

Kaivalya Upanishad

General Introduction to Upanishads

Meaning of Upanishad

The word Upanishad can be understood in many ways. The literal translation of उप is near, close to ; नि is below or down and षद् is to sit : sit down close to or sit below close to. Traditionally, the disciple sits below the level of the preceptor, at his feet. He also sits close to him so he does not miss a word or gesture; or to ensure that the preceptor does not have to shout to make himself heard; or because of his devotion to the preceptor because all of us like to come close to those whom we revere. This implies that Upanishad is not something that can be understood by reading it by oneself as a book, even if it is accompanied by learned commentaries. In today's context, Upanishad is also not something that can be understood by listening & watching videos or live-streamed discourses of the Master. It is the wisdom that can be absorbed only by humbly sitting close to the Master, making eye contact with him, watching and listening with full attention.

What makes the Upanishads so special? Bhagawan Adi Shankaracharya derives the meaning of “Upanishad” in his commentary on *Kathopanishad*. It is derived by adding उप (approaching close to) & नि (with certainty, fortitude) as prefixes & क्तिप् as suffix to the root word षद् which means विशरण break up, destroy; गति attain, reach; अवसादन loosen, weaken. It is the attainment of Knowledge that destroys, weakens संसारबीजस्य अविद्या (ignorance, the very seed of worldly existence of those seekers) with विवेक discrimination, who have developed वैराग्य detachment, from दृष्ट अनुश्रविक विषयवितृष्णा: desires for all visible, tangible objects of this world as well as the invisible, intangible objects of higher worlds. They are no longer drawn to mundane joys – prosperity in the form of progeny, wealth, power, relationships – or for the more intense and longer versions of the same joys in heaven. They know well that even if the heavenly enjoyments last for several thousand human years, they would eventually have to end and the jivas have to return to the cycle of birth & death. They are मुमुक्षुs – they seek nothing less than मोक्ष, the final liberation from all beginnings & endings. They उप approach the Knowledge that will lead them to that liberation with नि certainty & determination to succeed. Upanishad is therefore not a book, though it may take the form of a book. Upanishad is the import, the meaning, the Knowledge that will liberate the seeker.

This Knowledge is not objective knowledge. It is the insight that reveals my unchanging, unconditioned, independent identity. This is what I Am. It is the ultimate subject that cannot be known, but only existed. I can stand apart from all other forms of knowledge and say that I know this or that. But, there is no vantage point from which I can observe ‘I Am’ & claim that I know it; I can only Be. Once I am established in That, there is nothing else to be heard & learned, nothing else to be thought of, nothing else to be known, for I am complete & whole.¹ It cannot be seen; it is indescribable by words; thought cannot reach it; it cannot be taught as objective knowledge.² It lies at the root of all thoughts & words. A qualified, determined seeker needs to be carefully guided to that realisation by a teacher who has discerned the intention of the Shruti from his own teacher, who follows the example of his own Guru in instruction and who has himself realised that knowledge. Secondly, the minds of the teacher & student have to be attuned to each other. The student must have implicit faith that what the teacher is saying is the truth. There will be many times when his mind is unable to comprehend; the teacher must be generous & compassionate to the student through the latter's doubts & confusions. None of these can be

¹ येन अश्रुतं श्रुतं भवति अमतं मतं अविज्ञातं विज्ञातं इति – *Chandogya Upanishad* 6.1.3

² न तत्र चक्षुर्गच्छति, न वाग् गच्छति, नो मनः न विद्मः, न विजानीमः – *Kena Upanishad* 1.3

established without a close personal relationship between the two. Hence, the need that the disciple be at the feet of the teacher.

Upanishad also means रहस्यम् secret. *Kathopanishad* 1.3.17 calls it य इमं परमं गुह्यं this highest secret. But “secret” and “hidden” do not necessarily mean “confidential” or “not to be revealed”. As Bhagavan Adi Shankaracharya says, the Knowledge in the Upanishads is accessible only to a qualified seeker, as only a seeker who has keenly examined all the joys that the worlds can offer & found them to be paltry relative to the Infinite, will approach the Upanishads. The unqualified seeker can study the Upanishad to his heart’s content but will not be able to break out of the shell of his ignorance. On the contrary, by not understanding or misunderstanding Shruti, such a seeker can build up resistances in his mind that may cause considerable problems in future. This Knowledge is not something to be taken lightly.

There is a shloka that summarises all that has been said above. उपनियेममात्मानं ब्रह्माऽपास्तद्वयं यथः | निहन्त्यविद्यातज्जञ्च तस्मादुपनिषद् भवेत् || (उपनिय इमं आत्मानं ब्रह्म अपास्त द्वयं यथः | निहन्ति अविद्यां तद् जञ्च तस्मात् उपनिषद् भवेत् ||) Which उपनिय leads the आत्मानं jivas, souls to the Brahman अपास्त sans अद्वयं any duality, which निहन्त्य destroys अविद्यातज्जञ्च ignorance & all the effects born of ignorance - that is Upanishad.

The journey to the Upanishad.

What is my connection to Upanishad? All knowledge has to mean something to me, personally. If it is not relevant to me, I will have no interest in it. This applies even more to the knowledge of my Self, of what I really am. Hence, any introduction to the Upanishad has to include an introduction of myself to the Upanishad. How have I reached the moment in my life when I arrived at the Shruti? With what world-view have I come? What do I expect from it?

All beings struggle & strive to find आत्यन्तिक दुःख निवृत्ति & परमानन्द प्राप्ति, the complete cessation of sorrow & the attainment of endless joy. Since our senses are extroverted by nature, we first look at objects, relationships & experiences outside of ourselves to find that happiness & avoid that sorrow. We compete, acquire & accumulate, change, arrange & re-arrange the environment around us to obtain अर्थ security & काम enjoyment. After a while, some people discover that such extroverted enjoyments have major defects. They are associated with pain. One has to struggle to acquire them. But they are all temporary. All pleasures eventually fade away. They create bondage through dependence. Sensory indulgence exhausts the senses (ie damaging their ability to enjoy) while simultaneously creating dependence on them. So one has to search for stronger & more extreme experiences to get the same satisfaction.

The net result of all our experiences in life is either happiness or sorrow. There are three components of all experiences: the Experiencer (the subject), the Experienced (the object) & the Experience itself (the interaction between the two). I realise that परिस्थिति वाद the re-arrangement, re-organisation of the objects in my environment will never fulfil me because they suffer from the above defects. I realise that I must deal with the Subject, I, the Experiencer. The objective sciences are useless in this quest because their concern is with phenomena whereas my problem is with the observer of phenomena. Joy & sorrow, the human condition, are not their concerns whereas they are my problem & solution. So, I come to धर्म the scriptures. The scriptures tell me that the joys and sorrows are for the body. I am the jiva that suffers & enjoys but never dies. So, I perform various rituals & prayers so that my jiva, due to accumulated merits arising out of these, can enjoy the bliss of heaven after the death of the body.

But even heaven does not promise the death of all sorrow & eternal happiness. Admittedly, the joys of heaven would be of a higher order than on earth and endure for a much longer period. The music will be more melodious, the art more vivid, the atmosphere more beautiful. All

desires will be fulfilled; the enjoyments would be endless; there will be no pain, no sorrow, no fear.³ But, even that will not last forever. Eventually, after the exhaustion of my accumulated merits, I would have to be reborn to run again the gamut of experience.⁴

Many of us, who are presently leading peaceful, comfortable lives with no major shortcomings, will not regard the cycle of birth & death with dismay. But a little reflection will tell me that the प्रारब्ध कर्म that has now materialised as this comfortable life may not last forever. The other lives waiting to express themselves in my सञ्चित कर्म could be completely different. Again, while I am assured that no progress made in this life will be wasted⁵, there is no assurance that, in the next life, the circumstances & my choices will allow me to continue on the path. I might even regress. Secondly, the scriptures teach that the jivas have these fundamental defects. I have राग likes, things to which I am attracted & द्वेष dislikes, things from which I am repelled. So long as I am constantly torn between the two, running towards one & away from the other, I will never be at peace. I have विक्षेप restlessness, काम desire, क्रोध rage, लोभ greed, मोह delusion, मद pride and मात्सर्य envy. So long as I regard myself as a jiva & retain my attachment to individuality, these defects will continue to operate in some fashion, whether on earth or in heaven. I will be forever incomplete.

When I realise that heaven is not my solution, I will come to the path of knowledge that will cut through the आवरण the veil, the barrier, that conceals the truth of the authentic & immutable relationship between जीव myself, जगत् the world & ब्रह्म. When I am in darkness, only light will dispel the gloom. When I am in ignorance, only knowledge will remove it. When this is realised, the drive to Liberation becomes far more urgent. I have already wasted enough time in this & in previous lives. There is no time to be lost. This is मुमुक्षुत्वम्, the urgent desire for मोक्ष to be free of all bondages.⁶ I have travelled this long road. Many others have not. I have found the Guru. I have come to the Upanishad. This is the journey that the *Kaivalya Upanishad* is referring to when it begins with अथ.

³ कामस्याप्तिं जगतः प्रतिष्ठां क्रतोः अनन्त्यम् अभयस्य पारम् – *Kathopanishad* 1.2.11. The end of all desires, the foundation of the world, the endless rewards of sacrifice, the other shore where there is no fear.

⁴ सर्वं जीवितं अल्पं एव – All lives are verily short. *Kathopanishad* 1.1.26. Even a life in heaven, lasting for several thousand human years, will have to come to an end. And as it comes to an end, it will bring sorrow.

⁵ नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते । स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥ – *Bhagavad Gita* 2.40. In this there is no loss of effort, nor any harm produced of contrary result. Even a little of this knowledge, even a little practice of this yoga, protects from great fear.

⁶ अहङ्कारादिदेहान्तान् बन्धानज्ञानकल्पितान् । स्वस्वरूपावबोधेन मोक्तुमिच्छा मुमुक्षुता ॥ *Vivekachudamani* 27. The desire to free oneself from all bondage ranging from the ego to body identification, which are all imaginations created by ignorance, to realise one's true Self, that is Mumukshutvam.

The Kaivalya Upanishad

The *Kaivalya Upanishad* is a minor Upanishad in the Atharvana veda. Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, says that there are about 280 Upanishads extant of which 108 have been accepted by scholars as authentic texts. Of these, ten have been taken up for analysis & comments in the Brahma Sutra commentaries of Adi Shakaracharya & other masters. These ten are therefore called the major Upanishads. They are: ईशकेनकठप्रश्नमुण्डमाण्डुक्यतित्तिरिः । ऐतरेयं च छान्दोग्यं बृहदारण्यकं तथा ॥ The other Upanishads are referred to as minor (सामान्यवेदान्तोपनिषदः).

All the Upanishads have the same theme – the identity between आत्मा & ब्रह्मन्. Some of them treat Brahman as the Creator, the real cause of the world (सप्रपञ्च) while others describe Brahman through negation (न इति, न इति) & the world as an illusory appearance (निशप्रपञ्च). केवल Kevala means homogenous, where no differences whatsoever exist. There is no difference of the type that exists within the same species सजातीय भेद; there is no difference of the type that exists between species विजातीय भेद; there is no variance within itself स्वगत भेद (like limb & body, part & whole). The other differences identified by Vedanta are the perceived difference between souls, between souls & the world, between souls & God, between the world & God & between worlds. Kevala is that in which none of these differences exist. कैवल्य homogeneity is the abstract quality. The Upanishad is named as such because it proclaims at the end that the person who attains this knowledge attains कैवल्य ie he perceives no variety or differences whatsoever, no otherness, at any time or place. There is only the One Indivisible.

The Invocation

॥ ॐ ॥ - means praying to God for the auspicious beginning of study. The Word Om⁷ is the nearest pointer, indicator, of Brahman. It is the very first vibration in primordial space that emerged from the throat of the Creator, absolutely pure & untainted, as it did not even touch the tongue or palate or lips.⁸ That vibration, the very sound of Om, even if the one who speaks it or the one who hears it does not understand its import, is auspicious, holy, sacred. The disciple prays that everything that he perceives be auspicious, so that he does not get disturbed while studying.

भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः *Oh Gods! May we hear only auspicious sounds by our ears.*

Oh Gods! May we ever hear by ears what is auspicious alone, not gossip or unwanted conversation. It means to have the great ability to listen to the teaching with all our ears (because it is plural not dual) ie with full attention. It also means that we should speak only what is auspicious, because we are the first to listen to what we speak. So, it is to pray that nothing inauspicious comes out from our speech.

The idea is that may we have श्रद्धा to listen to Veda which is talking about the Truth. Without श्रद्धा: one would not listen seriously. May we also understand what we listen, because even if we listen with श्रद्धा: , it is useful only when we understand and grasp the teaching.

भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः । *Oh! Worshipful ones! May we see only auspicious sights by our eyes.*

Oh! Worshipful ones; May our eyes see only that which is auspicious. Grant us the insight to see auspiciousness in all and in everything, so that the sense of otherness reduces in us gradually. It could also be understood that the prayer is that we do not become the cause for seeing something that is not auspicious. Even if some inauspiciousness is seen, let us try to transform it to the auspicious. Since the ears and eyes have the longest range of perception, they are the two key sense organs which connect us to the world of objects & hence they seem to have been specifically indicated here. In general, these two lines of prayer indicate to us that we should focus on the virtues in everyone, rather than on their defects. The ability of seeing the good in people keeps us in peace within ourselves. People will have defects but we should have an attitude of seeing good in people. In other words, may we practise virtues like sympathy, compassion, understanding, love, sharing, giving & friendliness. It is only when we have these qualities, that we will see auspiciousness & not otherwise.

