, the mind, all organs, space, air, fire, water, and the earth that supports all.

This verse continues the biography of the *jīva*, the one that is going through waking, dream, and deep sleep experiences. From him, the self, is born the cosmic *prāṇa*, the vital air; the cosmic mind, which knows and creates; all the sense organs; and the five elements, *ākāśa* (space), *vāyu* (air), *jyoti* (fire or light), *āpaḥ* (water), and *pṛthivī* (earth). From the self that is *saccidānanda ādhāram ānandam akhaṇḍabodham*, the substratum, the undivided happiness or wholeness, and undivided awareness, from that self is born the entire universe beginning from *prāṇa* or *hiranyagarbha*. Another word for *hiranyagarbha* is *sūtrātmā*. *Sūtra* means the thread that connects everything, and *prāṇa* is the *sūtrātmā* because *prāṇa* is the *kriyā śakti*, the cosmic energy pervading the entire universe of sentient and insentient beings, which is responsible for the vitality and activity of the entire universe. *Manah* here stands for the cosmic mind, which is the totality of the *jñāna śakti*, the power of knowledge and *icchā śakti*, the power of will. The whole universe is born from this self that goes through the three states of experience, waking, dream, and deep sleep.

The poor *jīva* feels helpless all the time; a helpless creature, that's what he is. He has no control over anything. In the waking state he feels helpless because of what the world does to him, beginning from the spouse to everybody else. In dream also he is helpless and in deep sleep he does not know what is there, anyway. This helpless, helpless creature is the substratum of this whole universe. He is the self of the whole universe. From him the universe beginning with *prāṇa* is born, by him it is sustained, and unto him it finally resolves back. Therefore, the one who is the self of the three states of experience is in fact the self of the entire universe.

We see the famous *mahā-vākya*, great statement, *tat tvam asi*, that thou art, being unfolded in these *mantras*. The *mahā-vākya* reveals the identity between *jīva* and *brahman*. *Jīva* is indicated by *tvam-pada*, (the word “you” or “thou”), *brahman* is indicated by *tat-pada* (the word “that”) and *asi* (the word “are” or “art”) indicates the identity between the two.

Tvam-pada, the meaning of the word “you,” was described in verses that examined the three states of experience. *Tat-pada*, the cause of the creation, was described in the fifteenth verse, which we just discussed. The sixteenth verse gives us the *mahā-vākya*, revealing the identity between the two.

Verse 16

यत्परं ब्रह्म सर्वात्मा विश्वस्यायतनं महत् ।

सूक्ष्मात्सूक्ष्मतरं नित्यं स त्वमेव त्वमेव तत् ॥ १६ ॥

yatparam brahma sarvātmā viśvasyāyatanam mahat ।
sūkṣmātsūkṣmataram nityam sa tvameva tvameva tat ॥ 16॥

यत् - which परम्ब्रह्म - unconditioned *Brahman* सर्वात्मा - the self of all
विश्वस्य - of the universe आयतनम् - the support महत् - great सूक्ष्मात् -
than the subtle सूक्ष्मतरम् - subtler नित्यम् - timeless सः त्वम् एव - he is
you alone त्वम् एव तत् - you are that alone ॥ १६ ॥

That which is the unconditioned brahman, the self of all, the great support of the universe, subtler than the subtle, timeless, that alone you are, you are that alone.

Param brahma is *brahman* that is unconditioned, limitless. To *brahman* is added this adjective, *param*, because the word *brahman* is used for *aparam* or inferior *brahman* also. The word *brahman* is used for both *saguṇa-brahman* and *nirguṇa-brahman*, conditioned *brahman* and unconditioned *brahman*, therefore a qualification is added here, the adjective *param*. *Param* means *deśa-kāla-vastu-pariccheda-sūnyam*, that which is devoid of the limitations of space, time, and attributes. In fact the word *brahman* itself means limitless. *Brahman* means unconditionally big or great. That which is unqualified big, which is limitless, is *brahman*. But since the word *brahman* is used for both *saguṇa-brahman* and *nirguṇa-brahman*, this adjective *param* is used.

Brahman is limitless; it is *satyam jñānam anantam*. *Brahman* is *satyam*, of the nature of truth, *jñānam*, of the nature of awareness, and *anantam*, infinite. *Brahman* is *sarvātmā*, the self of all, because the universe has arisen from it. *Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jīvanti, yatprayantyabhisamviśanti*. “*Brahman* is that from which the whole universe of names and forms emerges, by which it is sustained, and that unto which it goes back.”¹ It is the *upādāna-kāraṇam*, the material cause of the universe, as well as the *nimitta-kāraṇam*, the intelligent cause. Being the material cause, it is *sarvātmā*, the self of all, the self of the whole universe, like clay is for the universe of pots. For that

¹ Tai.Up. 3.1

reason, it is also *mahat āyatanam*, the great abode of the entire universe, substratum of the entire universe.

Again, *brahman* is *sūkṣmāt sūkṣmataram*, subtler than the subtlest, because the material cause is subtler than the effect, like clay is subtler than the pot. Subtlety implies pervasiveness; the subtler an entity is, the more pervasive it is. For example, clay is more pervasive than pot in as much as clay has the potential of being any number of pots, whereas a pot is confined to a given name and form. Pot is an effect that is confined to a name and form whereas the clay, which is the material cause, pervades all of the effects. Thus the material cause is superior to and subtler than the effect. *Brahman*, the cause of everything, is the substratum of everything, is the self of all, is limitless, is the subtlest.

Now the teacher says that the *brahman* described in the first line, the cause of creation, the limitless substratum and self of all, subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest as well as smaller than the smallest—meaning that it is free from the ideas of smallness and bigness—that *brahman* indeed you are.

I can understand that *brahman* is limitless, but wait a minute, am I *brahman*? How can I be that *brahman*? I am limited in every way. *Brahman* is limitless, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, and on the other hand I am limited in every way. I can be part of it, I can be a fraction of *brahman*. *Brahman* is my self all right, but how can I be the self that is *brahman*? A doubt like this is possible because the statement *tat tvam asi* of Chāndogya Upaniṣad has been explained in so many ways by different *ācāryas*. One *ācārya* explains *tat tvam asi* as meaning “You are a fraction or part of *brahman* or God.” Another *ācārya* explains it as “You are his

(servant).” Yet another *ācārya* explains it as *atat tvam asi*, meaning “You are not that.” The *sāmānādhikaraṇyam* (placement in the same grammatical case) of *tat* and *tvam* can be explained in many ways. Therefore different *ācāryas*, using their expertise in grammar, seek to distort the meaning of this simple statement revealing identity, and instead explain it in a way that conforms to their own notions of reality.

However, this Upaniṣad eliminates all such doubts by saying “you are that” and “that you are,” leaving no doubt about the mutual identity. Think about who you are. “Well, I was born a few years ago and I am going to die in a few years.” No, no. Who was born? The body was born; the body will die; you will not die. “I am so helpless.” No, the mind is helpless; you are not helpless. This statement forces us to look at ourselves and scrutinize every notion we entertain about ourselves. Who am I? I am the connecting link of the various experiences in the three states—waking, dream, and deep sleep. What is the common denominator? *Ādhāram*, *ānandam*, *akhaṇḍabodham*, I am the support of all, the substratum of all; I am undivided in all the experiences that are divided. All the states are mutually exclusive, but I am the one that connects them all, that illumines them all, that informs them all, that sustains them all; that’s what I am. *Brahman*, when it identifies with this individual body comes to be called *jīva*. Says Ramana Maharṣi,¹ what causes the difference between *jīva* and Īśvara is only *veśa*, the costume; it’s only the costume that is

¹ ईशजीवयोर्वेषधीभिदा ।

सत्स्वभावतो वस्तु केवलम् ॥

īśajīvayorveṣadhībhidā ।

satsvabhāvato vastu kevalam || (US-24)

different. *Brahman*, when it wears the costume of *māyā* is called *Īśvara*, and when it wears the costume of ignorance is called *jīva*. Like the same actor is called king, or beggar, and also minister. “I am a beggar, how can I be king?” Wait a minute, are you really a beggar? Beggarliness is just incidental, and so is kingliness. This teaching is asking us, challenging us to question who we really are, helping us in removing identification of what we are not, and establishing the identity of who we really are. You are *brahman*, you are the plain, simple, consciousness. When we remove from *Īśvara* the costume of *māyā*, what is there is the plain, simple consciousness, *sat-cit-ānanda* or *satyam-jñānam-anantam*, both mean the same. Existence, awareness, wholeness, that’s what you are. That’s what *brahman* is. This is the *upadeśa* that is given.

The next *mantra* tells us what the reward of this knowledge is.

Verse 17

जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्त्यादिप्रपञ्चं यत्प्रकाशते ।
तद्ब्रह्माहमिति ज्ञात्वा सर्वबन्धैः प्रमुच्यते ॥ १७ ॥

jāgratsvapnasoṣṭyādiprapañcam yatprakāśate ।
tadbrahmāhamiti jñātvā sarvabandhaiḥ pramucyate ॥ 17॥

जाग्रत् - waking स्वप्न - dream state सुषुप्ति - deep sleep state आदि - etc.

प्रपञ्च - creation यत् - which प्रकाशते - illumines तत् - that ब्रह्म -

Brahman अहम् - I इति - thus ज्ञात्वा - knowing सर्वबन्धैः - from all bondage प्रमुच्यते - is released ॥ १७ ॥

"I am that brahman which illumines the realms like waking, dream, and deep sleep." Knowing thus, one is released from all bondage.

The three states include the experiencer, the experience, and the objects of experience, and in *ādi* everything else is included. The one that illumines the realms of waking, dream, and deep sleep states is *brahman*. Instead of bothering about the details of the three states of experience, we are asked to look at that because of which the experience is; that is what Vedānta wants us to look at. What you see is not important, but that because of which you see is important. What is important is not the experience, but that because of which you experience. The teaching of the *śāstra* is to be followed that way, knowing the consciousness because of which the experience is.

