

# Tattvameva Tvameva Tat

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## I. What is *Brahma Vidyā*<sup>1</sup>?

The word Upanishad indicates *Brahma Vidyā*. The Upanishads are considered the crown and cream of the Vedas. How many Upanishads are there? Different people have different opinions, but as Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda always used to say there is only one Upanishad. The Ultimate Reality indicated through each Upanishad is always the same, although the expression may vary. We are normally conditioned to relate a book to its author, but that is always not the case with scriptural texts. The Bhagavad Gita was addressed by Krishna to Arjuna. Other texts like Rama Gita, though written by Valmiki or Tulsidasji, are in the form of a dialog between Rama and Lakshmana. Vibhishana Gita is not a Gita by Vibhishana, but addressed to Vibhishana. Similarly the Upanishads also are in a dialog format, but they do not have authors like Valmiki or Goswami Tulsidas. They are authentic, but they do not have authors. It is said that the Vedas were born as the Lord's breath when He created the world. When the Vedas were originally revealed, they were not in the same format as we see them now. That great editing job was done by Vedavyasa Maharaj. He segregated the mass of scriptural teachings into what we now know as Rg Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda, and Atharva Veda. Each Veda consists of four sections or segments.

The first section is the *mantra*<sup>2</sup> portion, which contains *stutis*<sup>3</sup> sung in praise of various gods and goddesses in order to propitiate them.

The second section is the *Brāhmanas*<sup>4</sup>, which is the ritualistic portion and indicates the procedure of worship. These two portions provide a framework of religious discipline for the performance of daily rituals and periodic special observances.

The third section is the *Āranyakas*<sup>5</sup>, which is the contemplative portion. This portion of the Vedas is *upāsana*<sup>6</sup> based and contains reflections on the inner meaning of the rituals, and is meant to provide food for introspection by people in their later years, when they can retire to forest hermitages for that purpose.

The last section is the Upanishads or Vedanta<sup>7</sup> as it is also known, which contain philosophic declarations of the highest spiritual truths. The central theme of all the Upanishads is the same - the nature of *Brahman*, the One Supreme Reality. The exposition method used by the teacher varies from Upanishad to Upanishad depending on the background of the student. For example, in Shilpashastropanishad, which is found in the Atharva Veda, the terminology of

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<sup>1</sup> Knowledge of the 'one self-existent Being', sacred knowledge

<sup>2</sup> Vedic hymn or sacrificial formula

<sup>3</sup> Songs or hymns, eulogy, panegyric

<sup>4</sup> Ritualistic portion which contains rules for the employment of the *mantras* with detailed explanations of their origin and meaning

<sup>5</sup> "Forest texts" dealing with philosophy

<sup>6</sup> To pay homage, worship

<sup>7</sup> End of the Vedās

sculpture is used to indicate the Ultimate Reality. Once Gurudev was invited to address MBA students at a university. When he was asked what the topic would be, he replied, "Economics of life." Why did he use that kind of terminology? Because the management students would be able to relate to it. The same truth is expounded to the students of sculpture using the language of the hammer and chisel and to the MBA students using terms like change management and resource management!

How many Upanishads are there? When we started, we said there is only one, which is theme oriented. As an authority and authentic source there is an Upanishad, which is a dialog between Ramji and Hanumanji. It is called Muktikopanishad and in that Upanishad, Ramji mentions the names of 108 Upanishads. There are many more, but these 108 are the principal ones. Within these Upanishads also there is a further classification of major and minor Upanishads. The criteria for determining which ones are major or minor is not based on the theme because the theme of every Upanishad is always the same – the Supreme Self. So which are the major Upanishads? They are ten in number – Īsāvāsya, Kena, Kaṭha, Prasna, Mundaka, Māndūkya, Taittiriya, Aitreya, Chhāndogya, and Brihadāraṇyaka. These ten are considered major Upanishads because the *mathādhīpatis*<sup>8</sup> of the *Advaita*<sup>9</sup>, *Dvaita*<sup>10</sup> and *Viśiṣṭādvaita*<sup>11</sup> schools of thought - Ādi Sankarācārya, Madhvācārya and Rāmānujācārya wrote commentaries on them.

The Upanishad under consideration here is Kaivalya. Why are we studying Kaivalyopanishad if it is a minor Upanishad? Kaivalyopanishad, though considered minor, is a very popular Upanishad. In the olden days when *sannyāsis*<sup>12</sup> had to go from one place to another, they did not have any vehicles. They usually went on foot and they used to measure distance in terms of how many times they could chant Kaivalyopanishad from point A to point B. So the distance between Haridwar and Rishikesh might be measured in terms of 700 Kaivalyas! Most of us are very familiar with the third *mantra* of Kaivalyopanishad:

*Na karmanā na prajñā dhanena tyāgenaike amṛtatvamānasuh  
Parena nākam nihitam guhāyām vibhrājate yadyatayo visanti*<sup>13</sup>

Like the Bhagavad Gita, this text also starts with a dialog, a dialog between a guru and a *śiṣya*<sup>14</sup>. Who is the guru here? All the Upanishads are so amazing! Each set of guru and *śiṣya* is unique. In Kathopanishad we have Yama, the Lord of Death teaching Naciketa about life! Who else can teach us better about life than the one who is standing on the threshold between life and death? Who is the teacher here in Kaivalyopanishad? He is the creator; he is Brahmaji, *chaturānana*, with four heads - three heads constantly involved in creation and one head always involved in *satsang*<sup>15</sup>. Brahmaji, the creator has been approached by a student called Asvalayana. So this is a dialog between the student and the teacher. It is a great tradition for the student to approach the guru with his doubts. In our case, it was

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<sup>8</sup> Head of monastery

<sup>9</sup> Non-duality - belief in the oneness of the human soul with the Supreme Being

<sup>10</sup> Duality - belief in the existence of the human soul as separate from the Supreme Being

<sup>11</sup> Qualified non-duality – belief in the qualified oneness of the human soul with the Supreme Being

<sup>12</sup> Renunciates

<sup>13</sup> Not by work, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but by renunciation alone, Immortality is attained. Higher than heaven, seated in the cave of the intellect, It shines, which the seekers attain.

<sup>14</sup> Disciple

<sup>15</sup> Good company

Gurudev's magnanimity that he came to us instead of waiting for us to come to him, even though he realized that he could take the pot to the horse, but he could not force the horse to drink!

What is the nature of this knowledge of *Brahman*? In this Upanishad Asvalayana reaches Brahma, the Creator and asks for the supreme knowledge of *Brahman*. He says *adhih bhagavan brahmavidyām varishtham*.<sup>16</sup> He needs nothing other than *Brahma Vidyā*, and he gives different reasons why he is asking for this knowledge. This knowledge has always been pursued by the *sadbhi*<sup>17</sup>, the great men who became great because they put forth great efforts to learn this great knowledge. It is *nigudham*<sup>18</sup>. Why is it a secret? It is a secret, not because traditionally it is only disclosed to a select few. It is considered secret because even if it is disclosed to all, only the select few who are ready, can understand it. What happens to the rest? Either they don't understand or they misunderstand and think that their understanding is correct. It is also considered a secret because it cannot be acquired by the student through self-study. It must be revealed to the student by a teacher, who is himself a seer of the Truth.

Now let us understand the goal of studying any text, any Upanishad, any scripture. Whenever we have a problem on the path of spirituality, it is either misunderstanding the goal, not understanding the goal or lack of clarity about the goal. So what is the goal? If you don't understand the goal, *aapki zindagi mein bada gol hai*<sup>19</sup>. The goal of any spiritual practice is annihilation of ego. The ego has to be totally melted down, either through *bhakti*<sup>20</sup> or as Gurudev puts it, evaporated in the white heat of meditation. That is the **only** purpose of all scriptural injunctions and spiritual practices. Now, if on the path of spirituality, in the name of spirituality we are doing anything else for any other purpose we are living in a fool's paradise. So when the *sisya* approaches the guru, the clarity of purpose should and must be there.

The Upanishads are the most straightforward expression of the truth. If at all the purpose is not understood properly, the clarity of the purpose is not sinking in, the subject matter will never ever sink into the heart. In Mundakopanishad the *sisya* goes to the guru with some dry sticks in his hand. One of the symbolic meanings of those dry sticks is that the student offers himself to the teacher so that he can dry out his ego like the dry sticks. Akhandananda Maharaj gave his own unique explanation. He says that the student says to the teacher, "I come here to be disciplined, and I have not one, not two, but plenty of sticks. Use them and discipline me. I offer myself with these sticks to be disciplined." So it is our free will, free choice that we reach the guru for knowledge and if the purpose is not clear, there will be no transfer of knowledge. The files are not going to be transferred. An error message window will pop-up, "File not found" or "File corrupted."

### **What is the nature of *Brahman*?**

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<sup>16</sup> O Lord, teach me the highest Science of Reality

<sup>17</sup> The good people

<sup>18</sup> Secret

<sup>19</sup> There is a big zero in your life

<sup>20</sup> Devotion

The nature of *Brahman* can only be indicated, not defined, since language is but a limited and finite tool.

It is indicated as *virajam*<sup>21</sup> – most *sāttvik*<sup>22</sup>, no *rajas*<sup>23</sup> or *tamas*<sup>24</sup>, with not even the slightest hint of agitation or lethargy. It is *visuddham*<sup>25</sup>, existence in its purest form. When something acts against its nature or is placed where it does not belong, it becomes impure. As long as hair is attached to the head it is fine, but if it falls into the food, it makes the food impure. What should be our proper state of expression? The body should be under the absolute control of the mind, which should be free from agitations and under the guidance of the intellect because the intellect is the point from where we glide into meditation.

*Brahman* is *visadam*<sup>26</sup>, *hiranyamaya*<sup>27</sup>, *tamasah parastāt*<sup>28</sup> - the clear, glowing self-effulgent One. He is *visokam*<sup>29</sup> – no *soka*<sup>30</sup> can touch the Pure Self since it is beyond the limitations of the BMI<sup>31</sup>. It is that state of absolute freedom, which can only be achieved by *guru kripa*<sup>32</sup> or *Bhagavat kripa*<sup>33</sup>.

*Achintyama*<sup>34</sup> – we cannot catch *Paramātmā*<sup>35</sup> by thinking about *Paramātmā*. He is *chitsadāham*<sup>36</sup>, the One who knows<sup>37</sup>, Whom none can know<sup>38</sup>. The process of thinking cannot lead the seeker to himself. Thinking is a function of the *antahkaraṇa*<sup>39</sup>. The *chitta*<sup>40</sup> is the black box that records all our experiences, the mind reacts to the world and the intellect makes decisions based on everything recorded in the *chitta*, but since the knowledge of the self is not objective, it cannot be experienced through the equipment of the BMI. So here the Guru is saying to the student, "Start thinking about yourself as the unthinkable." What a paradox! Start thinking about the unthinkable! Many times when we are totally satisfied, we end up exclaiming, "It is **too** good!" Words seem too limited to express our feelings of total contentment. And here we are only talking about an experience in the gross world! Drik Drishya Viveka starts with a beautiful *sloka*, "*Rūpam drisyam locanam drik*," all that we can perceive, all that we can see and observe through our eyes is not us. Many times we are looking at an object, but we do not see it! We listen to something, but do not hear it! The organs of perception as well as the mind and intellect have to be available for us to experience anything. Now who enlivens these

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<sup>21</sup> Untainted

<sup>22</sup> Quality of purity

<sup>23</sup> Quality of activity, passion, the process of change

<sup>24</sup> Quality of darkness, inertia

<sup>25</sup> Pure

<sup>26</sup> Clear

<sup>27</sup> Effulgent

<sup>28</sup> Beyond all darkness

<sup>29</sup> Griefless

<sup>30</sup> Sorrow

<sup>31</sup> Body, mind, intellect

<sup>32</sup> Grace of the Master

<sup>33</sup> Grace of the Lord

<sup>34</sup> Beyond thought

<sup>35</sup> Supreme Self

<sup>36</sup> I am the Pure Knowledge

<sup>37</sup> *Aham vijānāmi*

<sup>38</sup> *Na chāsti vettā mam*

<sup>39</sup> Inner equipment

<sup>40</sup> Memory

equipments so that they are full of energy and vigor? How can we describe that which is enabling our inner equipment to function in the world outside? In order to do that we need to have it stored in our memory bank! It is neither the object of experience nor is it recorded in our memory so that we can recollect it and say with certainty, "Yes that is me!"

Therefore, *Brahman* is considered *avyaktam*<sup>41</sup> – beyond perception. An object of perception must be manifest. Since the Self is beyond perception, it is considered unmanifest. At the same time, though unmanifest, it is also *anantarūpam*<sup>42</sup> because the entire world of names and forms is nothing but an expression of the one Supreme Consciousness. *Brahman* is the source of the manifested world, the *samasta-sākshim*<sup>43</sup>, a Witness to all that is happening in Its light and around It. It is all pervading, including everything, excluding nothing. *Brahman* is *sivam*<sup>44</sup> – auspiciousness itself, in its original, purest form. It is *prasāntam*<sup>45</sup> – the nature of existence itself is silent, with no modifications whatsoever. It does not have to shut the world out to be silent, nor is it affected by the agitations of the external world.

In the Sanskrit dictionary, *mṛtyu*<sup>46</sup> is described as a state of modification. The physical body changes, the mind – it definitely changes! Our intellectual convictions also keep changing constantly. Anywhere we find a modification, that modification is *mṛtyu!* That which is *ananta*<sup>47</sup> in and through all modifications, that blissful state is *Brahman!* Gold does not lose its goldness, because it is modified into different forms. *Brahman* never loses Its own being, It is *amṛtam*<sup>48</sup>.