स्थिरैः अंगैः तुष्ट्वाग्ं सः तनूभिः व्यशेम देवहितं यत् आयुः ॥

With healthy body and able limbs, may we live our life engaged in the good of the Gods, praising your glory.

May we have firm limbs and body and enough life-span for the work of Gods, i.e. contentment and ability to worship/glorify Gods. It also means that may we have not any complaints as regards our limbs, body and lifespan which are as per our merits alone, granted by the Gods.

⁷ सर्वे वेदा यत् पदमामनन्ति तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद् वदन्ति । यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत् ते पदं सङ्ग्रहेण ब्रवीम्यमित्येतत् ॥ The goal (word) which all the Vedas declare of (praise), which all penances { austerities } proclaim, and wishing for which they lead brahmacharis, that goal (word) I shall briefly tell thee. It is Om. *Kathopanishad* 1.2.15.

⁸ ओंकारश्च अथशब्दश्च द्वा वेतौ ब्रह्मण पुरा । कण्ठं भित्वा विनिर्थातौ तस्मात् माङ्गलिक उभौ ॥ Brahman uttered two words in the very beginning – ओं & अथ. They emerged from his throat, without contamination by the saliva of the mouth. So the sound of both are auspicious.

May we perform God's work silently & happily without blaming anyone at anytime, anywhere. Grant us the ability to connect with others without pinpointing defects. Wrong thinking leads to wrong action which leads to wrong results, leading to sorrow/grief. Also, grant us the wisdom to see the glory in Gods as also in other people.

स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः *May Lord Indra, the ancient and renowned, give us the blessings.*

May we be granted the blessings from Lord Indra. Lord Indra being the deity of the hands, ie grasping, may He give us wisdom & strength to do good things. In other words, may all be well with us – may we think correctly so that we do correct things which leads to happiness-prosperity and to the company of good people.

स्वस्ति न पूषा विश्ववेदाः *May Lord Sun, the all-knowing, give us the blessings.*

May our thinking/intelligence be enlightened by the Sun, the Illuminator , deity of Intellect. May His light give us good health.

The whole world functions because the sun sustains all lives – plants, animals and human beings. We know that because of sun, the clouds are formed leading to rains. Further, it is because of sun that the great rivers flow with water due to melting of ice in the mountains. Despite being so magnanimous, the sun does not claim any credit or compensation for his generosity. The message to us is that whatever great thing we may do, it is foolish to claim any credit for it as it is negligible compared to Sun's role, under whom everything happens. So, let us keep doing our best possible silently and without any sense of doership.

स्वस्ति नः ताक्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः *May Lord Vayu/ Garuda, the Lord of swift movement, give us blessings & save us from harm.*

May we be protected from all inauspiciousness and blessed with solutions for all problems/issues by the god of swift motion, Vaayu or Garuda, who removes all obstacles. Both Vaayu and Garuda move in the sky freely, without any barriers. In the same way, may our journey towards the goal be free from all obstacles. Let us be free from our negativities and inherent enemies like काम, क्रोध, लोभ, मोह, मद, मात्सर्य, etc.

स्वस्ति नः बृहस्पतिः दधातु ॥ *May Lord Brahaspati give us blessings.*

May we be blessed by Lord Brahaspati, who is Guru of Gods, with peaceful minds, power, health, intelligence and the right Knowledge. Let the Knowledge attained be retained in me and be available with me for ever.

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

The Chanting of *शान्तिः* three times is intended to ward off obstacles to our learning arising from 3 quarters, viz., (i) आधिदैविक divine forces beyond our knowledge & control like earthquakes, lightning, etc.; (ii) आधिभौतिक, i.e. issues related to the world around us which we know but are beyond our control like noise, rains, floods, etc.; and (iii) आध्यात्मिक, related to issues within me like inability to concentrate, mental disturbances & agitations, lack of faith caused by vasanas.

In short the invocation is addressed to Almighty God, through the presiding deities of cosmic forces, to bless us by keeping our minds fully available for learning; to improve those qualities in us that will enable us to understand & retain the knowledge. Its goal is spiritual growth not material gain. It is also to express our gratitude for the blessings already received. Addressing each deity intensifies the prayer.

Mantra 1

अथाश्वलायनो भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनमुपसमेत्योवाच (अथ अश्वलायनः भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनं उपसमेत्य उवाच)

अधीहि भगवन् ब्रह्मविद्यां वरिष्ठां सदा सदभिः सेव्यमानां निगूढाम् ।

ययाऽचिरात् सर्वपापं व्यपोह्य परात्परं पुरुषं याति विद्वान् ॥ १ ॥

1. अथ Thereafter, then, Ashwalayana, उपसमेत्य approached परमेष्ठिनम् the Lord of Creation, परं तिष्ठिनम् the one established in the highest seat of knowledge and said: Pray अधीहि teach me, pray recollect to me what your teacher taught the वरिष्ठां ब्रह्मविद्या highest meta-knowledge, which सद्भिः the wise persons with spiritual hunger सेव्यमानां सदा have always sought, chosen, {that knowledge which is} निगूढाम् the highest secret. यया That knowledge which अचिरात् without delay, swiftly, अपोह्य destroys, discards all sins & विद्वान् the wise man याति attains or goes to परात्परं – that which is higher than the highest, that which is beyond the beyond.

The student is Sage Ashwalayana who is approaching Lord Brahma Himself for knowledge. He has already examined the promises of earth & heaven & found them wanting. He knows the Vedas, the Vedangas & the Upavedas.⁹ He has passed through the stages of कर्म & उपासना. He is hungry for liberation. He has understood that the last & most difficult barrier is ignorance & the only antidote is Knowledge. In his existential journey, he believes he has developed the necessary qualifications of mind & intellect to understand it. He is such an unusually qualified अधिकारि seeker, student, that he is able to approach Lord Brahma, the original source of that Knowledge. The single word अथ encompasses all these meanings.

He approaches the Guru विधिवत् उपसन्न in the manner prescribed in the scriptures, with reverence & humility, समित्पाणि wood faggots in hand as offerings for the sacrificial fire. These dry, small twigs & sticks signify the ego & identity that he is prepared to throw in the fire of knowledge so that it may burn brighter. He waits as long as necessary for the Guru's favour and, in the meanwhile, occupies himself in the Guru's service. After the Guru accepts him as a disciple, he waits for the appropriate moment when the teacher is not otherwise occupied & asks him the question that has been uppermost in his mind all along. The two words उपसमेत्य उवाच include all these meanings. The Upanishad is brief because Shruti assumes that the reader has the necessary knowledge to understand all the things that she leaves unsaid. We must not take brevity to be abruptness: that Ashwalayana pushed himself forward to meet Lord Brahman & tossed the question at Him.

Unlike *Kathopanishad*, *Chandogya Upanishad* & *Prashnopanishad*, *Kaivalya Upanishad* does not develop the plot & introduce the characters. Unlike *Kenopanishad* & *Prashnopanishad*, its questions are not preliminary, requiring long & patient explanations from the Master. Ashwalayana already has the अपाथत ज्ञानम् the general knowledge of the subject. He only needs it to be systematically explained. He knows precisely what he is looking for & goes directly to the point.

What is the knowledge that Ashwalayana is seeking? It is the highest knowledge that swiftly, immediately, destroys sin. Sins arise from our desire-dictated actions to find fulfilment in the objects & relationships around us. The root of that desire is the sense of individuality (of I) & possession (Mine). But the "I" remains incomplete regardless of all that I do to satisfy it. Brahma-vidya is the only Knowledge that will falsify that finite individuality & reveal the truth

⁹ Vedanga – शिक्षा phonetics ; व्याकरण grammar ; निरुक्त etymology ; छन्दस् prosody ; ज्योतिष astronomy ; कल्प science of rituals. Upa Veda – आयुर्वेद science of life & health ; गान्धर्व वेद the fine arts ; अर्थवेद economics, politics, administration ; धनुर्वेद science of archery & war.

about my authentic identity - I am, have been & always will be, whole & complete; there is no Other, all are I. When that is my most intimate Knowledge, all sins, all sorrows, will drop like dry leaves. All other sources of knowledge will teach me about इदम् the world around me; only this will teach me about अहम् . Once I have this Knowledge, there will never again be confusion or conflict about what the world is & what I am in relation to the world. I will know the relevance & value of everything.¹⁰ All wise men seek this Knowledge. Why is it then a secret? Because only wise men search for it. It is secret because though all of us know it, primal ignorance conceals it from us. It is hidden within all of us. It is rare to find someone who is searching for it; it is rarer to find someone who can teach it. It is rarest to find someone who can absorb & live that knowledge.¹¹

This verse also serves as the अनुबन्ध चतुष्टय the preface to the Upanishad. The अधिकारि the reader it is aimed at is the highly qualified seeker. Shruti does not bother to explain the qualifications, assuming that the student who has come to the Upanishad knows enough to understand the meaning of अथ. The mantra calls them सद्भिः they whose only interest is the truth of the relationship between the जीव, जगत् & जगत् कारणम् the triangular relationship between individuality, the world & the Creator. This विषय, the subject matter is ब्रह्मविद्या, the highest knowledge. The प्रयोजनम् the end result of that knowledge is destruction of all sin. The सम्बन्धः the relationship is that this Upanishad will reveal that Truth.

Mantra 2

तस्मै स होवच पितामहश्च श्रद्धाभक्तिध्यानयोगादवैहि ॥ २ ॥

2. To him the Grandsire said, “अवैहि Learn this, know this by faith, devotion & meditation.”

The student says अधीहि please teach me & the Guru replies अवैहि learn this. Knowledge is not transmitted by a look or touch or else we will only have to go near the Guru to get liberation. The Guru can teach, guide, inspire, correct, but he cannot carry us to the goal. Readiness, effort & commitment are required from the disciple. The three things he needs are faith, devotion & meditation which are the equivalent to श्रवणम्, मननम् & निदिध्यासनम् listening to the teacher, reflecting by oneself to remove all doubts & meditation to eliminate all contrary notions.

श्रद्धाः is the conviction that what the scriptures state & the guru teaches is the truth; it is also the confidence that I will be able to understand & apply that Truth to myself.¹² I have tried all the other means to liberation. I have tried rites & rituals to remove all potential negative consequences; I have tried upasana to melt away the perceived separation between myself & others, myself & God. While all these remove sins, the identity of the sinner remains, however tenuous that idea may be. I come to the scriptures & the guru with the faith that they have the knowledge that will eliminate that final source of sorrow. The scriptures can be studied & analysed with scholarly interest. That can give technical knowledge but that is not liberation. They can be studied with faith but at the very end, one can be fearful of denying the personality to which one has become attached & draw back. One may imagine that one has understood the truth & is living it only for the faith to collapse in the face of calamity. Those too, are not

¹⁰ येनाश्रुतं श्रुतं भवत्यमतं मतमविज्ञातं विज्ञातमिति – by knowing which what is unheard becomes heard, what is not thought of becomes thought of, what is unknown becomes known. *Chandogya Upanishad* 6.1.3

¹¹ श्रवणायापि बहुभिर्यो नो लभ्यः श्रुण्वन्तोऽपि वहवो यं न विदुः । आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धाः आश्चर्यो ज्ञाता कुशलानुशिष्टः ॥ He (the Self) of whom many are not able to even hear; of whom many, even they hear of Him, do not comprehend. Wonderful is the man, when found, who is able to teach the Self. Wonderful is he who comprehends the Self, when taught by an able teacher. *Kathopanishad* 1.2.7

¹² शास्त्रस्यगुरुवाक्यस्य सत्यबुद्ध्यावधारणा । सा श्रद्धा कथिता सद्भिर्निर्या वस्तूपलभ्यते ॥ That by which one understands the precise import of the scriptures as well as the pregnant words of advice of the preceptor is called faith by the wise; by this alone does Reality become manifestly clear. *Vivekachudamani* 25

freedom. The seeker must have the courage & fortitude to pay whatever price, even the death of the body, if that is the cost of Liberation.¹³

Does that mean the substance of faith is only self-effort? No. It is the confidence that my self-effort will get the response of कृपा grace, favour. The scriptures will reveal themselves to me; the preceptor will compassionately accept & instruct me; god will remove barriers in front of me & smooth my way; and finally, that I will be able to learn & change. Is this a blind belief? No. It is the result of युक्ति logical thinking about श्रुति the scriptures saying that grace is in the very fabric of the universe, that effort will never go unrewarded. This abstract idea is supported by अनुभूति the evidence of my own experience or the experience of others.

भक्ति, devotion, is the fuel that the motor of श्रद्धा burns. It is the emotional support of the intellectual conviction. Devotion is another name for deep love. Devotion is its own reward; it seeks no other. It is the unconditional surrender of body, mind & spirit to the subject of one's love. It is the utter indifference to anything other than one's love.¹⁴ My love is for the सगुण, औपाधिक ब्रह्मन् God with attributes, expressing Itself in the world & in me. The relationship, when it begins, is trinary: the soul, the spirit & the world. As it develops, the world recedes & the relationship becomes binary: soul & spirit. In its highest form, devotion is unitary: there is only the Spirit. I have to begin with the सगुण ईश्वर to arrive at the निर्गुण ब्रह्मन्. Is devotion, love, an emotion that only a few people have & express? No. Acharyaji says - "We all have Love to express. If we don't love God, we will love something else. But my highest, purest, love will be for God".

Just as श्रद्धा intellectual conviction will turn into dry knowledge without emotional expression, भक्ति devotion will become soft sentiment without the support of Knowledge. Bhagawan Adi Shankaracharya says स्वस्वरूपानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्याभिधीयते single-pointed devotion is the supreme requirement for the constant endeavour to live up to one's own Real Nature.¹⁵

ध्यान is contemplation, the ability to maintain one thought or an uninterrupted stream of one type of thought for a period of time, like a stream of oil being poured from one vessel to another. Faith will tell me that I will find the truth in the scriptures with the preceptor's help; devotion to the scriptures & the guru will help me resolve my doubts & bridge the gaps in my knowledge. They will both sustain me in the next stage, meditation, the assimilation of scriptural statements into my understanding.

