

Upanishad Vahini

Stream of
The Upanishads

SATHYA SAI BABA

Contents

Upanishad Vahini	7
DEAR READER!	8
Preface for this Edition	9
Chapter I. The Upanishads	10
Study the Upanishads for higher spiritual wisdom	10
Develop purity of consciousness, moral awareness, and spiritual discrimination	11
Upanishads are the whisperings of God	11
God is the prophet of the universal spirituality of the Upanishads	13
Chapter II. Isavasya Upanishad	14
The spread of the Vedic wisdom	14
Renunciation is the pathway to liberation	14
Work without the desire for its fruits	15
See the Supreme Self in all beings and all beings in the Self	15
Renunciation leads to self-realization	16
To escape the cycle of birth-death, contemplate on Cosmic Divinity	16
Chapter III. Katha Upanishad	17
Nachiketas seeks everlasting Self-knowledge	17
Yama teaches Nachiketas the Atmic wisdom	18
The highest truth can be realised by all	18
The Atma is beyond the senses	18
Cut the tree of worldly illusion	19
The secret: learn and practise the singular Omkara	20
Chapter IV. Mundaka Upanishad	21
The transcendent and immanent aspects of Supreme Reality	21
Brahman is both the material and the instrumental cause of the world	21
Perform individual duties as well as public service activities	22
Om is the arrow and Brahman the target	22
Brahman is beyond rituals or asceticism	23
Chapter V. Mandukya Upanishad	24
The waking, dream, and sleep states are appearances imposed on the Atma	24
Transcend the mind and senses: Thuriya	24
AUM is the symbol of the Supreme Atmic Principle	24
Brahman is the cause of all causes, never an effect	25
Non-dualism is the Highest Truth	25

Attain the no-mind state with non-attachment and discrimination	26
Transcend all agitations and attachments	26
Cause-effect nexus is delusory ignorance	26
Transcend pulsating consciousness, which is the cause of creation	27
Chapter VI. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad	28
Atmic principles, experience, and constant practise	28
The four knowledge instruments: word, seed, measure, and geometry	28
Unity in diversity in nature	28
Janaka's sacrifice	29
Yajnavalkya explains the significance of ritual	29
Yajnavalkya explains the concept of Atma as super consciousness	29
Atma is to be attained by total renunciation	30
Brahman is the warp and woof of Creation	30
The never-changing Reality is the basis of the phenomenal world	30
Brahman is the Source of all Bliss	31
All things are loved for Atma alone	31
Yajnavalkya, the crown jewel of scholars of Brahmic knowledge	32
Chapter VII. Prasna Upanishad	33
Seekers meet the guru with sincere heart offerings	33
Beings are born to perpetuate Creation	33
Contemplate on the orderly universe and its principles	33
Consecrate the body, a complex of vital elements, by sacrifice	34
The Sun governs the vital air and vital functions	34
The Self abides in all beings	35
God resides in the heart	35
The never-changing Absolute Reality and the ever-changing phenomenon	35
Chapter VIII. Kena Upanishad	37
Seek to know the Eternal, not the ephemeral	37
The Atma activates and illumines all	37
No knower can know the Knower of All: Atma is beyond senses	38
Those who claim to know Atma don't really know	38
All people are entitled to knowledge of God; experience is the approach, the proof the result	38
Snap the strings of worldly attachment	39
Chapter IX. Chandogya Upanishad	40
Work, worship, and wisdom	40
Being or "is-ness" is the universal quality of all objects	40
By knowing Atma, you will know all	40

The body decays and dies, but not the Self	41
Discover omnipresent Brahman in the heart lotus!	41
The journey of the soul after death	42
Expand your consciousness for liberation	42
To experience Reality, give up identification of the Self with the body	43
Chapter X. Aithareya Upanishad	44
Freedom from delusion results in vision of Atma	44
Atma is unlimited, endless, changeless, all	44
Atma existed before Creation	44
Atma is devoid of all distinctions and beyond the reach of senses	45
Atma governs the “deities” of the senses	45
Lord illumines everything through living beings	45
Human beings have three forms of birth	46
Chapter XI. Taithiriya Upanishad	47
The objective world is caused by ignorance, with bondage the result	47
Liberation cannot be produced by any action	47
Brahman is Truth, Omniscience, Eternal	48
Do not swerve from Truth, duty, well-being of all	48
The science of spirituality is the highest field of experiential knowledge	48
Contemplate on the five sheaths of the human	49
Rise from the gross to the subtle stage by contemplating on the vital breath	49
Mantras illumine the Atmic splendour	50
Chapter XII. Brahmanubhava Upanishad	51
Nonduality is the essence of all Upanishads	51
Brahman is described by five attributes	51
Give up desire, attachment, and ego	51
Atma is ever full, ever pure, and Self-luminous	52
Give up desires, attachments and negate the mind	52
Attain Brahman by the process of negation of senses	53
God is encased everywhere	53
Discover Divinity through the eye of wisdom or of love	54
Joy and grief, vice and virtue are binding products of the mind	54
Overcome the triple distinctions or illusions	55
Glossary	56

Upanishad Vahini

Stream of the Upanishads



SRI SATHYA SAI SADHANA TRUST

Publications Division

Prasanthi Nilayam - 515134

Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh, India

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International Standard Book Number:

Revised Edition (ebook form): March 2014

Published by:

The Convener,

Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust,

Publications Division

Prasanthi Nilayam, Pincode 515 134, India

STD: 08555 ISD: 91-8555 Phone: 287375 Fax: 287236

DEAR READER!

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has come among humanity and is providing spiritual sustenance and guidance, in order to re-establish truth, justice, peace, and love as the mainspring of individual, social, and national life. He is using ancient and modern instruments for this great task, *Sanathana Dharma* and science. His writings, discourses, and conversations, which correct, communicate, and convince, are full of statements and commentaries on the discoveries of physical and metaphysical sciences.

This book, which gives in English His articles (first published in Telugu in the *Sanathana Sarathi*) on the Ten *Upanishads* (invaluable textbooks on spiritual discipline and on the glorious fruit of spiritual adventure) will reveal to you the vast limitless mercy that impels Him to save us from trivialities and prompts Him to guide us along, until we reach the Goal of Life.

Making us tread the path discovered by the sages of the past, inducing us to revere their light and their message, illumining in us the flame of knowledge, which dispels delusion —that is what Bhagawan, with His Supreme Love, does for us in this book.

Let us read it with care, recapitulate it with earnestness in the silence of our hearts, and practise it with humility and faith in every turn of thought, in every tilt of tongue, and in every digit of deed.

N. KASTURI Prasanthi Nilayam, 21 April 1968

Preface for this Ebook Edition

The first English edition of the *Upanishad Vahini* was translated by N. Kasturi from the Telugu version of the same written by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and published serially in the Telugu *Sanathana Sarathi*. This English edition improves on the previous one in several ways. Grammatical errors and typos have been corrected, and some sentences have been rewritten to smooth and clarify the presentation —of course, without disturbing the original meaning. Some long paragraphs have been split in two or more paragraphs where it made sense and provided easier reading. Numbered subtitles or sections make it easier to find one’s way in the book.

Sanskrit words have been replaced by their English equivalents, to make the *Upanishad Vahini* more accessible to readers who do not know Sanskrit. However, where appropriate, the Sanskrit has been retained (in parentheses, following the English). Many Sanskrit words have no exact English equivalent, and retaining the Sanskrit keeps the edition accurate.

Some Sanskrit compounds have been hyphenated between their constituent words to aid those who like to analyze the meanings of the individual words. Several Sanskrit words have made their way into the English language and can be found in most dictionaries —e.g. *dharmā*, *guru*, *yoga*, and *moksha*. These words have generally been used without translation, although their meanings appear in the glossary at the end of the book.

Besides definitions of Sanskrit words used in the *Upanishad Vahini*, the glossary contains descriptions of the people and places mentioned.

Finally, this ebook edition allows you, the reader, to choose the point size and font that suits you. Make use of that feature! Also, this ebook has links to the glossary. Click on most Sanskrit words, people, and places and you will be taken to the page in the glossary where that word, person, or place is defined. Your reading application should have a “back” button that will allow you to return to where you were reading.

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Prasanthi Nilayam Pin 515134, India

Chapter I. The Upanishads

Humanity is essentially divine. However, one believes oneself to be an individual, limited and temporary, because one is entangled in the characteristics of the five elements: sound, touch, form, taste, and smell. This error brings about joy and grief, good and bad, birth and death. To escape from this association with the elements, to rid oneself of the pulls of their characteristics, is the sign of liberation, known as *kaivalya*, *moksha*, or *mukthi*. The names may change, but the achievement is the same.

