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**ATMAN AND BRAHMAN  
IN  
VEDIC RELIGION**

**Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar**

GENERAL EDITORS

**K. M. MUNSHI**

**R. R. DIWAKAR**

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BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

*Let noble thoughts come to us from every side*

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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ATMAN AND BRAHMAN  
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VEDIC RELIGION

By  
JAYA CHAMARAJA WADIYAR

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**BY  
JAYA CHAMARAJA WADIYAR**



**1965**

**BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN  
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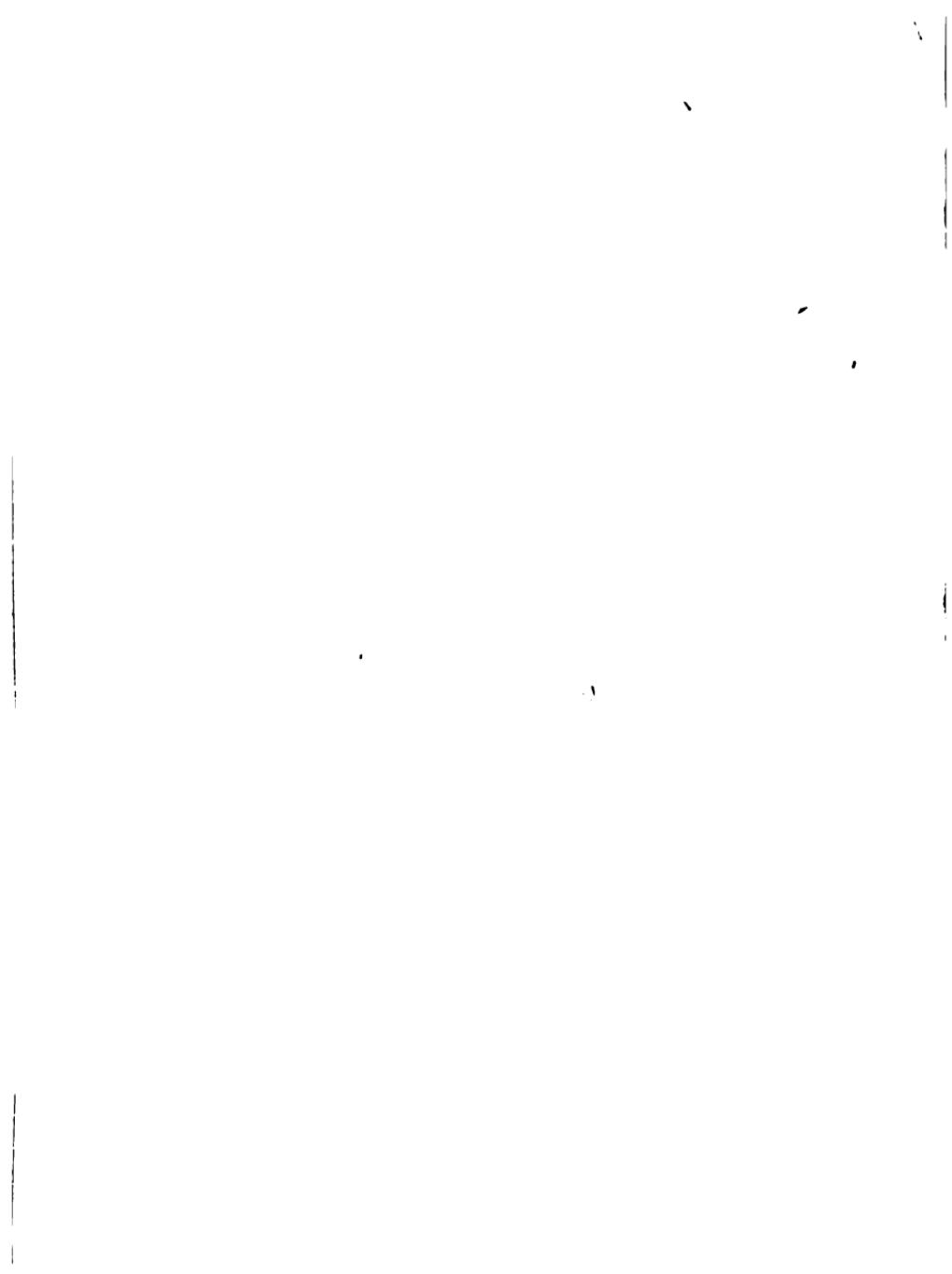
## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Bhavan's Book University volumes had rare success. About a million and a quarter volumes have been sold in about eleven years. However, there is an insistent demand for the stray volumes which the Bhavan has issued from time to time at a lower price. In order to meet this demand, it has been decided to issue the new One-Rupee Book University Series side by side with the Book University Series.

I hope this new One-Rupee Series will have the same good fortune which the other Series had, of being useful to those who are interested in the fundamental values of Indian Culture, and of reaching out to a wider audience.

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,  
Chowpatty Road, Bombay-7.  
*Vijaya Dashami*  
September 28, 1963

K. M. MUNSHI



## FOREWORD

His Highness Sri Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar, Maharaja of Mysore, is a philosopher among our princes. Brought up by his illustrious uncle, His Highness Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar, he turned early in life to religious and philosophical study. In addition, His Highness also came under the influence of the great saint, His Holiness Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swamigal, the late Sankaracharya of Sringeri and also of the reputed savant and thinker, the late Sri V. Subrahmanya Aiyer. These associations with great and holy men and scholars have left a lasting and deep impression on His Highness.

Schooled in the philosophy of *Advaita*, he took up the study of the *Avadhuta Gita* and brought out the results of his research in a book on *Dattatreya*. Since then, His Highness has been employing the freedom from the cares and responsibilities of administration which the new dispensation gave to him and has been carrying on research in the fields of Indian aesthetics and cultural subjects of an allied nature. He has also been continuing his deep study of the *Bhagavad Gita* and other spiritual classics.

The present book is a result of an Endowment which the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, has founded for the promotion of our national culture. His Highness develops the thesis that the realization of the identity of individual Atman and universal Brahman represents the *acme* of our ancient distinctive philosophy. Giving significant quotations from the *Upanishads* in which this identity is expressed, His Highness spells out the meaning of this

identity, and details the way to its realisation. Affirming that “it is by knowledge alone that liberation comes”, he refutes the *Mimamsaka* view that *Karma* can bring about *Moksha*. In all this His Highness exhibits his leanings towards the *Advaita* doctrine.

Yet, to him, as to all *Advaitins*, this identity is not merely a matter of philosophical conviction. It is also the highest form of religion. He says that “the true nature of worship is taught by showing the identity of the worshipper and the worshipped”. “The grace of Brahman is necessary for the student to grasp the meaning of the texts and for realising the final truth” says Sri Jayachamaraja Wadiyar. “The disciple’s object in praying to Brahman is to see that the final truth burgeons within him. What a wonderful thought and prayer it is!”

Quite significantly, His Highness observes that “religion is born of a deep and innate belief in the revelation of a scripture”. It is in this context that the *mahavakyas* of the *Upanishads* become the means to the realisation of the identity of *Atman* and *Brahman*. “Liberation”, says His Highness, “is inherent in the *jiva*. Once the truth of the identity of the inner self and *Brahman* is intuited, liberation takes place,” “which is the be-all and end-all of the spiritual quest.”

In a small compass, His Highness has provided a lucid account of the treatment of *Atman* and *Brahman* in the *Vedanta* from the *Advaitic* point of view in a manner which reveals his scholarship and conviction.

Madras  
March 25, 1965.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

## INTRODUCTION

These three lectures were the result of the invitation extended to the author to deliver the Munshi Foundation Lectures at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, on December 11, 12 and 13, 1961. They have been printed with a few alterations.

It was a happy occasion for me to be associated thus with the great renascence work being done by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in the fields of learning and culture. Its Founder-President, Dr. K. M. Munshi, must be saluted for the devotion and zeal with which this work of regenerating Indian Culture has been undertaken. To have been with this distinguished body of savants for three days and to have had the privilege of participating in their discussions was a source of lasting inspiration and stimulus to scholarly effort.

This work is dedicated to Dr. Munshi as a token of respect and affection for one who has been so nobly striving for the study, maintenance and promotion of Indian Culture and Civilization.

It is my good fortune that our revered Rajaji has been pleased to contribute his valuable Introduction to this work. I am deeply grateful to him for this honour.

JAYA CHAMARAJA WADIYAR

The Palace,  
Mysore,  
16th April 1965.

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## I. ĀTMAN AND BRAHMAN

I express my sense of profound gratitude to my friend Dr. K. M. Munshi and to other Members of the Bhāratīya Vidyā Bhavan, Bombay, for inviting me to deliver the Munshi Foundation Lectures on Indian Culture. I am deeply conscious of the valuable contributions made by Dr. Munshi to our understanding of Indian Culture. I know that he has enriched our knowledge of our culture by making us familiar with the nuances of it as they express themselves in religion, philosophy and mythology. I can claim no scholarship or originality for my presentation of certain problems connected with what we have come to call and accept as 'Vedic Religion.' Perhaps what I can claim is my faith in the truth that it is only what is moral and good that will eventually win the day, however much may be the transient and temporary gains of the false and spectacular, the evil and the immoral. I believe it was a *dictum* of Goethe's that it was only those things and beliefs that were godly that always gained victory and never the opposite. We have our own scripture proclaiming '*Satyameva jayate nānṛtam.*'

What I propose to do in these lectures is to set out briefly the Concepts of Ātman and Brahman in Vedic religion. In the first lecture a general survey of religion with particular reference to India and its contribution is attempted, and in the second, stress is laid on the special contribution of Vedic religion to the idea of the inner discipline of man as

a pre-requisite to his reaching the goal of existence called *Mokṣa*. In the last lecture, I propose to consider the concept of the Supreme Identity of *Ātman* with *Brahman* which is the be-all and end-all of the Indian spiritual quest.