¹³ देहं वा पातयामि कार्यं वा साधयामि । Either this body will drop, or I will know the Truth.

¹⁴ Paraphrased from *Narada Bhakti Sutra* 1.2.7-9

¹⁵ *Vivekachudamani* 31

Mantra 3

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः । (त्यागेन एके अमृतत्वं आनशुः)
परेण नाकं निहितं गुहायां विभ्राजते यद्यतयो विशन्ति ॥ ३ ॥ (यत् यतयः विशन्ति)

2. Not by performing कर्मणा rituals, or doing self-less work; not by getting progeny; nor by gathering wealth but by त्याग renunciation एके alone is immortality आनशुः attained. परेण Higher than नाकं heavenly {pleasures} it is; निहितं abiding in the गुहायां cave of intelligence-awareness, it विभ्राजते shines by itself, independent of all. एके Only a few यतयः the self-controlled sages will विशन्ति enter into it. ¹⁶

कर्मणा Shruti says that the performance of religious rituals, prayer, worship, altruistic service, will not lead to immortality, liberation. This is a very large statement that needs explanation. The result of all effort is the उत्पाद्यम् the production, creation of something that did not exist earlier. It could also be the विकार्यम् the modification of something that existed in another form or सम्स्कार्यम् the purifying, refining of something that existed earlier. Or it could be आप्यम् the acquisition of something that was previously unavailable. Religious rituals are performed with one or the other of these results in mind, to attain prosperity & peace in this or higher worlds. But Atma cannot be attained by any of these means. It is ever-existent so It cannot be produced. It is not an object to be procured. It cannot be modified as It is unchanging. It is purity itself so It cannot be purified.

Secondly, there are many forms of karma. I can worship, recite, chant, donate, serve & so on. But since it is only primal ignorance that blocks the awareness of the Atma, there is only means – knowledge – that can remove it.

So is all कर्म useless & the entire कर्मखाण्ड of the Vedas a waste of time? No. The Vedas themselves explain that the knowledge of Brahman can be taught to them alone who perform rituals, study the vedas, meditate upon them, possess the faith & who themselves, personally, offer oblations to the sacred fire.¹⁷ कर्म योगा, as we understand it today, is not mentioned but we can take it that it that Shruti includes it. All these actions are essential to discipline my senses, purify the stream of thoughts in my mind, increase my ability to focus it in the desired direction, and, most of all, to remove the delusion in my mind that I am nothing more than the body & the ego. Only after these preliminary sadhanas refine my being will I become ready to approach the guru & the Upanishads.

प्रजया – the gift of progeny meaning sons. Only sons that inherit the father's gotra can perform the funeral rites & the annual श्राद्ध ceremony for their parents & ancestors allowing them to go to higher worlds of enjoyment. This too is not immortality.

धन – Wealth, meaning not mere accumulation of money but wealth in terms of कामिनि, काञ्चन, कीर्ती women, gold & fame. All these could lead to a luxurious life on earth but nothing beyond that. Wealth used to contribute to charity, make donations & other expressions of social responsibility will have a better result but also will not lead to liberation. Wealth could also mean the gift of our talents & character that can be used for the benefit of others. While this is a worthy action, better than mere wealth accumulation, it too, will not result in liberation.

¹⁶ The same mantra, in a lengthier form, appears in *Mahanarayana Upanishad* Question 4 Verse 12

¹⁷ क्रियावन्तः श्रोत्रिया ब्रह्मणिष्ठः स्वयं जुह्वत एकर्षि श्रद्धयन्तः । तेषामेवैतां ब्रह्मविद्यां वदेत... ॥ To them alone let one teach this knowledge of Brahman, who perform rituals, who read & study the Vedas, who meditate on Brahman, who possess faith & themselves offer oblations to the fire..... *Mundakopanishad* 3.2.10.

त्यागेन एके Sacrifice alone leads to immortality. In this context, sacrifice is synonymous with renunciation. Immortality will be granted to him who willingly forfeits all worldly desires, attachments, achievements, for the single goal of liberation. Sacrifice is the surrender of something of relatively inferior value for something of relatively higher value. That does not mean that I have lost all desire for the inferior thing; it just means that the lower desire has been over-shadowed by a higher one. Renunciation, on the other hand, means the complete abandonment of all desires except for immortality. I strip away all likes, dislikes, attractions, repulsions & seek immortality with that clean intelligence. Only very few will be capable of that quality of वैराग्य & hence the mantra says त्यागेन एके very few perform that sacrifice.¹⁸

All intelligent persons develop a certain amount of dispassion with age or experience. The urgency of many desires reduce; we become more moderate in expectations & are able to handle adversity without getting upset. Does it mean that such persons of experience also qualify to be called यतयः self-controlled sages? No. Because their dispassion is the pragmatic result of their experience. It is not based on a higher value, their search for realisation of their true identity. Their dispassion does not falsify the desires themselves; it only reduces the ability of the desires to enchant.

निहितं गुहायाम् It is not something that is available at some distant place. It is there in the deepest part of me, in the cave of my own heart, my own intelligence, meaning that it is always available. It is not hidden from me; it is not a secret. I only have to turn my attentiveness from the outside to the inside. It is the light that विभ्राजते illumines, grants awareness, Is-ness, to everything. It is the light that needs no other light to ignite it or reveal it. It is independent, unattached, unaffected.

परेण नाकम् The word कम् means joy. Its antonym is अकम्, sorrow. नाकम् means the absence of sorrow. We often mistake the absence of sorrow to be joy, the absence of dissatisfaction to be satisfaction. After all, even in our deep sleep, we experience the complete absence of experience & sorrow & mistake that for bliss. Shruti, knowing this, says it is superior to the state of sorrow-less-ness. It is a never-ending flood of joy that abounds.

Mantra 4

वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः संन्यासयोगाद्यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः ।

ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले परामृतात्परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे ॥४॥

4. Those who शुद्ध सत्त्वाः minds are pure, the संन्यास योगात् यतयः self-controlled strivers who are united with renunciation, वेदान्त विज्ञान सुनिश्चित अर्थाः come to clearly ascertain {& absorb} the deeper meaning of Vedanta { ie the identity revealing Mahavakyas of the Upanishads}. They परान्तकाले in the end {at the time of death}, attain ब्रह्मलोकेषु the world of Brahman परिमुच्यन्ति get freedom from everything पर अमृतात् & gain the highest nectar of immortality.

There is a difference between ज्ञान objective knowledge & विज्ञान the knowledge that has become my subjective self, which has changed me. Objective knowledge is the study of the effects, something external to me. It may affect & influence me but will not change my essential idea of my self. विज्ञान is the study of the cause, the subject, the introspection that changes my idea of my self. Objective knowledge is परोक्ष remote, separate from me. It is taught. Subjective knowledge is अपरोक्ष immediate, personal. It is realised. I have to recall & remember ज्ञान; I don't have to remember विज्ञान because it is my nature. Objective knowledge is to know that there is a Brahman & I will attain It somewhere & sometime. Subjective knowledge is to know that I am Brahman.

¹⁸ यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् । नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ He who is without attachment everywhere, who neither rejoices nor hates on meeting anything good or bad, his wisdom is fixed. *Bhagavad Gita* – 2.57

Those with विज्ञानम् will know without any doubts or gaps in knowledge. They will have the certitude of स्व अनुभव of personal experience of the truth of the scriptures.

This certitude can come about only by means of a pure mind, self-effort & renunciation. The mind is cleansed of all attractions, aversions & all the negativities that flow from them: desire, joy, sorrow, anger, envy & so on. That sharp, clean mind can meditate on the import of the scriptures and remove all false notions of identity that has been built up over many lifetimes. That is the internal साधना. The external साधना is summarised in the invocation at the beginning of this Upanishad – that all I take in from the environment is auspicious. I might look at the world & see only enmity, conflict & confusion; the wise man will see the Atma & all events & experiences as evolution towards that Atma. It is an alternate view of the “reality of the world.”

What external साधनाs can I practise to purify myself? I must first eliminate all निशिद्ध desires & actions that are prohibited by the scriptures. Besides avoiding unethical, immoral actions, I should endeavour to see that my desires are moderate, as greed to get more than my share would deprive another. I must avoid all काम्य selfish desires that bring me benefit & harm to others. I must retain only नियत & नैमित्तिक कर्म scripturally ordained daily & occasional duties. If I am not able or willing to perform rites & rituals, I must perform निष्काम कर्म perform the duties appropriate to my status & life station without my personal desires becoming the main driver of my actions. I must strive to ensure that my desires do not bind me in any way. I must be able to drop them as my प्रारब्ध कर्म the circumstances of life dictate. All these will gradually reduce the preponderance of the ego, which is essentially a false phantom of identity imposed on the Self. However, both ritualistic & altruistic duties can be performed only with a sense of total surrender, as an offering to God ईश्वरप्रणिधान. The importance of devotion cannot be over emphasized.

What is संन्यास renunciation? The external expression of renunciation is [a] observing vows of poverty or at least minimising the requirements for objects that would give comfort. In this each person must establish his own standards but in general must live with minimum requirements. [b] the performance of the daily & occasional rites & rituals are no longer duties that apply to the sannyasi. He has no interest in the householder state. This does not mean that the sannyasi ceases to perform his daily acts of worship as the faith that finds no expression would atrophy. It means that he has a choice whether to perform them or not. [c] just as one has given up attachments to possessions, the bonds of relationships must also be severed. It is not essential that the sannyasi must cut off all human relations & live like a hermit. He must sunder all his emotional bonds with his family & treat them as he treats everyone else. [d] the sannyasi must not initiate any transaction to gain, obtain, preserve any object or relationship with the world.¹⁹ Is sannyasa an external discipline or an internal attitude? It is both. External observance बहिरङ्ग साधना strengthens the अन्तरङ्ग साधना internal attitude & vice versa. However, in terms of priority, the latter is more critical than the former. A householder can be fully involved in the duties required of his station but can still be wholly detached from them & attached to his spiritual evolution. On the other hand, the sadhana of a monk in ochre robes may be continuously disturbed by his engagements with the world.

What happens to such a sannyasi? There are two views. The first is that if his sadhana has been sincere, when his body drops, he attains ब्रह्मलोक the world of Brahman ie highest heaven and, at the time of प्रलय dissolution, unites with Brahman. परान्त काले , the final moment of death, for them would be the dissolution. This is called क्रम मुक्ति gradual liberation. ब्रह्मलोक can also be interpreted to mean the union with Brahman when the gross body falls. Both follow the death of

¹⁹ त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन । निर्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥ The Vedas deal with the three attributes; be you above the attributes. O Arjuna, free yourself from the pairs of opposites & ever remain in goodness, freed from all thoughts of acquisition & preservation. Be established in the Self. *Bhagavad Gita* 2.45.

the body so they are called विदेह मुक्ति. But not all sanniyasis have to wait for the body to fall to renounce it. There are a few who detach themselves completely from the body even when it breathes, moves & feels. For them, the body has already dropped. परान्तकाले the ultimate moment of death does not have to await the cremation of the body. The liberation while the body continues to live is जीवन् मुक्ति.

The state of being they experience at & after the moment of realisation is पर अमृता a state of being that is completely free from all bondages, limitations & constraints of time & space. It transcends even immortality. A ज्ञानि does not become free; he realises that he always was & always will be free. The Acharya says: "Liberation is not freedom from sorrows; it is the realisation that in the midst of sorrows, I am free". Only an Upanishad can describe such a state of being. *Mundakopanishad* 2.2.8: भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्व संशयाः । क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे . When That is seen in both the higher & the lower, the knots that tie the heart are sundered, resolved are all doubts & misgivings & dissolved are all karmas.

Question: I have developed dispassion towards the short-term rewards of the world. I am removing the pollution & agitations in my mind. Knowing that I can only find the truth in the scriptures, I have turned towards them. God has graced me with a teacher. I am studying & reflecting with all sincerity. But nothing is happening. What should I do?

Mantras 5 - 7

विविक्तदेशे च सुखासन्स्थः शुचिः समग्रीवशिरः शरीरः ।

अत्याश्रमस्थः सकलेन्द्रियाणि निरुध्य, भक्त्या स्वगुरुं प्रणम्य ॥

हृत्पुण्डरीकं विरजं विशुद्धं, विचिन्त्य मध्ये विशदं विशोकम् ॥ ५॥

5. विविक्तदेशे In a secluded, clean & pure place, सुखासन्स्थः resting in a comfortable posture, समग्रीवशिरः शरीरः with neck, head & body erect in one line अत्याश्रमस्थः with an internal attitude of renunciation {ie with the resolve to have no engagements with the world}. सकलेन्द्रियाणि निरुध्य Having restrained all the senses, भक्त्या स्वगुरुं प्रणम्य bowing in devotion to the Guru, विचिन्त्य turning one's attentiveness to, meditating मध्ये within हृत्पुण्डरीकं विरजं विशुद्धं विशदं विशोकम् the lotus of one's heart on Brahman, the untainted, the pure, the clear & griefless.

अचिन्त्यमव्यक्तमनन्तरूपं शिवं प्रशान्तममृतं ब्रह्मयोनिम् ।

तथाऽऽदिमध्यान्तविहीनमेकं विभुं चिदानन्दमरूपमद्भुतम् ॥ ६॥

6. The unthinkable {which thoughts cannot reach}, the unmanifest, अनन्त रूपम् the One of manifold forms, the ever-auspicious, प्रशान्तम् the tranquil, immortal, the source of all (including the Creator Itself). The One without a beginning, middle & end, the only One {without a second}, विभुं the all-pervading, the Knowledge – Bliss principle, the formless, the wonderful.