While entangled in the five elements, one is attracted, distracted, or disappointed by them, all of which causes distress. Wealth, possessions —vehicles, buildings, etc.— are all transmutations of the elements. One craves them, and when one loses them or fails to get them, one spurns them.

Let us take the five elements, one by one. The living being has the first one, the earth, as its base. Water, the second, is the basis for the earth. Water is produced from fire, the third element, and fire itself emanates from wind (*vayu*), which is the fourth. Wind arises from ether (*akasa*). Ether emerges from the primal nature, and the primal nature is but the manifestation of one aspect of the majesty of God, or the supreme sovereign *Atma* (*Paramatma*).

Seeking to reach that supreme *Atma*, the source and core of the universe, the individual (*jivi*), who has entangled himself in the elements, has to overcome the bonds one by one, by discrimination and steady practice of detachment. One who does this is a spiritual aspirant, and one who wins in this struggle is liberated even while alive (is a *jivan-muktha*).

Study the Upanishads for higher spiritual wisdom

For the process of such discrimination and for the visualisation of one's innate reality, one has to study the *Upanishads*. Collectively called *Vedanta*, they form the section of the *Vedas* that deals with the higher wisdom—the *Jnana-kanda*. Liberation from the consequences of ignorance can be secured only by spiritual knowledge (*jnana*). The *Upanishads* themselves declare,

By knowledge alone can freedom be won
(*Jnaanaath eva thu kaivalyam*).

The *Vedas* are reputed to be “three-sectioned”, the three sections being spiritual wisdom (*jnana*), contemplation or worship (*upasana*), and dedicated activity (*karma*). These three are also found in the *Upanishads*; they provide the basis for the non-dualist (*a-dwaitha*), qualified non-dualist (*visishta-adwaitha*), and dualist (*dwaitha*) systems of philosophy.

The word *Upanishad* denotes the study and practice of the innate truth, *Brahma-vidya* denotes the supremacy of spiritual contemplation, and *Yoga-sastra* denotes the mental churning that brings success.

What is the fundamental activity that is required? What is the basic thing to be known? It is just one's real reality. The *Upanishads* describe the various stages and modes of this search.

The name *Upanishad* is full of significance. *Upa-ni* means the process of studying with steadfastness (*nish-ta*); *shath* means the attainment of the Ultimate Reality. The name *Upa-ni-shath* arose for these reasons. The *Upanishads* do not only teach the principles of knowledge of the supreme Reality (*Atma-vidya*), they also instruct in

the practical means of realisation. They point out not only the duties and obligations one has to bear but also tell us the acts to be done and those to be avoided.

Why, the *Gita* is but the essence of the *Upanishads*, isn't it? Arjuna acquired by the lessons of the *Gita* the fruit of listening to the *Upanishads*. The statement, "That thou art (*Thath twam asi*)" is found in the *Upanishads*. In the *Gita*, Krishna says to Arjuna, "I am Arjuna among the Pandavas," that is to say, "I and You are the same." This is the same as saying "Thou art That," that the individual and God (*jiva* and *Iswara*) are the same. So, whether it is the *Gita* or the *Upanishads*, the teaching is non-duality, not duality or qualified monism.

Develop purity of consciousness, moral awareness, and spiritual discrimination

The human eye cannot delve into the microcosm or the macrocosm. It cannot read the mystery of the virus or the atom or the stellar universe. Therefore, scientists supplement the eye with the microscope and the telescope. Similarly, sages are able to experience Divinity through the eye of knowledge gained by following the *dharma* of moral conduct and spiritual discipline.

When the human eye needs an extraneous instrument to observe even the insignificant worm and virus, how can a person refuse to go through the process of *mantra* in order to see the omnipresent transcendent Principle? It is very hard to acquire the eye of wisdom. Concentration is essential for it. And, for concentration to develop and stabilise, three things are very important: purity of consciousness, moral awareness, and spiritual discrimination. These qualifications are difficult for ordinary folk to attain.

But humanity is endowed with the special instrument of discrimination, of judgement, of analysis and synthesis. Among the animals, only mankind possesses it. It has to be developed and utilised to the best purpose. Through this instrument, one can realise the immanent Divinity.

Instead, one pesters oneself and others with questions like: Where does God reside? If He is real, why isn't He seen? Hearing such queries, one feels like pitying the poor questioners, for they are announcing their own foolishness. They are like the dullards who aspire for university degrees without taking pains even to learn the alphabet. They aspire to realise God without putting themselves to the trouble of the required spiritual discipline. People who have no moral strength and purity talk of God and His existence and decry efforts to see Him —such people have no right to be heard.

Upanishads are the whisperings of God

Spiritual practice is based on the holy scriptures (*sastras*). They can't be mastered in a trice. They can't be followed through talk. Their message is summed up in the *Upanishads*, so they are revered as authoritative. They are not the products of human intelligence; they are the whisperings of God to man. They are parts of the eternal *Vedas*, and the *Vedas* shine gloriously through all their parts.

The *Upanishads* are authentic and authoritative, since they share the glory of the *Vedas*. They are 1180 in number, but, through the centuries, many of them disappeared from human memory and only 108 have survived. Of the 108, 10 have attained great popularity as a result of the depth and value of their contents.

The sage Vyasa classified the *Upanishads* and allotted them among the four *Vedas*. The *Rig-veda* has 21 branches, and each branch has one *Upanishad* allotted to it. The *Yajur-veda* has 109 branches and 109 *Upani-*

shads. The *Atharvana-veda* has 50 branches and 50 *Upanishads*. The *Sama-veda* has 1000 and 1000. Thus, Vyasa assigned the 1180 *Upanishads* to the four *Vedas*.

Sankaracharya raised the status of ten of the *Upanishads* by selecting them for writing his commentaries, so they became specially important. Humanity stands to gain or fall by these ten. All who seek human welfare and progress are now apprehending whether even these ten will be forgotten, because neglecting them will usher in moral and spiritual disaster. However, there is no reason for such fears. The *Vedas* can never be harmed. Pundits and those with faith should resolve to present at least these ten *Upanishads* before humanity. They are:

01. Aithareya	04. Isa	07. Prasna	10. Taithiriya
02. Brihadaranyaka	05. Kena	08. Mundaka	
03. Chandogya	06. Katha	09. Mandukya	

The remaining 98 are:

11. Adhyatma	36. Ganapathi	61. Muktika	86. Sathyayana
12. Adhvayatharaka	37. Garbha	62. Nadabindu	87. Savithri
13. Aksha-malika	38. Garuda	63. Narada-parivrajaka	88. Sita
14. Akshik	39. Gopalatapani	64. Narasimha	89. Skanda
15. Amritha-bindu	40. Hamsa	65. Narayana	90. Soubhagyalakshmi
16. Amrithanada	41. Hayagriva	66. Niralamba	91. Sukarahasya
17. Annapurna	42. Jabaladarshana	67. Nirvana	92. Sulabha
18. Aruni	43. Jabali	68. Nrisimhatapani	93. Surya
19. Atharvasikha	44. Kaivalya	69. Paingala	94. Swethasvatara
20. Atharvasira	45. Kalaagnirudra	70. Panchabrahma	95. Tejobindu
21. Atma	46. Katharudra	71. Parabrahma	96. Tharasara
22. Atmabodha	47. Katharudra	72. Paramahamsa	97. Thripura
23. Avadhutha	48. Kaushitaka	73. Parama-parivrajaka	98. Thripurathapini
24. Avyaktha	49. Krishna	74. Pasupatha	99. Thuriyatita
25. Bhasma	50. Kshithi	75. Pranagnihotra	100. Trisikhi-brahmana
26. Bhavana	51. Kshurika	76. Ramarahasya	101. Vajrasuchika
27. Bhavaricha	52. Kundiska	77. Ramathapani	102. Varaha
28. Brahmajabala	53. Maha-bhiksuka	78. Rudrahridaya	103. Vasudeva
29. Brahmana	54. Mahanarayana	79. Rudraksha	104. Yajnavalkya
30. Brahma-vidya	55. Mahavakya	80. Sandilya	105. Yogachudamani
31. Dakshinamurthi	56. Maitrayani	81. Sanyasa	106. Yogakundalini
32. Dattatreya	57. Maitreyi	82. Sarabha	107. Yogasikha
33. Devi	58. Mandala	83. Saraswathi-rahasya	108. Yogathathwa
34. Dhyana-bindu	59. Mantrika	84. Sariraka	
35. Ekakshara	60. Mudgala	85. Sarva-sar	

The *Upanishads* have inspired other works on geography, astronomy, astrology, and economic and political theory, as well as the eighteen *Puranas* comprising *Skanda*, *Siva*, *Garuda*, and others.