In an age of renascence as we have now in India, it is but right to renew our strength and inspiration from the study of our scriptures. These scriptures have withstood the test of time. They have ever been a solace to the Indian, in doubt and danger, in anger and sorrow. The test has lain in the fact that they have been sought by people with varying temperaments and associations, and have never failed to give spiritual satisfaction. As the study proposed concerns the central theme of our scriptures, I shall endeavour to the best of my ability to confine myself to the main topic, namely, *Ātman* and *Brahman*, and not go into the ramifications of it. I should like to follow the advice of Vācaspati Miśra who says: "The scholar who gives an exposition of things, the knowledge of which is sought for by the audience is listened to with attention. On the other hand one who speaks of doctrines desired by none is likely to be disregarded as one who is not of sound mind."<sup>1</sup>

The crisis in which the human race finds itself today is the result of the spiritual bankruptcy of the world. At no other period of the history of the human race in its long ascent towards fulfilment

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1. "Iha khalu pratipitsitamartham pratipādayan pratipādayitāvadheyavacano bhavati preksāvatām. Apratipitsitamartham tu pratipādayan 'nāyam laukiko nāpi parikṣaka' iti preksāvadbhirunmattavadupekṣyeta." (*Tattvakaumudi*: Introduction. *Śāstravिशयकाजीनासावताराणम्*)

has so relentless and ruthless a situation been ever faced. With our mania for exploding bombs of frightful destructive power, and our callous disregard for human suffering, we have reached a critical stage at which all thinking people have begun to wonder if any form of existence on this planet will possibly survive this crisis. There is hardly a place in the world which does not represent a danger spot. The whole world is being drawn into the vortex. With all its stupendous achievements in its conquest of nature, science has failed really to fathom the mystery of life in general and human life in particular. The world's distances have shrunk with the advent of the telephone and television, the wireless and radio, the air-plane and the sputnik. So too have the problems of Cathay and Moscow, of India and South Africa, of America and the Antipodes been brought closer and juxtaposed with one another. Nothing in this sense can be looked upon as isolated or separate; they are all stuck together. From a geographical and geopolitical point of view the world can no longer be held apart in its sections. It has come to be closely knit together. Not merely in the field of transport or physical contact, but in all other fields also we have been forced closer than we ever thought possible or necessary to prepare for. While man's conquest over nature has given him a sense of triumph and comfort, it has taken away security and faith as its price, and left man a victim of unnamable fears. In this enormous spiritual crisis, the bankruptcy of the world stands revealed. To my mind, true religion and the realization of spiritual life seem to be the only effective factors in putting the split personality of

man together again and save the human race from irretrievable disaster. It is only a return to the path of reverence based on reason and revelation that can save humanity from its impending doom.

The greatest blunder of our era seems to be the lack of a recognition that religion alone is capable of giving us wisdom and the sense of peace which we sorely need today. Religion, if I may say so, is put in cold storage. That is the great and fatal mistake of our era. Religion is not taken seriously enough by many of its adherents in the first place. Secondly, the need for it in view of our prevalent materialistic outlook has not been keenly felt. This has resulted in a type of *Homo economicus* who is more interested in money and material prosperity rather than in spiritual regeneration. Even such religion as there is today has materially suffered. Professor A. N. Whitehead says very aptly: "The non-religious motive which has entered into modern religious thought is the desire for a comfortable organisation of modern society. Religion has been presented as valuable for the ordering of life. Its claims have been rested upon its function as a sanction to right conduct. Also the purpose of right conduct quickly degenerates into the formation of pleasing social relations. We have here a subtle degradation of religious ideas, following upon their gradual purification under the influence of keener ethical intuitions." This points out to us the fact that religion is realization and not merely a means of social control. It is a vision or *Darsana* as our philosophers put it, a vision which, in the words of Professor Whitehead, "is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within the pass-

ing flux of immediate things: something which is real, and yet waiting to be realised: something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts: something that gives meaning to all that passes and yet eludes apprehension: something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach: something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest."

Religion is born out of a deep and innate belief in the revelation of scripture; it is a faith born of a deep conviction that there is a transcendent and immanent principle in this universe, a great agent who guides it and carries it to its fulfilment. It is a faith based on and illumined by a rare experience. Faith in the possibility of this experience does a great deal, and the test of faith is that great 'inward light' which always keeps flaming within, 'Jyotiṣām jyotiḥ'<sup>2</sup> guiding us towards our ultimate destination, the realization that we are none other than the eternal *Brahman*. The inward vision which is the result of that light, is a profoundly moving and beatific experience. It is the conviction that arises from faith, the illumination that is the experience of faith. These mighty and potent factors are being ignored by currents of contemporary thoughts which are leading us to a strange sterility. The older races of people were more fortunate than we are in this respect.

In his Gifford Lectures entitled "*The Worship of Nature*," Sir James Frazer writes: "I am aware

2. I have in mind here, the story of the *Liṅga Purāṇa*, where the eternal fathomless Light is revealed as that in which everything merges and which cannot be measured or fathomed.

that the description of beliefs and customs which the enlightened portion of mankind has long agreed to dismiss as false and absurd, if not as monstrous, vicious and cruel, is apt to be somewhat tedious and repellent; certainly it lacks the vivid interest which would naturally attach to a discussion such as I have indicated of the relations between the latest advances of science and the latest advances or retreats of theology. Still I trust that an account even of crude theories and preposterous practices may not be wholly destitute of interest and instruction if it enables us to picture to ourselves something of the effort which it has cost our predecessors to grope their way through the mists of ignorance and superstition to what passes with us of this generation for the light of knowledge and wisdom. They were the pioneers who hewed their way through a jungle that might well have seemed impenetrable to man: they made the paths smooth for those who were to come after; we walk in their footsteps, and reap at our ease the harvest which they sowed with labour and anguish. The gratitude we owe them for the inestimable service which they have rendered us should temper the harsh judgments which we are too apt to pass on their errors, on what a hasty verdict stigmatizes as their follies and their crimes; and the lesson which we draw from the contemplation of their long wanderings and manifold aberrations in the search for the true and the good should be one rather of humility than of pride; it should teach us how weak and frail is human nature, and by what a slender thread hangs the very existence of our species, like a speck

or mote suspended in the inconceivable infinities of the universe.”<sup>3</sup>

It has become far too common to describe the two predominant viewpoints of the world as Western and Eastern. It has become the vogue these days, in keeping with the mania for labelling everything, to label the Western view of the world as materialistic and the Eastern as spiritual. This is to rest on a false foundation. Like most facile generalizations there is a great deal that is glossed over in this statement. Perhaps we may admit that there is this much of truth in it, that by and large, the West has been more concerned with outside things, pertaining to the world of matter more than with the inner things of the spirit. Equally well can the charge be sustained against the East that it became obsessed so much with the inner side of life that it forgot the existence of an external material world. Therefore such generalizations do no one any good—least of all to the protagonists of such views. What is needed now is a deeper understanding of each other’s point of view and mutual exchange of correctives.

Let us take a few expressions from ordinary life and see the consequences of their use in both the East and the West. Consider the two words ‘Religion’ and ‘Man.’ Religion, according to Rudolf Otto,<sup>4</sup> is associated with a kind of awe and reverence that people experience when they are face to face with something which inspires this feeling in them. Or to use the language of the *Gītā*, it is

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3. *The Worship of Nature*: by Sir James Frazer: Vol. 1, pp. 13-14.

4. Vide Ch. IV. pp. 12-13. ‘*The Idea of the Holy*.’ 2nd Edn. 1950.

something which inspires the emotion of 'adbhuta' or 'āścarya', like the feeling which was aroused in Arjuna when he was vouchsafed the Viśvarūpa-darśana.

The way in which this term has been used suggests that there are two ways of looking at the same problem. There are those who declare that religion consists of faith in God and the supernatural and those who say that faith consists in man's 'will to believe', as William James puts it. Be that as it may—for controversy here is endless—there is no doubt whatever that to those who do believe in religion, there is no getting away from the fact that it implies belief in God, as well as the acceptance of the supernatural element. By supernatural I do not mean something that cannot be understood or grasped but something which stands out like a tall pinnacle, a light,<sup>5</sup> far and above everything else, mysterious, awesome and omnipotent. It means that the person who has a living faith like this finds it reflected in the discipline of his own life leading to the assimilation of the light of his soul. This idea is indicated to us in the first few lines of the *Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad*.<sup>6</sup> The message of the *Upaniṣad* may be briefly summarized: The whole world is encased by the living presence of Īśa, the ruler of

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5. The story of the Exploration of the light by Brahma and Viṣṇu in the *Purāṇas* may here be noted, to emphasize the limitlessness of Brahman.

6. 'Īśāvāsyamidam sarvam  
yat kiñca jagatyāṁ jagat,  
tena tyaktena bhuñjithā  
mā gr̥dhaḥ kasya sviddhanam.'  
'Kurvannevaḥ karmāṇi  
jijīviṣet śāṭam samāḥ.'  
(*Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad*: I & 2.)

the universe. By coveting not that which belongs to others and by giving up greed and performing action without desires, man should desire to live for a hundred years. Here the stress is laid on disinterested action and the acceptance of the universe as His (God's) manifestation. Such is the noble view expounded by our scriptures.

In India, religious revelations are believed to be contained in the *Veda*. The *Vedas* are called '*Apauruṣeya*', which means that they are beyond what is called '*Pauruṣeya*.' No agency, human or divine, is responsible for the truths expounded in them. They speak of eternal truths that can be experienced here and now by those who follow them. As Dr. Radhakrishnan puts it, "This appeal to the *Vedas* does not involve any reference to any extra-philosophical standard. What is dogma to the ordinary man is experience to the pure in heart." The *Vedas* deal with truths that do not contradict the truth of another age. A perfect, universal and infallible knowledge can arise only from the *Veda*. Śaṅkara opines generally as follows: "Perfect knowledge has the characteristic mark of uniformity, because it depends on accomplished and actually existing things; for whatever thing is permanently of one and the same nature is acknowledged to be a true or real thing, and knowledge conversant about such is called perfect knowledge; as for instance, the knowledge embodied in the proposition 'fire is hot.' Now, it is clear that in the case of perfect knowledge a mutual conflict of men's opinions is impossible. But that cognitions founded on reasoning do conflict is generally known; for we continually observe that what one logician endea-

vours to establish as perfect knowledge is demolished by another, who, in his turn, is treated alike by a third. How therefore can knowledge, which is founded on reasoning, and whose object is not something permanently uniform, be perfect knowledge?—Nor can it be said that he who maintains the *pradhāna* to be the cause of the world (i.e. the *Sāmkhya*) is the best of all reasoners, and accepted as such by all philosophers; which would enable us to accept his opinion as perfect knowledge. Nor can we collect at a given moment and on a given spot all the logicians of the past, present and future time, so as to settle (by their agreement) that their opinion regarding some uniform object is to be considered perfect knowledge. The *Veda*, on the other hand, which is eternal and the source of knowledge, may be allowed to have for its object firmly established things, and hence the perfection of that knowledge which is founded on the *Veda* cannot be denied by any of the logicians of the past, present or future. We have thus established the perfection of this our knowledge which reposes on the *Upaniṣads*, and as apart from it perfect knowledge is impossible, its disregard would lead to 'absence of final release' of the transmigrating souls. Our final position therefore is, that on the ground of scripture and of reasoning subordinate to scripture, the intelligent Brahman is to be considered the cause and substance of the world.”<sup>7</sup>

According to the commonly accepted Western tradition, we are told that man was made in the

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7. From the translation of Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*: Part I. by George Thibaut. pp. 316-17. Edn. 1962.

image of God. He had to seek God and find him and then be admitted according to his deeds into heavenly company or be assigned to hell. In India, on the other hand, man was declared right from the beginning, to be no other than Brahman. 'Ayam-ātmā Brahma.' So here we have a difference between the two conceptions of man, a differentiation based on the emphasis given to the phrases: 'Image of God' and 'none other than Brahman.'