If we ask what illumines all objects, such as trees, in the waking state, you may say that the light emerging from my eyes illumines those trees. That is true. But do the eyes function independently, or do the eyes also need some other light? Yes, the eyes need the light of the mind, because something may be right in front of me and still I don't see it because the eyes are looking there but the mind is elsewhere. If the mind is not there behind the eyes, I don't see something even if it is in front of me. Thus, eyes see because of the mind. But is the mind an independent seer? No, the mind also requires another light, the light of consciousness, the self. The light

of consciousness enables the mind and the sense organs to illumine the sense objects.

Consciousness does require the medium of the mind and organs of perception to illumine the objects of the world, just as electricity by itself cannot dispel the darkness in this room. Electricity requires the medium of a bulb, the tungsten filament through which it gets turned into light, and then it can dispel darkness. So also, the pure consciousness as it is cannot illumine the objects, because consciousness is transcendental, whereas mind and senses are all immanent, or *mithyā*; they have *vyāvahārika-sattā*, meaning transactional reality. Consciousness is the *pāramārthika-sattā*, or absolute reality. The absolute has no contact with the transactional, so consciousness also needs to gain the same degree of reality as the objects. Reflecting through the mind and the senses, consciousness gains the same degree of reality as the objects, and then it can illumine them. But ultimately, what illumines all the objects is nothing but consciousness. The object, the subject, and the experience are all illumined by one consciousness. The same is true for the dream.

A similar discussion is found in the first chapter of Pañcadaśī, verses three through seven. There the author says that in the waking state, the objects such as sound, touch, and so on keep on changing but the *samvit* (the consciousness that illumines the objects) does not change. Consciousness illumines the objects as they change, but when objects change, consciousness does not change. In the dream also, the objects of consciousness keep on changing but the consciousness illumining them does not change. The consciousness that is in the waking state is the same consciousness that is in the dream state and that illumines the dream objects. In deep sleep also, the same consciousness

illuminates the object of deep sleep, which is ignorance. Thus, in all the three states, the consciousness, being homogeneous, is the same. It is so on other days too. Through the many months, years, ages, and world-cycles, past and future, consciousness is the same; it neither rises nor sets, it is self-revealing. The consciousness that illuminates the worlds of waking, dream, and deep sleep is *brahman*. Call it consciousness, call it existence, call it *ānanda*, call it immortal, call it eternal, call it limitless, call it whatever you will, that is *brahman* and it is self-effulgent. It illuminates everything, and that *brahman* I am. What is common between *brahman* and myself? Not the body, not the mind, not the *upādhi*, but the consciousness, the essence, the self that I am.

Sarva bandhainḥ pramucyate, knowing thus one becomes liberated from all the bonds. What are the bonds? We saw earlier that the bonds are my notions about myself. Who binds me? I bind myself. How do I bind myself? By holding fast to the various notions and conclusions about myself—that I am so and so, that am this much alone, and that’s all I am—this is the notion that binds me. Nobody else binds me. Those bonds, the notions, the complexes are all resolved, all dispelled, in the wake of the knowledge that I am *brahman*, I am limitless, I am consciousness. All the sense of limitation drops off. The wise person becomes liberated from all the notions that create the feeling of being bound, being limited.

In verses ten through fifteen of the tenth chapter of Pañcadaśī, called the *nāṭaka-dīpa-prakaraṇa*, the author gives a very beautiful analogy of a lamp in the theater. There he describes how, in a theater with a stage, there is a lamp that illuminates the whole theater, the stage, the musicians, the patron, and the audience. All of these being there, the dancer comes onto the stage. There she dances, the instruments are being played, and the spectators are all

watching the various gestures and moods on her face. All this is illumined by the lamp in the theater. As the dancer shows different gestures and expressions, the audience also sympathetically responds. The musicians also play in accompaniment with how the dancer dances. All these various changes are going on and they are all illumined by the lamp in the theater. One lamp, one source of light, illumines all various changes and modifications taking place, while it itself undergoes no change. The lamp remains *nirvikāra*, free from *vikāra* or change, but illumines all the changes.

Then the dance is over and the dancer goes back from the stage, the accompanying artists walk away, the patron leaves, the audience disperses. After a while, the whole theater is empty and we know that the theater is empty. We knew when the dance was going on and spectators were there. How did we know that? In the light of the lamp. Now we know that there is no one there, that the theater is empty. That also is known in the light of the lamp. So the lamp illumines the presence as well as the absence of everybody.

Here, the intellect is in the place of the dancer; the dancer's dancing is comparable to the waking and the dream states when the mind or the intellect dances to the various moods; the sense organs are the accompaniments; the sense objects are like the audience; and *ahaṅkāra*, the ego, is the patron for whom the dance is being performed. The whole *prapañca*—the display of the ego, the mind, sense organs, and the sense objects—is illumined by the one lamp, namely consciousness, which is the changeless witness. The deep sleep state is comparable to the situation when the dance is over and everybody has gone away. The dancer (the intellect or the mind) goes behind the stage, meaning merges into its own cause, which is ignorance. Sense organs, sense objects, everything is merged into the darkness of ignorance and there is nothing other

than ignorance. That absence of everything in deep sleep is also illumined by the same consciousness.

Sometimes there is a question about whether or not there is consciousness in the deep sleep state. The reasoning in the doubt is that if there were consciousness in the deep sleep state, then we should be aware of what is going on there; we should be aware that we are enjoying freedom, enjoying *ānanda*. But we do not have that awareness, therefore a doubt may arise that perhaps there is no consciousness in the deep sleep state. Would you still say that there is consciousness in deep sleep state? The answer is yes, because then the consciousness illumines the absence of everything. That is why when a person wakes up he says, *sukham asvāpsam na kiñcit avedīṣam*, “I slept well; I did not know anything.” Hence we can say that he knew the absence of everything, otherwise he would not be able to say that he slept well or that he did not know anything.

But if consciousness is there in deep sleep, then how come we are not aware of the experience of ignorance and happiness in the deep sleep state, as we are aware of the experiences in the waking and dream states? The reason is that the mind is required for knowing the particulars of any experience, just as to see the colors and forms during the day, not only do we require the eyes, we also require the light of the sun. The sun illumines all the differences in the colors and forms of the objects. The eyes of course see what is in front of them, but it is the sunlight that illumines all the particulars. Even if sunlight is not there and it is dark, then also I do see except that I cannot see the particulars existing among the different names and forms. Then I say that I do not see anything. But even when I declare that I do not see anything, it does not mean I am blind; it means that I do see the darkness. I see the

absence of everything because the external light that is required to illumine the *viśeṣas*—the particulars or the uniqueness of names and forms—is not there. Similarly, to know the particulars of the objects of the world, we require the mind and the sense organs. As we said earlier, consciousness itself cannot illumine the objects directly; it is only through the agents of mind and sense organs that it illumines the objects of the world. Since the mind and senses are not there in deep sleep, we are not aware of the particulars, but we are aware of the absence of the particulars. Like when the eyes are open and I see that I am seeing, but do not see anything particular because it is all dark, similarly in deep sleep, consciousness is there but there is no particular experience or awareness of experience, because the mind is not there.

In technical language we can say that in the waking and dream states we have the knowledge of the particulars or the *viśeṣas* of the objects, whereas in the deep sleep state we have *sāmānya-jñānam*, unparticularized knowledge. That is why not only in waking and dream, but in deep sleep also, that consciousness that illumines everything, that *brahman* I am. Knowing that, one becomes free from all the bondage of the nature of the notions or the complexes about oneself.

This idea is continued on to the next *mantra* also.

Identity of Self and *brahman*

Verse 18

त्रिषु धामसु यद्भोग्यं भोक्ता भोगश्च यद्भवेत् ।
तेभ्यो विलक्षणः साक्षी चिन्मात्रोऽहं सदाशिवः ॥ १८ ॥

triṣu dhāmasu yadbhogyaṁ bhoktā bhogaśca yadbhavet ।
tebhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ sākṣī cinmātro'haṁ sadāśivaḥ ॥ 18॥

त्रिषु - in three धामसु – realms, states of awareness यत् – that which
भोग्यम् - enjoyed भोक्ता - enjoyer भोगः - enjoyment च - and यत् -
which भवेत् - can be तेभ्यः - from them विलक्षणः - distinct साक्षी -
witness चिन्मात्रः - pure consciousness अहम् - I सदाशिवः - ever
auspicious ॥ १८ ॥

I am distinct from whatever it is that constitutes the enjoyed, the enjoyer and the enjoyment in the three states. I am the witness, pure consciousness, ever auspicious.

The previous verse said that I illumine whatever there is in the three states of awareness. This verse says I am distinct from everything that is in the three states of awareness. Even though we loosely say states of consciousness, in fact they are states of mind. The waking, dream, and deep sleep states are not the states of consciousness. Consciousness does not have states. They are states of the mind; and consciousness illumines whatever be the state of the mind. It is only on account of identification with the mind that I say that I am awake, I was dreaming, I was sleeping. But in fact to be awake, to be dreaming, and to be sleeping, all of these are the functions of the mind, states of the mind. Consciousness ever remains the same; it illumines whatever be the state of the mind *triṣu dhāmasu*, in all the three abodes, in all the three states—*yad bhogyam*, that which is the the object of experience, *bhoktā*, the experiencer, *bhogaḥ ca*, and the experience. This is the triad, the *tripuṭī*, which is involved in every experience—the subject of experience, the object of experience, and the experience itself. Thus we have various *tripuṭīs*—seer-seen-seeing, hearer-heard-hearing, eater-eaten-eating, toucher-touched-touching, smellers-smelled-smelling, and so on. In every experience these three factors—subject, object and the interaction between the two—are involved, and they constitute the entire creation, the whole range of existence, without leaving anything out. That whole universe is available through the waking, dream, and deep sleep states.