*Brahman* is described as *brahmayonim*<sup>49</sup>, the cause of the cause, which is the cause of the world! Brahmaji is the creator of the world both at the *vyasti*<sup>50</sup> and *samasti*<sup>51</sup> levels. At the *samasti* or macrocosmic level the act of creation is sustained by *Paramātmā*. At the *vyasti* or individual level, every experience that we are experiencing in this world is experienced only when the Self as Brahma becomes aware of the waking plane. The world does not exist until the individual wakes up, until our equipment, the body, mind and intellect, relates to the world and then expresses out into this world, which is the *jagat*<sup>52</sup> that we create for ourselves. Where does all this go when we go to sleep? Exactly the same place where the flame of the candle goes when it is extinguished! Does the candle lose its capacity to burn? Where does the flame go? It is *avyakta*<sup>53</sup>, just like the *jagat* when we go to sleep. Similarly taking the support of *Paramātmā*, Brahmaji creates and expresses out into this world.

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<sup>41</sup> Unmanifest

<sup>42</sup> Possessed of endless forms

<sup>43</sup> The Witness of all

<sup>44</sup> Auspicious

<sup>45</sup> Peaceful

<sup>46</sup> Death

<sup>47</sup> Endless

<sup>48</sup> Immortal

<sup>49</sup> The origin of Brahma, the Creator

<sup>50</sup> Individual

<sup>51</sup> Totality

<sup>52</sup> World

<sup>53</sup> Unmanifest

Whenever we talk of creation, it starts with confusion. How, when, and why did the Lord create this world? There is a very beautiful book called, *Vedanta Through Letters* by Gurudev where he is asked a similar question. He answers by saying that questions like this can never be answered because they are "logical absurdities." Gurudev continues, "God is omnipotent, hence to ask why He did this or that is to limit Him." It doesn't really matter how, when or why the world was created. The only important thing is that we are in this mess and we must get out of it. Let us try and understand this point by answering a simple question, "Tell me a place in your body where you don't exist?" The answer is, as Sri Vidyanaraya Swami also says, "*Nakha shikha parayantam* - I exist from my toe nail to the tip of my longest hair. I pervade in and through everything." Similarly *Brahman* because of His all pervading nature is *ādi-madhya-anta vihīnam*<sup>54</sup>. That which is all pervading cannot have a beginning, middle or end! And it is not something that is bound by time or space. Anything that is bound by time or space has to have an *ādi, madhya, anta* - start, middle and end. For example, a building is bound by space or the class is bound by time. The Self is not bound by time or space! Therefore our *sādhana*<sup>55</sup> should not be limited to a particular place or a specific time. Meditation is not a roller coaster or a thrill-seeking experience! Does that mean there is no need for discipline? There is a need for discipline and regularity in *sādhana* but that discipline itself should not become a cause for bondage.

We always teach children to do things with their right hand. For the onlooker, it might be the left or right hand, but for the person whose hand it is, he exists equally in both hands. The difference is seen only when there is a feeling of otherness. Wherever there is separateness, wherever there is a duality, it exists because of non-apprehension of the reality, which is expressed as misapprehension. Differences can be of three kinds - *sajātiya*<sup>56</sup>, *viajātiya*<sup>57</sup>, and *svagat-bheda*<sup>58</sup>. All human beings are *sajātiya*. Compared to humans, animals, plants, etc. are *viajātiya*. Amongst human beings, there are many different human races - the racial differences can be classified as *svagat-bheda*. We can look at our own body and dissect the differences. When we look at both are hands, they are *sajātiya*. There is *svagat-bheda* between the left hand and the right hand, but the hands and legs are *viajātiya*. From the standpoint of the individual, there is no multiplicity, but when somebody else looks at an individual other than himself, there is a *bheda*<sup>59</sup>! There can be no *dvaita*<sup>60</sup> when one realizes that *Brahman* is *ekam*<sup>61</sup>, *advayam*<sup>62</sup> and *vibhum*<sup>63</sup>. That which can express as many, has to be one! An individual can express as grandfather, father, son, and brother at the same time in relation to other people, but he does not change. Similarly the one Self is expressing in all the multiplicity.

India is a land of vast multiplicity. For example, for a north Indian anyone from the south is a Madrasi and for a south Indian, anyone from the north is a Punjabi! But when those people immigrate to a foreign country, they stop seeing the differences

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<sup>54</sup> Without a beginning, middle or end

<sup>55</sup> Spiritual practice

<sup>56</sup> Difference within the same category

<sup>57</sup> Differences between categories

<sup>58</sup> Difference of the entity within itself

<sup>59</sup> Difference

<sup>60</sup> Duality

<sup>61</sup> One

<sup>62</sup> Non-dual

<sup>63</sup> All pervading

because they are focusing on the fact that everyone is a *desi*<sup>64</sup>. The differences are lost in the feeling of oneness. These minor differences lose their charm when seen from a broader perspective. The broadest perspective is that I am the Self that is pervading the entire universe! Nothing is excluded. It is the Self expressing in the entire multitude. Whenever there is largeness or hugeness there is only one kind of experience and that is *chidānandam*<sup>65</sup>, *arupam*<sup>66</sup>! That experience of being is pure bliss because other than the Self nothing else exists. If there is otherness there is fear, *dvāyata bhayam bhavati*<sup>67</sup>. When there is only oneness, there cannot be any fear. When I stay alone, I am afraid. I am not afraid of myself, but I am afraid of others, but in that homogenous unison where I alone exist that experience can never be fearful. This fearless state of being is expressed as *ānanda*<sup>68</sup>.

*Brahman* is *adbhutam*<sup>69</sup> and *vicitram*<sup>70</sup>. Lord Krishna says in the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita:

*ascarya-vat pasyati kascid enam  
ascarya-vad vadati tathaiva canyah  
ascarya-vac cainam anyah srnoti  
srutvapy enam veda na caiva kascit*<sup>71</sup>

The one, who sees it, beholds it with such awe! It is a wonderful experience! Our limitation lies in our considering this experience to be object-oriented like all our other experiences. The baby Krishna is sometimes portrayed with His toe in His mouth. From an observer's standpoint it looks like Krishna has His toe in His mouth, but from His standpoint there is no experience because the toe is not separate from His body. For Him the *triputi*<sup>72</sup> of the experiencer, experience and experienced does not exist because He is all pervading. What complete bliss! What awe-inspiring beauty!

The attribute less *Brahman* is Itself Brahma, Siva, Indra, Visnu, Prāna, Time, Fire, and Moon etc. Similar descriptions can be found elsewhere also in Ganapati Atharvashirsha<sup>73</sup> and Narayana Suktam<sup>74</sup> to name a few other sources. The intent of naming these attributes is to show that the formless functioning through these named attributes is the same. He alone expresses as Brahma, Visnu and Siva. He alone expresses as the forces of nature. He alone expresses as the Lord who is maintaining, sustaining and dissolving this world. After having understood this on the seat of meditation one has to expand beyond the form of *Umasahayam Paramesvaram Prabhum*<sup>75</sup> to the *nirguna*<sup>76</sup>, *viviktarūpa*<sup>77</sup> Lord, who is *apānipadah*<sup>78</sup>,

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<sup>64</sup> Of Indian origin

<sup>65</sup> Knowledge-bliss

<sup>66</sup> Formless

<sup>67</sup> Fear arises from duality

<sup>68</sup> Bliss

<sup>69</sup> Wonderful

<sup>70</sup> Amazing

<sup>71</sup> One sees This as a wonder; another speaks of This as a wonder; another hears of This as a wonder; yet, having heard none understands This at all!

<sup>72</sup> Threefold entities

<sup>73</sup> *Tvam Brahma, Tvam Vishnustvam, Rudrastvam, Indrastvam Agnistvam, Vayustvam Suryastvam, Chandramāstvam Bramha Bhur Bhuva Svarom*

<sup>74</sup> *Sah Brahma sah Sivah sah Harih sendrah soksharah paramah svarat*

<sup>75</sup> The Highest Lord, consort of Uma

*acaksuh*<sup>79</sup> and *akarnah*<sup>80</sup>. This does not mean that *Brahman* is physically challenged! The truth exists not because of a form, it exists in spite of a form. This understanding must lead us to the realization that our *sāadhanā* cannot be constrained by the finite limitations of time, space or form and must expand to embrace the entire world. If we say that *Paramātmā* exists in the seat of meditation, who exists in the world? In the Narayana Suktam also it is said:

*Yaca kincit jagat sarvam drsyate srūyatepi va  
Antar bahisca tatsvaram vyāpya nārayanah sthitah*<sup>81</sup>

The same thought is expressed in the ninth *mantra* in Kaivalyopanishad:

*Sa eva sarvam yadbhūtam yaccha bhavyam sanātanam  
Jnātva tam mrtyumatyeti nānya panthā vimuktaye*<sup>82</sup>

He alone - the Lord, the *Paramātmā* exists in and through, pervades in and through all that was, all that is and all that will be. He is also referred to as *purātana*<sup>83</sup>, the most ancient primordial cause, which is at the same time ever-new. It is also said that the Self exists only in the present, the past is dead, and the future is unborn. The present alone is the reality; the present alone is the truth; that alone is *Paramātmā*. On the surface these concepts appear to be contradictory and confusing. That is because we limit ourselves only to a particular time frame or space frame. The concepts of time and space block our understanding in a very subtle manner. Let us take an example of two people watching the flow of traffic. One person is on the ground and a second person is on top of a building. The person who is in an elevated position is able to see far ahead and say, "There is a black car coming," but the person on the ground is unable to see it. The person on the top has a broader perspective in time and space. He can see the cars that have already gone by, are passing in front and that are yet to come. The person on the ground can only see what exists in front him. Our *sāadhanā* must lead us to that elevated position where we can cross the barriers of time and space, and see that *Paramātmā* cannot be limited by these finite concepts of the mind. He is smaller than the smallest *anu*<sup>84</sup> and larger than the largest structure imaginable. A commercial for the animated movie, *The World of Antz* said something to the effect that the intent of the movie is not to show how small the ants are but for us to feel how huge their world is! Size, like time and space is nothing but a relative concept of the mind.

*Brahman* is the source from which all things are born and merge back into. Every wave that comes up on the surface of the ocean has to merge back into the ocean. The true nature of the wave and the ocean is water alone. Let that ocean take any form. Let it take the form of a wave or a drop of water, its essential nature remains

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<sup>76</sup> Attributeless

<sup>77</sup> Devoid of form

<sup>78</sup> Without hands and legs

<sup>79</sup> Without eyes

<sup>80</sup> Without ears

<sup>81</sup> Whatever this entire universe is, seen or heard of, pervading all this from inside and outside alike, stands supreme the Eternal Divine Being (Narayana).

<sup>82</sup> He alone is all that was, and all that will be, the Eternal. Knowing Him, one goes beyond the sting of death. There is no other way to reach complete freedom.

<sup>83</sup> The Ancient One

<sup>84</sup> Atom

the same. Similarly the individual and the outside world both exist because of the presence of the Supreme Self, which allows them to exist. The *prāna*<sup>85</sup>, the *manas*<sup>86</sup>, the *indriyas*<sup>87</sup>, all exist because of the Self. If we close our eyes - do we cease to exist? If we cover our ears- do we not continue to exist? It is not the physical organs of perception – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue or skin that are important. That which enables the eyes to see, that which enables the ears to hear, that which enables the nose to smell, that which enables the tongue to taste and that which enables the skin to feel, that is the Supreme Truth indicated by *Brahman*. This is at the microcosmic level. At the macrocosmic level the *pancha mahābhūta*<sup>88</sup> also are born out of, supported by and merge back into the same Self. The glorious expression of the five elements in different permutations and combinations gets enlivened because of *Brahman*. He is the self-illuminating illuminator of the three planes of existence – *jaḡrt*<sup>89</sup>, *svapna*<sup>90</sup> and *sushupti*<sup>91</sup>. He is the Supreme Truth because of which the entire microcosm and macrocosm exist! He is that Lord, that *Paramātmā* whose glory can only be understood by one who has crossed the limitations born out of the mind! That is why it is not a big deal for the Lord to take *avatāra*<sup>92</sup> as Rama and Parasurama at the same time, "*Jisne yeh duniya banayi, uski marzi*"<sup>93</sup>.

This nature of *Brahman* is the reality that one has to experience on the seat of meditation. This experience cannot be described in words because the moment one tries to do so there is a *dvaita*<sup>94</sup>. There is an incident in Sri Aurobindo's life where he witnessed a debate between the followers of the *Advaita* and *Dvaita* schools of thought about the relative merits of both. Finally, it appeared that the *Advaitis* were victorious. Sri Aurobindo made a comment to the effect, "In your victory is your loss". The moment we recognize a victory over something that proves the existence of duality. Similar is our experience when we start talking about the truth. The truth and the narration of the truth become two different entities, and that forms a block in our understanding of the truth. When reading or listening to an Upanishad, it needs to be done with an attitude, "The Truth is me. I am not listening to a discourse about the truth. In truth, I **am** the truth. *Asmi*"<sup>95</sup>." As Nisargadatta Maharaj has said, "I am That." This "am-ness" is the ultimate experience!