One of the cardinal beliefs of Hinduism lies in the expressions 'I am *Brahman*', and 'Thou art That.' These are known as 'Mahāvākyas.' Here in a nutshell is the magnificent assertion, that the indwelling soul (*ātman*) in all beings is none other than *Brahman*. The statements indicate the light of wisdom that liberates man from all his bonds. Here we have the knowledge that is called 'Brahma-vidyā.' Here again is indicated the place of man in the world and his position in the cosmos. Hinduism asserts unlike most other religions the grand truth that the *Ātman* (soul of man) is none other than *Brahman*. Here is the quest of religious experience, the content of which is the realization of the identity of *Ātman* and *Brahman*.

We all know and believe that the world in which we live and have our being is born out of the Supreme Self and dissolves in it, which is of the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss: *sat*, *cit*, *ānanda*. The Supreme Self from the point of view of the finite, creates the world, sustains it, nourishes it, and in time dissolves it. It is from this source that all the creations of the world and man derive their strength and have their being. Life springs from It; and so does death; and so does

immortality. There is no existence for anything save as part and parcel of the Supreme. This idea is most poetically expressed in the hymn of the *Rgveda*<sup>8</sup>:

‘Hiranyagarbhah samavartatāgre  
bhūtasya jātah patireka āsīt;  
sa dādhāra prthivīm dyāmutemām  
kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema.  
Ya ātmadā baladā yasya viśva  
upāsate praśīṣam yasya devāḥ;  
yasya chāyāmr̥tam yasya mr̥tyuh  
kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema.’

“Hiranyagarbha was present at the beginning; when born, he was the sole lord of created beings; he upheld this earth and heaven,—let us offer worship with an oblation to the divine Ka.”<sup>9</sup>

“To Him Who is the giver of strength, Whose commands all (beings), even the gods obey, Whose shadow is immortality, Whose (shadow) is death,—let us offer worship with an oblation to the divine Ka.”<sup>10</sup>

The aim of *Brahmavidyā* is initially to destroy that cause which makes us perform a number of works (*karma*) with a desire for reaping rewards. It is the desire (*kāma*) which impels us to work. Out of desire arises activity; and it is pointed out that if desire is eradicated the impulsion to work also is removed. When we have by wisdom learnt the futility of mere actions being undertaken for gaining specific desires, then arises the knowledge that whatever we generally do is done not for its

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8. *Rgveda*: 10. 121-1-2.

9. *Rgveda Sāṃhita*: Translation by H. H. Wilson: Vol. VI. p. 225.

10. *Ibid*: p. 225.

own sake, but for the sake of reaping rewards. If action is dedicated to the advancement of the knowledge of Self, the actions born of desire cease, and we realize what we really are—that we are none other than *Brahman*. In such a state the Self rests in its own right and radiance. Our Self stands equated with *Brahman* as indicated in the two *Mahāvākyas* quoted above.

The supreme aim of man is to find rest in the *Ātman* or Self.<sup>11</sup> This is the only action that redeems him and not the futile and endless pursuit of satisfaction of his desires by mere works (*karma*). Such a person attains the abode of fearlessness<sup>12</sup> and becomes united with that Self which is Bliss. Desire or attachment acts as a shackle, whereas detachment unbinds. Liberation arises only when the sense of bondage is eliminated.<sup>13</sup> *Brahman* exists by Itself *per se*. It has no need for anything else to support it. It is the one without a second. It is the non-dual (*ekameva advitīyam*). And by knowing *Brahman*, everything else is known.

It would be highly appropriate in this context to examine two important views of the *Mīmāṃsakas*. The early *mīmāṃsakas* argued that liberation can be secured by action alone and that knowledge is not necessary to achieve this goal. Thus they maintained that the performance of the obligatory

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11. 'Tadātmānagm svayamakuruta  
tasmāttat sukrftamucyate.'

(*Taittiriya Upaniṣad*: 2-7-1.)

12. 'Ānandam brahmaṇo yidvān  
na bibheti kutaścana.'

(*Taittiriya Upaniṣad*: 2-9-1.)

13. 'Yat karma kurute  
tadabhisampadyate.'

'Brahmaiva san brahmāpyeti.'

(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: 4-4-5 & 6.)

and occasional rites results in the removal of sins. Also, avoidance of forbidden acts staves off sins while the rejection of all acts motivated by desire prevents pleasures of a sensual nature. By scrupulously observing these directions, it is possible for a human being to avoid the necessity of enjoying either a stay in heaven, which is the result of meritorious actions or of suffering in hell which is a result of evil actions. Nor can the *prārabdha-karmas* or actions which have started to take effect influence man because they can be ended by experiencing their consequences fully. By such processes, the causes which bring about another life disappear and consequently man obtains liberation which is the state of the soul maintaining its natural disposition.<sup>14</sup> Another view of the *mīmāṃsakas* on this matter is more direct and explicit. According to this view the obtainment of pleasure of heaven (*svarga*) is itself liberation. This view maintains that liberation could be achieved by the performance of the ordained actions<sup>15</sup> and that knowledge here is of little consequence.

Now an examination of these views of the *mīmāṃsakas* shows how futile they are. The first view rests on the maxim that when a cause disappears, the result also disappears automatically: *Nimittāpāye naimittikāpāyah*. Therefore when the cause of transmigration, namely action, is eliminated, transmigration comes to a close too. But this argument of the *mīmāṃsakas* does not have the

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14. (1) Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahma-sūtra*: 4.3. 7-14.  
(2) *Taittirīya-bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara: Introduction.  
(3) Śaṅkara's 'Gītābhāṣya' on  
'Sarvadharmaṇ parityajya.'

15. Śaṅkara's *Taittirīya-bhāṣya*: Introduction.

authority of *śruti*. Nor is it possible to believe that actions which are causes of transmigration could be completely eschewed. Indeed, many are the actions which a man will have performed in the past which require innumerable births for working out their results. Of these actions again, some bring desirable results and others undesirable. There are besides, actions which bring about mutually contradictory results. While some actions result in birth, there are others which wait for a suitable place and time to work themselves out. It means that the theory that all actions can work themselves out within a single birth is completely unfounded. The scriptures say that man will have to be born again on earth to experience the results of his remaining action even after enjoying in full in heaven the fruits of his meritorious deeds. It is not correct to say that by the performance of the obligatory and occasional rites the results of all actions of past births are removed. There is no antagonism between the performance of obligatory and occasional rites. Sometimes sins disappear through the performance of obligatory and occasional rites. Good actions however may lead to a good birth. But in fact all sins do not disappear. For *Brahmahatyā* (killing of a Brahmin) the scriptures have ordained eleven births. Even good actions lead to several births. It is not possible to give up actions—obligatory, occasional, the forbidden or the desire-motivated, without having a real vision of *Brahman*. Even men of discrimination commit errors. It is therefore a vain hope to think that liberation could be achieved by the performance of mere actions without knowledge or realization of *Brahman*.

The second view of the *Mīmāṃsakas* may easily be countered. It cannot be accepted that the pleasures of heaven constitute liberation. Men of true vision have declared that liberation or *mokṣa* is eternal while the pleasures of heaven are not. Besides, it must be admitted that all that is achieved by action is non-eternal. This is in accordance with the maxim: 'Yat kṛtam tadanityam.' Therefore, liberation which is eternal cannot be equated with the obtainment of *svarga* or heavenly pleasures.

What is it then that leads to liberation according to the *Brahmavādin*? It is that by knowledge alone that liberation comes.<sup>16</sup> The effects of *karma* can never be removed except through knowledge. Actions are either good or bad—the good bring happy results and the bad evil ones. As long as desire resides in the human heart, actions will always arise bringing results in their wake, good or evil in accordance with the nature of the acts. Therefore for one who seeks liberation, the path of knowledge alone is the path to follow. In him who knows the truth, knowledge of the Ātman or Self arises spontaneously. And one who has the knowledge of the Self has the knowledge of Brahman. The scriptures tell us clearly that Ātman is Brahman and that true knowledge of Ātman is knowledge of Brahman. And this knowledge of the Self is something positive. It cannot arise from mere performance of acts or avoidance of acts. To gain the knowledge of Ātman requires a special effort and this effort brings us *mokṣa* or release which is eternal. Release or *mokṣa* cannot merely arise

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16. See Śaṅkara's introduction to the *Gitābhāṣya*.

from action. It can only arise from a recognition or realization or knowledge of what the self is in its true nature.

A further objection may also be raised here. Is it not possible that *karma* (action) may engender the realization sought after with the help of *vidyā* (knowledge)? The *Vedānta* answers by saying that *mokṣa* is eternal and that it is not produced by *karma* or action. Besides, whatever is the product of *karma* is always transitory. The above argument contradicts this well-accepted maxim and therefore is not valid. And as *vidyā* (knowledge) and *mokṣa* (liberation) following therefrom are eternal, realization cannot be produced by mere action. Besides, *mokṣa* can be realized by *vidyā* (knowledge) and *tapas* (meditation). *Mokṣa* is inherent immortality and not a conditional immortality. Hence is the *Upaniṣadic* prayer—‘Uncover the golden lid which covers the face of truth which is revealed to the sight of one who is truthful and virtuous.<sup>17</sup>

When a thing is destroyed, it ceases to exist. Yet, it may appear in a different form. For example, when a pot is destroyed, potsherds arise. We have here the destruction of the pot and its existence in another form, namely, potsherds. The case of *mokṣa* is quite different. *Mokṣa* is the eternal living in the Self. This can be experienced only when ignorance (*avidyā*) and desire (*kāma*) cease. As long as these exist, there will be an impelling motive towards action which in turn produces misery or happiness. But when true knowledge

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17. ‘Hiraṇmayena patrena  
satyasyāpihitam mukham.’  
(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: 5-15-1.)

(that Ātman is Brahman) arises, it leads to the disappearance of *avidyā* (ignorance) and *kāma* (desire). Indeed, no knowledge of Ātman can arise in the presence of *avidyā*. Therefore a correct and comprehensive knowledge or realization of the identity of Ātman and Brahman is called *Brahmavidyā*.

The Brahman we have been trying to know so far is ineffable; and therefore it is impossible either to describe or express it in words. And the *Upaniṣad* declares it to be so in the statement. 'From where the mind returns unable to describe it.'<sup>18</sup> Then the question naturally arises as to why we should strive hard to know Brahman that is indescribable. The *Upaniṣads* attempt to answer this question. Brahman, they say, is *sat-cit-ānanda*: truth, consciousness and bliss, and by such a declaration they enable us to grasp the true nature of Brahman. Again to a keen student of *Brahmavidyā*, the *Upaniṣads* point out some practical steps to enable him to grasp what is indescribable. Thus ultimately the scriptures teach the aspirant something tangible and something which could be understood. The aspirant is taught to meditate on the Self by making use of his mind in a sharp and subtle manner.<sup>19</sup> It is also pointed out that such a concentrated medita-

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18. 'Yato vāco nivartante  
aprāpya manasā saha.'  
(*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*: II. 4.1.)
19. 'Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu  
gūdhōtmā na prakāśate;  
drṣyate tvagryayā buddhyā  
sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ.'  
(*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: 3-12.)

tion could be had by constant practice and determination.<sup>20</sup>

In this connection, it must also be mentioned that the true nature of worship is taught by showing the identity of the worshipper and the worshipped. In other words, man (*jīvātman*) is taught to realize his identity with the over-soul (*Brahman*). Thus the man who knows *Brahman* as the soul within him becomes *Brahman*.