I am distinct from all of them. I am distinct from the subject, object and the experience. I am distinct from the experiencer, the experienced, and the experience. We should carefully note what this *mantra* says. Not only am I distinct from what is experienced, I am also distinct from the experiencer as well as from the experience, which are all states of mind. For example, there is a flower in front of me. The flower is the object of experience, I am

the experiencer, and in my mind a flower thought takes place, which is what we call the experience. The verse says that I am distinct from all these three, the object, subject, and the experience. Usually we equate the self with subject, please understand. Usually I take myself to be the subject, the witness, the seer, the experiencer, but, here it is said that I, the consciousness, is distinct from all the three—the subject, object, and the experience. Because what is the subject? The subject is *aham vṛtti*, the I-thought. What is an object? Object is the outside world. What is experience? *Idam vṛtti*, “this” thought, is the experience. Understand that our mind itself has these two aspects, *idam vṛtti* and *aham vṛtti*, this-thought and I-thought. Consciousness identified with the I-thought is the subject; consciousness identified with this-thought is the experience; and that which is illumined by this-thought is the object. I am different from the subject, object, and experience; I am the illuminator of all the three. Like the theater lamp that illumines the audience, the dancer, and all the various gestures and modifications, yet is distinct from them all, I am distinct from the triad. I am the consciousness in which even the I-ness is also not there. Even though the word *ātmā* means I, in the ultimate analysis *ātmā* does not mean I that excludes you or that excludes anything. I am the one that is distinct from the subject, object and, experience, and at the same time I illumine, accommodate, and sustain all the three.

Tebhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ sākṣī, I am the witness. Witness means illuminator. Witness also is a relative term. We use the word witness with reference to what is witnessed, and therefore the word witness also cannot be primarily applied to the self. I am just the pure consciousness. Then why is the word witness used here? Well, some word has to be used, and regardless of what word we use, it is never going to be adequate. Suppose I say illuminator,

there also it implies an act of illumination, but there is no attempt or act of illumination on the part of consciousness, the I. Hence all the words such as subject, witness, or even *ātmā*, the self, convey the meaning through *lakṣya-artha*, the targeted meaning, and not *vāchya-artha* the literal meaning. What is meant by *sākṣī* is not the witness in the primary sense, but what remains when the witnessing is also dropped, and that is pure awareness, *cinmātra*. Pure awareness I am.

I am *sadāśivaḥ*, ever auspicious. *Śiva* means auspicious; *sadā* means always. *Sadāśiva*, always auspicious, and auspiciousness is where happiness is. There cannot be auspiciousness in unhappiness. When we were young children in India, if a death of a relative occurred somewhere, they would send you a postcard informing you of the event. Usually if the recipient was a close relative of the deceased, then he or she would have to take a bath to purify themselves. So usually the senders would write on the top of the postcard *aśubha*, inauspicious. What is this inauspicious? It is the news of death, so death is inauspicious. Ignorance is inauspicious; sorrow is inauspicious. I am auspicious. I am free from death, ignorance, and sorrow. *Sat-cit-ānanda*, existence-awareness-happiness I am.

Lord Śiva is also called *sadāśivaḥ*, ever auspicious. Not even the smell of sorrow ever touches him—not the smell of ignorance, the smell of sorrow, nor the smell of death. He is called *mṛtyuñjaya*, one who has conquered death. He is *Sadāśivaḥ* ever auspicious, even though he lives in the midst of all the inauspiciousness. That is very well known about Lord Śiva, that he lives in the midst of all inauspiciousness. He dwells in the cremation ground, which is the most inauspicious place. He smears on his body the ashes from the funeral pyre, again very inauspicious. He wears on his neck a

garland of skulls, most inauspicious. He has poison in the neck, again inauspicious. Snakes are crawling on his body, again inauspicious. Ghosts are dancing around him, again inauspicious. Everything around Lord Śiva is inauspicious and still he is *sadāśivaḥ* ever auspicious, meaning that the external inauspiciousness never touches him. He is *asaṅga-udāsina*, ever unattached, unconnected, untainted. If one is isolated from everything and remains auspicious, then we may wonder what would happen to that person if he were to come in the midst of and be touched by the inauspicious. But here is Lord Śiva who is in the midst of inauspiciousness and still we always see on his face a great tranquility, serenity, purity. That *sadāśiva*, ever auspicious *śiva* I am.

The self also dwells in the midst of many things that are inauspicious. It dwells in this physical body, which is not only subject to death one day, it is constantly dying. This physical body, characterized by death, is like a cremation ground where death is constantly present, and the various impulses of the mind, like lust, anger, and greed, are like ghosts that are dancing around the self, the consciousness. Many other tendencies are like poisonous snakes. The self is in the midst of all these, illuminating them all and still untainted by them. self is ever auspicious.

The equation of nonduality

This *mantra* said *tebhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ*, I am distinct from them all; I am distinct from subject, object, and the experience. That seems to mean that the self is one and everything else is different from the self, that the subject, object, and experience are different from me. Are you accepting the duality that you are different from them and

they are different from you? Are you saying that the world of the triad or *tripuṭi* is different from you?

The answer is no. I am different from them but they are not different from me. This is the equation of nonduality; B is equal to A, but A is not equal to B. The beggar is not apart from the actor; the actor is distinct from the beggar. Vedānta teaches us nonduality that is not absence of duality, but is nonduality in spite of duality. Duality in no way negates or hides the nonduality. If it did, it would be what *Pūjya* Swamiji calls the “submarine philosophy.” He asks rhetorically, “Is the self like a submarine, which is underneath the water and which has to surface? Is nondual *ātmā* submerged in duality, and when duality goes away, the nondual self will surface?” No, it is not that the nonduality surfaces in the absence of duality. Nonduality is in spite of duality. In fact duality is because of nonduality. This *mantra* said that I am distinct from all duality. The next *mantra* says that duality is not different from me. I have independent existence, *satya*, reality, but the world of duality does not have reality apart from me.

Verse 19

मय्येव सकलं जातं मयि सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् । मयि सर्वं लयं याति
तद्ब्रह्माद्वयमस्म्यहम् ॥ १९ ॥

mayyeva sakalam jātam mayi sarvaṁ pratiṣṭhitam | mayi
sarvaṁ layaṁ yāti tadbrahmādvayamasmyaham || 19||

मयि - in me एव - alone सकलम् - everything जातम् - is born मयि - in me सर्वम् - all प्रतिष्ठितम् - exists मयि - in me सर्वम् - all लयम् याति - goes into dissolution तत् - that ब्रह्म - *Brahman* अद्वयम् - nondual अस्मि अहम् - I am ॥ १९ ॥

In me alone is everything born; in me alone does everything exist, in me does everything dissolve. That nondual brahman I am.

Mayyeva sakalaṁ jātam, everything is born in me, emerges from me. *Mayi sarvaṁ pratiṣṭhitam*, everything exists in me, rests in me, abides in me. *Mayi sarvaṁ layaṁ yāti*, everything ultimately merges back into me. Everything has emerged from me, everything exists because of me, everything is sustained by me, and everything merges back into me. *Tat brahman*, that *brahman*, the nondual, I am.

What is meant by nonduality is explained here. Who am I? I am *brahman* which is *asti bhāti priyam, sat-cit-ānanda, satyaṁ jñānam anantam*. I am the truth, I am the awareness, and I am infinite. I am the limitless from which the whole universe emerges. Therefore Upaniṣads present *brahman* as the *upādāna-kāraṇam*, the material cause. “That from which these beings emerge, that by which all the beings are sustained, that toward which all the beings move back and merge into, that is *brahman*.”¹

Here I recall Pūjya Swamiji's famous story of his being invited to a town in Europe for *bhikṣā* to a place of a jeweler. An Indian

¹ Tai.Up. 3.1.1

merchant was a big jeweler there, and he invited Swamiji for dinner. After dinner he took Swamiji into his shop. There was a big room and another room inside containing the jewelry. The door was opened and the light was switched on. There was glitter everywhere because the room was full of gold ornaments. Swamiji was wonder-struck. The host told Swamiji, "Please take one." Swamiji said "Give me gold." The jeweler did not quite understand. He picked up one ornament, a bangle, to give to Swamiji. Swamiji said, "I do not want bangle, I want gold." If the jeweler gives away the gold, then what remains? Nothing remains.

When you count the ornaments, or the names and forms, there are many. But from the standpoint of gold, *upādāna-kāraṇam*, the material cause, there is one alone. That is how Upaniṣads present *brahman*, self, Truth, or reality as the *upādāna-kāraṇam*, material cause of the universe. Then alone can there be nonduality. The material cause is that which pervades the effect, and at the same time it transcends the effect.

Īśvara is both immanent and tanscendental

The concept of Īśvara that Vedānta presents is that Īśvara is immanent, all pervasive, and at the same time is transcendent. If Īśvara were to be merely transcendental, then what about the world? How would you explain the existence of the world? If he were merely immanent, meaning if God is only the material cause transformed into the universe as clay gets transformed into pots and other objects, then he is just confined to the universe and he is changing all the time. Both positions are untenable. Therefore, Īśvara is immanent as well as transcendent. *Tad brahma advayam asmi aham*, that immanent and transcendent *brahman*, that nondual, I am. Nondual means there is nothing other than *brahman*. There is no such thing as *jagat* apart from *brahman*. Just as there are no pots apart from clay, there are no names and forms

apart from *brahman*, apart from the self, because whatever be the names and forms, they are ultimately nothing but *asti bhāti priyam*.

Here a question may arise in someone's mind regarding the nature of the material cause that *brahman* is. If *brahman* is to the world as clay is to pots, then is it not true that the clay, in "becoming" a pot, undergoes some kind of change? It is no longer a lump of clay as it used to be, now it has taken the shape of a pot; that is a change. Similarly, when you say that *brahman* (*asti bhāti priyam* or *satyaṁ jñānam anantam*) is the material cause of the universe, does it mean that *brahman* has undergone change or transformation to become the universe? If *brahman* is the material cause, that's how it should be. Is it not? Then what is changing all the time is *brahman*. *Brahman* is being born, it is growing, it is dying, in effect it is changing. That is the question.