### Where is *Brahman* located?

The third *mantra* of Kaivalyopanishad indicates that *Brahman* is *parena*<sup>96</sup> *nākam*<sup>97</sup> *nihitam*<sup>98</sup> *guhāyām*<sup>99</sup>. This immortality that we are searching for is beyond the

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<sup>85</sup> Vital air

<sup>86</sup> Mind

<sup>87</sup> Organs of perception and action

<sup>88</sup> Five elements – earth, water, fire, air and space

<sup>89</sup> Waking

<sup>90</sup> Dream

<sup>91</sup> Deep sleep

<sup>92</sup> Incarnate

<sup>93</sup> It is the will of the One who has created this world

<sup>94</sup> Duality

<sup>95</sup> I am

<sup>96</sup> Higher than

<sup>97</sup> Heaven, state beyond pain

<sup>98</sup> Kept

<sup>99</sup> In the cave (of the intellect)

realms of this world, but then where does this *nākam*, this abode of happiness reside? *Nihitam guhāyam*, it is right there in our heart, *guhāsayam*<sup>100</sup>, *hrtpundarikam*<sup>101</sup>. Ramana Maharishi calls it *hrdaya*<sup>102</sup> *ākāsa*<sup>103</sup>. Where is this *hrdaya ākāsa*, this *hrtpundarikam*? Suppose someone who is very dear to us is transferred to another city and leaves. That person's departure puts a pressure on the center of our sternum as if a heavy weight has been placed there. That is the exact location of the *hrtpundarikam*, the spiritual heart where we feel all the emotions, where the Self resides. *Parena nākam*. *Nākam* is a beautiful word. *Kam* means happiness (*sukha*), *akam* means absence of happiness (*dukha*). *Nākam* = *na*+ *akam*, absence of *dukha*, that which is beyond both *sukha* and *dukha*, that which is the substratum because of which we are able to perceive both *sukha* and *dukha*. Both *sukha* and *dukha* are modifications of the mind; the Self is the observer, the witness, *parena*, beyond these modifications, residing in the cave of the heart. In Kathopanishad it is said that this Self that resides in the cave of the heart is the size of our thumb<sup>104</sup>. This shining, luminous *angustha-matra* entity residing in the cave of our heartd is *vibhrājate*<sup>105</sup> because of which the whole of this world is illumined.

### What is the nature of the *jīva*<sup>106</sup>?

Until now we have focused our discussion on the truth absolute! But if the truth is that evident, that clear, why is that in spite of listening to it for so long, in spite of doing so much *sādhanā*, so much *abhyāsa*<sup>107</sup>, we are no where closer to the truth? Where is it that we are going wrong? In order to answer this question we must understand who we think ourselves to be and why we think what we think.

The individual, the ego, the Self is deluded by *māyā*<sup>108</sup>, and because of this delusion he accepts himself as a body and performs all actions at the body, mind and intellect level. The goal of every individual is to be happy and to feel a sense of completeness, but these activities performed at the BMI level leave him with a feeling of dissatisfaction and incompleteness. This is the story of our lives! The first misconception when we start our *sādhanā*, our process of spirituality is that we are the body. We start *japa*<sup>109</sup>, *upāsanā* or *pūjā*<sup>110</sup> as the body, and reach back to the same point. We are taught, "The body is only a temple, it is not you! You are that Lord who is expressing through this body, interacting through this mind, expressing through that intellect. You are that Ultimate Reality expressing through these forms," but our perception of ourselves is that I am this body! And then there is another intelligent question that we ask, "How can I not be this body? If someone hits us or pinches us, do we not feel the pain?" Even if someone hits our new Mercedes or Lexus very hard with a hammer, we feel the pain! What we need to recognize is that

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<sup>100</sup> Cavity of the heart

<sup>101</sup> Lotus of the heart

<sup>102</sup> Heart

<sup>103</sup> Sky

<sup>104</sup> *Angustha-mātrah purusah*

<sup>105</sup> Glowing from within

<sup>106</sup> The individual soul

<sup>107</sup> Practice

<sup>108</sup> Ignorance or non-apprehension of Reality

<sup>109</sup> Repetition of God's name or a *mantra* usually with the help of a rosary

<sup>110</sup> Ritualistic worship

both the car and this body represent one and the same thing, they both belong to me, but they are not me.

We started by saying that the Self is deluded by *māyā*. What is *māyā*? *Māyā* is a very ambiguous and all encompassing term. Whenever we don't understand anything, we immediately label it as *māyā*. *Māyā* has to be understood from two aspects, "*Jo nahin hai usko samajhte hain, aur jo hai usko samajhte nahin hain,*" that which **is not**, but appears to be, and that which **is**, but appears not to be. When both these states of non-apprehension are accepted as the truth by us, that state of misapprehension is *māyā*. In *Ātmā Bodha*, Sankarācāryaji gives the example of a mirage that appears as though it exists, but it does not. Or, we can look at the example of the celestial palace built by Maya for the Pandavas, where everything appeared contrary. There were fine flowers carved in stone, so natural in color, that even the bees were confused and were seen hovering over them. The flowers were in full bloom in all seasons. The eyes could not differentiate between solid land and water! So unique was this Mayasabha!

Similar is our confusion when we talk about *Paramātmā* or the Supreme Self, which we have never experienced, and the body, mind and intellect, which we experience day in and day out. The scriptures tell us that this body, mind and intellect equipment does not exist, "You do not exist as a body, mind or intellect. You exist as that Supreme Self." Thus begins our confusion! We are told that what we experience very vividly is non-existent and all that truly exists is something that is beyond the realm of our experience. What a paradoxical and confusing concept! The confusion exists because we do not understand what is meant by the non-existence of the body, mind or intellect. The BMI exist as instruments of action. What is false is our identification with our body, mind and intellect. A car that rolls off the assembly line has a body, four tires, an engine, a gas tank, seats and many other parts that have been assembled for the buyer's use. The parts do not start moving all by themselves, an intelligent driver has to crank the ignition, change the gear and make it move forward by pressing on the gas pedal. Similarly the body, mind and intellect are provided for our use, but our problem is that in making use of this equipment, we identify with them and act and react in this world as a body, mind, and intellect. There is a difference in interacting in this world **through** the body, mind and intellect and interacting in this world **as** the body, mind and intellect. The experiences that we gain through these two kinds of expressions are worlds apart.

Our misunderstanding is based on the fact that we can see the body, feel the mind, and know that there is an intellect. If we recognize the existence of the body, mind and intellect, who is the one who recognizes their existence? There must be an entity that must be recognizing all these three. That I am! Not the body, not the mind, nor the intellect! But because this concept is too abstract, we end up concluding that we are the BMI because they are tangible objects of experience. So we try to feel complete, we try to feel content by trying to achieve permanency for this equipment.

What is the boon asked by *asuras*<sup>111</sup> like Ravana, Hiranyakashipu or Bhasmasura? They wanted to achieve permanency of expression through the body. So maybe we can conclude that anybody who is expecting permanency through the body is an *asura*! Hiranyakashipu thought he was being very intelligent when he asked the Lord for a boon that covered all the different combinations and permutations of where he could not be killed, but the Lord says, "I have created you. Don't think that you are

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<sup>111</sup> Demons

more intelligent than Me!” So He appears as Narasimha, in a form that is neither animal nor human, drags Hiranyakashipu to the threshold of the house, puts him on His lap and tears him apart with His nails. There can be no permanency through this body! We claim to understand the Puranas, but we don’t understand the simple fact that our body is also getting *purana*<sup>112</sup>! We are in love with the thought of achieving permanency through the body. Just watch all the advertisements on the television for anti-aging creams, all kinds of lotions and potions to keep the body looking young and beautiful! Whenever we find a wrinkle or a gray hair, we want to hide it, patch it up, and that art of patching up, we call make up! The other day I went to a drugstore. In the nail care aisle, on one side there were different kinds of nail polish and on the other side there were different kinds of nail polish removers. Create one confusion and then create something else to remove the confusion created by the first one!

If somebody was to ask us who are you, in our present state of experience, deluded as we are, the *jīva* that we are, we can quote the twelfth and thirteenth *mantras* of Kaivalyopanishad as our history, our resume. Identifying ourselves with the BMI, we experience pleasure and pain in the dream state created by our misapprehension of reality. All that we aspire for is far away from us and all that we do not want is very close to us. In the dream world we are the boss and in the so-called real world all that we ask for, demand, and aspire for is no where around us. We are surrounded by all the things and persons that we do not like, do not want, and hate living with. For example, a person may love sweets and candies, but he is already too sweet to handle that candy because he is blessed with diabetes!

The dream state is not just an expression of unfulfilled desires; it is also an expression of misplaced thoughts or combination of thoughts. One time I took a roll of pictures to be developed. When I got the pictures back, one of them had my head and somebody else’s body. The positive image was a combination of two different negatives developed into one picture. Similarly in our dreams we see all kinds of weird combinations, which are a result of all the different experiences registered in the *chitta* during the waking plane. The same mind takes the form of the whole gamut of experiences in the dream world. We always tend to ask, “What is the meaning of this dream?” The most important thing to remember is that it is only a dream! And since it is a dream, it is not real. Vasishthaji says to Lord Rama that there are only four things that can be real in a dream – *Deva*<sup>113</sup>, *shāstra*<sup>114</sup>, *guru* and *mantra* because they take appear in our dreams to give us some instructions. In this dream world, the experience, experiencer, and the experienced are all nothing but the mind.

During the state of profound sleep the *jīva* is overpowered by *tamas*<sup>115</sup> and it experiences a state of bliss. In this state of *sushupti*<sup>116</sup> the mind and the intellect are withdrawn from the external world. This state is defined very beautifully by Sankarācāryaji in Tattva Bodha, *aham kimapi na jānami sukhen māyā nidrā anubhūyate*<sup>117</sup>. What exactly is the experience of sleep? Nobody can say! Can you describe it? How was it? What were you doing? I do not know! That is the only

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<sup>112</sup> Old

<sup>113</sup> The Lord

<sup>114</sup> Scriptures

<sup>115</sup> Ignorance

<sup>116</sup> Deep sleep

<sup>117</sup> That state about which one says later, “I did not know anything; I have enjoyed a good sleep.”

answer that anybody can give, otherwise he was not really asleep. The experience of deep sleep cannot be spelt out in words, but we remember it because it gets registered in the sub-conscious or the *chitta*. When we rewind and replay the experience in our mind, the only answer that we get is that we experienced a state of bliss. Why? Because, the key to happiness is there in this statement, we were happy because the mind and intellect were not functioning. So in the waking state, if we want to be happy, don't use the mind or the intellect. That is why we have the proverb, "Ignorance is bliss!" What a state of being! The mind, the intellect, and all their expressions are dissolved. Where do the mind and intellect go? As stated previously, the same place where the flame of the candle goes when it is blown out - in the *avyakta* state. Actually, in sleep, we are closest to ourselves, our own nature, but we are not aware of it. Rather we can say that in the state of deep sleep we are almost realized! But we do not know that we are realized because we are not aware of it.

In the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord says that the *mahātmā* or man of perfection is one who is awake while we are sleep, and who is asleep while we are awake<sup>118</sup>. The first time I heard this explanation from Gurudev, the only person I could visualize was the night watchman! He is awake while we sleep, and when we are all awake, he is asleep. So he must be a man of perfection! The same statement said in another form is, if we can sleep in the waking plane and be awake in the state of sleep, that state is realization! Such a beautiful experience! While sleeping if we are aware that we are asleep, while awake having the body, mind and intellect in their causal form, unattached, expressing in the waking plane.

In the Upanishads and other Vedic literature we find discussions of these three planes of existence - *jagrt*, *svapna* and *sushupti*, but in the Māndukya Kārika Gaudapādāchārya narrows it down to two - one with thought and one without thought. He combines the waking and dream plane as the field of thoughts. In the waking plane we are acting and reacting in the world based on our thoughts. The dream plane is nothing but an expression of our thoughts. What is the second state of experience according to Gaudapādāchārya? He calls it the thoughtless state, which is the state of deep sleep. One is a field of thoughts and one is a thoughtless field. Any *sāadhanā* that we do can only be done in the waking state, so two-thirds of our life is not available to us. And in that waking plane of experience, how aware are we regarding spirituality? The point of this discussion is to make us aware that as *jīvās*, we do not have any control over the states of *svapna* or *sushupti*. Neither the dream nor the deep sleep planes are controlled by us, but even the one-third that is under our control is not utilized for spirituality. So the *jīva* continues to gather a lot of *vāsana*<sup>119</sup> dust on his *chitta* or his *antahkaraṇa*. As long as he continues to do that he is forced to express again and again in the world.

The same thought is expressed very beautifully by Ādi Sankara in Bhaja Govindam, *punarapi jananam punarapi maranam, punarapi jananijathare sayanam*<sup>120</sup>. Because of the imprints and *vāsanas* collected through the lives that we have lived, every trans- migration from one plane of experience to another, the waking plane dies to give birth to the dream plane, the dream plane dies to give birth to the deep sleep plane of experience, and so the cycle continues. And the *jīva* keeps transmigrating

<sup>118</sup> *ya nisa sarva-bhūtanām tasyam jagarti samyami  
yasyam jagrati bhūtāni sa nisā pasyato muneh*

<sup>119</sup> Impressions

<sup>120</sup> Again birth, again death and again lying in mother's womb

from one plane of experience to the next, not realizing the permanency of the *ātmā*<sup>121</sup>. We are propelled to act in this world because of the pressure of our *vāsanās* and our actions create more and more new *vāsanās* in our *chitta*, which again gather more potentiality and force us to work. So our actions create the impressions, impressions creates the pressure and the pressure forces us to act again. This *karma chakra*<sup>122</sup> is *vichitra*<sup>123</sup>! The method to break free from this cycle of action is *karma yoga* which teaches us to sublimate and not suppress our *vāsanās*. To tune the equipment that has been provided, the method is *bhakti yoga* which teaches us to engage the mind in *upāsana* so that it can disengage from creating new *vāsanās*. After having tuned the equipment, *jnāna yoga* teaches us the secret of awareful living, having steadiness and firmness in experience. But the *jīva* does not understand that, he keeps fluctuating from one plane of experience to the other. Once he understands he that is the one because of which these three planes of experience are given any validity, all the three planes are merged into the substratum which is *ānanda-akhandabodham*<sup>124</sup>. Being aware of the changeless, immovable through all the changing experiences is realization. When the *jīva* is aware of being awareness, neither the "I" nor the awareness is the truth, the "am-ness" is the truth, nothing else exists.