The difficulties which beset such a man who is out to realize *Brahman* are many. The *Upaniṣad*<sup>21</sup> says that very few have heard of *Brahman*, let alone knowing or realizing it. The *Gītā*<sup>22</sup> expresses a similar idea and adds that out of thousands some persons only strive to attain perfection; and out of these, scarcely one may know *Brahman* in reality.

In order to be a recipient of such wisdom one must undergo a process of self-purification. This is accomplished by undertaking such actions (*karma*) by which all egocentric desires are annulled and the fruits thereof are consecrated to *Brahman*. "He

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20. 'Tatraikāgrāṇi manah kṛtvā  
yatacittendriyakriyāḥ;  
upaviśyāsane yuṇijyāt  
yogamātmaviśuddhaye.'

(*Bhagavadgītā*: VI-12.)

21. 'Śravanāyāpi bahubhīryo na labhyāḥ  
śrīvanto'pi bahavo yāṁ na vidyuh;  
āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā  
āścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭāḥ.'

(*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: 2-7.)

22. 'Manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu  
kaścidyatati siddhaye;  
yatastāmapi siddhānāṁ  
kaścinmāṁ vetti tattvataḥ.'

(*Bhagavadgītā*: VII-3.)

who acts" says the *Gītā*,<sup>23</sup> "dedicating all actions to God and shaking off all attachment, remains untouched by sins even as the lotus leaves remain untouched by water."

Even after the mind has attained detachment there are other obstacles which have to be overcome to make the mind 'one-pointed.' These obstacles are enumerated by Patañjali in his *Yoga* aphorisms.<sup>24</sup> These are: sickness, dullness, doubt, carelessness, laziness, sensuality, delusion, aimlessness and unsteadiness. Such obstacles are removed by a prayer to Brahman for right guidance and learning. Our ancient seers had perfected the art of prayer to such an extent that they made use of visible signs of Brahman's manifestation to impress on the adept his ultimate goal. The aspirant was asked first to look at the human body closely in order to understand it. Every human being has to breathe, by exhalation and inhalation. *Prāṇa* is the upward motion of breath and *apāṇa* its downward motion. This is how the vital breath is described. The vital spark in the eye or the sun is *Aryaman* and Indra is the giver of bodily strength. The intellect is Bṛhaspati and the feet are represented as Viṣṇu. Thus every part of the human body functions because of its association with *Brahman*. The

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23. 'Brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi  
saṅgam tyaktvā karoti yaḥ;  
lipyate na sa papena  
padmapatramivāṁbhasā.'

(*Bhagavadgītā*: V-10.)

24. 'Vyādhi - styāna - samśaya - pramāda - ālasyāvirati -  
bhrānti - darśanālabdhahbhūmikatvānavasthitattvāni  
cittavikṣepastentarāyāḥ.'  
(*Yogaśūtra*: I-30.)

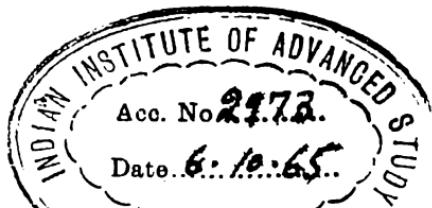
life spark is *Brahman*. In this manner the disciple is taught to realize *Brahman* through its perceptible form, the human body. Here the life principle is equated with life force or breath which is easily perceptible as *Vāyu* or air. Thus the disciple is asked to address as *Brahman*, the vital breath or *Vāyu* which is something he can easily perceive. By recognising what is perceptible, the seeker is led on to that which is the imperceptible and the indwelling ruler within all. *Brahman* is thus the *sūtra* or string which binds all. As the *Upaniṣad* says “By *vāyu*, the world and all beings are threaded.”<sup>25</sup> This *Brahman* called ‘*Vāyu*’ is perceptible because we all can experience the air when it touches us. This is the *Brahman* with attributes or the conditioned *Brahman*. After prolonged practice it can be contemplated on as the imperceptible one. That is why it is said that “one who attains to the *Īśvara* state feels certain that after the end of his life here, he will attain the Supreme (*Brahman*).”<sup>26</sup> Such a state implies becoming one with the *Deva* or lord, with complete identity of *Deva*<sup>27</sup> and disciple. As the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* says, “Becoming the *Deva*, he, the disciple is absorbed, merged in the devas.”<sup>28</sup> This is the truth. Having declared the perceptible *Brahman* to be *Vāyu*, the seeker proceeds to investigate the imperceptible ruler within, the *Antaryāmin*. This he does by means of the *Pranava*, symbolically

25. ‘*Vāyunā hi gautama sūtreṇā sandṛbdhāni bhavantīti’*  
(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: 3-7-2.)

26. *Siddhāntaleśasāṅgraha*: p. 113.  
Madras University Edition.

27. ‘*Divyati iti devah*’—that which shines.

28. Vide *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*: I. 4.5.



called the 'Aum.' It is the *Praṇava* that removes the obstacles in the way of realization of Brahman. As the Upaniṣad says, "Praṇava is the bow, the Ātman is the arrow," and with it, "Brahman the target is struck."<sup>29</sup>

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29. Vide *Muṇḍaka*: 2-2-4.

## II. THE DISCIPLINE FOR BRAHMAVIDYĀ

In the first lecture, I dwelt chiefly on the way in which Vedānta establishes the identity of Ātman with Brahman. It was also pointed out that this was achieved through the medium of meditation or contemplation as gleaned from the *Mahāvākyas*. It is legitimate to ask how one can arrive at the truths of the Vedānta asserted by the Upaniṣads in statements like: 'I am Brahman,' 'Thou art That,' 'Consciousness is Brahman,' and 'Ātman is Brahman,' by mere reflection and contemplation. If that were the case, it would be possible for all to become *Brahmavits* or *Brahmajñānins* easily. Yet we have seen the śrutis declare frequently that the path prescribed for the realization of Brahman is a difficult one; it is "like walking on the edge of a razor."<sup>30</sup> If that is so, what are the disciplines and rigours to be undergone by the mind to achieve it?

There was a regular course of training and discipline to be gone through to achieve this end. Nothing was left to chance. Our ancients had so well perfected a system of psychosomatic discipline that by following it faithfully and thoroughly one could obtain the desired results. The discipline included a study of phonetics and contemplation of the mystic syllables like 'Aum' and the *vyāhṛtis*; know-

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30. 'Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata  
prāpya varannibodhata;  
kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā  
durgam pathastat kavayo vadanti.'  
(*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: 3-14.)

ledge of *Hiranyagarbha* and *pranava* and knowledge of rules prescribed for understanding the exhortations. All these disciplines were very closely interwoven and they were said to reveal the final meaning of sentences such as 'I am Brahman.' It will therefore be worth our while to examine them a little more closely. Let us start with the discipline of Phonetics.

We all know that phonetics is the science of sounds and their pronunciation. When we utter a word or make a statement we are putting together a number of sounds and pronouncing them in a particular manner so as to bring out a meaning. Words have to be put together and pronounced in a certain specific manner, if they are to convey a meaning at all.

Mispronunciations of words can only end in confusion or childish talk. This is an everyday experience. The *śruti* is of the view that words have to be pronounced grammatically and clearly in order to convey the right meaning. Voice has to be modulated so as to convey the meaning intended. These lessons must necessarily be learnt in the first place: for without them, there can be no meaning and no conveyance of meaning to a listener. As meaning is bound up with knowledge, care is needed to bring out thoughts conveyed by the employment of language which in turn is governed by phonetics. So it is a vital discipline for a student to master properly the art of phonetics. Without this his studies are in vain. As the highest meaning is conveyed by the *śrutis*, prime importance is attached to the study and mastery of the sacred texts, to their pronunciation, inflexion and usage. Once this

is done, the next thing would be to concentrate on the meaning conveyed; and only thus can the full majesty of the texts be understood. Hence the first step is to master the art of phonetics.

The next thing one must learn is *samhitā* or correlation. What do we mean by correlation? It is the harmonization of contemplation, physical objects and sounds. Take for example the word 'Brahman.' A beginner does not know exactly what Brahman is. To enable him to understand it through something that he knows, he is first taught to think of *vāyu* as Brahman. Hence the asseveration: *Namaste vāyo. Tvameva pratyakṣam brahmāsi.* *Vāyu* or the air which is something gross is known and experienced by everyone. And while we contemplate on this, we contemplate on the gross element and obtain the subtle idea of Brahman as suggested in association with it. This is intended to enable the mind which is generally extrovert to turn its attention inward. By such a correlation therefore the subtle truths hinted at in the *śrutis* become realized. It must be the endeavour of the pupil to understand the truths taught by his master based on the process of correlation. The student is the aspirant for such knowledge, and his prayer is that such truths be vouchsafed to him. Indeed such a study brings fame and splendour to him: *Saha nau yaśah; saha nau brahmavarcasam.*

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* specifically mentions five great 'correlations' for meditation. These are of the worlds, the luminaries, learning, progeny and the self. It is by the contemplation of the sounds in correlation that man finds all the good things of the world related to him. In the order of guidance, one

begins with the contemplation on the worlds. The first form of these is to be contemplated on as earth and the next as heaven. Ether is their junction and air brings about the connection. Coming to the luminaries, the first form is fire and the second is the Sun. Water is the junction and the means is lightning. The third series consists of the teacher and the pupil; learning is their junction and the medium is instruction. Taking progeny which is the fourth in the series, mother and father are the first and second respectively; progeny is the junction, while the means is procreation. And last, but not least, is the Self. Here the first and second forms are the lower and upper jaws while the junction is speech and the tongue is the connection. Here end the great combinations. The disciple is asked to contemplate on these continuously so that he becomes a knower—*vidvān*. It is specifically ordained that this contemplation should be continuous and that all these symbols should be contemplated as Brahman. By meditating continuously on these symbols (*pratimā*) as Brahman, the idea of the great Reality becomes firmly rooted in the aspirant. This is because the worlds, the luminaries, learning, progeny and the self are all part and parcel of Brahman and are veritable symbols of Brahman. We are enabled therefore to go from the symbol to the symbolized.