God is the prophet of the universal spirituality of the Upanishads

The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* are the very foundation of the Eternal Religion (*Sanathana Dharma*). This

religion has no one founder, as do others. The invisible unknown founder is God, the source of all wisdom. He is the prophet of this eternal universal religion. His grace and inspiration manifested through pure sages, and they became the spokespersons of this *dharma*. When the moral purity of men degenerates, God takes form as grace and inspiration in sages and teachers. Through the *Upanishads*, He has also spoken the wisdom concerning the Supreme Reality.

Chapter II. Isavasya Upanishad

The spread of the Vedic wisdom

The Lord, intent on the regeneration of the world, communicated *Vedas* through *Hiranyagarbha*, who in turn passed them on to His ten mental sons (*manasa-putras*), including Athri and Marichi. From them, the *Vedas* spread among humanity, handed down from one generation to another. As time passed and ages accumulated and continents moved, some *Vedas* got lost or were neglected as too difficult for comprehension, and only four have survived into modern times. These four were taught in the *Dwapara* era (*yuga*) to his disciples by Veda Vyasa, the greatest of the exponents of the *Vedas*.

When Vyasa was thus expounding the *Vedas*, engaged in spreading the sacred scripture, one disciple of his, Yajnavalkya by name, incurred his wrath. As punishment, Yajnavalkya had to regurgitate the *Yajur-veda*, which he had already learned, into the custody of his *guru*, leave the place, and take refuge in the divine Sun (*Surya-deva*), the treasure-house of the *Vedas*. Just then, the sages, who revere the *Vedas*, flew into the place in the shape of partridges (*thithiri*) and ate up the regurgitated *Yajur-veda*. That particular section of the *Veda* is called *Taithirya*.

Meanwhile, the Sun was pleased with the devotion and steadfastness of the unfortunate Yajnavalkya. He assumed the form of a horse (*vaji*) and blessed the sage with renewed knowledge of the *Yajur-veda*. The version thus taught by the horse came to be called *Vajasaneyi*. The *Yajur-veda* as promoted by Veda Vyasa is called *Krishna Yajur Veda*; that handed down by Yajnavalkya, *Sukla Yajur Veda*. (*Krishna* means black; *sukla*, white).

The first few sections, the *Karma-kandas* of these *Vedas* are *mantras* connected with ritual actions, and the last few sections, the *Jnana-kandas*, deal with spiritual wisdom.

Renunciation is the pathway to liberation

The *Isavasya Upanishad* is concerned with the sections on spiritual wisdom (*Jnana-kanda*). Since the opening *mantra* of this *Upanishad* starts with the word *Isavasya* (pervaded by the Supreme), the *Upanishad* is called by that name.

All things of this world – the transitory, the evanescent – are enveloped by the Lord, who is the true Reality of each. Therefore, they have to be used with reverent renunciation and without covetousness or greed, for they belong to the Lord and not to any one person.

Ishaavaasyam idham sarvam yathkinchatjagath-yaam jagath. Thena thyakthena bhunjeethaa, maa gridhah kasya svith dhanam.

This verse says that the universe is the immanence of the Lord, His form, His body. It is wrong to take the universe and Its Lord as different. It is a delusion, just a product of your own imagination. Just as your image under the water is not different from you, the universe (which is His image produced on your ignorance) is the same as He.

As long as one has this delusion, one cannot visualise the Reality immanent within; in fact, one will slide

into wrong thoughts, words, and deeds. A piece of sandalwood produces a bad smell when kept in water, but when taken out and rubbed into paste, the former perfume will return. When the authority of the *Vedas* and scriptures is respected, and when discrimination is sharpened on the practice of *dharmic* actions, the evil smell of wrong and wickedness will vanish and the pure innate perfume of the *Atma* will emerge. Then, the duality of doer and enjoyer will disappear, and the stage will be reached that is called withdrawal from all activity (*sarva-karma-sanyas*). In this *Upanishad*, this type of renunciation (*sanyasa*) is described as the pathway to liberation.

Work without the desire for its fruits

Renunciation that involves the destruction of the three urges for a mate, for progeny, and for wealth is very difficult to attain without purity of the mind (*chittha*).

In this *Upanishad*, the means for obtaining this renunciation is declared in the second *mantra*: carry out the daily offering of milk to the god of fire, etc. prescribed in the scriptures, believe that for liberation one has to be actively engaged in such work, and become convinced that no sin can cling as long as one is so engaged. Work without the desire for its fruit slowly cleanses impurities, like the crucible of the gold-smith. The pure mind is spiritual wisdom (*jnana*); it is the consummation of detachment.

If you are able to divest yourselves of desire when you are doing work, no impurity can touch you. You know that “chilliginji” seeds, when dropped into muddy water, have the power to separate the dirt and deposit it at the bottom; the seeds also sink to the bottom and slip out of sight! In the same way, those who are adepts in doing action (*karma*) without attachment have their minds perfectly cleansed, and the results of their acts lose their effectiveness and sink to the bottom.

Out of the 18 *mantras* in this *Upanishad*, only the first two deal directly with the problem of liberation and its solution. The other sixteen elaborate on this solution and serve as commentaries thereon.

See the Supreme Self in all beings and all beings in the Self

The *Atma* never undergoes modification; yet, it is faster than the mind! That is the mystery and the miracle. It appears to experience all states, but it has no growth, decline, or change. Though it is everywhere, it is not perceivable by the senses. It is because of its underlying existence and ever-present immanence that all growth, all activities, all changes take place. Cause and effect act and react on account of the basic stratum of the *Atmic* reality. Why, the very word “Lord (*Isa*)” carries this meaning. The *Atma* is near and far, inside and outside, still and moving. He who knows this truth is worthy of the name “spiritually wise person (*jnani*)”.

The ignorant can never grasp the fact of *Atmic* immanence. Those who are conscious can see things and feel their presence. Those who have lost awareness will search for the lost jewels, even though they actually wear them at the moment. Though one may know all things, one conceives the *Atma* as existing in some unapproachable, unreachable place on account of loss of consciousness. But the wise person, who is aware, sees the *Atma* in all beings and sees all beings as *Atma*. The wise person sees all beings as the same and perceives no distinction or difference. So the wise person saves themselves from duality.

The *Isavasya Upanishad* makes this great truth clear to all. Wise people, who have tasted that vision, will not be agitated by the blows of fortune or the enticements of the senses. They see all beings as themselves, having

their own innate identity; they are free from bondage, from *dharma* and lack of *dharma* (*a-dharma*), and from the needs and urges of the body. They are “self-illuminating (*swayam-prakasa*)”. So, the individual body (*jiva-rupa*) is not their genuine form, no, not even the gross and the subtle bodies are their forms.

That is why the first *mantra* of the *Isavasya* expounds on intentness on acquiring spiritual wisdom (*jnana-nishta*) characterised by the absence of craving of any sort. This is the primary goal of the *Vedas*. But those who have cravings will find it difficult to get stabilised in that state of mind (*nishta*). For such, the second *mantra* prescribes a secondary means, ritual action (*karma-nishta*).

The rest of the *mantras* elaborate and support these two states —based on spiritual wisdom and action. Ritual action has desire and delusion as the cardinal urges; intentness on the cultivation of spiritual wisdom has discrimination (*vairagya*), the conviction that the world is not *Atma*, that is to say, not true, so it is profitless to have any dealings with it. Such an attitude of discrimination is the gateway to acquiring spiritual wisdom.

From the third to the eighth *mantra*, the real nature of the *Atma* is depicted through the condemnation of ignorance (*a-vidya*), which prevents understanding *Atma*.

Renunciation leads to self-realization

Thus the *Isavasya* teaches the lesson of renunciation through the first *mantra* and the lesson of “liberating activity” (through action devoid of attachment and anger (*raga* and *dwesha*)) in the second *mantra*. In the fourth and fifth *mantras*, it speaks of the *Atmic* principle (*Atma-thathwa*) and later of the fruits of the knowledge of that *Atmic* principle.