Gurudev was once asked, "What is death?" He was asked at the wrong moment, right after the morning meditation class, "Ha! That is also an experience!" If our daily experience of deep sleep is *laya*<sup>125</sup>, then death can be considered as *pralaya*<sup>126</sup>. Every day when we go to sleep, we wake up in the same body, but after death we go to sleep and wake up into another body. In fact, every experiencer, experiencing the world of experience is born new. The substratum, the supporting truth exists permanently, but every experiencer is born anew. The one who is angry, happy, jealous or over-enthusiastic, each experiencer is born and dies with the death of that experience. If we give importance and value to the experiencer, then we are dying every moment! Death as defined by Vedanta is nothing but change or movement. I, the *jīva*, born with every experience, as the experiencer in the trio of experiencer, experienced and the experience dies with every change in the experience and the experienced. I came, I saw, I perished.

Now imagine, that which is not permanent, that which has a momentary existence continues to carry the memories of the dead past, "I was so hurt," "I'm so disturbed," and so on. The one who was hurt, the one who inflicted the pain and the experience of being hurt, are all no more. With the passing of that experience into the past tense, the experiencer is also past, so there is no reason to be tense! This is not just a play with words, try and get the subtle point here. If every moment of our lives the experiencer is born and dies, then what are we holding on to in this world? Our standpoint for truth has to change. There is no permanency, when the experiencer is himself not permanent, how can the experience be given any value? Even the feeling of the being the experiencer is also a thought, which keeps moving. When we understand this thought, what are its implications in practical life? When J. Krishnamurthy said, "Spontaneity is truth," what does he mean by spontaneity? Every experiencer is spontaneously born and at the spur of the moment, he also

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<sup>121</sup> Soul

<sup>122</sup> Cycle of action

<sup>123</sup> Strange, wonderful

<sup>124</sup> Unbroken bliss-consciousness

<sup>125</sup> Dissolution

<sup>126</sup> Total dissolution

dies. This allows us to live every moment fresh like a child. The child doesn't carry his past, he lives every moment anew. That is the meaning of innocence! Being naive is not innocence, experiencing every experience without the encumbrances of the past, is true innocence and spontaneity.

Why does the *jīva* attach so much importance to his own experiences? Because he does not realize that he is the imperishable, immovable Truth based on which, taking whose support, all these experiences dance upon. When we look at paintings of *rāsa līlā*<sup>127</sup>, we see Krishna standing with every *gopi*<sup>128</sup>. Radha is in the center and Krishna is also dancing with her. Were the painters crazy to paint Krishna with Radha and every *gopi*? No. In and through every *gopi*, every experiencer that is born, the *gopi* is not important. It is Krishna, the Self, who is the *ādhāra*<sup>129</sup> who is important. That is the true meaning of *rāsa līlā*, when the *jīva* can dance in this world of plurality and duplicity, knowing very well that he is the unchangeable truth, in and through every experience. Then bliss alone is the expression. Nothing but bliss.

### **What is the relationship of the *jīva* with *Brahman*?**

The relationship of the *jīva* with *Brahman* is expressed very beautifully through the metaphor of churning the lower *arani*<sup>130</sup> and the upper *arani* to start a fire in the eleventh *mantra* of Kaivalyopanishad. Every student has to be given an example which he can understand, which he can assimilate. Asvalayana being a student of the Vedic period would easily understand this example. The ego is the lower *arani* and *Omkāra* is the upper *arani*, the process of rubbing them together to start a fire is our *sāadhanā*. This fire of knowledge when kindled, burns all the ties that bind us, elevates the lower Self to the Higher Self and leads us to a realization of our own true nature.

The Supreme Truth is indicated by four *mahāvākyas*<sup>131</sup> in the Vedas:

*Prajñānam brahma*<sup>132</sup>

*Tat tvam asi*<sup>133</sup>

*Ayam ātmā brahmā*<sup>134</sup>

*Aham brahmāsmi*<sup>135</sup>

These are the four *mahāvākyas* as they say, but every Upanishad has its own *sūtra*<sup>136</sup>, which expresses the truth in a capsule format. What is the essential teaching of Kaivalyopanishad in a nutshell? That is expressed in the sixteenth *mantra*, *tattvameva tvameva tat*<sup>137</sup>, which is a succinct encapsulation of the relationship of the *jīva* and *Brahman*. Every Upanishad has such a *mantra* which is supposed to take us very close to ourselves, the very source that we are talking

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<sup>127</sup> Divine dance of Krishna and the *gopis*

<sup>128</sup> Milkmaids of Vrindavan who were devotees of Krishna

<sup>129</sup> Substratum

<sup>130</sup> Piece of firewood

<sup>131</sup> Great declarations

<sup>132</sup> Consciousness is *Brahman*. (*Aitareya Upanishad, Rg Vedā*)

<sup>133</sup> That Thou art. (*Chhāndogya Upanishad, Sāma Vedā*)

<sup>134</sup> This Self is *Brahman*. (*Māndūkya Upanishad, Atharva Vedā*)

<sup>135</sup> I am *Brahman*." (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad, Yajur Vedā*)

<sup>136</sup> Aphoristic expression

<sup>137</sup> That thou alone art; thou alone art That.

about. So the *sisya* here in acceptance of that great truth says, *yatparam brahma sarvātmā visvasyāyatanam mahat*<sup>138</sup>, that *para brahma*, that which is the supreme *Brahman*, *sarvātmā*, the Self in all *visvasyāyatanam mahat*, which is the support of the *visva*, the universe that we can see and that which we cannot see, that which we have can perceive and that which we have yet to perceive, the whole *visva* is pervaded, supported by that *para brahma*. If the *Paramātmā* is that big, that huge, how can we say that the Lord is pervading in and through the entire universe? Here the Upanishad says that He is *suksmata-suksmataram*<sup>139</sup>, that which is very large, very huge, inclusive of everything, excluding nothing is expressing even in the smallest, tiniest of things. As Ādi Sankarācārya says, *pipilikādika brahma paryantam*<sup>140</sup>. Nothing exists which is not pervaded by that Supreme *Paramātmā*, that Supreme Self, Supreme *Brahman*, who is *nityam*, ever-present, eternal.

Where can we find this all pervasive, huger than the hugest, subtler than the subtlest entity? The location is indicated by the first half of the *mahāvākya*, *tattvameva*. That all pervasive, huger than the hugest, subtler than the subtlest entity is none other than our own Self - That thou art. However that is only half the truth. The other half of the truth is indicated by the second half of the *mahāvākya*, *tvameva tat*. It is not just, "That thou art", but also, "Thou alone art That." That means that I am the one who is pervading all throughout this universe, huger than the hugest, subtler than the subtlest!

How do we determine the grossness or subtlety of any object or entity? If we look at the *pancha mahā tattvas* or the five elements, we can see that earth or the *bhu tattva* has a dimension, weight and mass. It is visible, stationary and its pervasiveness is limited by the extent of its mass. When we look at water, the next *tattva*, it has movement which is two-dimensional – x axis and y axis, it flows from the higher to the lower and it has the quality of sapidity. The next element, fire is three-dimensional, it has height and it extends into space. The fourth element is air. Air not only has a three-dimensional movement, but it surrounds the entire earth and can move from one corner to the other with ease. Air is far more pervasive than fire. Earth, water, fire, air. The fifth element is space, which is the subtlest of all. It is in space that the universe exists, it is so subtle and so huge. What is space? That void or emptiness which allows something to exist can be defined as space. For example, if space is introduced in between the fingers of the hand, then the fingers can be seen separately. The whole universe exists in space, and the same space also exists in the eye of the needle. The subtlest to the hugest, it pervades everything.

Now what is subtler than the subtlest element? That which recognizes the pervasiveness of space from the subtlest to the largest, that consciousness is subtler than the subtlest. The extensiveness of space exists only when we can recognize it. That which is recognized is grosser, that which recognizes is subtler. That is why our *āchārya* would say that it is the space between our ears at work when he would see our blank faces after explaining a complex concept! Space is void, emptiness. In emptiness there is no recognition, that which is recognized, *yada drisyam*<sup>141</sup> is *jadam*<sup>142</sup>. That which recognizes is sentient, conscious. I am that consciousness

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<sup>138</sup> That which is the Supreme *Brahman*, the self in all, the ample support of the universe

<sup>139</sup> Subtler than the subtlest

<sup>140</sup> *Brahman* pervades even the tiniest of ants

<sup>141</sup> That which is seen

<sup>142</sup> Inert

which pervades the subtlest to the grossest. The whole of the universe from the grossest to the subtlest, I pervade. *Tattvameva*, I am that all pervasive.

*Jnāna* uses the method of *neti-neti*<sup>143</sup> to indicate the truth. It tells us to drop everything - nothing that we see, nothing that we are experiencing, if indeed we are experiencing it, is anything other than the Self, so drop it. That is *jnāna*. What is *bhakti*? Everything that exists is the *Paramātmā*, the Supreme Lord. The *jnāni* starts from himself as the Self and reaches the immeasurable expanse of the Supreme Self. The *bhakta* says if the whole world is *Paramātmā*, then as a part of the world, I also am an expression of *Paramātmā*. He starts from the vast expanse of the world and reaches himself. So both the *bhakta* and the *jnāni* ultimately reach the same state of experience. If somebody were to question, "Is the *jnāni* greater than the *bhakta* or the *bhakta* greater than the *jnāni*?" *Na to jnāna samajh me aaya, na to bhakti samajh me aayi*<sup>144</sup>. They both culminate at the same point. The totality of the vision is that whether you start from this end or from that end, the end result is this elevated experience of oneness in everything, *sarvabhūtasthātmānam sarvabhūtani chātmani*<sup>145</sup>.

What is the point of this discussion? As long as there is pain, there is sorrow, there is misery, what have we given importance to? Not the *sādhana*, not the Self, not the *Paramātmā*. We have given importance to the otherness, the world, the objects, the experiences. Once we realize that I alone exist in everything, then how can I hate myself? How can there be a feeling of negativity? How can there be any feeling of otherness? When there is no sense of negativity, no hatred with the world, there is a harmony in existence. That harmonious existence is the expression of *Paramātmā*.

### **Who is the qualified student of gaining this knowledge?**

The teacher in Kaivalyopanishad is the creator Brahmaji Himself, who is approached by Asvalayana with complete and total humility. It has always been a tradition that the *sisya* approaches the guru, and surrenders completely unto the guru. The first and foremost requisite for a *sisya* performing spiritual *sādhana* is to drop his identity in this spirit of surrender. When Gurudev was studying under Tapovan Maharaj, his method of teaching was unique. He taught any subject only once. The surroundings were not cozy and comfortable, with a regulated temperature and chairs like we have here. When they were in Tapovan Maharaj's *kutiya*<sup>146</sup> in Uttarkashi, most of the time would be spent in serving the guru. When the guru and *sisya*, Tapovan Maharaj and Gurudev, walked through the Himalayas, in those ranges where the ordinary person gasps for air, Tapovan Maharaj would be speaking on Vidyaranya Swami's Panchadasi, and Gurudev would be following, carrying his luggage and the Gurudev's luggage, listening to him, trying to memorize the *sloka* and at the same time understand both the literal and subtle meaning. These were the kind of conditions in which the student was trained. Tapovan Maharaj's second condition was that if he asked a question and Gurudev could not answer, then they were done for the day. *Talāk, talāk, talāk*<sup>147</sup>. There was a time when Gurudev rebelled and said enough. He packed his bags and was ready to leave. Tapovan Maharaj just told him to go and

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<sup>143</sup> Negation – not this, not this

<sup>144</sup> He has not understood the essence of knowledge or devotion

<sup>145</sup> Experiencing one's own Self in all beings and all beings in the Self

<sup>146</sup> Cottage

<sup>147</sup> Divorce, divorce, divorce

unpack. Typical guru-*sisya* relationship! When a *sisya* reaches the guru, he loses his individuality. Whatever the guru says is the last word.

Who is a *sisya*? The one who has taken a vow to follow the discipline ordained by the guru. What is the interest of the guru? The interest of the guru is definitely not in pampering the ego. If the purpose of the guru is to pamper the ego, then the whole purpose of teaching Vedanta is lost. Wherever the guru finds a trace of ego in the student, he crushes it relentlessly. Keeping Gurudev's photograph and saying that I am a big *bhakta*<sup>148</sup> is fine, but if at all we are sincere and serious about *sāadhanā*, then live with a guru – *tab ayega maza*<sup>149</sup>! Live with a guru. Living with him and serving him is in itself a *sāadhanā*, a *tapas*<sup>150</sup> because he is least interested in the individual or the individual's individuality. The guru says that whatever you said is wrong, but if I say the same thing, it is right. It is that simple. The other day I was conducting a Bala Vihar camp in Chicago and the children were freaking out. I laid down a few rules for them. Rule number one, "When I speak you don't speak. When I don't speak, you still don't speak." Rule number two, "I am the boss, and I am always right." Rule number three, "If at all you think I am wrong, refer to rule number two!" Whatever the guru says, the student has to follow implicitly. There is no choice. *Na guroradhikam tapah*<sup>151</sup>. We practice all kinds of austerities like keeping a fast or taking a *mauna vrata*<sup>152</sup> in the name of *tapas*, but the real *tapas* is staying with a guru, serving him and in the process of serving him, annihilating the ego.

The *shānti mantra*<sup>153</sup> for this Upanishad is a prayer unto the Lord by both the guru and the *sisya* requesting Him to let them hear and see only the auspicious. Spirituality starts when we start recognizing auspiciousness all around us. Using selective hearing as a *sāadhanā* is spirituality. The act of hearing also includes our speech because who is the first one to hear what we are saying? Let my heart not get poisoned with prejudice because everything that I see and hear reaches the heart. The qualified student is one who has the desire to absorb only the positive and reject all negativities, one who has the selective hearing and vision to see only that which is auspicious. He recognizes that every experience brings auspiciousness and auspiciousness alone. He must also be physically capable of undergoing the rigors of *sāadhanā*. Here is a student, full of inspiration and enthusiasm, but the body is weak and fragile, every joint and bone is creaking. If tries to sit for meditation, after every two minutes, he is meditating on the joints. It is not just meditation; it is "joint" meditation. If at all we have to do *sāadhanā*, the physical body has to be in a good condition. That is why the teacher and student pray to the Lord to bless them with good health and vitality for their entire life span.