If one must successfully embark on contemplation on Brahman, it is necessary for one to be endowed with health and strength. Hence the prayer in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*: “May my body be vigorous; may my tongue be exceedingly sweet; may I

hear well.”<sup>31</sup> Only a man with a restful mind can develop himself fully. A prayer is even offered for securing retentive memory. The prayer is in the form of the mystic contemplation of the syllable ‘Aum.’ As the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* puts it,<sup>32</sup> ‘All speech is first bound in the syllable ‘Aum’, just as all leaves are bound in the stalk.’ A similar passage in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* declares: “That which the Vedas declare and that for which all austerities are practised... that word is ‘Aum.’<sup>33</sup> One of the prayers also seeks to request God (*Bhagavān*) to enter one’s inner self and for the inner self to enter God. By doing this, we are told that the sins are washed away; ‘*Tam tvā bhaga praviśāni svāhā. Sa mā bhaga praviśa svāhā.*’<sup>34</sup> We are to understand that on an etymological basis, ‘*bhaga*’ means the possession of perfect power, perfect virtue, perfect fame, perfect fortune, perfect wisdom and perfect non-attachment. God is the source from which all these virtues proceed. A spiritual teacher who is free from all sins because of his devotion to God (*bhagavān*) gains many disciples.

Now for a contemplation on the *vyāhṛtis* of the

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31. ‘Śarīram me vicarṣānam,  
jihvā me madhumattamā,  
karnābhyāṁ bhūri viśruvam.’  
(*Taittiriya Upaniṣad*: 1-4-1.)
32. ‘Tānyabhyatapat  
tebhyo’bhitaptebhya aumkāraḥ saṁprāsravat  
tadyathā śāṅkunā sarvāṇi parṇāni  
santrāṇyevamōṅkārena sarvā vāksantrāṇ-  
-omkāra evedagām sarvamōṅkāra evedagām sarvam.’  
(*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*: 2-23-3.)
33. ‘Sarve vedā yatpadamāmananti  
tapāṁsi sarvāṇi ca yadvadanti;  
yadicchanto brahmācaryāṁ caranti  
tatte padagām sangraheṇa bravīmyomityetat.’  
(*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: 2-15.)
34. *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*: 1-4-3.

mystic utterances. *Vyāhṛti* is a mystic word uttered by every *dvija* (twice-born) in performing his daily *sandhyā*. These utterances secure freedom for man. They are uttered in all religious performances. The first three *vyāhṛtis* are—*bhūḥ*, *bhuvaḥ*, *suvāḥ* and the fourth one is *mahaḥ* which should be contemplated as Brahman. We are told further that in this *vyāhṛti*, *mahaḥ*, the other three are to be meditated upon as its parts. The expression ‘*bhūḥ*’ symbolises this world, ‘*bhuvaḥ*’ the atmosphere, ‘*suvāḥ*’ the world yonder and ‘*mahaḥ*’ the sun. The *vyāhṛtis* are first contemplated as this world, the mid-regions, the outer world and the sun,—the sun holding together the whole world. The *vyāhṛtis* also symbolise gods Agni, Vāyu, Sun and Moon respectively, the moon illuminating all. The *vyāhṛtis* are the Vedas *Rg*, *Sāman* and *Yajus*. *Mahaḥ* is Brahman that holds together all Vedas. Brahman here is the ‘Aum.’ The *vyāhṛtis* are also contemplated as *prāṇa* or upward breath, *apāna* or downward breath, *vyāna* or all-pervading breath and *mahaḥ* or food sustaining all. The four *vyāhṛtis* when contemplated as having four forms<sup>35</sup> each making a total of sixteen, represent the sixteen aspects of Brahman and they become aids to the contemplation of the Supreme.<sup>36</sup> The *Taittirīya* says that “He who knows these *vyāhṛtis* and contemplates on them knows Brahman.<sup>37</sup> Here meditation or Brahman is the major factor. The *vyāhṛti*, *mahaḥ* should

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35. See Ānandagiri. p. 19. Commentary on *Taittirīya-bhāṣya*.

36. *Sāyaṇa's bhāṣya on the Taittirīya*: p. 510.

37. ‘*Tā yo veda  
sa veda brahma*.’

(*Taittiriya Upaniṣad*: 1-5-5.)

be considered primary just as Lord Hiranyagarbha is considered amongst the gods as primary. We have seen that all the three *vyāhṛtis* are limbs of Brahman, Who is here represented as 'Mahāḥ.' We are then told that the place to meditate on this Brahman is the space within the heart. Brahman lies in the illumined space of the heart. He is eternal and full of radiance. The heart is described as an organ which in shape is like a lotus bent downward and from which many *nāḍis* (nerves) emerge. In the bright space of the heart lies the *puruṣa* or soul; he is called *puruṣa* because he lies within the body (*puri śete*) or because he pervades the world.

Let me here recapitulate a little in the interest of clarity. We were told that the meditation on the *vyāhṛtis* as the worlds, luminaries, gods and the Self was meant to impress on the mind of the aspirant that Brahman was the trunk from which the other gods (*devatas*) stemmed out as branches. In the present contemplation we are told that the aspirant must meditate on Brahman as the immanent. A question can legitimately be asked: "Why was not the aspirant directed to meditate on Brahman as being within from the very beginning? Why was the idea that the whole external universe was Brahman given priority in contemplation?" This is because the senses of man, being naturally cognisers of outside objects, find it difficult to withdraw their attention from something they can see and understand in the world outside and focus it on something within, which they cannot gauge because of its subtlety. The immanent ātman therefore becomes a difficult object for ordinary comprehension. This can be more easily accomplished by the mind

getting used to the idea that the whole external world it sees is Brahman and then to switch on to a consideration of Brahman as something existing within oneself. This method then is an easier approach to Brahman. Therefore, the aspirant is instructed to meditate on Brahman known externally as none other than Brahman within the heart. This leap from the outer to the inner, from the cosmos as visible Brahman to Ātman as invisible Brahman is psychologically more easy to achieve. It is also observed that such a comprehension of truth, namely, that Brahman is immanent, is gained by intuition. Therefore to one who grasps the Truth finally, Brahman shines forth of its own grace and illumination.

This achievement is possible to one who resorts to the prescribed path. Describing the path, the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says that in the middle of the throat there is a nipple-like growth where the nerve called the *suṣumnā*<sup>38</sup> is situated. This is also called the path of Indra or Brahman. By means of this path we attain the knowledge of our true Self. We learn that the Self first associates with the *suṣumnā* and then through the *suṣumnā* it reaches the upper regions of the skull helped by the *recaka* type of breathing or exhalation of breath. Finally, it goes upwards through the opening in the skull. Of this, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says 'Rising up by this path, one reaches immortality.'<sup>39</sup>

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38. The most famous of the *nādis* or nerves.

39. 'Śatāṁ caikā ca hṛdayasya nādyah  
tāsāṁ mūrdhānamabhiniḥsṛtaikā;  
tayordhvamāyannamṛtattvameti  
viṣvaññāya utkramane bhavanti.'  
(*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: 6-16.)

The aspirant is further told that he exists in Agni, represented by *Bhūḥ*, in Āditya by *Suvaḥ*, and in Brahman by *Mahaḥ*. He who knows this attains *svārājya* or the state of one who has no other master. Then he becomes one with Brahman, the lord of *manas* and gains lordship over speech, sight, hearing and intelligence. He becomes Brahman whose form is space, whose nature is truth, whose life is bliss, whose mind is delight and who is peaceful, prosperous and immortal.<sup>40</sup> The *Upaniṣad* says that to one who becomes Brahman even gods offer their obeisance.<sup>41</sup> The happiness that accrues to a mind which is purified of all impurities and which has entered into the self is said to be verbally indescribable. It can only be experienced. Another<sup>42</sup> *Upaniṣad* describes the experience as being nectar-like. The spiritual aspirant who has thus attained to this highest state becomes Brahman here and now. This is called the attainment of *sākṣatkāra* or the immediate realization of Brahman.

Next, the aspirant is taught to view the visible world as Brahman. Here we are told that the Supreme is the earth; the region in between and the yonder world, the main and sub-directions. These form the first group of five entities. The second group considers Brahman as consisting of fire, air, sun, moon and star. The third is formed of waters, planets, trees, ether and the all-pervading soul (*ātman*). The above three groups are classified

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40. 'Ākāśasarīraṁ brahma  
satyātma-prānārāmāṁ mana ānandam.  
śāntisamrddhamamrtam.'

(*Taittiriya Upaniṣad*: 1-6-2.)

41. 'Sarvesmai devā balimāvahanti.' (*Ibid*: 1-5.5.)

42. *Tārasāropaniṣad*:

under the heading 'gross matter'. The second set of three groups relate to subtle things within. Of this set, the first group comprises of the vital airs: *prāṇa*, *vyāna*, *udāna*, *apāna* and *samāna*. The second of this group is formed of the eye, ear, mind, speech and the sense of touch. The third in the series is made up of the skin, flesh, muscle, bone and marrow. Thus the external five and internal five groups are represented as the places where Brahman functions. The internal five groups are co-terminous with the external and they finally fuse into one. So the universe of Brahman is considered as being five-fold in nature and to be meditated on as the *Virāṭ*. On attaining *virāṭ*, one is said to obtain liberation.

The mystic syllable 'Aum' is next dealt with. The syllable 'Aum' is to be meditated upon as Brahman. This syllable is to be identified with Brahman for it represents everything. Just as an image is to be contemplated as *Viṣṇu*, so too should the syllable 'Aum' be contemplated as Brahman. 'Aum' refers to the unconditioned Brahman. The foregoing observations show that the syllable 'Aum' is all-comprehensive even as Brahman is and that it is but appropriate for an aspirant to contemplate on it. The scriptures highly praise the syllable 'Aum' and associate it with the entire Vedic ritual. Therefore it is an excellent syllable to be meditated upon.