उमासहायं परमेश्वरं प्रभुं त्रिलोचनं नीलकण्ठं प्रशान्तम् ।

ध्यात्वा मुनिर्गच्छति भूतयोनिं, समस्तसाक्षिं तमसः परस्तात् ॥ ७॥

7. ध्यात्वा By meditating upon Parameshvara, the Lord of Lords, the consort of Lady Uma, the three-eyed, blue-throated, ever-tranquil, the meditator, the man of reflection, attains Him, the source of all the manifested world, the witness of all, the One who is beyond all darkness.

I can meditate on my इष्ट देवता, the God of my understanding, with a specific form & name described in the scriptures & who appeals to my emotions. I will start by meditating on that single form एक रूप ध्यानम् but as my intelligence clarifies & becomes more one-pointed, I will come to the ideal behind the idea. I will see the world around me as manifestations of that deity. As I see my God express Itself in the innumerable forms around me, my meditation becomes

multi-form अनेक रूप ध्यानम्. ²⁰ These meditations on the deity with form & attributes will purify & concentrate my mind. As I mature in my enquiries into Vedanta, I will realise the deity cannot be limited to certain categories of names & forms but encompasses all names & forms in this stupendous sprawl of the universe. This is विश्व रूप ध्यानम्. But even this universe, whose dimensions are far beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend, does not exhaust, diminish, or fully express the imperceptible, indescribable, unthinkable, awesome, unitary Reality that is its foundation & support. My attention will shift to meditation on the formless, attribute-less One, अरूप ध्यानम्. Beyond that is the meditation in which I consciously, deliberately, gradually, dissolve the false identities that I have projected on myself & realise the truth that I am that formless One. That is निदिध्यासनम्.

The Upanishad explains all three forms of meditation. Mantra 5 tersely describes the location, time, posture & the internal attitude with which I must start meditation. The location should be secluded, clean & quiet. While one can learn to meditate in a group, meditation is, ideally, a solitary practice. I should fix a particular time & location for regular meditation so that my mind will get habituated to become quiet when I am there. शुचि cleanliness applies to the place & to myself. I should sit erect so I am alert & do not fall asleep. Initially, the mind is likely to confuse stillness with rest & tend to doze off. At the same time, my body should be comfortable so I can maintain that posture for some time. So much for the externalities.

अत्याश्रमस्थः – अति आश्रमस्थः Sannyasa is the last stage of life. For the duration of the meditation, I should lay aside all my various identities (name, form, roles, positions, relationships, etc.), all attachments & pre-occupations arising from them, much like a sannyasi does. I go naked into meditation. ²¹ I should consciously withdraw my senses (hearing, vision & so on) from the environment. I can close my eyes & shut off vision but as for the other sense organs, I must discipline myself to merely observe the sensations as they come & go. I must not record, analyse, compare & identify them or else the mind will get distracted. All physical movement of the body should cease. This is far from easy. The mind & ego will resist. I will need the support of my faith & devotion to my Guru, the scriptures & God to even compose myself for meditation. Only by invoking their grace & blessings can I attempt to begin. Guru, for me, should not mean only the person with whom I have been brought into contact. It should include the entire tradition of Gurus, the immortal men of Realisation, who have handed Knowledge down from generation to generation & who have included me in the range of their compassion.

हृत्पुण्डरीकम् - I turn my attentiveness ie my thought flow is channelled to my intelligence which is located in the centre of the lotus shaped heart. The reference is not to the physical heart though, in terms of physical practice, it would help to turn the attention to the heart or the अनाहत चक्र area. During the waking state, intelligence pervades the whole body but in the deep sleep state, it resolves into a subtle, non-material space in the body centre. The attentiveness is turned to intelligence because it is there that the effulgence of the Atma, the “I” Consciousness, is reflected. The un-attached, un-acting, un-moving, un-affected silent witness can be accessed from the intelligence.

What is the Atma? It is not an objective entity that can be described. But I can reflect on what It is not to try & conceptualise It. It is विरजम् tranquil, peaceful, free of all रजस् restlessness, turbulence. विशुद्धम् immaculate, untainted of all तमस्. It is absolutely clear विशदम्, free of all negativity, anxiety, ever pleasant. All these are synonymous with peace, love & compassion, the

²⁰ पुरुष एवेदं सर्वम् ॥ यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यम् ॥ All this is the purusha alone. What is present, what was past & what will be in future is purusha. *Purusha Suktam* - 1

²¹ जातिनीतिकुलगोत्रद्वारं, नामरूपगुणदोषवर्जितं । देशकालविषयातिवर्ति यद्, ब्रह्म तत्त्वमसि भावयात्मनि ॥ That which has no caste, creed, family or lineage, which is without name & form, merit & demerit, which is beyond space, time & sense objects. “That Brahman Thou art..” meditate on this in your mind. *Vivekachudamani* 254

qualities ascribed by the scriptures to the personal or cosmic deity with attributes so it can be taken that this part of the mantra is meditation on the सगुण ब्रह्मन्.

Mantra 6 says It is अव्यक्तम् un-manifest, formless, inaccessible to the senses.²² Hence it is all-pervasive, encompassing infinite forms अनन्त रूपम्. It is शिवम् holy, sacred, perfect. It is प्रशान्तम् अमृतम् of the very nature of peace & immutability. It is the ब्रह्मयोनिम् the origin, the source of all. This term can be understood in several ways. [a] as the source of the Vedas because they too are called ब्रह्म. [b] as the source of ब्रह्मा, the Creator, or हिरण्यगर्भ the un-manifest, subtle macrocosm.[c] as the source of subtle matter प्रकृती which eventually evolves into the gross universe. [d] the word योनि or womb is generally used to indicate the material cause. Hence the mantra is referring to the निमित्त उपादान कारणम् the efficient & material cause of creation. It is without beginning, middle & end – all-pervading, देशकालवस्तु अपरिच्छिन्न unconditioned by time & space, अखण्ड homogenous, part-less and therefore एकम् the indivisible One without a second. It manifests in all. It is the nature of Knowledge & Bliss. It is a marvel. This part of the mantra is meditation on the निर्गुण ब्रह्मन्.

The mantra includes all three forms of meditation. [a] एक रूप ध्यानम् with the deity being described as a deity of peace, love, compassion. In this case, the meditation is one-to-one between the individual meditator & the deity. [b] अनेक रूप, विश्व रूप ध्यानम् with divinity being characterised as all-pervasive, holy, immutable, encompassing infinite forms. In this case, the meditation is between one who identifies himself as the cosmic जीव, an identity greater than one individuality²³ & Creator. [c] अरूप ध्यानम् is where the formless, limitless, immutable Principle cause of all is meditated upon by the intelligence in which even the idea of individuality is fading away. So can all the forms of meditation be practised simultaneously? No. Meditation on the personal deity of one form is relatively easy for all people. Meditation on the deity of many forms can be practised by contemplating the beauty & majesty of mountains, rivers & other vistas as indicators of the beauty & majesty of the deity. But here the radius of imagination has to expand far beyond one's individuality to include neighbours, friends (& enemies!), even other beings & species. Meditation on the formless can be done by contemplating the indicators that are themselves formless, like space. Space is also all pervading, feature-less, part-less, unattached, unaffected, whole, complete, accommodating all, etc. But correspondingly the radius of imagination of the "I" identity has also to expand. I have to gradually abandon my conditionings, superimpositions, one by one. As I do that, the Divine will also shed the conditionings that I have imposed on It. I cannot stand on my toes & reach for the Infinite. I have to raise myself from one form of meditation to the other.

What is the quality of the intelligence that can traverse the road from the personal god to the impersonal spirit? A person may be highly intelligent in worldly matters but may lack the subtlety (fineness, delicacy, exquisiteness) of intellect to think of the formless, nameless. The axe & the razor are equally sharp but the axe cannot be used to trim beards & the razor would be useless to cut trees. The Acharya says: "The intellect that does not have the practice of dwelling on the formless, attribute-less, may be brilliant in the worldly sense but will not be able to function in the spiritual field." The intelligence must be quick to grasp, reflect, resolve & retain. It must be pure, undisturbed by waves of likes, dislikes, fear, anger, regrets & expectations. It must be able to distinguish fine, delicate nuances with precision. It must be able to think in this

²² अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथारसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् । अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परं ध्रुवं.... It is without sound, without touch, without form, without decay, without taste, without smell, without beginning, without end, beyond the great, eternal, immutable... *Kathopanishad* 1.3.15

²³ How does one come to see oneself as greater than one individual? Through love of all of those beings with whom I come into contact in my life. When I am able to accept them as they are regardless of their attitude towards me ; when I am able to understand their point of view without judgement ; when I see their faults in me & my virtues in them, then the separation between the "I and They" will greatly reduce. It means the love of humans more than love of humanity.

manner without the support of form, shape & quality. At the same time, it must be able to apply the result of thought to its own experience. Meditation should not be an abstract, philosophical flight of thought that finds no application in life. The intelligence that is so subtle also must be strong enough to overcome the disturbances that may arise from the vasanās in the subconscious & unconscious levels of the mind. Generally, the mind is so busy that these bubbles of past impressions do not have any impact. But when the mind is quietened in meditation, these disturbances could surface. They are one of the well-known obstacles to meditation called कशाय poisonous, bitter, unsettling tendencies. I cannot allow those tendencies to express themselves outside on others; neither can I swallow them for they will only return. I must learn not to take ownership of those thoughts but merely observe them. I must hold them within me but not be affected by them, just like Lord Shiva drank the poison but did not swallow it, turning his neck blue. It can take months, perhaps years, may be lifetimes to attain the clarity & purity of intelligence that can meditate on Brahman.

Mantra 7 returns to the theme of 3 forms of meditation, beginning with the form of the Lord. The Infinite is described in the form of Lord Shiva, उमासहायम् the consort of Uma. Uma also appears as हैमावति daughter of Himavan in *Kenopanishad* V-3.12, representing ब्रह्मविद्या the supreme Knowledge of Brahman. Hence, depending on one's point of view, the mantra spans the spread between एक रूप & अरूप ध्यानम्.

प्रभु – the all-powerful, all – capable Lord of Lords who is कर्तुम्, अकर्तुम्, अन्यता कर्तुम् – who can do, not do or undo. It pervades the universe as Awareness, the inner Awareness in every being hence It is the controller of the universe.²⁴ Again, as Consciousness, It accommodates the universe but remains unconnected, unaffected by it.

त्रिलोचनम् नीलकण्ठम् – In एक रूप ध्यानम् the sun, moon & fire can be taken as the three eyes that illuminate: the sun during the day, the moon in the night up to the full moon, fire during the night of the new moon. In अनेक रूप ध्यानम्, two eyes represent love & order, mercy & justice, forgiveness & restitution, the opposing but complementary qualities with which the Lord governs creation. The blue throat can be a symbol for meditating on the God of my understanding.

भूतयोनिम् समस्तसाक्षिं – the fount, the cause from which everything springs. The एक रूप, अनेक रूप, विश्व रूप are all contained within this One source. It is the One Consciousness that gives existence & awareness to all beings & things as the silent witness. It is the अभिन्न निमित्त उपाधान विवर्त कारणम् the indivisible, efficient, material cause that projects the world. तमसः परस्तात् – Tamas here does not mean ignorance because ignorance operates only at the individual level. Tamas means माया cosmic primal concealment that hides the truth. Maya cannot exist without Brahman but it does not affect Brahman. Brahman pervades Maya, like It pervades the world. But just as It is unattached to it, unaffected by the world, it is independent of Maya. I am this Brahman, not anything else. This is the goal of अरूप ध्यानम्.

A मुनि meditator will use the mantras to reach that state of being. In meditating on the mantras, I will move from an admiration for the beauty of their composition to the stage of intellectual understanding of their meaning. I will have to move from there to the final stage of applying that meaning to myself for the conviction that This is I. This last mile would be difficult as it would demand the falsification of all that I previously thought of as real. How long would it take to reach this goal? No one can hazard a guess about that. The Acharya explains that “It is not how long you meditate; it is the quality of meditation that counts”.

²⁴ भयादस्याग्निस्तपति भयात्तपति सूर्यः । भयादिन्द्रिश्च वायुश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥ For fear of Him the fire burns; for fear of Him shines the sun. For fear of Him do Indra, Vayu & Death, the fifth, proceed with their respective functions. *Kathopanishad* 2.6.3

स ब्रह्मा स शिवः सेन्द्रः सोऽक्षरः परमः स्वराट् ।

स एव विष्णुः स प्राणः स कालोऽग्निः स चन्द्रमाः ॥ ८॥

8. He is Brahma; He is Shiva; He is Indra: He is the Immutable { Imperishable }; He is the Supreme; He is the Self- effulgent. He alone is Vishnu; He is प्राणः the Vitality; He is Time; He is Fire; He is the Moon.

स एव सर्वं यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यं सनातनम् ।

ज्ञात्वा तं मृत्युमत्येति नान्यः पन्था विमुक्तये ॥ ९॥

9. He alone is all that was; {all that is;} all that will be. He is the Eternal. Knowing Him, one goes beyond death. There is no other way to Freedom.

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।

सम्पश्यन् ब्रह्म परमं याति नान्येन हेतुना ॥ १०॥

10. I am in all beings {the moving & unmoving, the flowing & the static, the horizontal & the vertical, all that is seen & unseen}; all beings are in Me. The one who सम्पश्यन् sees this clearly, he याति attains the highest Brahman. There is no other means.