Brahmaji tells Asvalayana that there are three qualifications required to understand the truth, *shraddhā*<sup>154</sup>, *bhakti* and *dhyāna*<sup>155</sup>. *Shraddhā* is a mandatory qualification of the student. It is complete only when there is firm and unshaken conviction in four things:

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<sup>148</sup> Devotee

<sup>149</sup> Then you will really have fun!

<sup>150</sup> Practice of austerity

<sup>151</sup> No austerity greater than (service to) the guru

<sup>152</sup> Vow of silence

<sup>153</sup> Peace invocation

<sup>154</sup> Faith

<sup>155</sup> Contemplation

- Faith in the Lord – the Lord is there and taking care of us every step of the way. He is providing us with everything that we need to flourish. The whole burden of life is dissolved with this firm conviction.
- Faith in the scriptures - think independently and accept totally that what the *shāstras*<sup>156</sup> are saying is for our benefit. Our belief in the scriptures should be as firm as our belief in the Lord. The *mantras* will reveal themselves to us when we approach them with reverence. They are the live expression of Sarasvati in our hands.
- Faith and surrender to the guru – the guru is none other than the visible expression of the Lord.
- Faith in self - *ātma visvās*<sup>157</sup> that we can achieve our goal. Why do I get back to square one? Because I do not have faith in myself.

We should have 100% faith in all four things. Lack of one element means that we do not have *shraddhā*.

What is *bhakti*? Our understanding of *bhakti* is usually limited to different kinds of procedures like performing *pūjās*, chanting, going to the temple or prostrating to the Lord. Just the mechanical performance of these actions alone is not *bhakti*. Then what is *bhakti*? Each effort made by an individual, right from birth to the last moment, is done to fulfill a demand, a want from within, to feel complete. With the five instruments of perception and five instruments of action, he runs around in this world trying to find that sense of completeness. With the eyes he sees the forms, with the ears he hears the sounds, with the skin he feels the touch, with the tongue he tastes, with the nose he smells. The intense desire which pushes him into the world to experiment with the world is called *bhoga*<sup>158</sup>. When this same person turns within with the same kind of intensity to experiment, to experience the sense of completeness, and finds that completeness within himself, that effort is called *bhakti*. At the end of the day I am tired, so I rest and when I wake up I feel completely and totally relaxed. I feel complete within myself. Is this *bhakti*? No, *bhakti* is not the ignorance of deep slumber. Any process that can make an extrovert mind introvert, is *bhakti*. The mind has the capacity to run out through the ten gates from this body into the world outside. That is being extrovert. Being able to channel the mind through different methods so that it goes within is *bhakti*.

The third and most misunderstood component pointed out by Brahmaji is *dhyāna*. Contemplation or meditation. Before we even talk of *dhyāna*, the mind must be purified because only the *suddhasatvah*<sup>159</sup> are qualified for the practice of meditation. What do we understand by meditation? Meditation for better health! Meditation for stress reduction! *Yeh koyi achar hai kya*<sup>160</sup>? Meditation is a battered word that has lost its charm and meaning in the hype of Madison Avenue. *Dhyāna* in Sanskrit means contemplation, thinking intensely about something. The *dhyāna* that is talked about here is the same *dhyāna* that leads to the fall of man as described by Lord Krishna in the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita<sup>161</sup> if it is directed towards

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<sup>156</sup> Scriptures

<sup>157</sup> Self-confidence

<sup>158</sup> Enjoyment

<sup>159</sup> Pure in mind

<sup>160</sup> Is it some kind of pickle?

<sup>161</sup> *dhyāyato visayān pumsah sangas tesupajāyate  
sangāt sanjāyate kāmah āmāt krodho 'bhijāyate  
krodhād bhavati sammohah sammohāt smṛti-vibhramah  
smṛti-bhramsād buddhi-nāso buddhi-nāsāt pranasyati*

the objects of this world. We are intense and compulsive thinkers. We have to keep on thinking. We may be sitting in a serene atmosphere. The body may be present here, but not necessarily the mind. Where is the mind? Intensely thinking of something else, *dhyāyatah*. Rather, we keep on brooding. This brooding or thinking intensely on one particular thing without being aware of it leads to our doom because it destroys the intellect's capacity to discriminate. A qualified student is one who can direct the same intensity towards *satsang*, the study of the scriptures, and understanding them thoroughly through *manana*<sup>162</sup>. With these three things as the foundation in the *sādhaka*<sup>163</sup>, the guru can take him to the Truth, the Supreme Truth as expounded in the Upanishads.

With the best will in the world, the guru cannot take the student to the Truth unless the student is ready to put forth effort. *Brahman* can only be attained by the *yatyah*<sup>164</sup>, those who are willing to put forth the required effort. The word *yati* means one who is making an effort. It is the root of the Hindi word *prayatna*, which means effort. The student must have an intensity of purpose and purity of intention. The person, who while living in the world, has the dispassion to say, "To hell with the world," is a fit student of this knowledge. That dispassion leads to courage, "Come what may nothing can shake me!" After Gautama Buddha left his palace, he tried many different things in order to gain *nirvana*<sup>165</sup>. Finally he sat down to meditate under a *bodhi* tree in Gaya with a firm resolve not to rise until he had realized the Ultimate Truth, "Come what may, let the body perish, but I will not get up until my goal is achieved." With firm conviction, he just sat there. So it is that the *yatis*, being the qualified students, enter the great abode of Immortality.

*Vedānta vijnān sunischitārthah*<sup>166</sup>. There is no ambiguity here. When we are taught that two plus two is four, there is no doubt in our minds, "Why not five?" *Brahman* can be attained by the pure of heart who follow the path laid down in the scriptures. There are two ways in which we can live our life. One is to follow what the guru says, what the scriptures say implicitly, with complete trust. This method is not based on blind belief; it is based on good logic. There is a simple rule of mountaineering, "Follow the footsteps of your leader, at least on the snow because he has already checked out the path ahead." Similarly in spirituality, we do not have to reinvent the wheel. There are so many *mahātmās*<sup>167</sup> who have gone on the path before us, Ramana Maharishi, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Tapovan Maharaj, and Gurudev to name only a few. These are not *rishis*<sup>168</sup> who lived thousands of years ago, but in the last century. They have reached the peak and shown us the path.

The second method is "dare to do it, go ahead". But if one follows this path, then one should be ready to face the consequences. If you have the courage to face the consequences, then go ahead and experiment yourself. But what happens in our lives is a *khichdi*<sup>169</sup>. We are like Trishanku suspended in mid-air between *svarga*<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Reflection and careful analysis

<sup>163</sup> An aspirant devoted to the practice of spiritual discipline

<sup>164</sup> Self-controlled sages

<sup>165</sup> Absorption in *Brahman*

<sup>166</sup> Those who have ascertained clearly the deeper import of Vedānta

<sup>167</sup> Great souls

<sup>168</sup> Sages

<sup>169</sup> Mixture

<sup>170</sup> Heaven

and earth, neither here nor there. The point is that if we follow either method with complete conviction, we will reach the Ultimate Truth. There is no ambiguity, *sunischitārthah*.

### **What is the process of gaining the knowledge of *Brahman*?**

Before we can start the process of our *sādhana*, there are three questions that must be answered:

- Am I limited?
- Am I bound by these limitations?
- Do I want to break free from these limitations?

Answering the questions starting from the reverse order, no living being likes to be bound. We love freedom, we love free expression. That is why we talk of human rights, constitutional rights, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of this, freedom of that. Freedom is the basic nature of each expression of life, not just of human beings. What is the *jīvātmā* limited by? He is limited by his own understanding of himself as the body, mind, and intellect. And, when this individual limited by his own body, mind and intellect expresses out into the world, taking the support of the outside world, he starts to believe that he exists because of this world of externality. Not only does he think that he is limited by his own body, mind and intellect, he starts to believe that he is limited by this world of objects, emotions, thoughts, beings, people. He exists because of them. For him to understand and digest the fact that all these things exist because of him and he does not exist because of them becomes very difficult. So this *jīvātma* bound by his identification with his own body, mind and intellect, acting and reacting in the external world of plurality becomes that much more fragmented into small pieces.

In the previous discussion we saw that the qualified student must possess faith, devotion and be contemplative. The knowledge of *Brahman* can be gained by one who practices these three *yogas* – *shraddhā yoga*, *bhakti yoga* and *dhyāna yoga*. The word *yoga* is derived from the root word *yuj*, which means to unite. So what do we have to do? Through *shraddhā* unite ourselves with the truth. Through *bhakti* unite ourselves with the truth. Through *Dhyāna* unite ourselves with the truth.

The third *mantra* of Kaivalyopanishad uses the technique of negation to tell us very clearly that this Immortality cannot be attained by action, progeny or wealth<sup>171</sup>. It can be gained by *sannyāsa*<sup>172</sup> alone. Renunciation of what? Renunciation of *karma*<sup>173</sup>, renunciation of *prajaya*<sup>174</sup>, renunciation of *dhana*<sup>175</sup>. All our efforts in the world are directed towards gaining security through our actions, our children or the acquisition of wealth. Our goal is immortality or a state of changelessness, but that goal cannot be achieved by these three. It can be achieved only by *tyāga*<sup>176</sup> alone. *Tyāgenaike* can also mean renunciation of that one entity, which is trying to become everything every moment, which leads to the different changes known as “death”. Who is that entity? It is the ego. To be somebody, to become somebody is all that the ego is

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<sup>171</sup> *Na karmanā na prajayā dhanena  
tyāgenaike amratvamānasuh*

<sup>172</sup> Renunciation

<sup>173</sup> Action

<sup>174</sup> Progeny

<sup>175</sup> Wealth

<sup>176</sup> Renunciation

trying to do. Drop that one ego and you will attain immortality. Live as an individual, but without individuality.

When we talk about gaining *Brahman* by *sannyāsa* alone, it is not a 50-50 *nyāsa*<sup>177</sup>, "Swamiji thoda to chod deejye"<sup>178</sup>. In spirituality it is either 0% or 100%. There is nothing in between. *Samyaka*<sup>179</sup> *nyāsa*, *sampūrna*<sup>180</sup> *nyāsa*. If you want that ultimate reality, that ultimate happiness, leave all these things right now and leave them completely. Not even a trace should remain to disturb you. This is a difficult concept from the standpoint of the *grhastha*<sup>181</sup>, "How do I leave everything? How do I give up my attachment to *karma*, *prajya* and *dhana*?" It is important for us to be recognized as an achiever, a wife, a mother, a father, a person of accomplishment. This is one part of the equation. The second part is the satisfaction we get from having achieved something. Both of these need to be dropped. In the Upanishads *sannyāsa* does not mean we leave our responsibilities and run away or stop up performing actions. Even after *sannyāsa*, if we run away and start living in an *āsrāma*<sup>182</sup>, we are forced to work. As Gurudev puts it, "Work we must." What we must renounce is our attachment. If we have understood this much, we have understood half of the concept of *sannyāsa*. What is the other half?

The word *nyāsa* also means to put or place and refers to a component of ritualism in which the practitioner touches various parts of the body, and at the same time pronounces a *mantra* in order to purify the body by propitiating the Lord who is residing in the different parts of the body. We sit in front of the Lord and perform *kara*<sup>183</sup> *nyāsa*, which is purification of the hands, *anga*<sup>184</sup> *nyāsa*, which is purification of the body. *Nyāsa* is supposed to divinize the body of the worshipper. Such is the beauty of language! The same word indicates two opposite meanings! After having propitiated that Lord, you worship that Lord in you. Spirituality is not just a part of life, it is the whole. *Sampūrna nyāsa*. Our *sāadhanā* should be done with complete understanding of the purpose, with an intensity that does not leave any scope for forgetfulness. Spirituality does not accept forgetfulness. Do we ever say, "I forgot to breathe. I was hungry, but I forgot to eat. I was thirsty, but I forgot to drink." Ridiculous! We don't say that. There should be no negligence, no forgetfulness whatsoever.

Vedanta *mārga*<sup>185</sup> is known as *neti mārga*<sup>186</sup> where we start by negating things which are not the Self. The other day I went to somebody's house for *bhikshā*. The hosts had a cute little boy who was about six years old. One of the dishes that the hostess was serving was *bhindi*. What do you call it? Okra. In India, we call it lady's fingers. So the mother was trying to serve everyone the okra. As the children do when there is somebody new in the house, *thodi khit-pit zyada karte hain*<sup>187</sup>, he said, "I don't want any." She was trying to convince him to take it, but he kept resisting. *Bahut*

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<sup>177</sup> To throw or cast away

<sup>178</sup> Swamiji please leave us with something

<sup>179</sup> Complete

<sup>180</sup> Total

<sup>181</sup> Householder

<sup>182</sup> Hermitage; monastery

<sup>183</sup> Hands

<sup>184</sup> Body

<sup>185</sup> Path

<sup>186</sup> Path of negation

<sup>187</sup> They whine a little bit more than usual

*awaaz kar raha tha*<sup>188</sup>. The father immediately took him to the kitchen, opened the refrigerator, pulled out all the vegetables and put them on the table. He said, "That vegetable is green in color, thin, not too long and almost hexagonal with six sides. Now try and find it." The boy came running up with a carrot first, "Dad is this it?" Immediately, his older brother said, "Fool, didn't you hear what Daddy said? It is green in color." "Oh!" He ran back. Next he brought back a squash. The Father laughed and said, "I said it is thin and not too long." He left the squash there and came back with a *mirchi* – jalapeno, which was green, thin and not too long. The father was very patient, "You are very close. Go back and look again." He finally comes back with an okra. It is such a simple technique that the father had applied. What he was doing here was *neti*, giving the known parameters so that which is not can be negated. By saying that the vegetable is green, slender, not too long, hexagonal, all other colors, shapes and sizes are negated.