In the ninth *mantra*, the path of progressive liberation (*karma-mukthi*) is laid down. This path is useful for those who are too weak to follow the path of total renunciation but who are adepts in acts that are conducive to moral development and inner purification. This path coordinates all action on the principle of contemplative worship. Those who are engaged in acts that are contrary to spiritual knowledge (*vidya*) are full of ignorance, it says; those who confine themselves to the study and practice of divine forms are even worse, for their desire is for powers and skills. Knowledge leads to the world of the gods (*deva loka*), while action leads to the world of the fathers (*pitru loka*), it is said. So the spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) that results in Self-realization (*Atma-sakshathkara*) is something quite distinct from these; no attempt to coordinate the two can succeed.

To escape the cycle of birth-death, contemplate on Cosmic Divinity

Of course, one should not engage in anything opposed to the scriptures, and in the ultimate analysis, all actions are classed as ignorance (*a-vidya*). At best, action (*karma*) can help only to cleanse the mind, and contemplative worship can help only to achieve single-mindedness. Worship has to rise to the level of contemplation of the cosmic Divinity, the *Hiranyagarbha*; it has to ripen and develop into liberation while alive (*jivan-mukthi*) before the end of this life.

Knowledge of gods (*devatha-jnana*) and ritual actions have to be complementary and coordinated; then, one can escape the round of birth and death and become divine.

Chapter III. Katha Upanishad

This *Upanishad* contains the story of Nachiketas, who was initiated into spiritual discipline by Yama himself. The same story is also mentioned in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* and its *Brahmana* portion and also in the *Mahabharatha*, in chapter 106 of the section of moral principles. This *Upanishad* has become famous on account of its clarity and depth of imagination. Many of the thoughts expressed in it can be found in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Since it belongs to the *Katha Saakha* of the *Black* (or Krishna) *Yajur-veda* School, it is called *Kathopanishad*.

Nachiketas seeks everlasting Self-knowledge

A very strict ritualist, Yajnasravas, also known as Gautama, performed a sacrifice. As part of the sacrifice he gave away cows that were no longer able to eat grass or drink water, much less yield milk! They were too old for any useful purpose. Seeing this, his virtuous and intelligent son, Nachiketas, realised that his father was in for a great deal of sorrow because of these sinful gifts. The boy wanted to save his father from his fate as much as he could, so he asked his father to whom he intended to offer him (Nachiketas) as a gift! He pleaded that he too should be given away to someone.

At this the father got so incensed that he shouted in disgust, “I am giving you to the God of death.”

Nachiketas resolved that his father’s words must not be falsified, even though they were uttered in the world of the living, infected with birth and death. So he persuaded his father to offer him, in strict ritualistic style, as a gift to Yama. Nachiketas promptly proceeded to the abode of the God of death. He had to wait three nights before he could see Yama. Yama felt sorry for the delay and promised Nachiketas three boons, one for each night he had spent outside his doors.

Nachiketas first asked that when he returned to his native place and home at His behest, his father must welcome him gladly, bereft of all anger at his former impertinence and full of mental equanimity. His second desire was to know the secret of the absence in heaven of hunger, thirst, and fear of death.

Yama gladly gave him these boons. In addition, Yama initiated him into the mystery of a special ritual. Nachiketas listened reverentially and grasped the details of the ritual quickly and clearly. Yama was so delighted with his new disciple that He gave the sacrifice (*yaga*) a new name, *Nachiketa Agni*! This was an extra boon for the young visitor.

Nachiketas said, “Master! Man is mortal, but some say that death is not the end, that there is an entity called *Atma* that survives the body and the senses. Others argue that there is no such entity. Now that I have the chance, I wish to know about the *Atma* from you.”

Yama wanted to test the credentials of his questioner’s steadfastness and his eagerness to know the highest wisdom. If he was undeserving, Yama didn’t want to communicate the knowledge to him. So he offered to give him instead various other boons, related to worldly prosperity and happiness. He told him that the *Atma* is very subtle and elusive and is beyond the reach of ordinary understanding. He placed before him other attractive boons that could be enjoyed “more quickly” and “better”.

Nachiketas replied, “Revered master! Your description of the difficulty of understanding the *Atma* makes me

feel that I should not let this chance go by, for I can get no teacher more qualified than you to explain it to me. I ask this as my third boon and no other. The alternative boons You hold before me cannot assure me the everlasting benefit that Self-knowledge (*Atma-jnana*) alone can bestow.”

Yama teaches Nachiketas the Atmic wisdom

Pleased with Nachiketas’ faith and steadiness, Yama concluded that he was fit to receive the highest wisdom. He said, “Well, My dear boy! There are two distinct types of experiences and urges, called spiritually elevating (*sreyas*) and worldly pleasant (*preyas*). Both affect the individual. The first releases; the second leashes. One leads to salvation; the other to incarceration! If you pursue the worldly pleasing path, you leave the realisation of the highest goal of humanity far, far behind. The spiritually excellent path can be discerned only by the refined intellect; the worldly pleasant path is trodden by the ignorant and the perverted. Spiritual wisdom (*vidya*) reveals the spiritually elevating; ignorance (*a-vidya*) makes you slide into worldly pleasure. Naturally, those who seek the spiritually elevating road are very rare.”

Yama continued, “The *Atma* is agitationless, unruffled; it is consciousness, infinite and full. One who has known the *Atma* won’t be moved by the dual ideas of “is” and “is-not”, “doer” and “not-doer”, etc. The *Atma* is not even an object to be known! It is neither knower, known, nor knowledge. Discovering this is the supremest vision; informing one of this is the supremest instruction. The instructor is *Brahman*; the instruction is *Brahman*, and the instructed is also *Brahman*. Realisation of this ever-present truth saves one from all attachment and agitation, so it liberates one from birth and death. This great mystery cannot be grasped by logic; it has to be won by faith in the scriptures (*smrithis*) and experienced.

“The *Atma* is capable of being known only after vast perseverance. One has to divert the mind from its natural habitat—the objective world—and keep it in unwavering equanimity. Only a hero can succeed in this solitary internal adventure and overcome the monsters of egotism and illusion! That victory alone can remove grief.”

The highest truth can be realised by all

The teaching of the *Vedanta* is that the highest truth is capable of being realised by all. All the texts proclaim so with one voice; they also say that the syllable *Om* (*Pranava*) is the symbol of the transcendent and immanent (*para* and *a-para*) *Brahman*; they declare that worship of the *Om* brings within your reach even the Cosmic Mind (*Hiranyagarbha*) stage, and it also helps you to attain two aspects of *Brahman*. The *Hiranyagarbha* is enveloped by the thinnest veil of illusion (*maya*), and, through *Om*, the veil can be rent asunder and both the transcendent and immanent *Brahman* can be realised.

The Atma is beyond the senses

The *Katthopanishad* also elaborates on the *Atma* in various ways. It says that the *Atma* is not measurable, that it can never be contained by limitations, though it appears so. The image of the Sun in a lake quivers and shakes due to the quivering and shaking of the water; the Sun is but a distant witness. It is unaffected by the media that produce the images. Likewise, the *Atma* is the witness of all this change in space and time.

The individualised ignorance (*jiva*) is the participant of the fruits of action, of right and wrong, of good and

evil; the individual (*jivi*) forges bondage through egotism and loosens the bonds through the intellect (*buddhi*), the counterforce of ignorance.

Realise that all is won the moment the senses (*indriyas*), external and internal, are put out of action. Discard them as false and misleading; merge them all in the mind (*manas*). Throw the mind back into the intellect and the individualised intelligence into the cosmic intelligence of *Hiranyagarbha*. And, having reached that stage of spiritual practice, merge the cosmic intelligence into the *Atmic* principle (*Atma-thathwa*), of which it is but a manifestation. Then you attain the stage of the perfect unruffled equanimity of Absolute Oneness (*nir-vikalpa-samadhi*), which is your true nature. That is the secret propounded by this *Upanishad*; that and the fact that all creation is but a creation, a proliferation of name and form.

Misled by the mirage, you are unable to see the desert waste; frightened by the snake (superimposed by you on the rope), you are unable to discern the basic reality. The beginningless delusion that haunts the individual (*jivi*) has to be broken through. The fourteenth *mantra* of this *Upanishad* wakes up the individual from the sleep of ages and leads him on toward the goal.

The *Atma* is beyond sound, touch, form, taste, and smell (*sabdha, sparsha, rupa, rasa, and gandha*); it knows no end. The senses are object-bound and outward-bound. The *Atma* is the prime instrument for all activity and knowledge, the inner motive-force behind everything. This delusion of manifoldness, variety, multiplicity, and manyness has to die. It is born of ignorance (*a-jnana*). The “many” is a mirage caused by “circumstances”; the feeling that you are separate from the One is the root of all this seeming birth and death through which the individual appears to go.