The answer is that there are two kinds of *upādāna-kāraṇam*, material cause. One is called *pariṇāma-upādāna-kāraṇam*, the material cause that undergoes change. The other is called *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇam*, the material cause that does not undergo any change. Clay is an example of *pariṇāma-upādāna-kāraṇam*, because clay undergoes change to become the pot. In the rope-snake example, on the other hand, the rope is the material cause of the snake—because the length of the snake is the length of the rope; the curvature of the snake is the curvature of the rope; the shining of the snake is the shining of the rope; so it would be correct to call the rope the material cause of the snake—but that rope does not undergo any change in order for the snake to be created. What kind of creation will that be, when the material cause does not undergo change? Normally we associate the word "creation" only when the material cause undergoes a change. Here

however, the material cause does not undergo any intrinsic change, and if that is so, what is the nature of this creation? This creation is only a superimposition; it cannot be a real creation. It is what is called a projection or a superimposition, such as the rope which, without undergoing any intrinsic change, simply appears to be a snake.

Similarly *brahman*, without undergoing any intrinsic change, simply appears as the universe. Therefore, the universe is an appearance rather than being a solid, tangible creation. This view of the universe is also beginning to be recognized by modern science. Science also sees matter as nothing but waves of energy, meaning there is no tangibility about matter, even though it looks very tangible. There is no solidity to the universe really, because what appears very solid consists of molecules, which themselves are nothing but atoms. Within atoms there is so much space and there is no such thing as a tangible particle, ultimately. Vedānta has been saying this all along, that the universe is just an appearance. So *brahman*, or consciousness, is the *vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇam*, the material cause that does not undergo any intrinsic change. There is one consciousness alone shining as the whole universe, appearing as the whole universe. This is presented so beautifully in the very first verse of Īśāvasya-Upaniṣad—*Īśā vāsyamidam sarvaṁ yatkiṁca jagatyām jagat*. “Whatever there is appearing as creation is Īśvara alone.” Īśvara is *brahman*, self, consciousness, *asti bhāti priyam, sat-cit-ānanda*. That one, nondual *brahman*, Īśvara, I am.

Now a question may arise in the student’s mind that if one *brahman* is the material cause of the world, does it mean that *brahman* is also affected by the constant turmoil in the world? We see in the creation a constant process of birth and death taking

place; does it mean that *brahman* is being born and dying constantly? We see pain and sorrow; does it mean that *brahman* is having pain and sorrow? That would be miserable. As if being the self of this one body itself is not enough trouble for me, if I am the self of all, would that mean that all miseries existing everywhere would become my misery? Then not only would I be a *saṁsārī*, but a *mahā-saṁsārī*, a hugely miserable person. But that is not so. Says Kaṭhōpaniṣad, “Just as the sun, which is the eye of the whole world, is not tainted by ocular and external defects, similarly, the self that is but one in all beings is not tainted by the sorrows of the world, it being transcendental.”¹ The sun is the eye of all living beings, but is not tainted by blemishes. When we see something inauspicious, we become affected, but the sun does not get affected, even though he is the eyes. So also the self is the self of all but does not get tainted or affected by the pleasure and the pain of living beings, which obtain at the level of the *upādhi* (body), and he transcends the *upādhis*.

The nature of the self with reference to the universe is stated in the next *mantra*.

Verse 20

अणोरणीयानहमेव तद्वन्महानहं विश्वमहं विचित्रम् । पुरातनोऽहं पुरुषोऽहमीशो
हिरण्मयोऽहं शिवरूपमस्मि ॥ २० ॥

¹ *sūryo yathā sarvalokasya cakṣurna lipyate cākṣuṣairbāhyadoṣaiḥ, ekastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā na lipyate lokaduḥkhena bāhyaḥ*. (Ka.Up. 2.2.11)

aṇoraṇīyānāhameva tadvanmahānahaṁ viśvamahaṁ
vicitram | purātano'haṁ puruṣo'haṁīśo hiraṇmayo'haṁ
śīvarūpamasmi || 20||

अणोः - than the subtle अणीयान् subtler अहम् एव I alone तद्वत् -
similarly महान् - (greater than the) great अहम् - I am विश्वम् अहम् - I
am the universe विचित्रम् - the manifold पुरातनः - ancient अहम् - I am
पुरुषः अहम् - the whole I am ईशः - the ruler हिरण्मयः अहम् - effulgent
I am शिवरूपम् अस्मि - I am of the nature of auspiciousness || २० ||

**I am subtler than the subtle, and similarly greater than the
great. I am the manifold universe. I am the ancient, the whole,
the ruler, the effulgent, and of the nature of auspiciousness.**

Aṇu means an atom. Here it stands for the subtle, very small and very subtle. *Aṇoḥ aṇīyān*, subtler than the subtle I am. *Tadvat mahān aham*, in a similar manner, I am *mahān*, I am big also. I am simultaneously smaller than the smallest, and bigger than the biggest. How can a given thing be simultaneously small as well as large? This can be true only when the smallness and largeness are superimposed. Therefore, I am the one that shines as smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest. What is small, what is large, and what is in between, all this is because I am. I impart the existence and intelligence to everything; I am everywhere. I am *aṇu*, small, smaller than an atom. I have not become an atom; I have not become big or small. Whatever is big and small is and

shines because of I. Putting it another way, I shine or appear as the small and the big and everything in between, without having become that.

Viśvaṁ idaṁ vicitram, this manifold, variegated universe I am. I shine as this variegated universe of names and forms. It is not that I have become that. Like the rope shines or appears as snake, so also I appear as the whole manifold universe, in which whatever is small, big, or in between is I alone. That is how I am shining as the whole universe.

But the universe is something recent and is changing. Are you also changing? No. *Purātanaḥ aham*. I am the most ancient one. I am not subject to birth and growth. I am ancient, ever the same, eternal, changeless. I am *puruṣa*, which means *pūrṇa*, complete; I am all pervasive. *Puruṣa* also means consciousness. One who dwells in the city of the body is called *puruṣa*, or the one in whom the whole universe dwells is *puruṣa*. I am the self of all. I am the one that fills up everything. That all-pervasive consciousness I am.

Aham īśaḥ, I am the ruler. In my presence everything is ruled as we discussed earlier. The word ruler is used for *Īśvara* but not in the literal sense, because in ruling, some kind of strain is always involved. Nobody wants to be ruled; everybody wants freedom. Even a child does not want to be ruled. I ask the child to hold my finger and walk with me, but it wants to walk independently. A little dog also does not want to be ruled. When you take the dog for a walk, in the beginning you walk the dog, then the dog walks you. So if *Īśvara* wanted to rule this universe, he would be in trouble really, because that would involve a lot of stress on his part, and some day all that stress would cause things to come to an end. But,

as we saw, this is not the case, because by the mere presence of *īśaḥ* everything becomes ruled; there is no real ruling involved.

Things can happen merely by presence only when the presence is of the nature of love; then everybody is happy. We see that everything in the universe is happy doing what it is required to do. We do not see any kind of pressure. The sun rises every morning at an appointed time. It is not that some day the sun revolts, “Come on now, I can't do this day in and day out. Some day I also need a break.” The sun and the moon and the stars, all of them function exactly according to the rule, as appointed. There is no transgression of rule. That is because they do not see any need to transgress. They are happy in being what they are. If you are happy doing what you are required to do, then no ruling is required. There is self-motivation, isn't it? Only if I am not quite happy doing what I have to do, then I need to be ruled, I need to be forced, I need to be disciplined. But if I enjoy what I am doing, then there is no need for any rule. We can see that the whole universe seems to function out of *ānanda*, joy. Says Taittirīya Upaniṣad, “All the beings of the universe are born of *ānanda* (wholeness, fullness), in *ānanda* alone they are sustained, and into *ānanda* they go back.”¹ In this *ānanda* alone Īśvara is manifest. Call it *ānanda*, happiness, or call it love. Therefore, everything seems to be quite content being what it is. There is no need for any external motivation or pressure, everything just functions out of total contentment and harmony. By the presence of *ānanda* or love, everything automatically is ruled. That kind of *īśaḥ* or ruler I am.

¹ आनन्दाद्धयेव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति । आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्तीति ।

ānandāddhyeva khalvimāni bhūtāni jāyante! ānandena jātāni jīvanti!
ānandaṁ prayantyabhisamviśantīti! (Tai.Up. 3.6.1)

Hiraṇmayo'ham, I am golden, the effulgent. *Hiraṇya* means gold, which implies shining or effulgence. I am golden means I am the self-effulgent, self-shining, self-revealing. *Śivarūpaḥ asmi*. I am *śiva*, I am the very auspiciousness. Ever pure and sacred I am.

We hear that Īśvara is omniscient, omnipotent, meaning he is all-knowing, and all-powerful. In what sense is that so? In what sense is Īśvara the ruler? That becomes clear when we analyze what the word Īśvara means. The word is derived from the root *īśa*, in the sense of ruling. To that the suffix *varac* is applied. It gives the sense of an agent having such a habit. Hence, one whose nature is to rule is called Īśvara. He is also supposed to be omniscient, omnipotent, all knowing, all powerful. God alone knows how many galaxies there are and what is all happening in each one. But how many eyes does he require to know everything? How many ears should he have? How many hands should he have to be all powerful? How many weapons should he wield? Indeed our gods are shown with many hands and many weapons. But how many weapons should God have? How many hands would he need to control the universe which extends everywhere? The next *mantra* explains this.