The three verses are being read together because they raise one effortlessly from एकरूप to अनेकरूप to विश्वरूप to culminate in अरूप ध्यानम्. The सः the 'He' referred to in Mantra 8 is the meditator. In the beginning my attention is entirely on the form, decoration & beauty of my beloved deity. But even the most ardent devotee will eventually realise that if he limits his God to one form, he is actually diminishing It, imposing his own conditionings upon the Supreme. It is अक्षर immutable, changeless, absolute. The names & forms will change over time but the formless, nameless Principle behind them will not change. It is the Highest, incomparable, Supreme. Life expressing through the macrocosmic gross forms is called विराट्; the same supreme Spirit expressing through the totality of mind & intellect is called सम्राट्. But the Supreme without the adjuncts of the gross & subtle matter, is स्वराट् – self-luminous, स्वयम्प्रकाशः requiring no other source to bring It forth, no other light to ignite It, no other lamp to illuminate It. Because It shines, everything shines.²⁵ The most important meaning of the mantra is that it is not talking about a third party. I am not observing an event happening somewhere. It is the meditator, I, who is saying, I am Brahma, I am Vishnu, I am Shiva: I am the Creator, Sustainer & Destroyer of this awesome creation. It is relatively easy for me to intellectually grasp the idea of the eternal, immutable, ultimate, transcendent Cause as “something somewhere out there”. It is harder for me to absorb that that transcendent Cause, that is immanent in the universe, is also in me; perhaps only as a flawed image of the original, but present all the same. It is extremely difficult to raise myself to the last stage where I realize that I am the original, that there is only the original & the transactional reality that I experience is only a mirage. Only a few great souls are granted that revelation.

This is the declaration the meditator makes in Mantra 9. I do not say that I was previously separate but have now become one with Brahman. I declare that even before time began, even before time & space existed, I alone existed. I alone am existent now. I alone will exist in future. I am not only the creator; I am the very stuff of creation. Creation arises in me by My thought. It is sustained by My power & knowledge. At dissolution, at My command, time & space will contract & fold themselves into Me. This would appear to be a colossal lunacy to people who

²⁵ न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः । तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥ The sun does not shine there, nor does the moon, nor do the stars, nor lightning and much less, this fire. When He shines, everything shines after Him: by His light, all these shine. *Kathopanishad* 2.5.15.

can only see themselves as finite, faulty, flawed entities, each one different from the other, separated eternally from the world & God. But the Vedantin is not overwhelmed by his apparent meagreness against the unimaginable scale & variety of the universe. His attention is not on the effects but the Cause behind them. The mantra says सः He, second person singular, is सर्व everything, plural. There is no plurality; there is only One, appearing as many. The multitude of names & forms are वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयं merely names based on words.²⁶ तं, He, is That. On knowing that, on realizing that Truth, he मृत्युमत्येति passes beyond the bondage of mortality. What is the bondage of mortality? My authentic nature is the eternal, boundless, indivisible One. But due to error, I see myself as the finite individual. So long as I see myself as this individual, I shall be born to die & be born again.

The individuality is the repository of likes & dislikes, preferences & expectations, This is the root of all sorrow. This is the ultimate bondage.²⁷ The finitude of individuality is the ultimate bondage because all sorrow arises from that. Hence the nullification of the mirage of individuality & the realization that I am the universal पुरुष is the only means to freedom. There is absolutely no other way.

Is this single-minded dedication or a form of fundamentalism? In Mantra 2 the Guru stressed faith, devotion & meditation. It is one thing to say that the paths are many – कर्म, उपासना, भक्ति, राज योगा & so on. But it is another thing to say that there is only one path & all others are auxiliary to that main path. But the issue is that while all the other paths may purify individuality & lift it to higher plane of existence, they will not negate it. A great devotee will be prepared to accept that his true identity is to be the servant of God he sees everywhere & in everyone. This, by itself, is a very high state of being. But Vedanta says that even that purified identity retains its individuality & thus the potential for harbouring likes, dislikes, pride, egotism & so on. At its most sublime expression, the distance that the devotee senses between his individuality & the subject of his love can be the cause of sorrow. That distance can only be bridged by knowledge. Acharya clarifies : “ The falsification of individuality is the only way. Any religion that teaches this is Upanishad”. There is no other option but for me to change my understanding of myself. देहो देवालय प्रोक्तः, जीवो देव सनातनः, सोहं भावेन पूजयति The body is the temple of the Spirit. The Spirit is eternal. I shall worship you God as being one with You. जीव ईश्वर ऐक्यं – the one-ness of the soul & God is not the absorption of God into the soul; it is the soul that disappears leaving only the Spirit.

In Mantra 9 the meditator declares that I, Brahman am beyond Time, I am the Efficient Cause. In Mantra 10, he declares that I am beyond Space, I am the Material Cause. I am in all beings as their अन्तर्यामिन् inner controller, illuminator, lending Existence, Awareness & Joy to all beings, from Brahma to a clump of grass, to use Bhagavan Adi Shankaracharya’s expressive phrase.

The inanimate know me as Existence; even the frailest creeper struggles to catch the sun. The intelligent know me as Existence & Self – awareness. The wise, who meditate on the source of Existence & Awareness, know that I am Existence, Consciousness & Bliss.

But how can I be in all beings & simultaneously all beings be in me? This seems contradictory. The simplest answer is that the proliferating variety we experience around us is only a

²⁶ Chandogya Upanishad 6.1. 4-6.

Kathopanishad 2.5.9 declares: अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव । एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥ Just as fire, after it has entered the world, though one, assumes different forms according to the shapes it enters, so does the eternal Atman of all living beings, though One, takes a form according to each shape It enters and also, in Itself, It exists beyond them.

²⁷ अद्वयानन्दरूपस्य सद्व्यत्वं च दुःखिता । बन्धः प्रोक्तः स्वरूपेण स्थितिर्मुक्तिरितीयते ॥ The duality & misery of the non-dual blissful self is called bondage. Abiding in its own nature is said to be liberation. Hence to experience duality as real & be unhappy is bondage. To abide in one’s own true self is liberation. Panchadasi 10.4

projection; it is only seemingly real. If I look beyond the names & forms, there is only Brahman. I am aware of the variety because of Brahman. The projection is Brahman. The source of projection is Brahman.

There are vast oceans & small ponds. Oceans have huge waves whereas ponds can have only small ripples. The waves & ripples are nothing but the ocean & the pond. And both are nothing but water. Earth supports an enormous variety of species & life forms but ultimately all of them are made up of the same 5 fundamental factors, earth, water, fire, air & space. The 5 fundamental elements are nothing but combinations of elements in their purest form. They all arise from one source: Space. So, space is in all varieties are all varieties are in space.

Mantra 11

आत्मानमरणिं कृत्वा प्रणवं चोत्तरारणिम् । (प्रणवं च उत्तरारणिम्)

ज्ञाननिर्मथनाभ्यासात् पाशं दहति पण्डितः ॥ ११ ॥

11. Keeping the mind (ego) as the lower block & Om { the indicator of Brahman } as the upper block, ज्ञाननिर्मथन अभ्यासात् by the steady, repeated practice of churning the knowledge in the mind, the wise man burns up all the cords of bondage.

How do I reach that level of understanding of seeing only the totality & not my individuality? I have to put out self-effort. Shruti described the process of श्रवणम्, मननम् & निदिध्यासनम् beautifully, using the analogy of the fire blocks. The sacred fires for the rituals were lit either by focusing the rays of the sun on the combustibles by a magnifying glass or by rubbing two blocks of wood together to create a spark. The अधो अरणि the lower block was of ashvattha wood & had a trough or scoop dug into it. The उत्तर अरणि was of shami wood. The upper block was inserted into the scoop & turned using a cord. The tiny spark that eventually resulted was fed with dry grass, cotton & other fuel until it became a flame & then transferred to the larger fire pit. There it was carefully nursed with fuel & wood until it became a blaze.

The lower block is the inner equipment, the composite of मनः, बुद्धि, चित्त, अहंकार – mind, intellect, memory & “I” sense. It has to be held steady as otherwise the उत्तर अरणि can never churn. Knowledge of the vedas, specifically the mahavakyas, have already scooped out an area on the false do-er, enjoy-er, ego identity. Hence, Shruti is referring to the qualified seeker who has already done श्रवणम् which can be described generally as the consistent & systematic study of Vedantic scriptures under the guidance of a competent teacher. He is now doing मननम् & निदिध्यासनम्. He uses Om, the nearest indicator of Brahman, as the churn to deliberate on the knowledge imparted to him by the scriptures & the guru. Om here refers to the sound or symbol that is used to initially quieten the mind & seek the Lord’s grace for meditation. What is the significance of meditating on Om? *Kathopanishad* 1.2.16 says एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं परम् । एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥ This Word is verily Brahman alone, this Word is verily the Highest, he who knows this Word verily obtains whatever of the two he desires. The two that are desired are the saguna Brahman with attributes, qualities or the nirguna Brahman without any attributes, qualities. What does this meditation involve? It requires the meditator to apply the essence of the scriptures, the महावाक्याs, the terse, identity-revealing statements of the Upanishads to himself until revelation “I am Brahman” dawns on him. How does he apply them? By meditating on the ways in which each Upanishad reveals the truth of his identity. *Mundaka & Kaivalya Upanishad* use the method of अवस्थात्रय विचार the enquiry into the 3 states with which Consciousness is associated: waking, dream & deep sleep. *Kenopanishad* uses दृग् दृश्य विवेक the examination into the see-r and the see-n. *Kathopanishad* uses three methods:

पञ्चकोष विवेकः analysis of the 5 sheaths identifying the Atma as the passenger in the chariot ²⁸; The see-r & the see-n analysis; ²⁹ the जीवात्मा – परमात्मा method. ³⁰ Each method assists the meditator to negate the falsity of his apparent identities & assert the reality of his authentic nature: which is Brahman, which is Om.

The fire-sticks must be churned repeatedly, patiently for the spark to come out. That spark must be sheltered from moisture & wind & be immediately fed with small bits of dry fuel so that it becomes a tiny flame. That small flame must be transferred to the fire-pit & again carefully nursed with fuel until it becomes a blaze. The analogy stresses the fortitude with which the seeker should continue his practice & the care with which the meditator should treat the flash of insight that comes to him. *Kenopanishad* says that the revelation would come as suddenly as a flash of lightning, as quickly as the blinking of the eye. ³¹ So the meditator should be intensely alert to that leap of intuition, sedulously preserve it, continuously reinforce it until it becomes an unquenchable fire inside him. The meditator should take as much care of this spark as a pregnant mother does to preserve & nourishes the foetus inside her गर्भ इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः . ³²

Continuing with the analogy of the fire, the mantra describes the result of revelation as the burning of all bondages. (See notes on Mantra 8-10 on bondage.) The first to be burned are the accretions of identity that I gather around me such as profession, caste, community, family; then my notion of doer-ship & enjoyer-ship. I then stand naked in front of Brahman in a I – Thou duality with the minimum of attributes & qualities. Finally the vestiges of identity merge into Brahman as the rivers flow into the sea. ³³

If Brahman is all & all is in Brahman, what is then the explanation for the fact that we do not comprehend Brahman at all but are constantly aware of the reality of the individual jiva & the world? We can experience only the triangle of jiva – jagat – Ishwara; the second-less Brahman is not in our existential experience. The Upanishad begins the process of अध्यारोप अपवाद negation of superimposition by assuming the jiva to be real & analysing the states of experience it endures.

Mantra 12 - 14

स एव मायापरिमोहितात्मा शरीरमास्थाय करोति सर्वम् ।

स्त्रि-अन्नपानादिविचित्रभोगैः स एव जाग्रत्परितृप्तिमेति ॥ १२॥

12. His mind deluded by Maya, he (the Self), शरीरमास्थाय identifying with his body, performs all actions (perceptions, feelings, thoughts). In the waking state it is he who attains fulfilment {or strives to attain fulfilment} through a variety of objects like women, food, wine & so on.

²⁸ आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथं एव तु । बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥ Know the Atman as the lord of chariot who sits within it & the body as the chariot. Know the intellect to be the charioteer & the mind, verily, as the reins.

Kathopanishad 1.3.3

²⁹ येन रूपं रसं गन्धं शब्दान् स्पर्शाश्च मैथुनान् That Atman by which man cognises form, taste, smell, sounds & sexual joys.... *Kathopanishad* 2.4.3-1

³⁰ ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्थे । The two who enjoy the fruits of their good works being seated in the cavity of the heart, the seat of the Supreme.... *Kathopanishad* 1.3.1

³¹ तस्यैष आदेशः यदेतद् विद्युतो व्यद्युतदा । इतीन्द्रमीमिषदा ३ इति आदिदैवतम् ॥ This is the instruction/ teaching आदेशः {of Brahman} by means of illustration/ analogy. It is like that which is (known as) the flash of lightning विद्युत्: व्यद्युतदा. It is as the blinking of the eye इतीन्द्रमीमिषदा. These are Its illustrations in the divine, cosmic context.

Kenopanishad 4.4

³² *Kathopanishad* 2.4.8

³³ यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रेऽस्तं गच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय Just as the flowing rivers disappear into the sea, losing their distinctive names & forms. *Mundakopanishad* 3.2.8-1

स्वप्ने स जीवः सुखदुःखभोक्ता स्वमायया कल्पितजीवलोके ।

सुषुप्तिकाले सकले विलीने तमोऽभिभूतः सुखरूपमेति ॥ १३ ॥

13. The same individualised ego, experiences pleasure & pain in the dream state, the imaginary world created by his own Maya (misapprehension of Reality). In the state of deep sleep, when सकले विलीने everything is merged, resolved { into their causal state }, he is तमोऽभिभूतः overpowered by ignorance (non-apprehension), & एति attains the nature of bliss.