Just as Asvalayana went to Brahmaji, similarly there were two other people who went for *ātmā jñāna*<sup>189</sup> to Brahmaji. One was Asurarāj<sup>190</sup>, and the other was the king of the *devatās*<sup>191</sup>, Indra. Both of them approach Brahmaji in Chhāndogyopanishad and say, "Please bless us with the knowledge of the Self." Immediately Brahmaji says, "That which you feel you are, meditate on that as *Paramātmā*." So both of them go away and meditate for thirty six years. After thirty six years of *tapas* they come back to Brahmaji and say, "I have understood." "What is it?" "I feel this body is *Paramātmā*." Brahmaji does not say yes or no, he just stares at them, "So be it, but if you still feel that you have not recognized who you are, then go back and do some more *tapas*." Now the Asurarāj and Indra thinking their *sādhanā* is done start on their way back to their respective homes. In thirty six years, their nails and *dadhi-wadhi badh gaya tha*<sup>192</sup>, so they stop at a pond to groom themselves. When Indra sees his reflection in the water, he thinks, "If I can see the reflection of this body and can recognize it as a reflection that means I am definitely not this which I can see." He comes back confused to Brahma, but the Asurarāj goes back to his kingdom convinced that he is the body. So here the Upanishad *rishi* is implying that those who consider themselves to be the body are *asuras* or *daityas*. Each time Indra recognizes each one of these layers of the body, mind, intellect, and *prāna*, Brahma keeps sending him back. Every time he meditates for thirty six years. Imagine thirty six times five! After the fifth time when Brahmaji sends him back, Indra does not come back because he recognizes that subtler than the subtlest all pervading truth as himself, that which is not experienced, that which is not seen, that which is not known, but that which exists in and through all these experiences. Then Brahmaji sends for Indra. Indra says, "I have recognized the truth. I am that truth." Brahmaji says, "Go and meditate again." He goes off for another thirty six years. In the silence, Indra recognizes himself as pervading all that which he had negated as *na-iti, na-iti, na-iti*<sup>193</sup>. This doesn't exist, this doesn't exist, this is not me, this is not me, this is not me. He experiences himself as pervading in and through everything. When Indra's eyes shine with the glow of self-knowledge, Brahma says, "Now you can go. You have realized the Truth."

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<sup>188</sup> He was making a lot of noise

<sup>189</sup> Self-knowledge

<sup>190</sup> The king of the demons

<sup>191</sup> Gods

<sup>192</sup> Their beards had grown long

<sup>193</sup> Not this, not this, not this

This method of negation is the one adopted by the *jnāni* who starts his *sāadhanā* by saying that this is not the permanent existential truth. I alone am that. *Tat tvam asi*. He recognizes himself to be That and That is *sat*<sup>194</sup>, *chit*<sup>195</sup>, *ānanda*<sup>196</sup>. The world that he is experiencing, the layers that he is experiencing are not *satchidānanda*. The *bhakta* approaches the same Truth from a different angle. What does a *bhakta* do? He does not negate the world; he does not negate the things around him. He says, "*Main sevak sa char-achar swami*<sup>197</sup>." He understands that he is existing in and through everything. Whether we start from *bhakti* or *jnāna*, the experience that we reach is the *yoga*<sup>198</sup> of both. That is why in Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, one of the *sūtras* says, *jnāna* fulfilled is *bhakti*, *bhakti* fructified is *jnāna*. They are called *para-bhakti*, *para-jnāna*, both of which are same, *tat tvameva tvameva tat*. After having realized the Truth, there is no need for negation. That is why when a *mahātmā* is realized, he never ever negates, he never ever says anything derogatory about the world, but when he says that the world is true, he is not saying it from the same standpoint as us.

Now what is the process of *sāadhanā*? One method given is to chant Om in synchronization with the breath. I think there is a chapter on *pranava*<sup>199</sup> *upāsana* in Linga Purāna or in Siva Purāna, one of the two, I don't remember. The reason I had to go through it is because a person came to me after one of my lectures, "Swamiji, I have read in this *Purāna* that *grhasthas* should not chant *Omkāra*. So we should not start our classes with chanting of Om." He was telling me this based on the authenticity of the scriptures. So before I could answer him, I had to check out what was said exactly in the *Purāna*. The *Purāna* says that if *Omkāra* is chanted ten thousand times, it creates a kind of energized frequency in the mind so that it loses interest in this world. *Vairāgya*<sup>200</sup> is the result. The repetition of *Omkāra* is not a fast, mechanical process. If a *grhastha* who has to take care of his spouse, parents, parents, in-laws and other extended family were to develop total *vairāgya* it might create confusion in society. So that is why it was said the *grhasthas* should not chant Om, but definitely chanting Om thrice before a class is not going to make much of a difference!

The chanting of Om must be synchronized to our breathing pattern. If we are very angry then our breathing is fast, uncontrollably fast. When we are fuming, we can feel the heat emanating from the mind. That is why we have this usage in Hindi, "*Dimag garam ho gaya hai*."<sup>201</sup> If we try to speak while breathing, we find it impossible. Try to chant *Hari Om* while taking a deep slow breath. It is a challenge! In order to pronounce a word, the air has to go through the larynx and come out. That is when sound is made. That is why it is said, don't start with the mental repetition of Om. Chant it aloud. Definitely when you are doing it aloud, do it in a place where you won't be disturbed and you won't disturb others. Synchronize the chanting with the breath. Here we are talking of Om, but it can be any *mantra*. Take a deep slow breath. Don't make an effort, it is an automatic process. The only thing you have to do is to observe and slow down the process. Take a deep breath as slow

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<sup>194</sup> Existence

<sup>195</sup> Knowledge

<sup>196</sup> Bliss

<sup>197</sup> I am the servant and the Lord is the Master of the moveable and the immoveable worlds

<sup>198</sup> Union

<sup>199</sup> Omkara

<sup>200</sup> Renunciation

<sup>201</sup> The mind is hot

as possible and while exhaling chant Om as loud as possible. The entire process should be smooth and effortless with no breathlessness or gasping for air. This chanting process in synchronization with the breath is called *japa*. *Japa* is not just the fast rattling of *mantras*. It is not the quantity of *japa* that is important, it is the quality.

Om represents the three planes of experience. When we do the *sandhi vicchedha*<sup>202</sup> of Om, it consists of three sounds – *A*, *U* and *M*. *A* + *U* becomes *O* according to the rules of Sanskrit grammar. *A* represents the waking world, *U* represents the dream world and *M* represents the state of deep sleep. This Om is such a beautiful word! *A* and *M* are two of the first sounds uttered effortlessly by children. That is why the term for mother in most languages starts with *A* or *M* – *ammā*, *mā*, mother. In the sequence of the 52 syllables, the first sound that can be produced is *A*, which starts from the *kantha*<sup>203</sup>. The last syllable *M* which is *oshthya*<sup>204</sup> cannot be pronounced without the lips touching each other. What is the sound in the middle? *U*. When the lips are not completely open as in the case of *A* or completely closed as in the case of *M*, but a little open. So, the combination of these three sounds represents the world of experience. Anything that we experience in this world is between the two sounds *A* and *M*. How is that? Every object, every experience in this world needs to be named. *Nāma*<sup>205</sup> and *rūpa*<sup>206</sup> are inseparable. When we take a name inevitably a picture of the form immediately forms in our mind, see a form, and immediately the name occurs in the mind. The whole world of plurality is experienced by us as having a name and form. Wherever there is a form, there is a name. So the whole world of experience which we understand through names, is nothing but words composed of syllables starting with *A* and ending with *M*, with the *U* in between.

What happens when we try to start this *japa* of Om or any other *mantra*, “Swamiji, the mind is so agitated. I don’t know how to control the mind. How do I control the mind?” Our concept of controlling the mind is similar to the control we have over our cars, but how is the mind? Absolutely beyond our control, like our children. Stop expecting the mind to listen! As the children, so the mind. *Aap unko uttar baithne ko bologe, to woh dakshin baithenge*<sup>207</sup>. Similar is the mind, its nature is unsteady, you ask it to quiet down; it starts jumping all over the place like a monkey. When we sit down for the practice of meditation or *japa*, our aim, our interest, our concentration should not be in fighting with the mind. *Yeh seedhi si baat hai, man se ladna nahin hai. Aapne kushthi dekhi hai? Ek admi paanv pakadta hai, to doosra usko patakhta hai*<sup>208</sup>. The referee is also in the ring, but he is just a spectator, “*Maar lo bhaiya main dekhta hoon*<sup>209</sup>.” The mind being unsteady, if we participate in its unsteadiness, we also become unsteady. Stand back and watch the fun. And especially when you are watching your mind, you cannot be serious because nobody can be serious watching the cartoon network!

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<sup>202</sup> The process of breaking apart sounds that have been joined together

<sup>203</sup> Throat

<sup>204</sup> Labial

<sup>205</sup> Name

<sup>206</sup> Form

<sup>207</sup> You ask them to sit facing the north, they will sit facing the south.

<sup>208</sup> This is a straightforward statement - we should not fight with the mind. Have you seen wrestling? One man grabs the other’s leg and the second man throws him down.

<sup>209</sup> Go ahead and beat each other up, I will just watch.

Our effort should not be in controlling the mind. The more we try to do that, the more agitated we become. The result is that we become frustrated and totally sapped of all energy. One thing that we have to understand is that the mind cannot exist as a separate entity, "The mind exists because I exist. The mind does not have any potency if I do not exist." So where should the concentration be? The concentration should not be on the mind, the concentration should be on the Self. "Yeh kehna bahut aasaan hai, hota nahin hai"<sup>210</sup>. Why is that? "Aadat se majboor hain"<sup>211</sup>. We are so used to the old patterns of living that we cannot break free from them. That is where *japa* can help. When we synchronize our breath and chant the *mantra*, our attention is taken away from the mind and its agitations. Repeated practice of this method **will** have an effect in our day-to-day life.

Now going to a subtler level, the next level of experience. When we are chanting in synchronization with the breath, then we start observing that our chanting starts from silence and merges back into silence. It is like a wave that rises from the surface of the ocean and merges back into the ocean. With the help of this slow process of breathing and chanting, our concentration or intensity has to be gradually shifted from the chanting and observing the breath to the place where the sound is rising. Immediately we go deep within. This can only happen if we drop the body and concentrate on the silence from where the Om is rising and merging back into, which leads us to the realization that I am that unshakeable, immovable silence. The whole world of thought rises in me and merges back into me. When this awareness of the self as silence becomes an unforced state of being, the mind glides effortlessly into the state of meditation.

As long as we are fighting, we are struggling and we are trying to act, we are still in the state of *pratyāhāra*<sup>212</sup>. We have to elevate from the process of *pratyāhāra* to *dhāraṇa*<sup>213</sup> in order to develop the *nishthā*<sup>214</sup> to reach the state of *dhyāna*. But then this state of *dhyāna* is also limited by time and space. Speaking from this standpoint someone asked me, "Swamiji, meditation kitni der karun main"<sup>215</sup>? "Gin ke teen second – ek, do, teen...utha jao"<sup>216</sup>. Meditation is not something which you force on yourself and start doing. It is an unforced state of being. Whenever somebody calls us by our name, do we force ourselves to practice, "Ek second. Main Uddhav Chaitanya, main Uddhav Chaitanya... ab boliye"<sup>217</sup>. " Do we have to practice our name? It is such an unforced state of being. Meditation is also such a state of unforced existence. Meditation happens, it is not forced to happen. So let me repeat myself so that I am not misquoted. To reach this state of unforced existence, we have to start with the practice of *pratyāhāra* wherein we withdraw from everything that limits us as individuals, the world of plurality, the world of experience, the body, the mind and intellect, and start the practice of chanting Om synchronized with the breath. This helps us to reach the state of meditative poise. Once we become established in this practice, then meditation happens.

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<sup>210</sup> This is easier said than done.

<sup>211</sup> We are slaves of habit.

<sup>212</sup> Withdrawal

<sup>213</sup> Concentration

<sup>214</sup> Conviction

<sup>215</sup> Swamiji how long should I meditate?

<sup>216</sup> Do it for three seconds. 1, 2, 3...now get up

<sup>217</sup> Wait just a second. I am Uddhav Chaitanya; I am Uddhav Chaitanya...Go ahead now.

The fifth *mantra* of Kaivalyopanishad gives a detailed description of how the seeker should sit for meditation. A prerequisite for meditation is a pure mind. How do we achieve this? The Lord was very kind to us. When He created the human psyche, He created the *antahkaraṇa* as the purest, the most *sāttvik*<sup>218</sup> form of expression. That is the purest form, but in that purest form why is it that we feel so many disturbances? If there is a disturbance in the mind, if there is a disturbance in the intellect, if there is a disturbance in the memory, if there is a disturbance because of the ego, it is not the Lord's creation. It is not *Isvara sristi*<sup>219</sup>, it is *jīva sristi*<sup>220</sup>. In order to purify our minds, we must drop everything that is not part *Isvara sristi*. Stop contaminating the *antahkaraṇa* with the so-called *loka jñāna*<sup>221</sup>.