Verse 21

अपाणिपादोऽहमचिन्त्यशक्तिः पश्याम्यचक्षुः स शृणोम्यकर्णः ।

अहं विजानामि विविक्तरूपो न चास्ति वेत्ता मम चित्सदाऽहम् ॥ २१ ॥

apāṇipādo'hamacintyaśaktiḥ paśyāmyacakṣuḥ sa
 śṛṇomyakarnaḥ | ahaṁ vijānāmi viviktarūpo na cāsti vettā
 mama citsadā'ham || 21 ||

अपाणिपादः - without hands and legs अहम् - I am अचिन्त्यशक्तिः - of
 incomprehensible power पश्यामि - I see अचक्षुः - without eyes सः -
 that शृणोमि - I hear अकर्णः - without ears अहम् विजानामि - I know
 विविक्तरूपः - of distinct nature different from all न च अस्ति - there is
 no वेत्ता - knower मम - my चित् सदा - ever the nature of knowledge
 अहम् - I am || २१ ||

I am without hands and legs, yet I am of incomprehensible power. I see without eyes, hear without ears. I am different from all. I know everything, but none knows me, who is of the nature of pure knowledge.

Apāṇipādaḥ aham; I am without hands and legs. *Acintyaśaktiḥ*, still I am endowed with incomprehensible power, meaning I am omnipotent, I am all-powerful. We know that our power is in our hands and legs. How many hands and legs should I have? Without any hands and legs, I am all powerful, meaning that in my presence, whatever is required automatically happens. Since everything is functioning in harmony, we have to assign the agency of that functioning to somebody, therefore we say God does everything. Since the world seems to be created, therefore we assign creatorship to God and then we call him the creator. The omniscience of Īśvara is evident as the whole universe. It is knowledge alone that manifests as this universe of names and

forms. Everywhere you see knowledge or intelligence or omniscience, but I am omniscient without a mind. *Paśyāmi acakṣuḥ*, I see everything without eyes. *Śṛṇomi akarṇaḥ*, I hear everything without ears.

The idea is that Īśvara is omniscient and omnipotent in the primary sense with the *upādhi* of *māyā*. Omniscience and omnipotence are the attributes of *māyā* and because of *māyā* as his *upādhi*, Īśvara becomes creator, sustainer, omniscient, and so on. However, from the standpoint of the intrinsic nature of Īśvara, he is *brahman*, the absolute reality, transcending all the attributes. With the *upādhi* of *māyā*, Īśvara is immanent, whereas, as *brahman*, Īśvara transcends all attributes. The identity of self with Īśvara is when all attributes are transcended. Therefore, in this mantra and others, we see the negation of all attributes.

In Kenopaniṣad the aspirant asks of the teacher, “Oh revered Sir, by whose command does this mind perform its functions? By whose command does the *prāṇaḥ* or the vital air performs its various functions? Directed by whom or willed by whom do these people speak words? Who makes the eyes see? Who makes the ears hear?” The teacher replies, *śrotrasya śrotraṁ manaso mano yadvāco ha vācam sa u prāṇasya prāṇaḥ*. “He is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the eye of the eyes, the speech of the speech.”¹ What does the reply mean? Does it mean that there is another ear inside this ear and another eye inside this eye and

¹ केनेषितं पतति प्रेषितं मनः । केन प्राणः प्रथमः प्रैति युक्तः । केनेषितां वाचमिमां वदन्ति । चक्षुः

श्रोत्रं क उ देवो युनक्ति ।

keneṣitaṁ patati preṣitaṁ manaḥ | kena prāṇaḥ prathamah praiti
yuktaḥ | keneṣitāṁ vācamimāṁ vadanti | cakṣuḥ śrotraṁ ka u devo
yunakti | (Ke. Up. 1.1)

another mind inside this mind? No. What is meant is that it is that because of which the mind thinks, because of which the eyes see, because of which the ears hear, because of which the vital air does what it does. Figuratively we say that the self breaths and he sees and he hears. But in the self there is no agency of hearing or seeing. It is in his presence that hearing, seeing, and everything else take place. You could also say that the self sees through all the eyes, hears through all the ears, walks through all the legs without himself having eyes, ears, or legs. In short, in my presence all the organs of perception function, all the organs of action act. In my presence the mind thinks. In my presence everything happens. All that is necessary is just the presence.

Aham vijānāmi means I indeed know everything. *Viviktarūpaḥ*, I am endowed with a distinct nature, different from all of this—distinct from the mind, organs of action, organs of perception, distinct from everything. *Vijānāmi*, I know everything because I illumine everything. *Na cāsti vettā mama*, nobody knows me. I know everything but nobody knows me, meaning that I cannot become the object of knowledge for anybody. I cannot be objectified by anybody; I am not knowable in the conventional sense. A flower can become the object of my knowledge, but the self or consciousness cannot become the object of knowledge in that sense. It cannot be objectified with organs of perception or the mind because it is their illuminator. Therefore I know everything, meaning I illumine everything, but nobody knows me, meaning nobody illumines me. I do not need to be illuminated. I am self-effulgent, *cit sadā aham*, I am consciousness, ever self-effulgent.

What is meant when you say nobody knows you? Do you mean there is no way of knowing you? No, there is a way of knowing me. The next *mantra* tells us what that way is.

Verse 22

वेदैरनेकैरहमेव वेद्यो वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम् ।

न पुण्यपापे मम नास्ति नाशो न जन्म देहेन्द्रियबुद्धिरस्ति ॥ २२ ॥

vedairanekairahameva vedyo vedāntakṛdvedavideva cāham
| na puṇyapāpe mama nāsti nāśo na janma
dehendriyabuddhirasti || 22||/

वेदैः - by Vedas अनेकैः - different अहम् एव - I alone वेद्यः - is to be
known वेदान्तकृत् - the author of Vedānta वेदवित् - knower of the
Vedas एव - alone च अहम् - and I am न - not पुण्यपापे results of good
and bad actions मम - my न अस्ति - is no नाशः - destruction न जन्म -
no birth देह - body इन्द्रिय - senses बुद्धिः - mind अस्ति is ॥ २२ ॥

I alone am what is to be known through all the Vedas. I am the author of Vedānta as well as the knower of the Vedas. I am not subject to the results of good and bad actions and suffer no destruction. I have no birth, no body, senses, or a mind.

Vedaiḥ anekaiḥ aham eva vedyaḥ. I am the only one to be known through all the Vedas. Hence what is the means of knowing me?

Vedas are the means of knowing me, not as a pot or clay or cloth, but knowing me as the very self. Vedas are the means of knowledge for revealing me alone. I am the only subject matter of all the Vedas. Vedas are dedicated to revealing just one being, namely Īśvara. *Aham eva* means I alone am that which is to be known through all the Vedas. Therefore I am the subject matter of all the Vedas.

All the Vedas can mean all the four Vedas, or it can mean all sections of the Veda. There are two main sections in the Vedas, *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* means Upaniṣad and that reveals my nature directly. *Karma-kāṇḍa* contains all the rituals; they also indirectly reveal me because they are meant for worshipping me. So Vedas present me either as the object of worship or they present me as the object of knowledge. I am the only subject matter of the Vedas. *Vedāntakṛt* means I am the initiator of all the Vedānta, meaning the Upaniṣads. I am the revealer of the Vedānta. *Vedavit eva ca aham*, I am the knower of Vedas also.

I am the one to be known through Vedas. Then someone might say, “Oh! Then Vedas are greater than you. If you are to be known through Vedas, meaning that without the Vedas you cannot be known, then Vedas are greater than you.” No. I am also the revealer of the Vedas, *vedavit*; the knower of the Vedas also I am. *Vedāntkṛt* can mean revealer of Vedānta or also the teacher of the Vedas. I am the subject matter of the Vedas, I am the revealer of the Vedas, I am the teacher of the Vedas. I am also the knower of the Vedas. I am the student, I am the teacher, I am the text also,

and I am what should be known through the transaction between the teacher and taught. Isvara claims the authorship of everything; nothing remains for anybody to claim the authorship.

Here Vedas or Vedānta is presented as a means of knowledge. Vedas are in the form of words, and words can only give indirect knowledge. But that rule applies to objects that are remote. Words can give rise to immediate knowledge when the object of knowledge is being experienced but not recognized, as in case of the tenth man. Because *brahman* is my very self, it is and is self-effulgent, meaning always experienced, therefore the words of Vedānta can generate *aparokṣa-jñānam* or immediate knowledge. That is done through the process of removing the false notions about the self.

Not only the Vedas, but all other scriptural texts and even the texts dealing with material sciences also have only one subject matter—self or *brahman*, simply because it is the only reality. Vedānta reveals the nature of truth directly, whereas the other texts talk about it indirectly, revealing its glories.

Further, all the *viśeṣas*, all the attributes, are negated from the self. *Na puṇya-pāpe mama asti*, there is no *puṇya* and *papa*, no virtue and vice for me. *Mama nāsti nāśaḥ*, there is no *nāśa*, destruction, or death for me. *Na janma*, there is no birth. *Na dehendriyabuddhirasti*, I have no body, no sense organs, no mind. The meaning is that all of these belong to the *upādhi* (the body that as though conditions the self). I am the one that transcends the *upādhi* or that illumines the *upādhi*.

The verse says I am *vedyāḥ*, to be known through the Vedas. It also means that the self is to be known, or it has to be known. As

Kenopaniṣad says, if the self is known in this lifetime, then there is truth, fulfillment. Otherwise there is great destruction.¹ The self must be known, and is to be known only through the Vedas.

If *brahman* is the self of all, then all virtue and vice happening everywhere should also be credited to *brahman*. The answer is no. The self transcends virtue and vice. *Puṇya* and *pāpa* stick to the doer, where there is the notion of doership. There is no doership in the self, who is therefore ever free from virtue and vice.