Cut the tree of worldly illusion

Yama then declared the nature of *Brahman* to Nachiketas, to remove his doubts on that point.

Like a light hidden by smoke, the thumb-sized supreme Spirit is eternally shining. Just as the torrent of rain falling on a peak is shattered downward in a thousand streams, the individual (*jivi*), who feels manyness and difference, falls down through manyness and goes to waste. This *Upanishad* announces that there is nothing higher than or even equal to the *Atma*. The roots of a tree are invisible; they are hidden underground, but their effect is evident in the visible flowers, right? So too, this tree of worldly illusion (*samsara-vriksha*), right? From that experience, you have to infer that the root, *Brahman*, is there as sustenance and support, said Yama.

The tree of worldly existence (*samsara*) is like the magician’s mango tree; it is just an illusion. One who has purified their intellect (*buddhi*) can see the *Atma* in it in this very life, as in a fine mirror. *Brahman* is the thing known (*jneya*) to the seeker of knowledge; it is the worshiped object, the thing attained by the seeker of attainment. The spiritually wise person is liberated by their visualisation of *Brahman*, but the worshiper reaches the world of *Brahma* after death. There, the worshiper merges in *Hiranyagarbha* and, at the end of a day of *Brahma* (*kalpa*), is liberated along with the *Hiranyagarbha* Itself.

Nachiketas understood without a flaw this knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*) that Yama taught him; he was released by death and attained *Brahman*. As far as this knowledge of *Brahman* is concerned, one who even attempts to know what it is becomes thereby a better personality, free from the dirt of sin.

The secret: learn and practise the singular Omkara

This *Upanishad* teaches in many ways the fundamental subjects: the embodiment of the *Om* (*Pranava-swarupa*), auspicious activities (*sreyas*), and knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*). My resolve is to tell you now the essence of these teachings. Of course one *mantra* is enough to save those who have sharpened intelligence and who are full of the yearning to escape. But for the dull-witted, sense-prompted individual immersed in secular pleasure-seeking, advice, however plentiful, is a waste.

The *Atma* is like the ocean; to instruct a person about it, you need not ask the person to drink the entire ocean. A single drop placed on the tongue will give the needed knowledge. So too, if you desire to know the *Upanishad*, you need not follow every *mantra*. Learn and experience the implication of one *mantra* and you can realise the goal without fail. Learn and practise. Learn to practise. That is the secret of the teaching.

Chapter IV. Mundaka Upanishad

This *Upanishad* begins with an invocation, praying that the eye may see auspicious things, that the ear may hear auspicious sounds, and that life may be spent in contemplation of the Lord. The teaching of this *Upanishad* is referred to as knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*), either because it describes first the message of *Hiranyagarbha*, the causal *Brahman*, or because the message relates the glory of *Brahman*. This *Upanishad* speaks of knowledge of *Brahman* as the mystery that only those with shaven heads and those who go through a rite of having fire on the shaven head can understand. So, it is called *Shaven Head* (*Mundaka*). This *Upanishad* is honoured as the crest of all, since it expounds the very essence of knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*). It is assigned to the Fourth *Veda*, the *Atharvana*.

The transcendent and immanent aspects of Supreme Reality

This knowledge has been handed down from teacher to pupil by word of mouth, enriched and confirmed by experience. When it deals with the attributeless principle, it is also called the knowledge of the Transcendent (*Para-vidya*); when it deals with the attribute-full, the materialised principle, it is called the knowledge of the immanent (*a-Para-vidya*), not the transcendent aspect. These two are found in this *Upanishad*. They were taught by Sounaka to Angiras; that is what the text announces. The *Vedas* and the subsidiary texts (*Vedangas*) deal with knowledge of the immanent or materialised aspect of *Brahman*. The *Upanishads* deal specifically with knowledge of the transcendent *Brahman*. But the interesting thing is: knowledge of the immanent, materialised *Brahman* leads to the knowledge of the transcendent *Brahman*, which is the goal.

The spider evolves out of itself the magnificent manifestation of the web; so too, this moving, changing world is manifested from the causative *Brahman*. The objective world is the product of the creator-creation complex. It is true, factual, and useful as long as one is unaware of the Reality. The utmost that one can gain by activity—that is, holy or sacred activity—is heaven (*swarga*), which has a longer lease of life but nevertheless has an end. So, the seeker loses all yearning for heaven and approaches an elderly teacher full of compassion, who instructs the seeker in the discipline for realising *Brahman*.

Brahman is both the material and the instrumental cause of the world

All beings are *Brahman* and no other. They all emanate from *Brahman*. Just as sparks emanate from fire, just as hair grows on the skin but is different from it, so too beings originate from *Brahman*. *Brahman* causes the sun, moon, stars, and planets to revolve in space; *Brahman* grants the consequence of all acts of beings. The individual (*jivi*) and the Lord (Iswara), the individual and the Universal, are two birds sitting on the same tree—the human body. The individual acts and suffers the consequences of those acts. The Lord sits quietly, as a witness of the other bird. When the individual looks at the Lord and realises that it is but an image, it escapes from grief and pain. When the mind is drawn by yearning to know the Lord, all other low desires diminish and disappear. Then, knowledge of *Atma* is attained.

The last *mantra* of this *Upanishad* declares that its aim is to make people attain that spiritual wisdom (*jnana*). *Munda* means head, and we can say that this *Upanishad* is the head of all *Upanishads*. Even the *Brahma Sutra*

devotes two chapters to elaborate on the inner meaning of the *mantras* of this *Upanishad*.

This *Upanishad* has three sections, with two chapters in each. In the first section, knowledge of the materialised aspect of *Brahman* (*a-Para-vidya*) is dealt with; in the second, knowledge of the transcendental Supreme (*Para-vidya*) and the means of mastering it. In the third, the nature of the Reality and of the release from bondage are defined. Activity (*karma*) that helps attain the *Brahman* is described in the *mantras*. That is why this *Upanishad* is respected as very sacred.

As already indicated, the spider spins out the web from itself without any extraneous agency; it also takes in the web it has spun. So too, creation was effected without an agent and the universe emanated. This nature (*prakriti*) is but a transformation of the basic *Brahman*, like pot from mud, cloth from cotton, jewels from gold. So, *Brahman* is called the material (*upadana*) cause of nature. It is also the instrumental cause (*nimitta-karana*). For, nature can be the result only of a higher intelligence, an intelligence that is all-comprehensive (*sarva-jna*).

Perform individual duties as well as public service activities

Heaven is the highest attainable stage through activity (*karma*). Of such rites (*karmas*), the worship of fire, called *agnihotra*, is the chief. The performance of such rites contribute to the cleansing of the mind. Such cleansing is a necessary preliminary to knowledge of the Transcendent (*Para-vidya*). The flames that rise high from the sacrificial altar of fire appear to the performers as if they are hailing them on to realise the Reality or *Brahman*. One who does the rite with full awareness of the significance of the *mantra* is able to reach the solar splendour, through the offerings made; they take the performer to the region of Indra, the Lord of the gods.

The *Vedas* recommend two types of obligatory activities (*karmas*): individually auspicious and charitably auspicious (*ishtha* and *purtha*). The rite of *agnihotra*, adherence to truth, asceticism (*tapas*), study of the *Vedas*, service offered to guests in one's home —these are individually auspicious.

Construction of temples, caravanserais, rest-houses, tanks, planting of avenue trees —such acts are charitable. These give consequences that are beneficial, but all such cause-effect chains are transient; they are fundamentally defective.

Om is the arrow and Brahman the target

The entire creation is bound up with name and form and is thus unreal. It can be described in words, so it is limited and circumscribed by the intellect and the mind. Only the supreme Person (*Parama-purusha*) is eternal, real, and pure. He is the prompter of activity and the dispenser of consequence. But He is beyond the eye, beyond the intellect. Like the spokes of a wheel that radiate from the hub, that lead from all directions to the centre, all creation radiates from Him.

The mind is the instrument to reach the central hub and know that all spokes radiate from it. *Brahman* is the target to be reached by the arrow-mind. Have your mind fixed on the target and, using the *Upanishadic* teaching as the bow, shoot straight and hard, to hit the *Brahman* and master. *Om* (*Pranava*) is the arrow; *Brahman* is the target.