पुनश्च जन्मान्तरकर्मयोगात् स एव जीवः स्वपिति प्रबुद्धः ।

पुरत्रये क्रीडति यश्च जीवस्ततस्तु जातं सकलं विचित्रम् ॥

आधारमानन्दमखण्डबोधं यस्मिल्लयं याति पुरत्रयं च ॥ १४ ॥

14. Once again, due to its connections with the deeds performed in previous lives, he comes back to the dream or waking states. That jiva, who sports in the पुरत्रये three cities, ततस्तुजातम् from whom verily have sprung all varieties & diversities, he is the आधारम् the substratum, अखण्ड the indivisible, homogenous, part-less बोधम् Consciousness आनन्दम् Bliss. यस्मिन् Into Him , the पुरत्रयम् the three worlds, cities resolve, go into लयम् dissolution.

Consciousness illumines the mind which, immediately deluded by the inexplicable, mysterious power of Maya, identifies itself with the body - mind - intellect – “I” sense complex to conclude “This is what I am.” In as much as the components are finite & unstable, the identity has a built-in sense of finitude, change & incompleteness. The mind illumined by Consciousness goes through three levels of existential experience: the waking state, dream state & deep sleep state. In the waking state, all the senses of knowledge & action are active, flooding the mind with their signals. The “I” sense, captivated by the colourful multiplicity around itself, responds to its own sense of finitude to try to gain those objects & experiences that would give it a sense of fulfilment. The Upanishad employs the catch-all phrase “wine, women & song” to describe the hierarchy of physiological, emotional, psychological & intellectual needs that rise in the jiva. While the Upanishad says परितृप्तिमेति attains fulfilment, there is no human being who has ever found complete contentment in the objects of the world. The phrase refers more to the attempt rather than the end result.

The Upanishad’s purpose here is to explain my real identity by analysing the three states of existence it undergoes every day. The waking state is the most vivid of the three; it is also the one in which I remain the longest. But, based on those two factors alone, it would not be correct for me to conclude that the experiencer & the experiences in waking state alone are real & the others are unreal. Vedanta points out that I need to study my experiences in all three states to come to any firm conclusion about what is real & unreal. Vedanta admits that there are differences between the waking & dream state. But there are also similarities. The examination of those similarities would lead to the conclusion that the experiencer & the experiences in the waking state do not occupy a higher locus or plane of reality than the other states.

My body, senses, mind & intellect are all active in the Waking state. Carried away by their activities, I identify with them & say that this is my identity, the Waker. My mind, influenced by the impressions of the significant experiences that I underwent in the waking state, in this & previous births, projects another world within itself in the Dream state so that I may relive those experiences.³⁴ This is विक्षेप शक्ति, the power of projection. Identifying myself with the mind, I call myself the Dreamer & enter the dream world to experience the reality of the dream. At that point in time, the reality of the waking world no longer exists & I am no longer the Waker. From the dream state, I enter into deep sleep state in which my body, mind & intellect become

³⁴ जाग्रतवस्थायां यद् दृष्टं यत् श्रुतं तज्जनित वासनाया निद्रासमये यः प्रपञ्चः प्रतीयते सा स्वप्नावस्था । The dream state is that which is projected while in sleep from the impressions born of what was seen & heard in the waking state.

dormant. The Waker & Dreamer disappear. I have no experienter to identify with; no experience to be undergone; no knowledge to be gained. विक्षेप शक्ति no longer entertains or agitates me; I am close to the wall of primal ignorance आवरण शक्ति. The mantra says the state of bliss is obtained in deep sleep. Can primal ignorance yield such bliss? The bliss experienced in deep sleep is not the positive bliss of knowledge but the passive, dull bliss of the absence of all thought modifications. It can be likened to the silence of the grave, not the peace that passes understanding. But Consciousness remains for when I wake up, I can assert that I did not know anything; I slept well. In each state, that state alone is real & no other state has reality. Only the Waker exists only in the Waking state; only the Dreamer exists in the Dream state; there is no Experienter at all in the deep sleep state. There is no continuity of experience. Hence it cannot be maintained that the reality experienced in the waking state has a greater validity than the reality experienced in the others. .

What occurs in the microcosm is a reflection of that which occurs in the macrocosm. The Waker is Brahman. But identifying with the body – mind – intellect complex, It becomes the jiva. The waking state & the waker are seen as real. In the dream, it is Brahman that becomes the dreamer & the waker is negated. The dreamer & the dream are seen as real. The waking & dream state are nullified in the sleep state where only primal ignorance, avidya or maya exists. But it is Brahman, pure Consciousness, that gives Existence & Awareness to all three states. The jiva, under the influence of avidya, projects the world of three states & inhabits them. Brahman + Maya project the variety of the worlds & inhabit them as Ishwara.

In mantra 14, the Upanishad resolves the allegory it began in mantra 12. I am the jiva that creates the dream world; I am the jiva that creates the waking world: I am the jiva into which both of them dissolve when I sleep in profound ignorance of my identity. I return again & again to these 3 fields of experience without realising that I alone have created them. The reality is that there is only the unity where I alone am creator, creation & creature. The trinity of soul, world & creator are merely the adjuncts that simultaneously conceal & point to the Consciousness on which they are projected. When I shift my perspective from the individual to the totality, I will wake up from the long sleep of Maya & realise that I am the fountainhead, the indivisible complete whole. I am the alpha & the omega. I am Brahman & there is nothing else but I.

Mantra 15

एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च ।

खं वायुर्ज्योतिरापः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी ॥ १५॥

15. From It (the supreme Reality) are born the vitalities, the inner equipment, and all the faculties {and organs} of perception & action. Born too are खं space, वायु air, atmosphere ज्योति fire, water & the earth. He is foundation; the support of all.

The mantra summarises जगत् सृष्टि, creation of the individual & cosmic, the gross & the subtle, in two lines. The first line covers the organs of knowledge & action in the gross body, the faculties of perception & action in the subtle body & the mind with its four functionalities. In as much as the individual exists only in the context of the cosmic, the first line includes विश्व & विराट्, तैजस & हिरण्यगर्भ, प्राज्ञ & ईशवरः. This is the description of the Self तत् पद on both the miniature & the grand scale. But तत् पद is possible only against the background, in the context of, the cosmic. Hence all descriptions of the Self are accompanied by an enquiry into creation, because by perceiving creation as the effect, we can understand the cause. In the miniature frame of individuality, this is the world of waking, dream & deep sleep that I create. In the grand scale of the universe, it is the five elements that spring from Consciousness that Itself does not modify by their emergence. The purport of the mantra is that the individual can exist only in the context of

the cosmic, the microcosm in the macrocosm.³⁵ Our conventional notion of individuality denies any connection with the totality & is therefore an illusion.

Mantras 6 to 10 taught about the goal for which I should aim. It is the revelation that I am in all & all are in Me. That is the only path to Liberation. There is no other. I can come to that knowledge by studying the scriptures under the guidance of a knowledgeable & competent preceptor; reflecting on the teachings to resolve all doubts; meditating to remove all contrary notions & establishing the scriptural truth in me. I have to expand the radius of my identity by first identifying myself with divinity in one form; then the divinity of many forms & finally the Divine of no form. At each stage, I also dissolve my attachment to the adjuncts that limit & confine me. Mantra 11 teaches how to meditate. Having established the goal & the means, the Upanishad turns to describe the student - meditator as the creator & experiencer of the three states of experience in mantras 12 to 14. In mantra 15, it concludes the allegory of 3 states by establishing that the Self, that Consciousness, is the origin of Creation. Now in mantra 16, it completes the equation by declaring that I, the individual self जीवात्मा, is the same as the Self परमात्मा. This is the महावाक्या the great identity- revealing declaration of the Upanishad. This is, in fact, the Upanishad.

Mantra 16

यत् परं ब्रह्म सर्वात्मा विश्वस्यायतनं महत् ।

सूक्ष्मात्सूक्ष्मतरं नित्यं तत्त्वमेव त्वमेव तत् ॥ १६॥

16. That which is the Supreme, which is the Self in all, the great आयतनम् support, the great abode of the universe; which is subtler than the subtle; which is eternal – That alone thou art; thou art That alone.

The Upanishad indicates Brahman as महत् – colossal, gigantic like space. But space itself depends on Its support. Space is subtle because it has only one attribute – sound, or more accurately, vibration – with which it can be sensed. Atma does not even have that single attribute. Subtlety is also a measure of pervasiveness. Space is all-pervasive. But the Atma is subtler, more pervasive, than space because It is the cause of space. Space is the interval between objects; time is the interval between events. By adding नित्यम् the Upanishad says that Brahman is beyond space & time. It is the support of the universe. It is that from which this universe of innumerable worlds springs; it is that into which the universe folds & enters at dissolution. The Upanishad says: That is verily what you are; you are verily That.

The Upanishad has already taught me how to expand my idea of my identity by first meditating on the deity with one form, then many forms & finally the formless Infinite. But the vestige of the “I” identity remains because the intellect that I have used to negate all the other adjuncts is still there. Now the stage has come for me to deny that intellect itself. This is the last & most difficult leap of intuition to make. Vedanta describes the logical process of dissolving the small “I” into with the universal “I” in painstaking detail. One way of understanding Brahman is as महत्, जगत्कारणम्, कर्मफलधाता colossal beyond comprehension, the cause & support of the universe, the dispenser of all results. In other words, I try to understand Brahman’s infinitude by using the scale of my own finitude. But the Brahman of that understanding remains impossibly remote परोक्ष from me. On the other hand, I have अपरोक्ष direct, unmediated experience of myself, meaning the combination of my mind, intellect, memory, “I” sense & चिदाभास the reflection of consciousness. I have the intellectual conviction of the presence of the शुद्ध चैतन्य pure Consciousness. Vedanta says that all I need to do is to negate the finitude that has been projected on my “I” sense & the remoteness that has been projected Brahman to realise my true identity. Jivatma + Conditionings in the microcosm = Paramatma + Conditionings in the macrocosm. Thus when the Conditionings are negated what remains is the equation Jivatma =

³⁵ एवं पिण्डब्रह्माण्डयोरैक्यं संभूतम् – Thus there is identity between the microcosm & macrocosm. *Tattvabodhah*

Paramatma. As a matter of fact, there is not even the equation but only the singularity = Brahman. This is the crux of the problem. Denying my acquired external attributes is relatively easy. Denying my body & senses is more difficult but still possible. Denying my mind & the personality so carefully constructed by it is the most difficult of all. Furthermore, I do not have to deny it but falsify it ie I will continue to experience it every day but understand that it is not the real I. Knowledge has to triumph over existential experience. Acharya comments: “It is very easy to remove God’s conditionings but very difficult to remove our own”. But, as the Upanishad says, there is no other way to salvation.

The Upanishad now declares several महावाक्याs that I can use in my निदिध्यासनम् meditation to remove those limiting conditionings.

Mantra 17

जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्तादिप्रपञ्चं यत्प्रकाशते ।

तद्ब्रह्माहमिति ज्ञात्वा सर्वबन्धैः प्रमुच्यते ॥ १७॥

17. I am That Brahman that illumines the worlds of waking, dream & deep sleep. Realizing this, I am freed from all bondage, untied from all shackles.

The mantra calls each state of experience a separate world because the experience in each one of them is distinct from the other. I experience the five elements & their qualities most vividly in the waking state. I experience the same five elements but in their subtle form in the dream state. I experience the blankness of absolute ignorance in deep sleep. The mantra says आदि meaning all the experiences in between the three pure states. Who is the experiencer & illuminator? The mind complex, especially the “I” sense, is the experiencer; the illuminator is the pure Consciousness that lends Awareness to everything. It is the pure Existence that gives reality to every experience. I have no doubt about the reality of the dream while I am in dream. It is the अन्तःकरण the inner equipment that is affected by what it underwent; the शुद्ध चैतन्य pure Consciousness illuminates the experience but is never affected by it. It remains the detached, dispassionate witness. It would be incorrect to even call It the witness because the witness exists only in relation to what is witnessed, whereas Existence – Awareness remains unaffected by whatever it illuminates or does not illuminate.³⁶

Why does the Upanishad have these आत्म लक्षण मन्त्राs verses that indicate the nature of the Atma? Vedantic meditation is not like Yoga meditation which seeks to cease the modifications of the mind. When the mind ceases to move, the Existence – Consciousness from which the mind springs is realised. That is निर्विकल्प समाधि. Meditation in Vedanta, on the other hand, is the affirmation of one’s true identity & the negation of the superimposed false identity. This is the essence of अध्यारोप अपवाद the negation of primal, beginning-less superimposition. It is the qualified, trained meditator’s continuous turning over the thoughts of negation & affirmation that is निदिध्यासनम्. Initially, the thoughts of negation have to be more frequent or more intense as the dirt of falsity has to be cleaned. As the illusions are cleared away, the Self, the foundation on which the superimposition is projected, rises in the intellect. The affirmations of the Self therefore serve to negate the Not-Self. Vedantic meditation (or Yogic meditation, for that matter) is not a process that begins & ends. It is a state in which the mind must continually remain because so long as the gross & subtle body exist, the superimpositions will remain & they have to be negated. The snake will continue to appear on the rope; the nacre will continue to flash on the seashell. I have to keep affirming what is real & negating that which is unreal.

³⁶ सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य चक्षुः न लिप्यते चाक्षुषैर्बाह्यदोषैः । एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा न लिप्यते लोकदुःखेन बाह्यः । Just as the sun, the eye of the whole world {the illuminator of the worlds} is not affected by the defects of the external eye, in the same way, the Atma, the innermost essence in all beings, is not contaminated by the sorrows {or joys} of the world. *Kathopanishad* 2.5.11.