Verse 23

न भूमिरापो न च वह्निरस्ति न चानिलो मेऽस्ति न चाम्बरं च । एवं विदित्वा
परमात्मरूपं गुहाशयं निष्कलमद्वितीयम् । समस्तसाक्षिं सदसद्विहीनं प्रयाति शुद्धं
परमात्मरूपम् ॥ २३ ॥

na bhūmirāpo na ca vahnirasti na cānilo me'sti na cāmbaram
ca | evaṁ viditvā paramātmārūpaṁ guhāśayaṁ
niṣkalamadvitīyam | samastasākṣiṁ sadasadvihīnaṁ prayāti
śuddhaṁ paramātmārūpaṁ || 23 ||

न भूमिः - no earth आपः - water न च वह्निः अस्ति - and there is no fire
न च अनिलः - and no air मे - for me अस्ति - is न च अम्बरम् - and no

¹Ke. Up. 2.5

space च - and एवम् - thus विदित्वा - knowing परमात्म रूपम् - the exalted nature of the self गुहाशयम् - residing in the cave (of the heart) निष्कलम् - partless अद्वितीयम् - nondual समस्तसाक्षिम् - witness of all सद् असद् विहीनम् - devoid of cause and effect प्रयाति - attains शुद्धम् - pure परमात्म रूपम् - the nature of limitless self of all ॥ २३ ॥

For me there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor space. One attains the very limitless self knowing thus the exalted nature of the self, the one who resides in the cavity of the heart, who is partless, nondual, the witness of all, devoid of cause and effect, and pure.

Na bhūmirāpo na ca vahnirasti. The five elements I am not. Both the body and the universe are made of the five elements; that also I am not. That means that inspite of my being the material cause, inspite of pervading everything, I transcend everything.

Evam veditvā means knowing the self in this way. In which way? *Na puṇya pāpa mama asti*, I have no *puṇya*, no *pāpa*; virtue and vice do not touch me. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Gīta, *na kartṛtvam na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ*. “The Lord does not create agentship or any actions for anyone.”¹ Lord Kṛṣṇa says that the self does not have *kartṛtvam*, doership or experiencership, nor does it cause anything to be done or experienced. It is ever free from *kartṛtva* (doership) and *bhokṛtva* (enjoyership).

¹ BG 5.14

Evam viditvā—knowing the self in this manner, that I am free from doership and therefore do not produce punya and papa, and I am free from enjoyership and so am not affected by them; also knowing that the five elements are not I, the body made of the five elements is also not I or not mine, the sense organs also are not mine, the mind also is not mine, there is no birth and death in me. As Śaṅkarācārya says, *manobuddhyaṅkāraccittāni nāhaṁ na ca śrotrajihve na ca ghrāṇanetre, na ca vyomabhūmī na tejo na vāyuscidānandarūpaḥ śivo’ham śivo’ham*. “The mind, intellect, memory, and ego I am not. The faculties of hearing, tasting, smelling, or sight I am not. The elements space, earth, fire, and air I am not. I am of the nature of consciousness, fullness. I am *śiva*.”¹

Evam viditvā—knowing in this manner, in the manner in which it is unfolded in this Upaniṣad, that I am the witness of all the three states; I am the illuminator of everything; I am the material cause of everything, the self of all; the one and nondual, ever changeless, ever auspicious. *Evam viditvā*, knowing the self in this manner that I am of the nature of *paramātmā*, the limitless self. The supreme self, the limitless self, I am.

Guhāśayam niṣkalam advitīyam means the partless, nondual that resides in the cavity of the heart. The body has parts, the mind has parts. I am partless, the nondual. Ever pure, shining in the cave of the heart is *aham*. Knowing the self in this manner—as *paramātmā*, as *samastasākṣi* (the witness of all), *sadasadvihīnam*, (devoid of the *sat* and *asat*, cause and effect)—*prayāti śuddhaṁ paramātmārūpam*, one attains *paramātmārūpam*, the nature of the supreme self. Knowing the *paramātmā*, one becomes *paramātmā*.

¹Nirvāṇa-Ṣaṭkam 1

In the very first *mantra* the request was made, “Please teach me that *brahma-vidyā* by which the wise, destroying all the sins, attains *puruṣa*, the *paramātmā* that is beyond *māyā*.” The Upaniṣad was in reply to that request, and the conclusion is now given, *prayāti śuddham paramātmārūpam*. Oh Āśvalāyana, knowing the self in this manner one indeed attains *paramātmā*, the supreme self. In this manner the Upaniṣad, taught by *parameṣṭhi* the teacher in response to the request by Āśvalāyana the student, is concluded here.

The teaching is essentially over; still we find one more verse here, because it is possible that in spite of imparting the teaching, which is complete in every way, the students may not gain the knowledge. From the standpoint of the teacher and the teaching, nothing is left out, everything is taught here. The *mahā vākya* “*tat tvam asi*” has been unfolded. The nature of *tvam*, the self, has been elaborately discussed; the nature of *tat*, Īśvara, has also been elaborately discussed; and the identity, oneness, between the two has also been revealed very beautifully. So this short Upaniṣad in fact contains everything; nothing remains to be taught. Then why is there one more passage?

If in spite of this teaching the student did not gain the knowledge, then that means that there are still some inhibiting factors which prevent the student from seeing this truth or owning up the truth. The teachers also consider it important to tell the students what to do in order to remove those inhibiting factors or the obstacles. The knowledge is there but it is knowledge with obstacles. So the obstacles should be removed in order for the knowledge to become fruitful. The final verse is for prescribing *upāsana*, worship to remove some impurities of the mind which manifest as obstacles.

Upāsanā (Worship)

Verse 24

यः शतरुद्रियमधीते सोऽग्निपूतो भवति सुरापानात्पूतो भवति स ब्रह्महत्यायात्पूतो
भवति । स सुवर्णस्तेयात्पूतो भवति स कृत्याकृत्यात्पूतो भवति
तस्मादविमुक्तमाश्रितो भवति । अत्याश्रमी सर्वदा सकृद्वा जपेत् । अनेन ज्ञानमाप्नोति
संसारार्णवनाशनम् । तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं कैवल्यं फलमश्नुते कैवल्यं फलमश्नुत
इति ॥ २४ ॥

yaḥ śatarudriyamadhīte so'gnipūto bhavati surāpānātpūto
bhavati sa brahmahatyāyātpūto bhavati sa
suvarṇasteyātpūto bhavati sa kṛtyākṛtyātpūto bhavati
tasmādavimuktamāśrito bhavati atyāśramī sarvadā sakṛdvā
japet| anena jñānamāpnoti saṁsārārṇavanāśanam |
tasmādevaṁ viditvainaṁ kaivalyaṁ phalamaśnute
kaivalyaṁ phalamaśnuta iti || 24||

यः - who शतरुद्रियम् - Śatarudriya अधीते - recites सः - he अग्निपूतः -
purified by fire भवति - becomes सुरापानात् पूतो भवति - becomes freed

from the results of drinking alcohol सः - he ब्रह्म हत्यायात् पूतो भवति becomes freed from the results of killing a *brāhmaṇa* सः - he सुवर्णस्तेयात् पूतो भवति - becomes freed from the sin of stealing gold सः - he कृत्याकृत्यात् पूतो भवति – becomes freed from the results of commissions and omissions तस्मात् - On account of that अविमुक्तम् - Lord Siva आश्रितः - one who takes refuge भवति - becomes अत्याश्रमी - one is beyond all duties of life सर्वदा - always सकृत् just once वा - or जपेत् - if recites अनेन - by this ज्ञानम् - knowledge आप्नोति - obtains संसारं अणव नाशनम् which destroys the ocean of the life of becoming तस्मात् - therefore एवम् - thus विदित्वा एनम् – knowing the self कैवल्यम् - state of nonduality, liberation फलम् - fruit अश्नुते - attains ॥ २४ ॥

He who recites the Śatarudriya becomes purified as by fire, freed from the results of drinking alcohol, freed from the results of killing a brāhmaṇa, freed from the sin of stealing gold and from the results of all commissions and omissions. On account of that he gains refuge in Lord Śiva. One who is free from all duties (stages) of life (a renunciate) should recite this always, or once (a day). By this one attains the knowledge that destroys *saṁsāra*, the endless life of becoming. Therefore, by knowing the self one attains the fruit of liberation, one indeed attains the fruit of liberation.

Yaḥ Śatarudriyam adhīte means one who recites *śatarudriyam*, the *stotra* called *śatarudriyam*, also known as *rudram*, beginning from the *mantra*, “*namaste rudra manyava utota iṣave namaḥ.*” The hymn is called *rudram* or sometimes called *śatarudriyam*, one hundred *ślokas* in praise of Rudra or Lord Śiva. This hymn is in both recensions of the Yajur Veda, the Śukla-Yajur-Veda and the Kṛṣṇa-Yajur-Veda, the white and the black Yajur Veda. They are considered very holy and are daily recited by thousands of Hindus. This causes purity of heart and produces *vairāgya* or dispassion. Thus this Upaniṣad prescribes the reciting of the *rudram* as a means of preparation, a means of purification of the mind.

The commentator Narayana thinks that by *śatarudriyam* the Upaniṣad means only the text of Kaivalya-Upaniṣad. *Yaḥ śatarudriyam adhīte*, one who recites the *mantras* of the Kaivalya Upaniṣad given so far, his heart becomes pure, meaning that he becomes relieved of various sins that he may have accumulated. Every living being has been passing through the cycles of birth and death from beginningless time. Each one of the *jīvas* has taken innumerable births, many even as human births, and in each human embodiment he would have done different kinds of actions. Certainly a lot of *punya-karmas* or virtuous actions must have been done because of which the human birth is obtained, and because of which there is the exposure to Vedānta; it must call for a great amount of *punya*. At the same time, it is possible that in the past births and sometimes in this birth also, some *pāpa-karma*, or vicious actions may also have been done. Those actions result into obstacles in the present, as various likes and dislikes, various emotional difficulties, various impulses that we have. Sometimes these impulses or emotions take hold of our mind. We get swept away in the current of thoughts, cannot maintain our focus, we

cannot concentrate, in short we cannot do what we want to do. Sometimes the mind is not sharp enough so there may be difficulties in understanding the teaching, in retaining it and assimilating it. Only when we understand, retain, and assimilate does the knowledge becomes ours.