The *Brahman* illumines the individual soul (*jivi*) by getting reflected in the inner consciousness (*an-thah-karana*). One has only to turn that consciousness away from the objective world, contact with which contaminates

the mind. Now, train the inner consciousness to meditate on the *Om* with single-pointed attention. Meditate on the *Atma* as unaffected by the individual, though It is in one and with one and activating one. Meditate on Him in the heart, from which countless subtle nerves (*naadis*) radiate in all directions. If this process is followed, one can attain spiritual wisdom (*jnana*).

Brahman is beyond rituals or asceticism

The universe is an instrument to reveal the majesty of God. The inner firmament in the heart of man is also equally a revelation of His glory. He is the Breath of one's breath. Since He has no specific form, He cannot be indicated by words. Nor can His mystery be penetrated by the other senses. He is beyond the reach of asceticism, beyond the bounds of *Vedic* rituals. He can be known only by an intellect that has been cleansed of all trace of attachment and hatred, of egotism and the sense of possession.

Only spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) can grant self-realisation. Meditation can confer concentration of the faculties; through that concentration, spiritual wisdom can be won, even while in the body.

The *Brahman* activates the body through the five vital airs (*pranas*). It condescends to reveal itself in that same body as soon as the inner consciousness attains the requisite purity. For the *Atma* is immanent in the inner and outer senses just as heat is in fuel and butter is in milk. Now, the individualised consciousness is like damp fuel, soaked in the foulness of sensory desires and disappointments. When the pool in the heart becomes clear of the slimy overgrowth, the *Atma* shines in its pristine splendour. One who acquires knowledge of this *Atman* is to be revered, for that one is liberated. One has become *Brahman*, that which one strove to know and be.

Chapter V. Mandukya Upanishad

This *Upanishad* is the kernel of *Vedanta*, the most profound among all the *Upanishads*. It is the chief one, having the distinction of being recommended as enough, by itself, to lead man to salvation. It is very brief, consisting of just a dozen *mantras*! They are divided into four chapters: origin (*aagama*), falsehood (*vaithathya*), non-duality (*a-dwaitha*), and extinction of the firebrand (*alatha-santhi*). In the first chapter, the secret doctrine of the *Om* (*Pranava*), which is the key to self-realisation, is expounded. In the second chapter, the doctrine of dualism, the great obstacle to liberation, is discussed and rebutted. In the third, the non-dual (*a-dwaitha*) Unity is propounded. In the last chapter certain mutually contradictory non-*Vedic* doctrines are described and rejected.

No sound is beyond the ken of *Om*; they are all *Om*, its permutations and products. *Brahman* is also *Om*, identified by It and with It. The *Brahman*, which is beyond vision, is manifest for vision as *Atma*.

The waking, dream, and sleep states are appearances imposed on the Atma

The distinctions of waking state, dream state, and sleep state (*viswa*, *taijasa*, and *prajna*) are but appearances imposed on the *Atma*; that is to say, the *Atma* continues the same, unaffected by the waking, dreaming, and deep-sleep stages of man's existence. This *Atma* and the *Atma* that one refers to as "I" are basically the same. The "I" or the *Atma* swims like a fish in the river, paying no regard to this bank or that, though the waters are limited and guided by them.

In deep sleep, all the impulses (*vasanas*) are suspended; though they still persist, they are not manifest or active. In the dream state, one follows the impulses and wins satisfaction in the process. All the manifold pulls and attractions of the sensory world, which impel one toward the surrounding objects, are born during the waking and dream stages. The mind is full of agitations, and these are the fertile fields where the impulses grow, multiply, and strike root. As a matter of fact, it is the agitating mind that causes creation (*srishti*) and that is behind all creation.

Transcend the mind and senses: Thuriya

However, there is a fourth stage that is distinct from these three: it is named *thuriya*! This stage cannot be described by words or even imagined by the mind, for it is beyond both intellect (*buddhi*) and mind (*manas*). The experience is inadequately described as peace, grace, and oneness (*santham*, *sivam*, *a-dwaithama*); that is all. The mental agitations are stilled, so there is no more mind. It is the conquest of the mind, its negation, the mindless stage.

What a victory it is! For in deep sleep the mind is latent; while dreaming, the mind is restless with agitations; and in the waking stage it is active and motivating. In all three stages, truth remains unknown. The objective world is but a delusion of the agitated mind, the superimposition on the rope of a nonexistent snake. The world is not born, nor does it die. It is born when you are ignorant and dies when you become wise.

AUM is the symbol of the Supreme Atmic Principle

The *AUM* of the *Om* *kara*, representing the stages of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep of existence, each

have a particular role in spiritual practice. Worship, which *A* emphasises more, makes one realise all desires; if *U* is concentrated upon, spiritual wisdom increases; and if *M* is specially dwelt upon in the worship, the final merging of the soul in the Supreme is effected. The worshiper of *Aum* (*Pranava*) will also earn knowledge of the truth of the world and creation. Therefore, the worshiper of the *Aum* draws to themselves the reverence of all.

The *A*, *U*, and *M* proceed from one to the other in the *Aum* and finally merge in a letterless resonance, which thins out into silence. That is the symbol of the peace (*santhi*), the auspicious (*siva*) and the non-dual (*a-dwaita*), the merging of the individualised soul in the Universal after shedding the limiting particulars of name and form. This is not all. Gaudapada's commentary on this *Upanishad*, verses 24-29, praise the *Aum* as the cause of creation. It is extolled as quenching all grief. Why? One who ruminates on the *Aum*, ever aware of its significance, can steadily move on to an awareness of the Real behind all this unreal appearance, of the Supreme *Atmic* Principle (*Param-atma-thathwa*) Itself.

Brahman is the cause of all causes, never an effect

In the first section of the commentary, the non-dual (*a-dwaitic*) uniqueness of the *Atma* is established in a general way; in the second, as has been said, the positing of two entities, God and the world, is shown as empty and evanescent. In the section called specifically non-dualism (*a-dwaita*), the doctrine is established by arguments and affirmations. At first, the world was latent and unmanifest; the Creator Brahma is Himself an effect, so reflection on the effect will not lead man to the source of all things. The Brahma revealed in this *Upanishad* is not the effect; It is the Primal Cause. It is neither born nor limited; it isn't broken into all this many.

The *Atma* is like ether (*akasa*), all pervasive. It may seem enclosed in certain limits, like a pot or a room, and it may be spoken of as individualised, but there is no truth to that limitation. The body is also like the pot, which, for all appearances, limits the sky enclosed in it. There is no innate distinction between the sky in the pot and the sky outside; take away the limiting factor, and they are One. When the body is destroyed, the individual soul (*jivi*) merges with the Universal (*Paramatma*). The limitation appears to qualify the *Atma*, but the *Atma* is the Highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*) itself. The individual soul can never be considered a limb or an adaptation of the Highest *Atma*.

Non-dualism is the Highest Truth

The birth and death of individual souls (*jivis*) and their wanderings in space and from one world to another are all unreal. It is appearance, not reality. Go deeply into the matter: you will find that duality (*dwaita*) or appearance is not opposed to non-duality, the substratum. The opposition is between various dualistic religions and schools of thought. For the non-dualist, all is Supreme *Brahman* (*Parabrahman*), so no opposition is known. For the dualist, there is always the atmosphere of attachment and pride and hate, for where there are two there is always fear, attachment, and all the consequent passions. Non-dualism is the Highest Truth; dualism is a certain mental attitude. So, dualism can move you only as long as the mind is active. In sleep or *samadhi*, there is no cognition of "two". When ignorance (*a-vidya*) prevails, difference is rampant; when spiritual wisdom (*vidya*) is established, union is experienced. So there is no opposition or quarrel between dualism and non-dualism. The rope is the cause of all the illusion and delusion; *Brahman* is the cause of all the illusion and delusion connoted by the word world (*jagath*).

Attain the no-mind state with non-attachment and discrimination

It is not correct to say that the supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*) is born as the world, for how can one's essential quality (*swa-bhava*) be changed? Manifoldness is not the characteristic of the supreme *Atmic* Principle (*Param-atma-thathwa*). The scriptures (*sruthis*) declare this in many contexts. Why, they even condemn those who see It as many. The witness of all the phases of the mind, of even its annihilation, can never be known by the mind. That witness alone is eternal, unaffected by time and space. That is the *Atmic* consciousness (*Atma-chaithanya*), the truth (*sathya*). The rest is all unreal.