It is important that there is an emotional content to these essentially intellectual endeavours. One way, of course, is to have love & devotion to a deity of one's heart, while always knowing that the deity with attributes is only a sacred symbol of the attribute-less Brahman. But even in this bhakti, I must avoid the error of thinking that I am a part of the whole, a reflection of the original. Only something gross has parts. Only something of substance has areas of relative weakness. Only something that is manifest has dimensions. Even space, which is extremely subtle & insubstantial, has directions because it is manifest. The Atma has none of these features.³⁷ Another way is to observe the lives & actions of realised persons who are my contemporaries in time & space. I can develop love & devotion for them. I can try & emulate their example. This would give a personal dimension to my meditations.

Mantra 18

त्रिषु धामसु यद्भोग्यं भोक्ता भोगश्च यद्भवेत्।

तेभ्यो विलक्षणः साक्षी चिन्मात्रोऽहं सदाशिवः ॥ १८ ॥

18. Everything in the three धामसु realms that is the object of enjoyment, the subject that enjoys, & the enjoyment - I am different from all of them. I am the Witness; I am the pure Consciousness; I am the holy, the auspicious.

I, the individual in the transactional world, create the dream & waking worlds within myself & then retire from both into sleep. None of the worlds exist by themselves; they are all dependent on me. Hence, even in the transactional plane, the three worlds occupy an inferior state of reality compared to the "I" who is their creator. In the same way, it is Brahman that gives existence to the waking, dream & sleep worlds;³⁸ that gives awareness to the waker, dreamer, sleeper; that gives reality to the experiences endured in the three worlds. The truth is there is only Brahman as sans Existence - Consciousness there would be no experiencer, object of experience or the experience.

But the Upanishad simultaneously declares that I, Brahman, am different from all three of them. I exist quite apart from all of them meaning that Brahman is independent of the three states, the 14 worlds. Its Being is not, in the slightest manner, affected or influenced by the three. The Acharya beautifully put it this way: "Others say: The World was – I came – I went – the World remained. Vedanta says: I was – the world came – the world went – I remained". While agreeing that Brahman is One, has to be One, there cannot be another, how do I reconcile that unity with the variety & multiplicity in the universe? Vedanta maintains that while the cause is one, results can appear as many.³⁹ But does that mean that Brahman changes, modifies into many? Modification would require that certain parts of Brahman modify into certain things & other parts change into other things. This is परिणामवाद the doctrine of modification. But that would contradict the declarations in the Upanishads including mantra 6 in this very Upanishad. Secondly, one modification would imply that there would be others: growth, maturity, decay & death. A limited, mortal, evolving entity of that nature cannot be Brahman. One way of reconciling the contradiction would be to apply Maya as "the black box solution" to the problem, saying, in effect, "The contradiction of a single cause modifying into multiple effects is because

³⁷ देह बुद्ध्या तु दासोऽहं, जीव बुद्ध्या त्वदम्शकः । आत्म बुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहं, इति मे निश्चित मतिः॥ Identified with my body, I am Your servant; identified with my soul I am a part of You. However as pure Self we are One; this is my firm conviction. Lord Hanuman to Lord Rama in Ramayana. Many realised Masters of Kevala Advaita retain a deep love for certain deities & draw inspiration from them. There is no contradiction between Kevala Advaita & bhakti as both attitudes are necessary. The Masters' approach is like Lord Hanuman's.

³⁸ Three worlds can also be interpreted as भूः, भुवः, सुवः, the representatives उपलक्षण, of the 14 worlds of creation, meaning the entire visible & invisible universe.

³⁹ अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव । एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥ Just as fire, having entered the world, though one, assumes different forms according to the shape it enters, so does the eternal Atma of all living beings, though One, takes a form according to each shape it enters. It also in Itself exists beyond them. *Kathopanishad* 2.5.9

of Maya. We cannot know how it happened.” But Maya is not a blank, negative quantity that can be used to equalise all equations.

There is the other view that holds that Brahman is the foundational Reality on which Maya, the power of Brahman, projects innumerable names & forms. This is विवर्तवाद the doctrine of superimposition. To one on the other side, Maya conceals the indivisible, all-pervasive, Existence – Consciousness – Bliss of Brahman & superimposes, on that concealment, the bewildering variety of the three states in fourteen worlds. But the substratum, Brahman Itself, is not affected in the least by the superimposition. It remains Pure, Inviolable Consciousness. Maya here is not a blank entity but a phenomenon, with powers that can be discerned by their effects. But unlike other phenomena, Maya is अनिर्वचनीय inexplicable; it appears to exist as long as I am not aware of it; when I become aware of it, it disappears.

But the very fact that I am trying to determine the reality of the universe in relation to Brahman is itself the effect of Maya. I am conditioned by my physical & mental frames of reference in which everything is bound by space, occurs in time, cause precedes effect & duality is real. To explain Brahman in the context of these conditionings, I need the doctrines of modification & superimposition because they serve the purpose of helping me get over the blocks in my mind. But in meditation, I have to do अध्यारोप अपवाद deny the reality that I have given to the adjuncts, boundaries & conditions. As long as I continue to interact with the world, though I may regard it & my experiences in it as illusory, Consciousness would be साक्षि Witness, the unattached, unaffected, unconditioned, unlimited, immanent, transcendent, Awareness. But it would remain Brahman in relation to, in the context of, the world. There would be the dichotomy of the see-r & the see-n. But once I traverse the illusion & know the unreality of the world, even the see-r & the see-n would disappear. This is the उपसंहार, the reiteration, the summing up, the restatement of the उपक्रम declaration in mantra 16. The अध्यारोप अपवाद has been accomplished. There is nothing more to be accomplished. The Upanishad has ended.

The song of Liberation

Mantra 19

मय्येव सकलं जातं मयि सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।

मयि सर्वं लयं याति तद्ब्रह्माद्वयमस्म्यहम् ॥ १९॥ (तद् ब्रह्म अद्वयं अस्मि अहम्)

19. In Me, verily, is everything born. In me, verily, does everything abide. Into me alone does everything gets dissolved. तद् ब्रह्म अद्वयम् अहं अस्मि That indivisible, non-dual Brahman I am.

Mantras 19 to 23 are the ecstatic declarations of the student who, carefully following the preceptor's teaching, has attained the revelation of his real identity & spontaneously bursts into song. There is no other Upanishad with such a direct, articulate expression of realisation. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* the meditator cries out in inexpressible awe & wonder⁴⁰ but is able to speak only in metaphors. In the *Aitareya Upanishad*, the meditator “sees” Brahman spreading over every creature & exclaims that he has seen it.⁴¹ But in this Upanishad, the student is direct & articulate.

When I awake from the dream, I realise that I was not in the dream but the dream was in me. I am the cause & creator of the dream. I also experienced the dream, while I was the dreamer. When I woke up, the dream disappeared into me. I am the creator of the dream; I am the supporter of the dream; I am the dreamer of the dream; I am the source into which the dream disappears. Similarly, the waking & dream state fold into me in the deep sleep state. I am therefore the “I” in which all the three states of experience are created, sustained & dissolve. I

⁴⁰ हा३वु हा३वु हा३वु । अहमन्नमहमन्नमहमन्नम् । अहमन्नादो३हमन्नादो३हमन्नादः । Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! I am the food, I am the food, I am the food ! I am the eater of the food, I am the eater of the food, I am the eater of the food. *Taittiriya Upanishad* 3.10.6

⁴¹ इदमदर्शमिति – “ Oh! I have seen this.” *Aitareya Upanishad* 1.3.13

can make this statement confidently in the waking state after my अल्प निद्रा small sleep in the transactional world. I can make the same statement after awaking from the महा निद्रा of Maya.

Mantra 20

अणोरणीयानहमेव तद्वन्महानहं विश्वमहं विचित्रम् । (अहं एव तद्वत् महान् अहम्)
पुरातनोऽहं पुरुषोऽहमीशो हिरण्मयोऽहं शिवरूपमस्ति ॥ २० ॥

20. I am smaller than the smallest, subtler than the subtlest. I am also vastness {larger than the largest}. I alone am the diverse, multifarious Universe. I am पुरातनः the ancient, timeless One. I am the पुरुषः the Universal Spirit. I am ईशः the Ruler, the Controller. I am हिरण्मयः the effulgent One. I am शिवरूपम् the very form of auspiciousness.

Shruti uses her favoured style of juxtaposition of opposites to indicate the indescribable Brahman. In the intellect that still insists on thinking “about” Brahman, objectifying It, the opposites cancel each other out, silencing all thought modifications. In that state of stunned silence, the “Is-Ness” of the intellect is revealed – and that Is-ness is Existence-Awareness – Bliss. Other Upanishads use the same technique.⁴² Zen Buddhism also makes similar statements, though what it seeks to indicate may be different from Vedanta.

One thought flow could be: The infinitesimally tiny gap between atoms is not empty for I am there. The unimaginably colossal intervals between the galaxies is not empty for I am there too. Subtlety is the measure of pervasiveness & I am all-pervasive. The other meditation could be: From the tiniest to the greatest, what is there is only “I”. I am the cause; I am the effect. I am the creator & the creature. I am the alpha & the omega. I am this wonderful universe of multiple dimensions & uncountable varieties. They are only the different names that last a few moments for the same, unchanging Truth. Vishvam is used here to denote the magnificent mystery of life. विविधं श्रयति इति विश्वम् that which throbs, pulsates with life in unimaginably diverse forms is vishvam.

How can the indivisible singularity be the cause multifarious effects? One answer, that of विवर्त वाद is in Mantra 18. The other answer, of परिणाम वाद, is that from the same Earth spring many varieties of grains, trees, fruits, flowers, herbs that take life & give life. So things with सजातीय, विजातीय & स्वगत भेद can rise from the same undifferentiated cause. But can that which is Consciousness give rise to that which is insentient? Can the sentient & the insentient exist in the same time & space? The answer is that in the same body in which every part throbs with life, grow nails & hair that are insentient. As a matter of fact, nails continue to grow even after the body dies. Thus the existence of variety & insentience cannot negate the possibility of one cause producing many effects.

I am the ancient one: I do not exist within the bounds of time; there was no “before” for me & there will be no “after” for me. There is no cause that preceded me. I am अनादि beginning-less. I am the Universal Spirit. पुरुषः means the resident of the body, the in-dweller पुरी शरीरे शेते इति पुरुशः. It also means that which pervades everything पूर्यति सर्वं इति पुरुशः. I am the jivatma; I am the Paramatma.

Mantra 21

अपाणिपादोऽहमचिन्त्यशक्तिः पश्याम्यचक्षुः स शृणोम्यकर्णः ।
(पश्यामि अचक्षुः सः शृणोमि अकर्णः)

⁴² अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान् – Subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest - *Kathopanishad* 1.2.20. अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो... तद्धावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठत् It is the motionless One that is swifter than the mind... It is stationary but overtakes others who run after it. *Ishavasya Upanishad* 4

अहं विजानामि विविक्तरूपो न चास्ति वेत्ता मम चित्सदाऽहम् ॥२१॥

12. I have no hands & legs {and yet} of incomprehensible power. I see without eyes, hear without ears. विविक्तरूपः Devoid of forms, I know everything { all forms} न च अस्ति वेत्ता & there is none that know Me. I am ever the pure Knowledge.

In this mantra, Shruti sings the same song as *Kenopanishad*⁴³ except that in the latter, Brahman is in the third person. Every day, in my dream, I see, hear, taste, feel objects though the organs & faculty of perception which are, by themselves, inert. It is Consciousness that thrills the senses to life but Consciousness by Itself has no power to experience. This is not just poetic fancy. From the viewpoint of the Absolute, this entire creation is like a dream. The incomprehensible power that creates, sustains & finally enfolds it, without any visible manifestation of its power, is Maya. Consciousness is Existence ie I give existence to various objects, emotions, thoughts. Consciousness is Awareness ie I become aware of objects, emotions & thoughts. But while Consciousness gives existence & awareness to everything in general, there is no specificity to knowledge itself. Because of Consciousness, I become aware of things as objects, ie as apart from me. But Consciousness itself has no awareness of any object apart from Itself. It is the power of knowledge but not of knowing. On the other hand, objective awareness, while it is conscious of all things that surround it, cannot become aware of itself for there is no vantage point from which it can observe itself. It is the ultimate subject. It is pure Consciousness.

Mantra 22 & 23.1

वेदैरनेकैरहमेव वेद्यो वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम् ।

(वेदै अनेकै अहं एव वेदः वेदान्तकृद् वेदविद् एव च अहम्)

न पुण्यपापे मम नास्ति नाशो न जन्म देहेन्द्रियबुद्धिरस्ति ॥२२॥

22. अहम् एव I alone am वेद्य that which taught in अनेकैः वेदैः the different Vedas. I am वेदान्तकृद् the One that reveals the Upanishads, the Vedanta {the meaning & essence of the Vedas.} वेदविद् एव च अहम् I alone am the knower of the Vedas. For me there is no merit or demerit. For me there is no destruction. I have neither birth nor body, nor sense organs, nor mind-intellect equipment.

न भूमिरापो न च वह्निरस्ति न चानिलो मेऽस्ति न चाम्बरं च ।२३.१।

23.1 For me there is no {elemental} Earth, no Water, no Fire, neither Air nor Space.

The purpose of the scriptures is to teach me something that I know but have not realised. That knowledge, of the Self, is self-evident in me. I experience It every moment of my life but I do not know It. I project that self-evident reality of the Self onto the teeming variety that I experience around me. The scriptures clear away all errors & doubts in thinking, defects & impurities in my mind so that I am able to see through the illusion to the underlying truth. This mantra is the spontaneous outburst of the one who has realised that truth. He sees no multiplicity around him; no separations or differences. As all differences boil down to त्रिपुटि the triad of the difference between the experiencer, the object of experience & experience, he uses that metaphor to indicate that there is only One.