After purifying the mind, how should we sit for meditation? *Viviktadese cha sukhāsanasthah*<sup>222</sup>. Sit in a secluded place don't disturb others, don't let others disturb you. We should be able to switch off the world wherever we are. *Sukhāsanasthah*. In a comfortable, relaxed posture, minimum area of body should touch the ground, head, neck, and back should be in a straight line. *Suchih*<sup>223</sup>. The place should be pure and clean and the *sādhaka* should sit with a pure mind, with a *pavitra*<sup>224</sup> *bhāva*<sup>225</sup>. The cleanliness that is talked about here is not the sterile cleanliness of hospitals. *Suchih* is not just clean, but pure, sanctified. When we go to the temple, when we go in front of the Lord, it is clean as well as *pavitra*. That is *suchih*. Once seated, we should lock all the gates of the mind, the five *jñāhendriyas*<sup>226</sup> and the five *karmendriyas*<sup>227</sup>. Let nothing disturb you. Let the whole world be on fire, don't move. Detach from the organs. The moment you disassociate from the activities of the mind, it loses its potency and power. Observe the mind, don't be a part of it. *Svagurum pranamyā bhaktyā*<sup>228</sup>, worship your guru with all intensity, surrender completely to the guru. Then start contemplating on the lotus of the spiritual heart where the Lord resides.

What do we do on the seat of meditation after all this preparation? If we are performing a *pūjā*, if we are chanting, if we are doing *japa*, we are doing something. The question is that on the seat of meditation, what do I do? In that calm atmosphere sometimes we feel really out of place because the mind is always used to chattering. Sitting in a composed state, we get jittery thinking, "What am I supposed to be doing here?" Then the guru tells us that sitting on the seat of meditation, start contemplating on who you are and stop bothering about who you are not! Normally the mind is always used to thinking about the body, its agitations, and its different kinds of disturbances. Put these things aside, start thinking about who you are!

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<sup>218</sup> Pure, serene

<sup>219</sup> The Lord's creation

<sup>220</sup> The individual's creation

<sup>221</sup> Worldly knowledge

<sup>222</sup> In an undisturbed place, resting in a comfortable posture

<sup>223</sup> Pure

<sup>224</sup> Pure

<sup>225</sup> Feeling

<sup>226</sup> Organs of perception

<sup>227</sup> Organs of action

<sup>228</sup> Prostrate to one's own guru with devotion

Meditation is not *prānāyāma*, it is not *japa*, it is not observing the mind, it is not *sākshi bhāva*<sup>229</sup>. Whether we are actively observing this world or our own mind, we exist in duality when we are observing something. That means we are doing something. That is not meditation. If we think that all these processes are meditation, then we are in a fool's paradise! They may be preparatory processes for meditation but they are not meditation. **When all the doing ceases, that is meditation.** Now while sitting and thinking about myself and contemplating, many a time we are inspired, but why is it that we come back to square one? Trained to think objectively about everything, we are forced to see this process of *sādhana* also in a very objective way. Each one of us is inevitably bound by his or her identification with the body. So many of our efforts are geared towards the body. As Ādi Sankarācārya puts it so beautifully in Bhaja Govindam, *udara nimittam*<sup>230</sup>. As long as we have this body-oriented living, as long as we feel that we exist as this body, achieving meditation is a long way away. That concept of being a body has to drop on the seat of meditation. How can that be dropped?

All of us who are entangled in the snares of the mind have to prepare the mind to glide into meditation by a technique called *upāsana*. What is *upāsana*? As the word suggests - *upa* + *āsana*. *Upa* means very close and *āsana* means seated, when we are seated very close to the Lord. Even to sit for a moment without a thought disturbing us is an art. When we sit for meditation, the mind does not get introverted automatically. Even to think about the Lord who is *achintyama*, to think about these pointers, the mind has to be prepared. Thinking about the formless is a difficult task. *Upāsana* has another meaning also. *Nikrishta vastuni utkrishta bhāva upāsana*, when we start seeing the Lord in even the things which do not carry any value for us. It is all *bhāva*, in our thoughts. Vivekanada once asked a king to spit on his photograph. The king got very angry, "How dare you ask me to spit on my photograph?" Vivekanada said, "Maharaj, that is just a piece of paper, mounted and framed. You are here, not there. Spitting on it is not the same as spitting on you. Why are you getting agitated?" The Maharaj got the point. We think about the Lord through something that we know, can relate to. That which we have never seen or experienced, to sit on the seat of meditation and start contemplating on it is not such an easy task because the mind is not prepared. So *upāsana* is a process through which we prepare the mind for contemplation of the formless.

Many of us have got a question regarding *saguna upāsana*<sup>231</sup> and *nirguna upāsana*<sup>232</sup> – contemplating on the Lord with form and without form, which is greater? Comparisons are wrong, each one with his own state of preparedness has to adopt one method and start practicing it. *Upāsana* is a technique for all those who are bound by the body, who think, exist and work as body. Inevitably all of us fall into this category. How do we get out of this mindset? The mind starts relating to the Lord in the form that it likes. The example given here is of Lord Siva. Start from there, or it can be Krishna or Rama. Can it be a guru? Yes, it can be your guru. Svetasvataropaniṣad very clearly states that the guru is the live expression of the Lord we have not seen. It can be the guru or any *ishta deva*<sup>233</sup>. Start relating to that *ishta deva* in different forms. That is why so many *manas pūjās* have been developed, for example *Siva Manas Pūjā*. When you are imagining, then *kanjoosi*

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<sup>229</sup> Attitude of a witness

<sup>230</sup> For the sake of the body

<sup>231</sup> Worship of the Lord with form and attributes

<sup>232</sup> Worship of the Lord without form and attributes

<sup>233</sup> The chosen deity of the devotee

*kyon karna hai*<sup>234</sup>? Let it be a marvelous thing! Offer the Lord a *ratna khachita hema simhāsana*<sup>235</sup>!

How do we prepare ourselves for *upāsana*? The body is gross and the mind is subtle. The subtle has an effect on the gross and vice versa. What is it that connects the gross to the subtle? That which connects the two is *prāna*, we can feel it, but cannot see it, subtler than the body, grosser than the mind, it connects the two. That is why we find that when the mind is agitated or angry like the pressure cooker before the whistle goes off, *abhi seeti bajegi*<sup>236</sup> our breathing is fast and shallow. Now let us look at the body. When the body is agitated, when we have been running, working hard and fast, the mind also gets agitated and the breathing is also fast. Supposing by mistake, you wake up early in the morning before sunrise, you are not tired, you watch the sunrise, listen to the birds chirping, feel the cool breeze, there is no agitation or disturbance of the mind. At that moment how is your breathing? Deep and slow. That means that when the body and mind are not agitated, the breathing is slow. When the mind is agitated, the body becomes agitated, breathing becomes fast and vice versa. That is the bridge.

So when we are sitting on the seat of meditation, when the head, body and neck are straight, the body is balanced and without any tension, sitting straight effortlessly like a shirt falling naturally on a hanger, all we have to do is to slow the breathing down as much as possible. There are three processes involved in breathing – *puraka*<sup>237</sup>, *rechaka*<sup>238</sup> and *kumbhaka*<sup>239</sup>. There are two kinds of *kumbhaka* – *antar-kumbhaka*<sup>240</sup> and *bahir-kumbhaka*<sup>241</sup>. Here we are not talking about *kumbhaka*. What are we talking about? Observing the simple, easy flow of breath in and out. How many of us aware of our breath in the waking plane? Just being aware of our slow and deep breathing is an achievement. So on the seat of meditation, sit and observe the breath, not *prānāyāma*, but observing the *sahaja prāna shakti*<sup>242</sup>. By doing this what do we achieve? The mind's agitations are totally negated. Suddenly there is a vibrant mind full of energy and limitless potentialities, available for contemplation without any kind of agitation or disturbance. What a scientific analysis by the *rishis*! This particular state of mind is called *ekagra chitta*<sup>243</sup>, whereby concentration can be achieved. Nowadays people are selling capsules for sharpening the concentration. Fool's paradise! How can you enhance concentration with pills? These are short-term remedies, but the remedies prescribed by the *rishis* are long-term and permanent. When the mind is ready, then start contemplating on the Lord, perform physical *pūjā* as well as *manas pūjā*, start relating to the *vibhuti*<sup>244</sup> and *līlās*<sup>245</sup> of your *ishta deva*, be with that thought for a while. Thus by thinking about the Lord, *yat bhāvam tat bhavati*, as the *bhāva*, so we become. When we criticize

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<sup>234</sup> Why be miserly?

<sup>235</sup> Gold throne studded with precious gemstones

<sup>236</sup> The whistle will just go off

<sup>237</sup> Inhalation

<sup>238</sup> Exhalation

<sup>239</sup> Holding the breath

<sup>240</sup> Holding the breath after inhalation

<sup>241</sup> Holding the breath after exhalation

<sup>242</sup> The normal flow of the vital air

<sup>243</sup> Single-pointed mind

<sup>244</sup> Glory

<sup>245</sup> Divine sport or play

somebody with intensity, the same negative traits manifest themselves in our personality also. *Bura mat dekho, bura mat kaho, bura mat suno*<sup>246</sup>.

*Umasahāyam* – that Lord is with Uma. Who is Uma? She was named Parvati when she was born. Why Parvati? *Parvat putri Parvati*, she was born to Himalaya. She started doing intense *tapas* for Lord Siva, so people especially her mother said *u...mā*. *Mā* in Sanskrit means don't. Every time they saw her, they said, *u...mā*. Don't do this kind of intense *tapas*. So Parvati was renamed Uma because of her *tapas*. The whole technique of *upāsanā* is indicated by Uma, who is sitting with the Lord. *Up-asana*, how do you reach there, and sit with the Lord? By the intensity of *tapas*. There are two words to be understood here - *titiksā* and *tapas*. Both appear similar, but there is a lot of difference. *Titiksā* is facing life and its difficulties as and when they come, not reacting to them, but facing them. What is *tapas*? To put it in very plain words it is a self-inflicted penance or discomfort that helps us to grow out of our limitations. Achieving concentration without *tapas* is not easy. Uma had done *ghor*<sup>247</sup> *tapas* and achieved her goal.

How do we achieve our goal? "Don't ask me to go to the Himalayas and stand on one foot Swamiji. Impossible! What can I do as *tapas*?" There are two or three different ways of understanding *sāadhanā* as *tapas*. Regularity of our spiritual *sāadhanā* is *tapas*, maintaining regularity is a must. Come what may, in that specified time that I have chosen for myself, nothing in the world can come between me and my Lord. Let the whole world be on fire!

The second *tapas* is to spend as little time as possible on the maintenance of the body. You will be surprised to find how much time you spend on the body. One basic thing, there should be some food intake three or four times a day, in the morning, afternoon and evening and sometimes in between these three intervals also, *madhye-madhye*<sup>248</sup>. But what do we do? Coffee *samarpayāmi*, *yeh samarpayāmi*, *woh samarpayāmi*. *Pet ko kachde ka dibba bana rakha hai*<sup>249</sup>! Spend as little time as possible on the body. As Akhandananda Maharaj says, "Do minute mein nahana, paanch minute mein khana, baad mein bhool jana"<sup>250</sup>. What a beautiful technique! How much time do we spend in the bathroom? The purpose of the *upāsanā* that we are doing is to rise above the body consciousness, but the rest of the time, the activities that we are doing ensure that it does not happen. Then we ask the question, "Why is spirituality not working?" How can it work when we are spending so much time on body *upāsanā*?

In Hyderabad every third shop is a *paan* shop. Each shop has ten or fifteen people waiting to be served. The *paanwala* does not want to lose any business. So what does he do? He covers the interior of his shop with mirrors. Why mirrors? So that after placing their orders, all the customers are preoccupied with themselves. What a marketing strategy! The *paanwala* is making use of our own limitations and bondage to the body to keep his customers satisfied. Many people ask why we wear yellow. Early in the morning after we take our bath, we don't have to wonder, "Aaj kya

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<sup>246</sup> See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil

<sup>247</sup> Intense, frightful

<sup>248</sup> In between

<sup>249</sup> We have made a trash can of our stomachs by offering coffee and other junk food any time we feel like it.

<sup>250</sup> Finish your bath in two minutes, your food in five minutes, then forget about them

*pahnoon? Kis ka kya matching hai<sup>251</sup>?*” The whole chapter is removed; the thought does not arise at all. Yellow-yellow, and more yellow! Finished! At the most, what choice do we have? Dark yellow or light yellow. What joy! Spend as little time as possible on the body. What is the rule of thumb? “*Do minute mein nahana, paanch minute mein khana, baad mein bhool jana.*” That is the second *tapas*.

The third *tapas*, very difficult but very important is to be aware of every breath that we take in the waking plane. Anything we do, anywhere we are, be aware of the breath. This is a practical method, not mentioned in any *bhāsyā*<sup>252</sup>. This does not require any extra time to sit somewhere. You have to breathe anyway, just be aware of it. Slow and steady. The moment you are aware of the breath, you are aware of the mind. The moment you are aware of the mind, the agitations in the mind are nullified. The moment the agitations in the mind are nullified, the unnecessary stress that we are carrying with us is released. Make it a point to be aware of the breath. If these three methods are accepted as *tapas*, following them is like being Uma. Because what will the world say? *U-mā*, don’t do it. *Umasahāyam*, where will you reach? *Paramesvaram prabhum*, you become the master of yourself.

If we are *sādhaks*, if we are doing spiritual *sādhanā*, listen carefully – you will not find this in a book. What should be our practice of spirituality? Never ever contaminate any experience that comes in your life with the confusion of past and future. Never contaminate it. Experience every experience as it is, as and when it comes. There is a different kind of a joy in it. The joy is not in comparing, the joy is not in expecting. The joy is in experiencing it – a very subtle statement. If we understand this, what is the practical implication of this understanding? There will be no reaction whatsoever to any thing, being, space or time. “I cannot stand that person, Swamiji!” No need to stand him! Make him sit. “Oh, this was so great yesterday!” There should be no comparison whatsoever, as and when it comes, whatever it is, accept it 100% completely.

What is the scientific reason behind living such a life? We are not creating any new impressions or *vāsanās* in our *chitta*. Whatever already exists is expressing itself whether you make an effort or not. The art of living is experiencing life as it comes without any contamination. The moment you contaminate it with an expectation or with a comparison, you are contaminating *Paramātmā*. To put it in a nutshell, spirituality does not end on the seat of meditation. Every experience, every moment that we live in the waking world has to be cautiously, alertly lived without contaminating that moment. And supposing you understand this statement – what a joy in that kind of a living. That is the reason, there is a sparkle, there is a joy on children’s faces. They are happy regardless of what happens. In existence alone, there is bliss.