If the obstacles to learning are the result of past *karma*, what type of actions were these? These are what we may call sins or unbecoming actions, *adharma*, meaning actions that are in violation of the order, which is called *dharma*. Even today whenever we act out of anger, greed, or other passions, our action is going to be an *adhārmic* action. When a person acts out of anger, it is going to be a violent action, either at the level of body, speech, or mind. This happens when we are not alert or are not strong enough. Sometimes we fall for our own weaknesses, like temptations. The doctor may have told me not to eat any sweets, but a student offers me a cookie and says that this is an exceptional cookie with a hint of orange in it. It may become very tempting and I may eat it. Thus there are temptations. There is sometimes greed, sometimes anger. Sometimes these impulses arise and take hold of us and we do things that are in violation of *dharma*, the order. All such violations of the past manifest today in the form of various obstacles, various irritants, various distracting factors, various conflicts, various pressures or compulsions.

So what do we do? We remove these pressures by deliberately performing virtuous actions and also reciting the *rudram* or reciting the *mantras* of Kaivalyopaniṣad. The present *mantra* says that if you recite this then you become free from the negative effects of the actions you may have done in the past. One who repeats this *rudram* or Kaivalyopaniṣad, *agnipūtaḥ bhavati*, gets purified as by fire, because fire is a great purifier. Many things are

held in fire for the purpose of purification. One becomes purified as though by fire. *Surāpānāt pūtaḥ bhavati*. *Surāpānam*, drinking alcohol, is considered a *mahāpāpa*, a great sin, along with killing a *brāhmaṇa*. In the past we may have done these things. Who knows what we did in which birth? We do not know what the cause is for what is happening today, although we ask, “Why is this happening to me?” We do not know what we did in the past and how those actions are fructifying now. But the verse says that by reciting *rudram* or the Kaivalyopaniṣad, slowly our mind becomes free from the effects of these negative actions that we may have done.

Kṛtyākṛtyāt pūtaḥ bhavati means one becomes free from the sins of omission and commission. Sometimes we do not do what needs to be done; that is also a sin. Sometimes we do what should not be done; that is also a sin. All this happens; we are not perfect. We are not always in control of ourselves. Very often we are controlled by our *rāgas* and *dveṣas* or emotions, and therefore at times there will be sins of omission and commission. One becomes purified from that also.

Here is presented an *upāsanā*, a form of worship in the form of recital or chanting. A *mantra* like *om namaḥ śivāya* can be repeated in the mind, but reciting is usually recommended for *sūktas* and hymns. *Rudram* should be recited orally; the oral recitation of *rudram* or the Upaniṣad itself has a very healing effect. There are many wounds in the mind, created on account of whatever past actions may have been done, and these will be healed.

When we repeat Kaivalyopaniṣad, the very subject matter of *mantra* will have some impact on the mind because these *mantras* only deal with or reveal the nature of the self, the highest reality,

the most pure and the most auspicious. Therefore these *mantras* or words or sentences or statements, which talk about the most auspicious, are themselves also auspicious. So repeating them also creates an auspicious effect in the mind. It is said that just reciting the Vedas has an effect, even if you do not know the meaning of the *mantras*. *Śikṣā*, the science of phonetics, explains to us that in recitation air originates from the naval region, rises up, strikes the skull, and passes through different *sthānas* or places as it comes out from the mouth. That is how the articulated words are uttered, so every articulated word involves the movement of air through certain places. For example, when I say Rāma, Rāma, Rāma, the air originates from the navel and strikes the skull also. So every time I say Rāma, there is an effect on my brain, an effect on my own personality, and that is how these recitals become very healing. They have a very positive effect upon our whole being. You can see an inner shine on the faces of many *brāhmaṇas* regularly reciting Vedas, because recitation creates a certain effect that impacts one's mind and one's personality. Therefore it is understandable that reciting Kaivalyopaniṣad will also nullify the inauspicious effects of past actions.

Tasmāt avimuktam āśritaḥ bhavati. As a result of that one comes under the shelter of Lord Śiva. *Avimukta* is a name of Lord Śiva. Lord Śiva is called *paśupati*, the Lord of animals. Animals are all liberated ones meaning they have no duty, no responsibility. They live their life by instinct; therefore there are no stresses because there are no responsibilities. A cat or a dog or a cow is *vimukta*, is ever free. There is no *dharma*, no *adharma*. They can never do anything wrong. Whatever they do is automatically right because they are so programmed.

There is a story that once Lord Śiva and Pārvatī were walking along a forest. At that time the four sages known as Sanatkumāras—Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana, Sanatsujāta—the four child sages were coming from the opposite direction. They were in deep concentration and overlooked the formality of bowing down to Lord Śiva. Pārvatījī noticed that these four sages did not salute Lord Śiva. They failed to show the respect that Lord Śiva was due, and she became quite upset. She said, “Since you did not bend down your head, from now on you will always keep your head up.” She cursed them to become camels. As a result these sages turned into camels, and Śiva and Pārvatī went away from that location. After some time Lord Śiva asked Pārvatī, “Do you remember those four sages that were cursed? Did you ever find out what happened to them?” “No,” she replied, “Let’s go and find out what happened to them.” So Śiva and Pārvatī went back to that place where the four sages were cursed. There they saw four camels just resting and leisurely munching on some grass. Pārvatī asked them how they felt. “We are doing just fine,” they replied. Pārvatī asked, “How can that be? You are just camels.” They said, “First of all, we do not have to take a bath regularly because there is no need for *suci*, purity. Secondly, we can eat whatever we want, whenever we want. There are no rules, no regulations. We are ever free, we have no problems.” Pārvatī saw that it was pointless to curse these people. So the animals are called *vimuktaḥ*. Lord Śiva, who is their Lord, is called *avimuktaḥ*. By reciting this *śatarudriyam* or by reciting this Kaivalyopaniṣad one comes under the shelter of Lord Śiva¹.

¹ Avimukta is the name of Lord Śiva in the sense of one who never deviates from his innermost essence of oneness, never mixing up with *māyā*. Avimukta is also the name of a place in Varanasi which, it is believed, is never abandoned by Lord Śiva and Pārvatī, even at the time of *pralaya*, or dissolution.

Now there's a recommendation for the *atyāśramī*, one who transcends all the stages of life, meaning a *sannyāsī*, a renunciate. A renunciate or a *sannyāsī* should repeat this text all the time or at least once a day. Many *sannyāsīs* do that. One of the things that they repeat everyday is Kaivalyopaniṣad, another is Dakṣiṇāmūrti-Stotra, the third is the Māṇḍukyopaniṣad.

Anena jñānam āpnoti. By the recital of śatrudriyam or the recital of Kaivalyopaniṣad, one attains the knowledge. One gains the knowledge that destroys the ocean of *saṁsāra*, meaning one becomes free from *saṁsāra*. *Saṁsāra* is the repeated cycles of birth and death; a life of becoming, of seeking. A life of death, ignorance, and sorrow is called *saṁsāra*. Because we have been trying to become free from death, sorrow, and ignorance from beginningless time, it is called an ocean, one which has no end. It is only by knowledge that one comes to the end of the ocean of *saṁsāra*. So by this repetition, by this recital one gains the knowledge by which one crosses the ocean of *saṁsāra*.

Tasmād evaṁ viditvā enam, therefore having known the self in this manner, in the manner in which it is unfolded in Kaivalyopaniṣad, *kaivalyaṁ phalam aśnute*, one attains the fruit of *kaivalyam*. It is called Kaivalyopaniṣad because the concluding verse says *kaivalyaṁ phalam aśnute*, one attains the *phalam*, the fruit of *kaivalyam*. *Kevala* means only, alone. *Kaivalyam* is the state of being *kevala*—onliness, oneness, the state of being the self of all, the nondual, the state of being free from every limitation—that is *kaivalyam*, and that is the result that one attains. *Iti*, in this manner the Upaniṣad comes to a conclusion. We find that the last sentence is repeated. *Kaivalyaṁ phalam aśnute, kaivalyaṁ phalam aśnuta iti*. That was the style in the ancient times. When a text concludes, the last sentence is repeated

so that the student would know that this is the conclusion of the text. The texts were not written down. It was an oral tradition passed on from teacher to the student. How would the student know when the text is complete? When a sentence is repeated the student knows that the text is complete. Thus we also complete our study of Kaivalyopaniṣad, which is a great blessing, a great blessing from Īśvara and from all our teachers. We are happy that we enjoyed this blessing and we pray that we imbibe all that we have learned and that ultimately *kaivalyam phalam aśnute*, each one of us also attains that *phalam*, the fruit of *kaivalyam*, nonduality, liberation.

श्री कैवल्योपनिषत् पाठः

ॐ अथाश्वलायनो भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनमुपसमेत्योवाच ।
अधीहि भगवन्ब्रह्मविद्यां वरिष्ठां सदा सद्भिः सेव्यमानां निगूढाम् ।
ययाऽचिरात्सर्वपापं व्यपोह्य परात्परं पुरुषं याति विद्वान् ॥ १ ॥

तस्मै स होवाच पितामहश्च श्रद्धाभक्तिध्यानयोगादवैहि ॥ २ ॥

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः ।
परेण नाकं निहितं गुहायां विभ्राजते यद्यतयो विशन्ति ॥ ३ ॥

वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः संन्यासयोगाद्यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः ।
ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले परामृताः परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे ॥ ४ ॥

विविक्तदेशे च सुखासनस्थः शुचिः समग्रीवशिरःशरीरः ।
अत्याश्रमस्थः सकलेन्द्रियाणि निरुध्य भक्त्या स्वगुरुं प्रणम्य ॥ ५ ॥

हृत्पुण्डरीकं विरजं विशुद्धं विचिन्त्य मध्ये विशदं विशोकम् ।
अचिन्त्यमव्यक्तमनन्तरूपं शिवं प्रशान्तममृतं ब्रह्मयोनिम् ॥ ६ ॥

तमादिमध्यान्तविहीनमेकं विभुं चिदानन्दमरूपमद्भुतम् ।
उमासहायं परमेश्वरं प्रभुं त्रिलोचनं नीलकण्ठं प्रशान्तम् ।
ध्यात्वा मुनिर्गच्छति भूतयोनिं समस्तसाक्षिं तमसः परस्तात् ॥ ७ ॥