Turn the mind away from the sensory world through the practice of discrimination and non-attachment; then, you attain the no-mind experience. Well, you have to remember another thing: trying to control the mind without a clear understanding of the nature of the sensory world is a vain, valueless effort; the attachment will not end, the agitation will not cease so easily.

Transcend all agitations and attachments

Attachments and agitations sprout at the first chance. What has to be done is to develop inertness of the mind during the deep sleep stage into a stage of permanent ineffectiveness. When the conviction that all sensory experiences are unreal is well and truly stabilised, the mind will no longer function as a distracting agency; it will lie powerless, as a defunct limb. However hungry people are, they certainly won't crave for excreta, will they?

To know that the *Atma*, which is the goal of realisation, is devoid of sleep, birth, name, form and so on, to know that It is eternally self-effulgent (*nithya-swayam-prakasa*), is to transcend all agitations of the mind. Attempting to curb the mind without the aid of discrimination, or attempting to make known the unreality of objects is as foolish and fruitless as attempting to empty the ocean using a blade of grass. Be firmly fixed in the conviction that the world is a myth; then, you can aspire to perfect peace (*prasanthi*) and fearlessness (*a-bhaya*).

Cause-effect nexus is delusory ignorance

As the motivating force behind every birth or product, there should be a purpose, either existence (*sat*) or nonexistence. Exactly what transformation takes place? The cause (*karana*) undergoes change (*vikara*) and gets transformed into the effect (*karya*). Well, existence has no change, so no birth is possible from it. Nonexistence is void, so nothing can emanate from it. Existence and nonexistence are inconceivable together. Therefore, logically, nothing can be born or produced; cause cannot become effect.

When you remember fire, you don't feel the heat. Only when you hold fire in your hand do you experience the heat. So too, all objects are different from knowledge (*jnana*) about them. Knowledge is one thing, actual experience is another. Moreover, the search for the first cause is an endless adventure. Even in the complete absence of the snake, one sees it in the rope. It is all a figment of the imagination. In dreams, with nothing concrete, all the joy and sorrow of manifoldness are undergone. For the machinations and inferences of the mind, no basis or explanation is needed. Irresponsible inferences about the unreal world will pester the mind as long as the illumination of truth is absent. The clasping of delusion is the fate of those who are steeped in ignorance (*a-vidya* or *a-jnana*).

This *Upanishad* declares in unambiguous terms that existence (*sat*) can never be the cause for the effect

(*karya*) viz. nonexistence. The external world is created by our own subconscious mind (*chittha*), like smoke emanating from a burning incense stick. Everything is appearance, a superimposition, an apparition —something mistaken to be there but really nonexistent. The atmosphere of ignorance (*a-jnana*) is the fertile field for their birth and multiplication. Worldly illusion, which has the dual characteristic of evolution, of origin and ruin, is the fruit of this mistake.

Transcend pulsating consciousness, which is the cause of creation

Since the supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*) is the whole being (*Sarvatma-swarupa*), no possibility of cause-effect or wish-fulfillment or purpose-product appears in it. For one who has had the vision of *Atma*, all is *Atma*. The illusion-infected (*maya*-infected) seed will sprout into an illusion-infected tree; both are false and fleeting. So too, both the birth and the death of the individual (*jivi*) are false; they are mere words, signifying nothing. The things seen in dreams are not distinct from the dreamer, are they? They may appear as different and as outside of the dreamer, but, really, they are part of the dreamer, arising out of their own consciousness. One who is the witness has no beginning or end. That one is not bound by duties or obligations, right or wrong. To know this, and to get firm in that knowledge, is to attain liberation from the shackles. It is the quivering of the consciousness (*chittha*) that causes things to originate. Pulsating consciousness is the cause of creation.

Contemplate on this and reach up to the union stage (*thuriya*) of consciousness. Then, name, form, object, and being (*nama, rupa, vasthu, and bhava*), all get merged in the one all-pervasive all-inclusive *Atma*!

This *Upanishad* teaches man the essential philosophy, in the briefest terms. It does not refer in the least to activity (*karma*) or kindred subjects. It concerns itself purely with the science of the *Atmic* Principle (*Atma-thathwa*).

Chapter VI. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

Atmic principles, experience, and constant practise

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* is affiliated with the *White (Sukla) Yajur-veda*. Of its six sections, all except the third and fourth describe worship (*upasana*) associated with ritualistic action (*karma*). The third and fourth sections deal with the teachings of Yajnavalkya on spiritual truth, which he imparted to Janaka. The grandeur of the intellectual eminence of that sage is impressively evident in this *Upanishad*, so the sections are referred to as *Yajnavalkya Kanda*. This part of *Brihadaranyaka* offers the best guide for aspirants eager to reach the goal of liberation.

The *Brihadaranyaka* is the last of the famous ten *Upanishads*. On account of its size, it is named *brihath* (big); since it is best studied in the silence of the forest (*aranya*), it is an *aranya*; it instructs in knowledge of *Brahman*, so it is classed as a *Upanishad*.

Scholars have designated the first two sections of this text as *Madhu Kanda*, the next two as *Muni Kanda*, and the last two as *Khila Kanda*. The first section deals with the basic principles, as they are; the second proves their truth by reference to experience; and the third shows how to practise them and get mastery over them. The first section teaches spiritual wisdom (*jnana*), which is essential for spiritual progress; it is assimilated with the paths of spiritual activity and contemplative worship—it is not mere dry intellectual discipline. *Khila* means appendix, so the name *Khila Kanda* is appropriate.

The four knowledge instruments: word, seed, measure, and geometry

For those eager to earn spiritual wisdom, there are four instruments or media for acquiring it. They are: word (*pada*), seed (*bija*), measurement (*sankhya*), and geometry (*rekha*). *Word* means the *Vedas* and the codes of law (*smritis*) that attempt to explain them. *Seed* connotes the entire gamut of *mantras* learned directly from the spiritual teacher (*guru*). Measurement is of two kinds, *Vedic* and worldly (*loukika*). *Vedic* measurement means the calculations and quantitative analysis of the various *mantras*; *worldly* refers to the numbers and their interrelations as far as they are related to the external world and the interrelations of human activities. *Geometry* also has two such categories: *Vedic* geometry is part of the worship activity mentioned in the *Vedas*, and worldly geometry is part of the mathematics of the universe.

Unity in diversity in nature

The *Madhu Kanda* describes the Brahma Principle in light of the categories accepted as authoritative by the scriptures. God (*Purusha*) is the primeval Person, from whom or on whom all this name-form manifoldness has emanated. We conceive the horse in the horse sacrifice (*aswamedha*) as the Creator (*Prajapathi*) Himself. He is directed to impose on the horse the characteristics and attributes of *Prajapathi*, so that he might acquire the fruits of that ritual. This portion is known also as the “Sacrificial horse-related text” (*Aswa-Brahmana*). Again, the fire that is the central figure in the sacrifice is also to be felt and consecrated as *Prajapathi*. Some descriptions attribute the qualities of *Prajapathi* to the god Agni, so this is called *Agni-Brahmana*.

This world (*jagath*), taken as true by the deluded, is just a jumble of names and forms; it is devoid of the permanence that only *Atma* can have. Hence, it breeds disgust and discontent and causes renunciation to grow. The mind is soon free from attachment to the objects of sensory pleasure, and it moves along its natural bent to *Brahman* itself. All sounds are names; voice is the cause for its emergence. Form is the result of vision or sight; it emerges from the eye. *Karma* similarly has the body as its source; the body is just a context for speech and other instruments. Contemplation on such truths helps the process of inquiry into the *Atma* to start and progress.

The vital air (*prana*), the body that is its basis, the head, which is the seat of the instruments of acquiring knowledge, the strength that is derived from food—all these are considered in this *Upanishad*.

Just as the sweetness of a thousand flowers is collected into honey, so this world (*jagath*) is a concatenation of the elements. *Dharma*, truth (*sathya*), and such abstract principles, people, and such concrete living beings, the first incarnation of Brahma (*Viraat-Purusha*) and such conceptions—all these again are the effects of the same *Brahman* principle, i.e. an immortal changeless principle. The realisation that this principle inheres in every individual is knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*).

Janaka's sacrifice

Janaka, the King of Videha, celebrated a sacrifice, giving away vast wealth in gifts. Many *brahmins* from the Kuru-Panchala territory attended. The King had a thousand cows decorated with anklets, necklaces, and hornlets of gold and announced that they would be donated to whoever taught him the *Brahman*. The *brahmins*, though great scholars in their own line, hesitated to claim the cows, through fear of failure. Yajnavalkya, however, was so confident that he asked his students to drive the cows to his ashram (hermitage)! The other *brahmins* got enraged at his audacity and started testing his scholarship and experience.