I am the one truth taught by the different Vedas; I am the teacher, the one who reveals the true meaning of the Vedas; I am the one who studies the Vedas deeply & knows the meaning. I am the knowledge, the known & the knower. In other words, the differences & distinctions I see are only the effect of conditionings I impose upon myself. I am प्रमा, ब्रह्मविद्या the knowledge of Brahman that is taught by the Upanishads. I am प्रमेय, the subject, Brahman, that declares अहं

⁴³ श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद् वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य प्राणः । चक्षुश्चक्षुः.... It is the Hearer of the ear; It is the Thinker of the mind; It is the Word of the speech; It is the Vitality of life. It is the hearer of the ear. *Kenopanishad* 1.2 न तत्र चक्षुर् गच्छति, न वाग् गच्छति, नो मनः न विद्मः, न विजानीमः, The Eye cannot reach there, nor Speech, nor Mind. We do not know. *Kenopanishad* 1.3

ब्रह्मास्मि. I am प्रमाण, उपनिषद्, the valid means of knowledge. I am प्रमाता, the ब्रह्मचारि, the one who delights in that knowledge. And yet, I am not any of them. How can this statement be understood? I am the one, indivisible, all-pervading, homogenous, self-illuminated Consciousness that is the substratum on which the existence & reality of all names, forms & perspectives mentioned above are projected. Without that substratum, nothing can be. With that substratum, everything is. When all distinctions fade away, when there is no projection at all, what remains is the ultimate Subject – Brahman. प्रमाताय प्रमाणं च प्रमेय प्रमितिस्तथा यस्य प्रसादात् सिद्ध्यन्ति सिद्धि किं अपेक्ष्यते What is needed to establish the existence of That because of which the Knower, the Means of Knowledge, that which is Known, Knowledge itself, Power & Empowerment take place? It is self-evident; it is self-illuminated.

So long as I identify myself as a jiva, conditioned by my vasanas & karmas, the body, senses, mind become real for me. I undergo the five modifications from birth to death. I act & so I earn merit & demerit. I manifest again & again to enjoy or suffer merit & demerit. My life as a jiva is real for me just as the waking state alone exists for the waker & the dream state alone for the dreamer. Just as when I awake from my अल्प निद्रा, the dream disappears, when I awake from my महा निद्रा, the appearance of the individual & the collective, the subtle & gross, the one & the many disappear.

I am not the jiva so I have no subtle body & inner equipment, meaning I have no identification with a subtle body or mental equipment. Since I lack subtle body & inner equipment carry the burden of merit & demerit from incarnation to incarnation, I have no virtue nor sin. The gross body is the platform for experiencing the consequences of merit & sin, I have no gross body either. The negation has taken place. Since I have negated what I am not, I will now affirm my authentic identity.

Mantras 12 to 14 used the analogy of the three states of experience to describe the superimposition of being the कर्ता performer of deeds, भोक्ता the enjoyer of the results, जीव the one who endures the results of doer-ship by returning time & again to run the gamut of experience. In mantra 14, Shruti draws attention to the screen on which these colourful names & forms are projected. Mantra 15 lifts the perspective from the individual to the totality, from the soul to the God of creation. The four mantras therefore covered the three cardinal points of the triad – जीव, जगत् & ईश्वरः. This is अध्यारोप - the superimposition of the nature & quality of one thing on the nature of another thing. What is unique about this Upanishad is the directness & rapidity with which अपवाद the negation of the same superimposition takes place. In the second half of mantra 22, the reality – existence of the individual jiva is negated. In the first half of mantra 23 Shruti negates the macrocosm: the four fundamental elements that emerge in तन्मात्र form from the first evolute, Space. By negating them, the very source of matter, Shruti negates all that follow, the disturbance of harmony that starts the पञ्चिकरण पञ्चमहाभूत their materialisation & mingling, the creation of time, the evolution of variety & multiplicity. ⁴⁴

Why is अध्यारोप अपवाद required? ब्रह्म विद्या is not objective knowledge that can be taught. It cannot be sensed; it cannot be thought of; it cannot be described. It is so effectively concealed by ignorance that though I experience it every moment, I do not know it. Shruti has no choice but to use language to indicate what is indescribable; concepts to point out the inconceivable; what is familiar to reach the unfamiliar. I am constantly aware of myself – meaning the BMI - & the world. So Shruti uses them as tools for analysis and shows me how to look beyond the superficiality of their names & forms to the truth. Once I am able to do that, she discards the

⁴⁴ न निरोधो न चोत्पत्तिः न बद्धो न साधकः। न मुमुक्षुर्न वै मुक्तः इत्येषा परमार्थता ॥ Creation there was not; there will be no dissolution, There is no bondage or the one who is bound. There is no liberation; no seeker for salvation. This is the Supreme Truth. This is I, Brahman. *Amrtabindu Upanishad* 10

tools she has been using, just like the pole-vaulter drops the pole after it has taken him high enough to cross the bar. ⁴⁵

To put the same in the form of a verse: कार्ये हि कारणं पश्येत्, पश्चात् कार्यं विसर्जयेत् । कारणत्वं ततोः गच्छेत् अवशिष्टं भवेन्मुनिः । In the effect, one should discern the cause; and after that, the effect negate. Thereafter, the cause-hood of the cause will vanish & what remains is the contemplator alone.

While I may admire the beauty of Shruti's composition & accept the validity of the truth she's teaching, my meagre qualification as a seeker & the maturity of my intellect may come in the way of realising that truth, taking ownership of it. In this transactional world, what is the use of my knowing that I, the limited soul & this world are only an illusion, like a dream? "It is worth remembering...so that when व्यवहार transactional problems are overwhelming, this awareness that they are all part of the cosmic dream, can reduce the impact of the problems.

Mantra 23.2 & 24

एवं विदित्वा परमात्मरूपं गुहाशयं निष्कलमद्वितीयम् ॥ २३.२॥

समस्तसाक्षिं सदसद्विहीनं प्रयाति शुद्धं परमात्मरूपम् ॥ २४॥

23.2 एवं विदित्वा Having thus realised परमात्मरूपम् the nature of the Paramatman { the supreme Self} - गुहाशयम् the in-dweller that resides in the cavern of the heart; निष्कलम् who is without parts, { whole & homogenous}; अद्वितीयम् singular, non-dual;

24. समस्तसाक्षिम् the witness of all { three states of being, three points of view, in all creatures in all worlds} सदसद्विहीनम् beyond both existence & non-existence, शुद्धम् absolutely pure & untainted { without a trace of Maya}; I प्रयाति attain, become one with परमात्मरूपम् the very nature of Brahman.

अथ, the first word at the very beginning of this Upanishad, summarised the long journey of the aspirant who began by seeking completeness in the objects & relationships of this & other worlds, discovered their faults through discrimination, saw detachment & dispassion grow within him, sought out the Guru & humbly surrendered to him in the traditional manner. एवम् विदित्वा indicates the self-restraint of body & mind with which he did श्रवणम् listening to the Guru's words with complete faith & attention; मननम् reflecting deeply & constantly to resolve his un-understanding, mis-understandings & doubts & निदिध्यासनम् meditating on the truth to negate all contrary notions. It is a long & difficult road to traverse. It is a road that one must walk alone. It demands great courage, determination & fortitude. The probability of failure, at least in one life, is very high. Many are called but few are chosen. Is there no other way? The Upanishad itself says न अन्य पन्था there is no other path.

This is the affirmation. Having denied the reality of my individual & cosmic existence, I affirm that I am गुहाशयम् the inhabitant that dwells deep within all hearts, ie the authentic Self that declares "I Am.". I am अद्वितीयम् complete, whole, One. I am निष्कलम् without parts or phases, growth or decay. I am समस्तसाक्षिम् I am the witness of all states of being, all points of view merge into me. I am beyond cause & effect, form & formless do not apply to me. I am the essence of Purity. There is nothing that can contaminate me. I am कैवल्य the undifferentiated mass of Consciousness without सजातीय, विजातीय, स्वगत भेद. I am the very nature of Brahman.

⁴⁵ अद्यारोप अपवादाभ्यां निशप्रपञ्चं प्रपञ्चते शिष्याणां भोदसिद्ध्यर्थं तत्त्वज्ञैः कल्पित क्रमः

There may be some students, some sadhakas, who say, "I am not ready for this." There are some mental blocks in their minds, in the form of "I am a sinner"; "I have done some wrong things in my life." Or some negative incident has happened in their life whose impression is so strong that they are not able to push it aside. So, every now & then, the memory of that comes back to them & they are not able to remember that "I am Brahman." That knowledge is obstructed continuously by पूर्व संस्कारs. The Vedas do not want to discourage such people. This is the compassion of the Shastra. Only thing is that you must have patience. For such people, some additional sadhanas are recommended.

Mantra 2.1

यः शतरुद्रीयमधीते सोऽग्निपूतो भवति,
सुरापानात्पूतो भवति, ब्रह्महत्यायात्पूतो भवति,
कृत्याकृत्यात्पूतो भवति, तस्मादविमुक्तमाश्रितो भवति ।
अत्याश्रमि सर्वदा सकृद्वा जपेत् ॥ २.१॥

2.1 He who अधीते studies, recites, the mantra called शतरुद्रीयम् ⁴⁶ becomes {as though} purified by the sacred fire. He is पूत purified from the sin of सुरापानात् of drinking wine, intoxication. He is purified from the sin of killing a ब्रामणा. He is purified from कृत्याकृत्यात् all sins of commission & omission. Thereafter, he gains refuge in अविमुक्तः the One who never leaves the Truth – Consciousness, Lord Shiva. The one who belongs to अत्याश्रमि the last station of sannyasa should जपेत् repeat this mantra सर्वदा always or सकृत् once {daily}.

Shruti uses the word अधीते. धी means intellect. One interpretation is study or 'bringing the idea, assimilating the idea into the intellect' – absorbing & living the truth. अधीति can also mean prayer. We generally turn to prayer when we, by ourselves, are unable to find a solution. We can handle situations where we have a choice. We have serious problems when we have no choice: when we have to accept the inevitable, endure the unendurable, suffer the insufferable. One idea of prayer is as प्रार्थना to seek support in the grace & compassion of the Lord in the duality of an intimate "I – Thou" relationship. Another idea is to acknowledge that the pain of the circumstances is suffered by the body-mind-intellect complex which is not my essential nature. I turn away from the BMI to the Self in the form of the God of my understanding in उपासना to identify myself as closely as possible with It. Shruti suggests that the imperfect student begin at least with पारायणम् the recitation of the रुद्रम् the hymn in praise of Lord Shiva, the deity of this Upanishad. As I continue to recite I will begin to understand. I can recite this constantly, once daily or once in a few days. What is more important is that I pray with the attitude of a अत्याश्रमि of a sannyasi who has renounced all his attachments. This is an internal attitude quite independent of my वर्णor आश्रम or the clothes I wear. Whichever form of prayer I adopt, Shruti assures me that it will grant me purity against all the negative vasanas of my past : सुरापानात् sins of sensuality; ब्रह्महत्यात् sins of violence against fellow men & holy men; sins against the divine & all other acts of commission & omission. Whatever qualifications I lack, the grace of the mantra will grant me. I will then attain the shelter of अविमुक्तः the one who will never leave you, meaning the Self, or in the context of this Upanishad, Lord Shiva.

⁴⁶ The mantra of 100 verses invoking Lord Shiva , the deity of this Upanishad, which is in the Taittiriya Samhita of the Yajur-veda.

Mantra 2.2

अनेन ज्ञानामाप्नोति संसारार्णवानाशनम् । (अनेन ज्ञानं आप्नोति संसार आर्णव नाशनम्)

तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं कैवल्यं फलमश्नुते कैवल्यं फलमश्नुत इति ॥ २.२॥

2.2 By this, the Rudra japa, one आप्नोति attains the knowledge that destroys संसारार्णवम् the ocean of transmigration {the cycle of birth & death} therefore knowing this one अश्नुते attains कैवल्यं the fruit of Liberation {that state of One-ness sans any distinction, separation, otherness, quality}. Indeed, one attains Kaivalya.

The previous verse described the means that the seeker can use to prepare his mind for understanding & absorbing the knowledge. This verse describes the फलश्रुति result that I will attain through that साधना. It will dry up, destroy, the boundless ocean of sorrow in which I have been struggling since time began. But how can knowledge that my authentic identity is the limitless, infinite, unchanging, unconditioned Self destroy anything? It will first falsify all my spurious identities of waker, dreamer, sleeper; knower, actor, enjoyer; inhabitant of the gross, subtle, causal body & so on projected by primal ignorance. Second, by falsifying these identities & the burden of “I” & “Mine” that they carry, it tears away the curtain that has thus far concealed the truth of the Self. I would become established in that Truth, the state called कैवल्यम्. I will perceive no difference between I & other beings; no difference between I & others like me; no differentiation of mind & body within myself. There would only be the “I”, encompassing everything. I would be anchored in that Knowledge which is utter contentment, the peace that passes all understanding.

The two verses bracket, as it were, the beginning & end of the spiritual journey. I must first dispassionately examine the attractions of these worlds & discover that they are fleeting. I must turn away from them & towards discovering the truth about myself. The four qualities of the seeker must grow within me. I must surrender to a preceptor, serve him & learn from him. I have to reflect on his teachings for clarity to come. I must then apply that knowledge to myself, to unlearn all my false understanding & absorb all that is true. All this is contained in the word अथ that is the first word in this Upanishad. Knowledge can be arrived at only in this way: तस्माद् एनं विदित्वैनं. The Upanishad itself says so: नान्यः पन्थाः विमुक्तये there is no other way to complete freedom.

X