Besides this meditation, a man must practise assiduously his duties such as doing the right thing, being truthful, performing penance, maintaining the fires, attending on the guests, discharging his obligations and bringing forth offspring. We are also told that all these should be combined with study

and teaching,<sup>43</sup> the importance of which is indicated by their repetition in the *Upaniṣadic* passage. Again, of these various duties what are the ones to be chiefly practised? Some enjoin speaking truth; others practising penance, while others enjoin attention to study and teaching.<sup>44</sup> The accepted idea is that at any rate the Veda should be learnt and its injunctions should be practised, for the Veda alone enables man to conquer death and attain unity with Brahman. For a person who has understood this lesson, illumination dawns. This idea is contained in the *Upaniṣadic* mantra: 'Ahāṁ

43. 'Vedamanūcyācāryo'ntevāsinamanuśāsti. Satyam vada.  
Dharmāṇi cara. Svādhyāyān mā pramadāḥ.  
Ācāryāya priyam dhanamāhṛtya prajātantum mā  
vyavacchetsih. Satyānna pramaditavyam.  
Dharmānna pramaditavyam. Kuśalānna pramaditavyam.  
Bhūtyai na pramaditavyam. Svādhyāya-  
pravacanābh्यām na pramaditavyam. Devapitr-  
kāryābh्याम na pramaditavyam. Mātṛdevo bhava.  
Pitṛdevo bhava. Ācāryadevo bhava. Atithidevo bhava.  
Yānyanavadyāni karmāni. Tāni sevitavyāni.  
no itarāni. Yānyasmākagm̄i sucaritāni tāni tvayopās-  
yāni no itarāni. Ye ke cāsmat śreyāgīmso brāhmaṇāḥ.  
teṣām tvayāsanena praśvasitavyam. Śraddhayā deyam.  
Aśraddhayā' deyam. Śriyā deyam. Hriyā deyam. Bhiyā  
deyam. Saṁvidā deyam. Atha yadi te karmavicikitsā  
vā vṛttavicikitsā vā syāt. Ye tatra brāhmaṇāssammar-  
śināḥ. Yuktā āyuktāḥ. Alūkṣā dharmakāmāḥ syuh.  
Yathā te tatra varteran. Tathā tatra vartethāḥ. Athā-  
bhýākhyātesu. Ye tatra brāhmaṇāḥ sammarśināḥ.  
Yuktā āyuktāḥ. Alūkṣā dharmakāmāḥ syuh. Yathā te  
teṣu varteran. Tathā teṣu vartethāḥ.' Eṣā ādeśāḥ. Eṣā  
upadeśāḥ. Eṣā vedopaniṣat. Etadanuśāsanam. Evamupā-  
sitavyam. Evamucaitadupāsyam.'

(*Taittiriya Upaniṣad*: 1-11-1.)

44. 'Satyamiti satyavacā rāthitarah.  
Tapa iti taponityah pauruśiṣṭih.  
Svādhyāyapravacane evetū nāko maudgalyah.  
Taddhi tapastaddhi tapah.'  
(*Taittiriya Upaniṣad*: 1-9.1.)

*vṛkṣasya*<sup>45</sup> and it is pointed out that all aspirants should recite this hymn to acquire purity of mind and ultimate knowledge. As a result of reciting this sacred hymn, his mind becomes pure and he realizes that he is one with Brahman. Thus the vision of Brahman is possible for him who loyally and faithfully carries out the ordained injunctions and duties of the Veda.

We learn from the *Upaniṣad* that the master exhorts a student at the end of his study to speak the truth and be righteous in conduct. The student is further directed not to swerve from the study of the *Vedas*. His studies completed, the student should discharge his obligations to his teacher; and then should undertake the duties of a householder. Also, he is to propagate his line. He is directed to discharge his obligations to the gods and manes. He must be reverential to his mother, father, teacher and guest. Apart from attending to the injunctions given above, he should cultivate other virtues practised by the sagacious and the revered. Acts prohibited by the *Veda* should be abandoned at all costs. He must give gifts liberally with faith and modesty. If at any time he should be in doubt as to the way in which a work is to be done, the example set by men of discrimination and whose disposition is always for performing good actions, should be fol-

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45. 'Aham vṛkṣasya rerivā.  
Kirtih prsthām gireriva.  
Urdhvapavitro vājinīva svamṛtamasmī.  
Dravinagñ savarcasam.  
Sumedhā amṛtokṣitah.  
Iti triśāṅkorvedānuvacanam.  
(Purport: I am the indweller of all and mover of all  
and have become a realised soul.)  
(*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*: 1-10.1.)

lowed. Those who aspire to a knowledge of the Supreme were directed to hear this message of the *Upaniṣad* and follow its directions.

Now it may be asked if obedience to all these injunctions is necessary for a person who wants to know Brahman. The answer is, that all these duties are conducive to the attainment of knowledge because they purify the person concerned. The performance of these duties removes the obstacles to knowledge. When such knowledge arises, "all desires of the heart disappear, all doubts are removed and all actions are destroyed."<sup>46</sup> In such a state of knowledge, there will be the realization of Brahman, the unborn, the great, pure and eternal.<sup>47</sup>

In the final prayer or peace chant the lesson that was taught in the beginning has been emphasized. The aspirant is led from the visible to the invisible and realises that Brahman is that which has protected him and his teacher. The pupil remembers the good done to him by his teacher and the deities and offers them prayers and thanks. Indeed, the gods have cut asunder all obstacles and purified him of his sins, thus rendering him fit to receive the grace of Brahman. The identity of aspirant and Brahman is well established by the teacher through proper instruction imparted to his spiritual disciple.

We have been looking so far at the self of man

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46. 'Bhidyate hṛdayagranthih  
chidyante sarvasamśayāḥ;  
kṣiyante cāsyā karmāṇī<sup>1</sup>  
tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare.  
(*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*: 2-2-9.)

47. 'Ekadhaivānudraṣṭavyam  
etadaprameyam dhruvam;  
virajah para ākāśat  
aja ātmā mahān dhruvah.'  
(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: 4-4-20.)

*sub specie eternitatis*. From this point of view the individual self is identical with Brahman. The essence of all spiritual endeavour is to enable the individual soul to realise its original state of identity with Brahman. The *Upaniṣads* prescribe that the only path that will lead to this consummation is that of *Vairāgya* or detachment. It would therefore be useful if we clarify to ourselves the implications of this concept of *vairāgya* which plays such an important role in the attainment of *Brahma-jñāna*.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa informs Arjuna that by practice and detachment the mind can be brought under control: 'Abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca grhyate.' What we call mind is a mighty psychic energy, which by being disciplined in these two-fold processes can be directed into channels fruitful of great achievement. Of all the achievements which are within its power, contacting divinity itself is the most remarkable. From the *Yoga* system we learn that the control of the mind is achieved by the processes of *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. These are aided by the physiological practices of controlling the breath (*prāṇāyāma*) and the sense organs (*pratyāhāra*). These in their turn are sustained by restraint (*yama*), control (*niyama*) and posture (*āsana*). The highest aim of the mind, brought under the control of the individual, is communion with God or God-realization. The necessary step to this is to know one's own self, the individual self. This is Self-realization, *kaivalya*, with which the last chapter in the *Pātañjala yoga-sūtra* deals. This philosophic truism is in keeping with the saying of St. Anselm: 'Become what thou art.'

Consecration of the mind-energy by discipline and detachment has thus the spiritual value of revealing one's soul to oneself and through it, the world-soul. The key to the wonders of the human mind that is controlled by discipline and detachment is to be found in the Divine Mind which sustains, supports and permeates it. Hence the human body which enshrines Ātman is the Holy Temple or Tabernacle in which God dwells. 'Nothing is holier' says Novalis, 'than that high form. Bending before man is a reverence done to this Revelation in the flesh. We touch Heaven when we lay our hand on a human body.'

The realised souls (*Brahma-jñānins*) are hopes of the human race. They have been distinguished for *vairāgya* or detachment. The mind runs outwards to objects of sense; and it has to be brought back to introspection. It is declared in the *Bhagavadgītā* thus:<sup>48</sup> "Because the mind is unsteady, it is fleeting; therefore it must be drawn back from those quarters to which it has travelled and should be established in the Self." To stop mental distraction and wean the mind from objects on which it wastes itself and wed it to the soul, the self or the spirit,—this is the task to be embarked upon. What *vairāgya* asks for is the withdrawal of the mind from functioning on the non-self. We are apt to think that the world of sense is that towards which the mind naturally tends. But deeper thought requires the mind to feel the self in the non-self.

The Supreme Spirit pervades not only the objective world but also the subjective world includ-

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48. 'Yato yato niścarati manaścañcalamasthiram;  
tatastato niyamyaitad ātmanyeva vāsam nayet.'  
(*Bhagavadgītā*: 6-26.)

ing man and his soul. Detachment or *vairāgya* is required for understanding this fact. Broadly speaking, the mind deals with external and internal things; and *vairāgya* enables the mind to withdraw from things external and concentrate on things internal. What is to be achieved is the realization of the meaning of the statements 'Sarvam khalvidam brahma' or 'Vāsudevaḥ sarvam' ('God is all'). In attaining to this vision not only is a spiritual exercise involved but also a mental transformation.

The acme of spiritual discipline enables us to feel the presence of God everywhere, to feel it as joy, as bliss or *ānanda*. Engaging in thoughts on the Supreme is meditation. If meditation warms up into devotion it becomes prayer (*bhakti*). All these spiritual exercises are subsumed under practice or '*abhyāsa*,' and by practising them, the soul becomes one with the Supreme. Thus *ātman* becomes *Brahman*. Here is *vairāgya* in the correct sense of the term, viz., detachment cultivated with a desire for self-realization. True *vairāgya* consists in surrendering one's ego so that Brahman occupies the vacancy so caused. This is the stage of 'God-intoxication' into which detachment leads the spiritual aspirant. The final aim and end of *vairāgya* is Brahman itself. It is the dissolution and fusion of self-centredness into the Brahman-consciousness. What is renounced here is the ego and what is espoused is Brahman. The man who replaces the individual by the universal to direct his conduct is the real *virakta*<sup>49</sup>.

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49. 'Ātmaupamyena sarvatra  
samam paśyati yo'rjuna.'  
(*Bhagavadgītā*: 6-32.)

Yājñavalkya of the *Upanisads* left his all in order to practise *Brahmavidyā*. Many others, particularly the *r̥sis*, retired to the forest, abandoning all worldly concerns. The *saṁnyāsa āśrama* is the last stage of man's life where a person practises the total abdication of worldly life. *Saṁnyāsa* also implies what is known as *tyāga* or renunciation. Emperor Janaka was a typical example of a person who practised *tyāga*. Naciketas, another *Upaniṣadic* figure, affords the example of the type of retirement from all that the world thinks to be of the most absorbing interest. Yama tempted him with women and wealth. But Naciketas was alive to the danger of acquiring such fugitive and fleeting pleasures and realised the worthlessness of their pursuit. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* says: "The sages who have comprehended thoroughly the truth of Vedānta have their nature purified by *saṁnyāsa yoga*. Being one with Brahman, they are liberated<sup>50</sup>." In his commentary on this verse, Śaṅkara says:<sup>51</sup> "The path trodden by the *jñānin* leaves no trace behind in the same way as birds flying in the sky and fish swimming in water do not leave a trace behind."

In the *Bhagavadgītā* which is an epitome of *Upaniṣadic* teaching, the one lesson that is consistently insisted upon from the beginning to the end is that of renunciation (*tyāga*). But one cannot run away from the world and oneself. Hence, the *Gītā*

50. 'Vedāntavijñāna-suniścītārthāḥ  
saṁnyāsasyāgādyatayah śuddhasattvāḥ.'  
(*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*: 3-2-6.)