स ब्रह्मा स शिवः सेन्द्रः सोऽक्षरः परमः स्वराट् ।
स एव विष्णुः स प्राणः स कालोऽग्निः स चन्द्रमाः ॥ ८ ॥

स एव सर्वं यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यं सनातनम् ।

ज्ञात्वा तं मृत्युमत्येति नान्यः पन्था विमुक्तये ॥ ९ ॥

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
सम्पश्यन्ब्रह्म परमं याति नान्येन हेतुना ॥ १० ॥

आत्मानमरणिं कृत्वा प्रणवं चोत्तरारणिम् ।
ज्ञाननिर्मथनाभ्यासात्पापं दहति पण्डितः ॥ ११ ॥

स एव मायापरिमोहितात्मा शरीरमास्थाय करोति सर्वम् ।
स्त्रियन्नपानादिविचित्रभोगैः स एव जाग्रत्परितृप्तिमेति ॥ १२ ॥

स्वप्ने स जीवः सुखदुःखभोक्ता स्वमायया कल्पितजीवलोके ।
सुषुप्तिकाले सकले विलीने तमोऽभिभूतः सुखरूपमेति ॥ १३ ॥

पुनश्च जन्मान्तरकर्मयोगात्स एव जीवः स्वपिति प्रबुद्धः ।
पुरत्रये क्रीडति यश्च जीवस्ततस्तु जातं सकलं विचित्रम् ।
आधारमानन्दमखण्डबोधं यस्मिँल्लयं याति पुरत्रयं च ॥ १४ ॥

एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च ।
खं वायुज्योतिरापः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी ॥ १५ ॥

यत्परं ब्रह्म सर्वात्मा विश्वस्यायतनं महत् ।
सूक्ष्मात्सूक्ष्मतरं नित्यं स त्वमेव त्वमेव तत् ॥ १६ ॥

जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्त्यादिप्रपञ्चं यत्प्रकाशते ।
तद्ब्रह्माहमिति ज्ञात्वा सर्वबन्धैः प्रमुच्यते ॥ १७ ॥

त्रिषु धामसु यद्भोग्यं भोक्ता भोगश्च यद्भवेत् ।
तेभ्यो विलक्षणः साक्षी चिन्मात्रोऽहं सदाशिवः ॥ १८ ॥

मय्येव सकलं जातं मयि सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।

मयि सर्वं लयं याति तद्ब्रह्माद्वयमस्म्यहम् ॥ १९ ॥

अणोरणीयानहमेव तद्वन्महानहं विश्वमहं विचित्रम् ।
पुरातनोऽहं पुरुषोऽहमीशो हिरण्मयोऽहं शिवरूपमस्मि ॥ २० ॥

अपाणिपादोऽहमचिन्त्यशक्तिः पश्याम्यचक्षुः स शृणोम्यकर्णः ।
अहं विजानामि विविक्तरूपो न चास्ति वेत्ता मम चित्सदाऽहम् ॥ २१ ॥

वेदैरनेकैरहमेव वेद्यो वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम् ।
न पुण्यपापे मम नास्ति नाशो न जन्म देहेन्द्रियबुद्धिरस्ति ॥ २२ ॥

न भूमिरापो न च वह्निरस्ति न चानिलो मेऽस्ति न चाम्बरं च ।
एवं विदित्वा परमात्मरूपं गुहाशयं निष्कलमद्वितीयम् ।
समस्तसाक्षिं सदसद्विहीनं प्रयाति शुद्धं परमात्मरूपम् ॥ २३ ॥

यः शतरूढ्रीयमधीते सोऽग्निपूतो भवति सुरापानात्पूतो भवति स ब्रह्महत्यायात्पूतो
भवति । स सुवर्णस्तेयात्पूतो भवति स कृत्याकृत्यात्पूतो भवति
तस्मादविमुक्तमाश्रितो भवति । अत्याश्रमी सर्वदा सकृद्वा जपेत् । अनेन
ज्ञानमाप्नोति संसारार्णवनाशनम् । तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं कैवल्यं फलमश्नुते कैवल्यं
फलमश्नुत इति ॥ २४ ॥

Śrī Kaivalyopaniṣat pāṭhaḥ

om athāśvalāyano bhagavantam
 parameṣṭhinamupasametyovāca | adhīhi
 bhagavanbrahmavidyām variṣṭhām sadā sadbhiḥ
 sevyamānām nigūḍhām | yayā'cirātsarvapāpam vyapohya
 parātparam puruṣam yāti vidvān || 1 ||

tasmai sa hovāca pitāmahaśca
 śraddhābhaktidhyānayogādavaihi || 2 ||

na karmaṇā na prajayā dhanena
 tyāgenaike amṛtatvamānaśuḥ | pareṇa nākam nihitam
 guhāyām vibhrājate yadyatayo viśanti || 3 ||

vedāntavijñānasuniścitārthāḥ sannyāsayogādyatayaḥ
 śuddhasattvāḥ | te brahmalokeṣu parāntakāle parāmṛtāḥ
 parimucyanti sarve || 4 ||

viviktadeśe ca sukhāsanasthaḥ śuciḥ samagrīvaśīraḥśarīraḥ |
 antyāśramasthaḥ sakalendriyāṇi nirudhya bhaktyā
 svagurum praṇamya || 5 ||

hṛtpuṇḍarīkam virajam viśuddham vicintya madhye
 viśadam viśokam | acintyamavyaktamanantarūpam śivam
 praśāntamamṛtam brahmayonim || 6 ||

tamādimadhyāntavihīnamekaṁ vibhuṁ
 cidānandamarūpamadbhutam | umāsaḥāyaṁ
 parameśvaraṁ prabhuṁ trilocanaṁ nīlakaṇṭhaṁ praśāntam
 | dhyātvā munirgacchati bhūtayoniṁ samastasākṣiṁ
 tamaṣaḥ parastāt || 7 ||

sa brahmā sa śivaḥ sendraḥ so'kśaraḥ paramaḥ svarāṭ |
 sa eva viṣṇuḥ sa prāṇaḥ sa kālo'gniḥ sa candramāḥ || 8 ||

sa eva sarvaṁ yadbhūtaṁ yacca bhavyaṁ sanātanam |
 jñātvā taṁ mṛtyumatyeti nānyaḥ panthā vimuktaye || 9 ||

sarvabhūtaṣṭhamātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani |
 sampaśyanbrahma paramaṁ yāti nānyena hetunā || 10 ||

ātmānamaraṇiṁ kṛtvā praṇavaṁ cottarāraṇiṁ |
 jñānanirmathanābhyāsātpāpaṁ dahati paṇḍitaḥ || 11 ||

sa eva māyāparimohitātmā śarīramāsthāya karoti sarvaṁ |
 striyannapānādivicitrabhogaiḥ sa eva jāgratparitrptimeti
 ||12 ||

svapne sa jīvaḥ sukhaduḥkhabhoktā svamāyayā
 kalpitajīvaloke | suṣuptikāle sakale vilīne tamo'bhibhūtaḥ
 sukharūpameti || 13 ||

punaśca janmāntarakarmayogātsa eva jīvaḥ svapiti
 prabuddhaḥ | puratraye kṛṇoti yaśca jīvastatastu jātaṁ
 sakalaṁ vicitram | ādhāramānandamakhaṇḍabodham
 yasmiṁllayaṁ yāti puratrayaṁ ca || 14 ||

etasmājjāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca |
khaṁ vāyurjyotirāpaḥ pṛthivī viśvasya dhāriṇī || 15 ||

yatparaṁ brahma sarvātmā viśvasyāyatanaṁ mahat |
sūkṣmātsūkṣmataraṁ nityaṁ sa tvameva tvameva tat || 16 ||

jāgratsvapnasuṣuptyādiprapañcaṁ yatprakāśate |
tadbrahmāhamiti jñātvā sarvabandhaiḥ pramucyate || 17 ||

triṣu dhāmasu yadbhogyāṁ bhoktā bhogaśca yadbhavet |
tebhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ sākṣi cinmātro'haṁ sadāśivaḥ || 18 ||

mayyeva sakalaṁ jātaṁ mayi sarvaṁ pratiṣṭhitam | mayi
sarvaṁ layaṁ yāti tadbrahmādvayamasmayaham || 19 ||

aṇoraṇīyānahaṁeva tadvanmahānahaṁ viśvamahaṁ
vicitram | purātano'haṁ puruṣo'haṁīśo hiraṇmayo'haṁ
śivarūpamasmi || 20 ||

apāṇipādo'hamacintyaśaktiḥ paśyāmyacakṣuḥ sa
śṛṇomyakaraṇaḥ | ahaṁ vijānāmi viviktarūpo na cāsti vettā
mama citsadā'ham || 21 ||

Vedāiranekairahameva vedyo vedāntakṛdVedāvideva
cāham | na puṇyapāpe mama nāsti nāśo na janma
dehendriyabuddhirasti || 22 ||

na bhūmirāpo na ca vahnirasti na cānilo me'sti na cāmbaraṁ
ca | evaṁ viditvā paramātmārūpaṁ guhāśayaṁ
niṣkalamadvitīyam | samastasākṣiṁ sadasadvihīnaṁ prayāti
śuddhaṁ paramātmārūpam || 23 ||

yaḥ śatarūdriyamadhīte so'gnipūto bhavati surāpānātpūto
 bhavati sa brahmahatyāyātpūto bhavati sa
 suvarṇasteyātpūto bhavati sa kṛtyākṛtyātpūto bhavati
 tasmādavimuktamāśrito bhavati atyāśramī sarvadā sakṛdvā
 japet | anena jñānamāpnoti saṁsārārṇavanāśanam |
 tasmādevaṁ viditvainaṁ kaivalyaṁ phalamaśnute
 kaivalyaṁ phalamaśnuta iti || 24 ||