### **What is the result of gaining the knowledge of *Brahman*?**

If we are spiritual seekers, what should be the result of our *sādhanā*? Whenever Gurudev used to visit the different centers, he used to leave everybody with a feeling, “He remembered me. Everything he said was only for me.” Everybody used to love him, and enjoyed being with him. If at all we are doing spiritual *sādhanā*, what is the barometer of our spirituality? Whenever we are working in this world, our

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<sup>251</sup> What should I wear today? What matches with what?

<sup>252</sup> Commentary

presence should be a joy for everyone we come in contact with. When we are not a joke, but a joy, when everyone feels a sense of oneness with us, we are making progress in spirituality, but if in spite of all our *sāadhanā*, we become a human repellant and people want to run away from us then there is definitely something lacking in our *sāadhanā*. The first result of gaining this knowledge is the absence of any feelings of negativity towards our own self or the world. We lose the right to hate ourselves or the world because both are none other than expressions of the same Self.

If we are pricked by a thorn and it is stuck in our foot it hurts, but the effort pull it out is also very painful. If an eyelash gets stuck in our eye, it hurts. The whole eye becomes red and starts watering. It is difficult to even keep the eye open so that the hair can be removed. As long as it was attached to our eye, it was our own. The moment it got detached and fell into the eye it was no longer our own, it became a foreign particle. The moment it is removed, the eye is still red and watering, but the moment foreign particle is removed, what a relief! In Gulliver's Travels, the Lilliputians tie him down with so many threads that it was impossible for him to move even though the threads were not big or strong. Similar is our plight! What we are attached to might be small things, but there thousands and millions of these small things that tie us down. The sparkle of freedom in the eyes of the self-realized expresses as fearlessness. Nothing has the capacity to touch them. The glow in their eyes says that they do not care about anything in the world. Understanding themselves to be the Self, they are free from their bondage with the world. This *nirbhayatvam*<sup>253</sup> can be seen in the eyes of *mahātmās* like Ramana Maharishi, Gurudev, and Swami Vivekananda. .

Once I was talking to children about fearlessness. They asked me, "Swamiji, are you fearless?" "Yes, I am". Their next question, "Are you afraid of lions?" "No." Their immediate response was to blow air into my eyes, "Why are you closing your eyes Swamiji? Are you afraid?" That is not what is meant by fearlessness. If somebody blows air into your eyes, it is a normal and natural reaction to close your eyes. Once the eyes are closed, they will not be disturbed by the air. We should know when to switch on and switch off this process of coming into the world and going out of the world. Nothing will have the power to disturb the one who is self-realized because he abides in that state of fearlessness wherein the world exists because he gives a value to it, he does not exist because the world gives a value to him.

In Ramayana when Sitaji picks up a blade of grass and puts it in front of Ravana, she is telling him that she gives less value to him than this *trina*<sup>254</sup>. The whole world is viewed from the standpoint of a blade of grass. Imagine how free, how unbound we become when that happens. The world exists at your command; you don't exist at the command of the world. Fearlessness of expression is not arrogance. *Manmani karte rahenge aur kahenge ki main nidar hoon*<sup>255</sup>. A licentious way of living is not fearless living. The most humble person is the most fearless person. How can humility be defined? A humble person has the attitude, "I do not place any value on this world of plurality, but it is the Lord who is expressing through these forms. I give value to that Lord expressing through these forms, not to the plurality of the forms." Such a person is not afraid of the world.

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<sup>253</sup> Fearlessness

<sup>254</sup> Blade

<sup>255</sup> We do as we please and say that we are fearless

The *mahātmās* are not disturbed by anything. They have got compassion and sentiments just like us, but they use their compassion and sentiments to uplift the world, not to mess themselves up. We have sentiments too, but we become “mental” in our sentimentality. We see examples of *mahātmās* like Ramana Maharishi, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and Gurudev enduring so much physical pain, but nothing ever touched them. Ramakrishna Paramahansa would be sitting there, singing the glory of Mother with throat cancer. Ramana Maharishi said, “You can operate on my tumor, but I am not going to take anesthesia. I will observe it as you observe it.” And he did observe the surgeon remove the tumor from his hand very coolly. Nothing touches them. They have understood that all these things are mere instruments provided so that they can work. They are free! Free not from this world, free from their bondage to the world, starting with their own body. No emotions, no sentiments, no disturbance can touch them. What a joyous state of living! No disturbance, no pressure, no stress.

When we recognize ourselves on the seat of meditation as that *Paramātmā*, *aham brahmāsmi*, as an observer of the flow, we realize that we exist irrespective of the existence of the flow of the mind, flow of thoughts, flow of experiences, flow of life. I exist irrespective of those things. I alone exist. What is the expression of that realization in day-to-day life? Every speck, every being, every object in this world is pervaded by the same principle of God. We experience that principle alone. How does that happen? When we have a strong sense of identification with the body, we relate to the world as a body and talk about that body, somebody, anybody, nobody, and everybody. When we elevate ourselves beyond the limits of the body, mind and intellect, what we experience and what we see is that Unlimited which is expressing through the body, mind and intellect, any body, mind and intellect, “I am that alone.” If we have a steadiness in the seat of meditation, this statement will reveal itself to us as an experience. It is not a statement that we have to grasp and catch. It is a result that has to happen. If after having practiced meditation for thirty-fourty years continuously, this does not happen, then our process of meditation, our understanding of meditation is wrong. The process of *sādhana* is wrong. What should be the result? *Sarva bhūtastha ātmānam sarva bhūtani chātmani*<sup>256</sup>, I exist as all these beings, all these beings exist as me. If I hate the world or if the world hates me, *mere meditation me kuch galti ho rahi hai*<sup>257</sup>. Correct yourself, not the world. Correct your lane, you are in the wrong lane.

The *Brahma jnāni* experiences every moment of life without any contamination, no new imprints are formed in his mind. His outlook on the world is *āgate svāgatam kuryat*. When it comes, he says, “Wow!” *Nirgate na nivārayet*. When it leaves, he still says, “Wow!” He does not hold on to anything. He sees life as a flow, “I am not the flow. I see the flow. I enjoy the flow. I neither have to hold on to the flow nor let myself flow with the flow.” If it comes, he enjoys it. If it goes, he doesn’t try to hold on to it. What is our experience? If we don’t get it, we are shattered. *Jab dil hi toot gaya hum ji ke kya kareng*<sup>258</sup>? What is *mrtyu*? What is death? Wherever and whenever we contaminate the present with the past and the future, that is *mrtyu*. Uncontaminated experience of life as it comes, when it comes, is the experience of *Paramātmā*. You don’t plan or scheme or try or manipulate things. They just happen. Just enjoy them. As Ādi Sankara puts it in Bhaja Govindam, *Yasya brahmani ramate*

<sup>256</sup> Experiencing one’s own self in all beings and all beings in the Self

<sup>257</sup> There is something wrong with my meditation.

<sup>258</sup> What is the purpose of living with a broken heart?

*chittam nandati nandati nandatyeva*<sup>259</sup>. Existing every moment of every day as bliss!

After a long practice of *dhyāna* the *sādhaka* reaches the state of *samādhi*<sup>260</sup>. *Samādhi* can be classified into two categories, *savikalpa*<sup>261</sup> and *nirvikalpa*<sup>262</sup>. *Savikalpa samādhi* is still limited by time and space. A trace of individuality remains which allows the individual to experience the divine vision. It is like going into a different world and coming back. In *nirvikalpa samādhi* there is no going and coming back, there is no trace of duality. It is a state of total composure, totally *prashānt*, where nothing has the power to disturb you.

When we recognize that which exists in and through time and space is nothing but my own extended self, when we recognize that each form, each person, each living being is my own self expressing as different forms of expression, what is the practical application of this principle in our lives? *Theory ka practical kya hai*<sup>263</sup>? If I am the Truth, if I am the essence of this whole world, I alone am expressing as different forms... Even before going there, let me give you an analogy. Do I ever hate any part of my body? Do I get angry with myself? Supposing a finger pokes you in the eye while washing your face. Do you get mad and say to the finger, "How dare you poke my eye? Where is the *chaku*<sup>264</sup>? Let me just chop you off." If somebody else did that, we would have given him a hard time, *accha khasa de dete*<sup>265</sup>. Because it is your own hand in your own eye, you don't feel that way. You don't hate your own finger; you don't react to your finger.

Supposing you are eating something and by mistake your teeth bite your tongue. *Hathoda le aao, maar doon main in daton ko*<sup>266</sup>. Do you ever say that? No. Why not? Because you love your teeth. You know it happened by mistake, you just accept it. Because you know you exist as a body too. This is the truth as we know it now. Extending this, if I am the Self, if I am the truth, if I am the essence pervading everything, I am existing in the different forms and beings around, different things around, can I hate my own self in a different form? Can I ever live without loving the beings or objects around? I either accept everything as the truth or reject everything. Either it is complete acceptance or complete rejection. Why is there an agony? Why is there misery? Why is there a miserable entity called ego? Why is there a miserable existence of Mr. Ego? Or, I should say Mr./Mrs. Ego. Because it is neither 100% acceptance, nor 100% rejection. Wherever there is a rupture between acceptance and rejection, it results in the birth of the miserable ego. Whether you start from the state of acceptance or rejection, you have to reach the same state – *tat tvameva tvameva tat*, but to reach the same state, you have to start by rejecting it or accepting it. If every form of life is an expression of my own self, can I ever have any *kāma, krodha, lobha, moha*<sup>267</sup> all these different kinds of *vikriti*<sup>268</sup>?

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<sup>259</sup> He whose mind revels in *Brahman*, he enjoys, verily he alone enjoys

<sup>260</sup> *Sama + dhi* - equipoised mind. State of absorption in which a person experiences his identity with the Supreme Reality.

<sup>261</sup> Communion with God in which the distinction between subject and object is retained

<sup>262</sup> The highest state of *samadhi* in which the aspirant realizes his total oneness with *Brahman*

<sup>263</sup> What is the practical application of the theory?

<sup>264</sup> Knife

<sup>265</sup> We would have given it to him!

<sup>266</sup> Let me get a hammer and hit these teeth!

<sup>267</sup> Desire, anger, greed, delusion

<sup>268</sup> Deformity

After listening to this, I know what every body is going to say, "Theoretically Swamiji it is all fine, practically it is not applicable." Why is it not practical? Because we don't want to extend ourselves beyond the limitations of this egoistic living. If it were impractical, the *mahātmās* or the *rishis* would not have said it. Brahmaji would not have said here, *tat tvameva tvameva tat*. After having said that it is impractical, it is we who again ask if the truth is so evident, so clear, so obvious then why are we not experiencing that happiness? It is because I am not ready to accept myself as complete. I am the one who is expressing, extending as different forms. Imagine the mass of water called ocean expressing as different waves, different forms of water. When one form of water hits another form of water, it is just a dance of joy, not a clash of egos. But what happens in our lives? After having expressed as an individual expression of that great Truth, identifying with this limited form, I think that the limited form alone is the truth. That limited form alone is **not** the truth. Whether we look at it from the standpoint of *jnāna* or *bhakti*, the truth is that I alone exist.

There is story in the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa where he went to take a bath in the Ganges. There on the river, somewhere on a boat, a *sāhūkār*<sup>269</sup>, a very rich man, hits the boatman. When the boatman is hit, Ramakrishna Paramahansa falls into the water and when he comes up to the surface there is a mark on his back as if he had been hit. Everyone is surprised to see the mark when he comes back to the *āsrāma* and they all ask him what happened. Ramakrishna Paramahansa says, "That *sāhūkār*, that *zamindār*<sup>270</sup>, he hit me". He was not lying. The boatman was none other than his own extended self! It is like living in a total state of harmony with everything around. I think it was Surdas or Kabirdas who said that the *mahātmā's* life is like *pani mein pani jaisa, doodh mein doodh jaisa, tel mein tel jaisa*<sup>271</sup>.

When Gurudev would go anywhere, the men, women, youth and children, old and young alike, all would feel that Gurudev's message was only for them, "Swamiji, he was here only for us." He used to be one with one and all. In that state of harmony, can you ever hurt anybody? Can you ever say something or do something which hurts somebody or think something which hurts somebody? Who is that somebody expressing? It is not some body expressing, it is my own expression, my own reflection, my own extended self, *tat tvameva tvameva tat*. That is why in Hinduism we find that values are valued. Values are not just namesake values, but they are values because once you reach that state, these values are the expression. If after having reached that state of fulfillment these values are a natural expression, then the values are taught so that we reach that state easily, the state of the *advayam Brahman*<sup>272</sup>.

The nature of the knowledge of *Brahman* is such that it can cleanse all sins because it leads us to the Highest Reality. When we don't know what our true nature is then every expression, every experience in this world is a *pāpa*<sup>273</sup>. Realizing our true nature, dropping all identification with the BMI, when we act in the world, then purity expresses as purity without any contamination or *kalamasha*<sup>274</sup>, and we experience

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<sup>269</sup> Merchant

<sup>270</sup> Landowner

<sup>271</sup> Like water in water, like milk in milk, like oil in oil

<sup>272</sup> Non-dual *Brahman*

<sup>273</sup> Sin

<sup>274</sup> Stain, sin

the transcendental *Purusha*<sup>275</sup> . This knowledge leads us to the attainment of *amrtatva*<sup>276</sup> by leading us from the untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. That immortality, which is beyond all changes, which can see all changes, because of which all changes occur, but which does not change whatsoever.

ॐ *Tattvameva Tvameva Tat* ॐ

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<sup>275</sup> The Supreme Being

<sup>276</sup> Immortality