51. 'Śakunīnāmivākāśe jale vāricarasya ca;  
padam yathā na dr̥ṣyeta tathā jñānavatām gatih.'  
(Śaṅkara's commentary on *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*: 3-2-6.)

says, "Let him remain like the ocean into which many streams enter from all directions and which yet stands calm and unruffled.<sup>52</sup> Hence a *virakta* or man of renunciation remains in the world and yet keeps unaffected by it like a lotus leaf in contact with water—*padmapatramivāmbhasā*." We cannot run away from the world, from all nature's environment, from our own bodies and from ourselves. What then is the lesson to be deduced from all discourses on *vairāgya*? It is best described in the *Śrīmadbhāgavata* and in the practical counsel delivered to king Priyavrata by Brahma: "Even if thou runnest away to forests, fear accompanies thee yet, for thou goest in company with thy six foes—the five outer senses and the mind. But if thou hast conquered these senses and remained at home a good useful householder, there is no harm in this. Wherever thou art with the senses at thy command thou art a free being. With senses weaned from their erratic wanderings but centred and fixed securely on God, thou might rest assured that thou hast abandoned all attachments, and that thou art finally established in the Self<sup>53</sup>."

What constitutes worldliness or *samsāra* is the transitory, the outward and the unreal. To love all is to love God, to covet is to forget Him. *Vairāgya*

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52. 'Āpūryamānamacalapratīṣṭham  
samudramāpāḥ praviśanti yadvat;  
tadvat kāmā yām praviśanti sarve  
sa śāntimāpnoti na kāmakāmī.'  
(*Bhagavadgītā*: 2-70.)

53. 'Bhayaṁ pramattasya vaneśvapi syāt  
yataḥ sa āste saha ṣaṭsapatnāḥ;  
jitetṛiyasyātmaraterbudhasya  
gṛhāśramāḥ kinnu karotyavadyam.'  
(*Śrīmadbhāgavata*: 5-1-17.)

calls away the mind from worldly things and helps it to concentrate on God. It is of this kind of mind which the *Gītā* speaks when it treats of the virtues of non-attachment<sup>54</sup>.

The *jñānī* or the man of knowledge who gives up all ideas of selfishness and surrenders himself entirely into the hands of God is the real recluse (*virakta*). He is also the *avadhūta* or one who has shaken off all taint of worldliness. He is the knower of Brahman who becomes Brahman.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, he<sup>56</sup> knows best. Such is the discipline for *Brahmavidyā*.

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- 54. 'Abhyāsena tu kaunteya  
vairāgyena ca grhyate.'  
(*Bhagavadgitā*: 6-35.)
- 55. 'Sa yo ha vai tat paramam brahma veda  
brahmaiva bhavati.'  
(*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*: 3-2-9.)
- 56. 'Eṣa brahmavidāṁ variṣṭhah.'  
(*Ibid*: 3-1-4.)

### III. THE UNION OF ĀTMAN AND BRAHMAN

We have seen the important and indeed the vital role played by discipline in the life of an aspirant for the realization of Brahman. But it may be asked why such a discipline becomes necessary at all for the realization of Brahman. The answer is this. The most important fact about the content of Brahman-realization is the knowledge that our inner self, the Ātman, is really the Brahman. The fact remains that this realization is not easy to come by. It requires very great effort, a strong will, abiding faith in the *śrutis*, unswerving devotion to one's instructor and unrelenting pursuit of what is taught by the teacher. These are certainly things which cannot be easily done or achieved quickly. It is a pursuit that may last for years, or even a lifetime or more. Indeed, it is an incessant struggle in the pursuit of truth. That is the reason why the discipline becomes worthwhile.

A disciple earns the right to be instructed in such knowledge only after he has gone through his obligatory and occasional duties (*nitya* and *naimittika karmas*) which may last for the duration of a single life or more than one life. The purpose of these actions is *sattva-śuddhi* or the purification of the mind. As a result of this discipline one becomes devoted to the pursuit of higher truth.

And how does such a disciple behave? With sacrificial fuel in hand, he approaches a great *Guru*

who knows Brahman and in all humility begs him to grant him illumination so that the meaning and mystery of existence may become clear to him. Such a *guru* must be deeply anchored in Brahman. He must himself be a knower of truth, a *tattvadarśī* or one who has had a personal experience of *Brahman*. It is only such a preceptor that can dispel the ignorance of the spiritual aspirant. The etymological significance of the term ‘*Guru*<sup>57</sup>’ is ‘one who can dispel the darkness of ignorance.’ The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*<sup>58</sup> says that an aspirant having examined the world of rewards, ultimately realizes the futility of it and cultivates non-attachment. He realizes too that the eternal cannot be gained by actions. Then he approaches a spiritual teacher for obtaining the knowledge of Brahman. A similar idea is contained in a passage of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* which says:<sup>59</sup> “It is difficult to institute an enquiry into Brahman because it is rare to secure an able spiritual teacher. Knowledge also is equally difficult to obtain because it is rarer to get a spiritual aspirant worthy of receiving knowledge.”

A student keen on learning prays to the Supreme for protection. He prays for protection not

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- 57. ‘Gukārastvandhakārassyāt  
rukārastannirodhakah;  
andhakāranirodhatvāt  
gururityabhidhiyate.’ *(Gurugītā.)*
- 58. ‘Parikṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo  
nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtah kṛtena;  
tadvijñānārtham sa gurumevābhigacchet  
samitpānīḥ śrotriyam brahmaniṣṭham.’  
*(Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad: 1-2-12.)*
- 59. ‘Śravanayāpi bahubhīryo na labhyāḥ  
śrīṇvanto’pi bahavo yam na vidyuh;  
āścaryo vaktā kuśalo’sya labdhā  
āścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭah.’  
*(Kaṭha Upaniṣad: 2-7.)*

only for himself but also for his teacher. This signifies that the teacher wishes to do his best to help the student in revealing the truth about the Supreme and the student prays for ability to grasp the knowledge so taught. The grace of Brahman for the student is necessary for grasping the meaning of the texts and for realising the final truth. For the ignorance of a disciple disappears only by God's will. The disciple's sole object in praying to Brahman is to see that the final truth burgeons within him. What a wonderful thought and prayer it is! Here the disciple prays to God that all the texts he studies with the preceptor may become intelligible to him and that all the knowledge imparted by the teacher may become illuminating.

But what is this knowledge of *Brahman* or *Brahmavidyā*? And why should it be undertaken? Let us try to define or describe it in terms which are available to us, however inadequate they may be. *Brahman* is the eternal cosmic consciousness. It is present in everything, is everywhere and in all things—small or big. *Brahman* is not bound by points in space or instants in time. It is the immutable and the everlasting Aye. It is the innermost core of things and is beyond all limitations. It is everywhere and ever-present. In the discipline mentioned above, works or ritualistic observances were enjoined for purification. Meditation on the *vyāhṛtis* or mystic sacred syllables was prescribed as a means for obtaining knowledge which led to absolute freedom (*svārājya*). However, the peregrination of the soul from body to body<sup>60</sup> will not come to an end by adopting only such means. It can be

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60. 'Samśāra, from "sam-sarati."'

brought about only by knowledge of Brahman and this comes only by the cessation of nescience or *avidyā* which really lies at the root of *samsāra*. This is clear from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* which says that the “person who has realized *Brahman* is rid of the illusion that he does not obtain *Brahman*.” The above statement makes it clear that a person realizes *Brahman* after becoming free from nescience and after casting off the delusion that he is other than *Brahman*.<sup>61</sup>

The embodied soul is in reality none other than the Supreme; only, on account of nescience, it thinks that it is different. The consequence of this is that the soul is deluded into thinking that it is not *Brahman*. This is illustrated in the statement: ‘*Daśamah tvamasi*.’<sup>62</sup> It is pointed out here that a party of ten wanted to count their exact number after crossing a river, but each one forgot to include himself in the count and found only nine members in the party of ten. Finally when another appeared on the scene and pointed out their mistake, each one in the party recognised his own omission and corrected himself.

Further, the *śrutis* say as pointed out before that *Brahmavidyā* is intended for those whose purity of mind is established as a result of leading a life of discipline. An aspirant must cultivate a detached mind too. And, as long as he is hemmed in by nescience, he will become attached to action and its rewards. In such a condition, he will never be a

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61. ‘*Brahmavidāpnoti param*.’  
(*Taittirīyopaniṣad*: 2-1.)

62. Vide Śaṅkara’s commentary on *Ānandavalli*: *Anuvāka-I* read with the gloss of Anandagiri. See also Vidyā-ranya’s *Pañcadaśī*.

fit recipient of the highest wisdom. In his attachment he can never behold the inner spirit, the Inner Being, the Brahman. The only way by which he could achieve this is by renunciation of actions. For only a person of such renunciation can become a fit recipient of *Brahmavidyā*. This is clear from the *Upaniṣad* which says “renunciation brings about realization.”<sup>63</sup>

The purpose of the śruti is to show us that *Brahman* can be attained by resorting to *tapas* or meditation. In fact, the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* specifically exclaims<sup>64</sup> that in order to know *Brahman*, *Tapas* or reflection must be resorted to. The śruti also enjoins that all the sheaths or *kośas* must be dropped off before realizing *Brahman* and explain that purity of mind is necessary for abandoning these sheaths. Again, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* recommends that ‘Ātman should be enquired into, inferred and meditated upon’ for obtaining the knowledge of *Brahman*.<sup>65</sup> Fearlessness is the reward which an aspirant obtains for having such knowledge.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, as long as a person is in *samsāra* or transmigration, he is bound to be in fear and prone to commit sins. It is only by attaining to *Brahman* that one becomes ‘fearless.’<sup>67</sup>

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63. ‘Nyāsa iti brahma.’  
(*Mahānārāyaṇopaniṣad*: Ānandāśrama Edn. p. 893.)
64. ‘Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva,  
tapo brahmeti.’  
(*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*: 3-2.)
65. ‘Ātmā vā are draṣṭavyah śrotavyo  
mantavyo nididhyāsitavyah.’  
(*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*: 2-4-5.)
66. ‘Ānandām brahmaṇo vidvān  
na bibheti kutaścana.’  
(*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*: 2-9.1.)
67. ‘Athā so’bhayam gato bhavati.’  
(*Ibid*: 2-7.1.)

It has been pointed out before in a general manner that *manas* or mind plays an important role in gaining the knowledge of *Brahman*. It is worthwhile considering the matter in detail here. It is often said that the cause of Realization is *manas* and not knowledge of the scriptures. There are two views to be considered in this regard. They are the *Vivarāṇa* view and the *Bhāmatī* view. According to the first, we learn that realization of *Brahman* will be brought about primarily by the *mahāvākyas* or the great statements of the *Upaniṣad*: .... that a pure mind is only an aid to realization. It is pointed out also that the saying 'manasaiva'<sup>68</sup> of the *Upaniṣad* bears out this idea. The second view is enunciated in the *Bhāmatī* of Vācaspatimiśra. According to this view, the immediate or direct cause of realization is the pure mind only. Both views however agree that the great statements of the *Upaniṣads* bring about the purification of the mind. While both views are commendable, that expressed by the *Vivarāṇa* school seems to be more plausible, because *Brahman* is declared 'Aupaniṣada' or that which can be comprehended only by the *mahāvākyas* of the *Upaniṣads* and not 'Mānasa' or that which is cognised by the mind.

The question now to be discussed is: what exactly is the role of the mind in the realization of *Brahman*? The *Upaniṣads* point out three different stages of the mind in the process of realizing Brahma-

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68. (1) 'Manasaivānudraṣṭavyam  
neha nānāsti kiñcana.'  
(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*: IV.4.19.)

(2) 'Manasaivedam āptavyam  
neha nānāsti kiñcana.'  
(*Kaṭha*: II.1.11.)

man. The first is called 'śravāṇa' which implies that one ought to hold an enquiry into *Brahman* with a desire to know It. Such a sincere enquiry will lead the aspirant to remove the misconception that the *Upaniṣads* are not the valid sources for knowing *Brahman*. All misconceptions about *Brahman* disappear in this process and there will not be any chance of misunderstanding *Brahman* further. The next stage is that of *Manana*. *Manana* is knowledge of *Brahman* through inference. By this knowledge the improbability of the existence of *Brahman* is removed. Then comes the stage of *Nididhyāṣana* or repeatedly concentrating or meditating on *Brahman*. In this stage the mind becomes pure and expansive. This helps the spiritual aspirant to be rid of all sense of duality. At this moment, a spiritual teacher appears on the scene and teaches the import of the great statements (*mahāvākyas*). On hearing these *mahāvākyas*, the aspirant's mind will undergo such transformation that all illusion will disappear from him. Disappearance of illusion leads to the destruction of ignorance. When the mind becomes thus rid of all ignorance bliss blossoms forth and the aspirant realizes then what is called *mokṣa* or freedom. In this blissful state the oneness with *Brahman* will be firmly realized and established.

Why is it that we do not have immediate perception of *Brahman* in the state of *Saṁsāra*? It is because our senses and mind run outwards. But when they are turned inwards a person can have immediate realization. This reversal of the senses and mind by the practice of *nididhyāṣana* brings

about realization of Brahman through the destruction of all conceptions of duality. After the disappearance of all dualities, the *mahāvākyas* easily bring about realization of Brahman. As a result of this, nescience and illusions that arise therefrom disappear. Then the soul becomes established in perfect bliss. This is brought out very well in the *vākyavṛtti* of Śaṅkarācārya.<sup>69</sup> We learn here that the soul is the Super-soul and that the super-soul is the soul. When this mutual identity is realized, the illusion that the soul is separate from *Brahman* disappears and the distance between the soul and *Brahman* is removed. It is indeed at this state that the soul is firmly established in Supreme Bliss. This is further clarified in a statement in Sureśvara's *Sambandha Vārtika*<sup>70</sup> on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara. Here it is pointed out clearly that 'that which is other than *Brahman* is not the soul and that which is other than the soul is not *Brahman*.' Therefore the identity here is unlike the identity which one finds between the 'blue colour' and the 'lily' in which it is. Moreover, though the Supreme is the soul, it appears to be remote because

69. *Vākyavṛtti*: 39-41.

'Pratyagbodho ya ābhāti  
so'dvayānandalakṣaṇaḥ;  
advayānandarūpaśca  
pratyagbodhaikalakṣaṇaḥ: 39.

40

Itthamanyonyatādātmya-  
pratipattiryadā bhavet;  
abrahmatvāṁ tvamarthasya  
vyāvarteta tadaiva hi.

Tadarthasya ca pārokṣyam  
yadyevam̄ kim tataḥ śr̄ṇu;  
pūrnānandaikarūpena

41

pratyagbodho avatiṣṭhate.

70. *Sambandha-vārtika* to *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: Sureś-  
varācārya: 909.

of the presence of nescience. Similarly though the soul is non-different from the Supreme, it entertains the idea of duality due to the presence of nescience.

What therefore is this Brahman? According to the śrutis, truth, consciousness and infinity go to form the definition of Brahman. This is contained in the statement '*Satyam jñānam anantam brahma*.' This definition of Brahman excludes the Supreme from everything. Here truth, consciousness and infinity are not adjuncts (*viśeṣaṇas*) of Brahman as the words 'blue', 'big', and 'fragrant' are adjuncts in the case of the expression, 'this lily is blue, big and fragrant.' The words '*satyam*, *jñānam* and *anantam*' are directly related to Brahman and should not be construed as adjuncts of Brahman but only as words which go to form the definition of Brahman. For an adjunct is different from a definition and the two are clearly distinguishable. An adjunct excludes all other similars to it. For example, in the instance given above for illustrating an adjunct, the attribute 'blue' excludes only the 'blue lily' from all other lilies. It is not so in the case of a definition. A definition brings about a difference between the object defined and all other objects—both similar and dissimilar. Thus when ākāśa is defined as 'that which allows space,'—'*avakāśa-dātr ākāśah*,' the difference of ether is established from all other objects which are similar or dissimilar to it. The definition of Brahman as truth, consciousness and infinity, similarly excludes Brahman from all others like the conditioned Brahman, the embodied soul and all insentients. The first word

‘*satyam*’ indicates that Brahman is the Real. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*<sup>71</sup> is of the opinion that Brahman alone is real and all others are Its manifestations, just as in the analogy given in the *Upaniṣad* the clay alone is real and all its modifications like pot and others are unreal. By thus defining Brahman as truth, the *śruti* is pointing out a qualification of the Supreme which distinguishes it from all others that are untrue.

Now about the second qualification, viz., *jñāna* or consciousness. This qualification given to Brahman is often enunciated in the *śrutis*.<sup>72</sup> This shows the distinguishing feature of Brahman and excludes It from all other insentient objects.

The third qualification states that Brahman is Infinite. The infiniteness of Brahman is beautifully and poetically brought out in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* where it is stated that “It is before and behind; It is on the right and left; It stretches above and below.” Other *śrutis* talk about this too.<sup>73</sup> The term ‘Infinite’ given in the definition of Brahman excludes It from all finite objects. Thus the definition cited distinguishes Brahman from all unreality, insentience and finiteness.

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71. ‘Yathā saumyaikena mrtpindena  
sarvam mṛṇmayam vijñātam syāt;  
vācārambhaṇam vikāro nāmadheyam  
mr̥tiketyeva satyam.’

(*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*: 6-1-4.)

72. (1) ‘Vijñānamānandaṁ Brahma,’  
(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*: III. 9-27.)

(2) ‘Cetanaścetanānām.’

(*Kaṭha*: V-13.)

(3) ‘Sākṣi cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca.’  
(*Śvetāśvatara*: VI.11.)

73. ‘Ananta ityenadupāsita,’  
(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*: IV-1-5.)

Śaṅkara explains Brahman in his *Sūtra-bhāṣya*.<sup>74</sup> First of all he points out that the existence of Ātman is known to everyone. No one entertains any doubt in this regard. If this was not known, then no one would know that 'he exists' or would entertain the knowledge that 'he is not.' By this the existence of Brahman is cognised by all because Ātman is Brahman as the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* declares.<sup>75</sup> Again, a person who realizes Brahman as present in the mind (*buddhi*) and as situated in the space of the heart will have all his desires fulfilled and will himself become the Supreme. The *Chāndogya* supports this idea and also declares that Brahman is full and non-active.<sup>76</sup> We also learn from Śaṅkara that within the cavity of the heart resides *buddhi* which helps our understanding. With the aid of this *buddhi*, Brahman which is within is realized. This is the only way in which the ever-present and unconditioned Brahman can be grasped.

We have thus seen how Brahman has been described and defined and how It could be comprehended by a disciplined mind of the aspirant. To sum up, we may say that the *mahāvākyas* of the *Veda* announce the oneness of the Self and Brahman, the oneness of the 'Thou' and 'That.' Brahman has to be meditated upon, reflected upon and realized. To do this a course of discipline is insisted upon, which will take the aspirant from the known to the un-

74. *Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣya*: Vol. I. p. 8.

75. 'Ayamātmā Brahma.'

(*Māṇḍūkya*: 2.)

76. 'Yo vai so'ntahpuruṣa ākāśah,  
ayam vāva sa yo'yamantarhṛdaya ākāśah  
tadetatpūrṇamapravarti.'

(*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*: 3-12, 7, 8 & 9.)

known. This highest knowledge about it is called *Brahmavidyā*. *Vedānta* teaches the *advaita* (nonduality) that exists between man (ātman) and Brahman. And a definition of Brahman is given to set it off against everything else. Its uniqueness is stated in the definition—‘*Satyaṁ jñānam-anantam brahma*.’ Once Brahman is realized the quest for Brahman ends and the aspirant becomes Brahman. Sureśvarācārya, explaining the nature of Brahman, writes in his *vārtika* on the *Taittiriyā Upanisad-bhāṣya* thus: “Space and time are created by Brahman. Brahman is the self of all. Objects other than Brahman are unreal. Therefore Brahman is not limited by time, space and objects.”<sup>77</sup>

So we now come to the end of this survey. The *Vedas* proclaim that *Jīva* is none other than Brahman and proceed step by step to establish that identity, which is the refuge of all in this world. This pursuit after Brahman-realization ends with the affirmation that all this is true knowledge ‘this indeed is the *Upaniṣad*.’

The realization of the union of Ātman and Brahman is an ineffable experience. It does not lend itself to verbal description. And if an attempt is made at all to describe it, one is compelled to employ metaphorical language. It happened so with the *rṣis* who, left to themselves, would have preferred to remain silent, *munis* strictly speaking, were it not for the fact that they were obliged to express themselves in words while teaching those who came to them seeking light and guidance.

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77. Sureśvarācārya's *Vārtika* on  
*Taittiriyā Upanisad-bhāṣya*:  
Brahmavalli: Stanzas 134-135. p. 73.

Liberation is inherent in the *Jīva*. Once the truth of the identity of inner self and Brahman is intuited, liberation takes place. Man is always free, but through *avidyā* he feels that he is in bondage. The śrutis teach the lesson that liberation takes place when Brahman is realised by man. Śaṅkara says that this state of realization is characterized by the mergence of the Ātman in Brahman and calls it as ‘*Aviśeṣātma-bhāva*.’ The *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* describes beautifully this state of Supreme Bliss and says that it is like the rivers losing their name and form when they enter the sea.”<sup>78</sup>

Let me close this by salutation to the great *r̥sis* who unfolded this great vision or *Darsana* to us:

*Namah parama-ṛṣibhyo*

*Namah parama-ṛṣibhyah.*

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78. ‘*Yathā nadyah syandamānāḥ samudre  
astam gacchanti nāmarūpe vihāya;  
tathā vidvān nāmarūpādvimuktah  
parātparam puruṣamupaiti divyam.*’  
(*Muṇḍakopaniṣad*: 3-2-8.)

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