Yajnavalkya explains the significance of ritual

The first to challenge Yajnavalkya was Janaka's family priest. The answers that the sage gave to his questions clarify the method of attaining the *Atma* encased in the vital airs (*pranas*), through the conjoint *yogas* of action (*karma*) and devotion. In the sacrifice, the sacrificial priest's voice is Agni, time (*kala*) is Vayu, and the mind of the performer is the moon—such is the manner in which one has to grasp the meaning of ritual and free oneself from the limitations of mortality.

Yajnavalkya explains the concept of Atma as super consciousness

The next to accost the sage was Bujyu. His questions were: Is there an entity called God (*Purusha*) who rules the senses and who is not entangled in this current named life (*samsara*)? Or is there no God of this type? If there is one such, what are his characteristics?

Yajnavalkya answered him thus: Your *Atma* is the entity you inquired about; just as a wooden contrivance cannot operate on its own but must be moved by some outside power or inside force, or just as this arm can move like this only when the will operates on it, so too, unless a super-spiritual power presides, the body cannot act and the vital airs cannot function as they do. He is the seer of the see-ing function of the body; He hears—not the ear. The super-consciousness (*chetana*) that sees and hears and feels is but a reflection of the *Atma* on the mind. That super-consciousness sees even the seer; what happens is that the consciousness reflected in the mind moves

out through the senses and grasps the external world of the five elements, so it appears as if the consciousness is engaged in activity. Really speaking, it has no activity.

Atma is to be attained by total renunciation

That consciousness (*chetana*) is the *Atma*; it is beyond the reach of the senses, it is above and beyond the subtle and even the causal bodies (*sariras*). It has been understood by experience where the *Atma* is and what its nature is. It is the same in all. The *Atma* is to be attained by total renunciation. Attachment to children, riches, wife, etc. —all have to be given up; these originate in desire. Why, all activities, whether ordinary or ritual or worshipful, are basically the products of desire. The desire for the fruit is present in ritual actions also. There is no denying this. Hence, they are opposed to true renunciation (*sanyasa*).

Light and darkness cannot be together, at the same place and time. So too, activity (*karma*) and knowledge of *Atma* cannot be together. Renunciation is renunciation of all action (*sarvakriya-parithyaga*). Begging for food is an action and is against renunciation. The *brahmins* of ancient days knew this; they gave up attachment and, through the path of withdrawal (*nivritti*), realised the Reality. This is scholarship —this understanding and this attainment. This is the achievement, the adventure, the fruit, the strength, and the endurance. He alone is a *brahmin* who has detached himself from all things concerned with non-*Atmic* ends. All other credentials are secondary.

Brahman is the warp and woof of Creation

In this *Upanishad*, the all-pervasiveness (*sarva-antar-yamithwa*) of the *Atma* is described. All this earth becomes habitable through association with water. Without water, it would fall apart like a lump of rice flour.

Gargi asked Yajnavalkya what the earth is based on. This question and the answer given inform us that earth, water, space (*akasa*), sun, moon, constellation, celestial being, Indra, *Prajapathi*, the world of Brahma —all these, one from the other, were woven out of the supreme *Atmic* Principle (*Param-atma-thathwa*), which is the warp and woof, the yarn of creation. Such truths are beyond the reach of the imagination of people. They have to be imbibed from the scriptures (*sastras*) by a clarified intellect.

Yajnavalkya negated Gargi's arguments, for her questions could not be solved by mere intellectual feats; they could be solved only by intuition earned by the guidance of a *guru*. The earth is pervaded and protected by air. The individualised Universal, individualised according to the impressions of experience in previous lives, is associated with seventeen instruments: the five organs of action (*karmen-driyas*), the five organs of perception (*jnanen-driyas*) the five vital airs (*pranas*), the mind (*manas*), and the intellect (*buddhi*).

The concrete body is a mutation of the Earth; it is pervaded by air. Forty-nine “earth-bits (*angas*)” can be identified in the body, and, like a string that holds pearls together, “air” holds them together as one coordinate whole. When the air leaves the body for good, the earth-bits become distinct and derelict. The body then becomes a corpse. However, the immanent spirit (*antar-yamin*) that is in the body-complex abode, the mystery that is beyond the reach of that complex, the motivating force of the impulses and intentions of that complex —that immanent spirit has no death; It is *Atma*.

The never-changing Reality is the basis of the phenomenal world

Gargi put her second question —after taking due permission from the gathering, for it is not courteous to pose problems without such notice. Her question was: On what does the inner Core —the *Atma*— rest in the past, present, and future in this dual world? Gargi’s intention was to bring about Yajnavalkya’s discomfiture, for he would be forced to admit that “The timeless Entity is beyond words and cannot be described at all.” This shows that Gargi was also an adept in the knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*), so you can infer that in the field of knowledge of *Brahman* there is no place for distinctions between one sex and the other.

“The masters of *Brahmic* wisdom declare that the highest *Brahman* (*Parabrahman*) is immanent in the unmanifested ether (*akasa*),” said Yajnavalkya, thus escaping from the trying situation into which Gargi wanted to drive him. Then he described the nature of that Indestructible (*A-kshara*): It has no gross, subtle, or other such changes; It has no material qualification like colour, smell, shape, etc. There are no “measures” to comprehend It. Time is but the execution of Its will. Why elaborate? The Sun and the five elements all carry out Its will.

Gargi then asked the assembled *brahmins* to bow before Yajnavalkya and acknowledge his supremacy. That action stopped further questionings.

Brahman is the Source of all Bliss

The *Atma* is effulgent, just as the sun is, by its very nature. People say that they “see” the *Atma* or Its effulgence, but there is no seeing It. Since It has no second, nothing is outside It. It is not seen, and It cannot see. It has no organs of sight or smell; it has no parts that, when coordinated, can perform any function.

From the lowest joy to the highest bliss of *Brahman* (*Brahma-ananda*), each step is an increase of the feeling of delight. Words like highest bliss (*Param-ananda*) indicate only stages of bliss (*ananda*). As a matter of fact, all types of bliss are derived from the primary basic source of the bliss of *Brahman*. Yajnavalkya explained all this to Janaka, for he took great delight in instructing the king on all that he knew.

The body grows like a tree sprouting from a tiny seed, and, when the body falls like a ripe fruit to the ground, the seed in it grows into another tree. Voice and other senses also follow; the breath also takes to its own path. The *Atma* alone is not affected, one way or the other. It remains as ever: unmoved, immovable.

Through sinful deeds, sin (*papa*) accumulates; through meritorious deeds, merit (*punya*). They produce the impulses for a new body, as the primary motive force of the body (*sarira*). The *Atma* leaves the old body, with its vision directed to the new one it occupies, like a caterpillar fixes its forelegs on a spot when it lifts up its hind legs. However, the knower of Self (*Atma-jnani*) has no impulse toward bodily activities, so in his case the *Atma* is not bothered by a new body at all. The path of spiritual wisdom is the path of the knower of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vid*).

The action-enthusiasts are led on to renunciation (*tapas*). The knowers of Self have escaped from desire, so their minds know no anguish or agony or yearning, which is the mark of renunciation. They are the very Artist who has evolved the creation (the very *Viswakartha*). One who has attained the vision of Brahmanhood has nothing further to attain, realise, guard, or seek.

All things are loved for Atma alone

The instruction that Yajnavalkya gives in this *Upanishad* to Maitreyi, his consort, reveals to us clearly the knowledge of the Self (*Atma-jnana*) that comes after a study of the scriptures with reasoning as a constant com-

panion. It also describes the principles of renunciation (*sanyasa*), which is the instrument for getting that spiritual wisdom. The entire sensory world and the senses have to be equated only with the dream-reality; there is no use pursuing them as ultimate and valuable.

The *Atma* alone has to be loved; all other things are loved for the sake of the *Atma*. When the *Atma* is understood, everything else is understood. All effects are subsumed by the Cause. The ocean is the goal of all the waters; so too, all tastes find their goal in the tongue, all forms realise themselves in the eye, all sounds are for the ear, all resolutions have the mind as their goal. That is to say, the entire creation merges in *Brahman*.

Yajnavalkya, the crown jewel of scholars of Brahmic knowledge

In his reply to Bujyu, Yajnavalkya reveals his knowledge of the process of evolution of the universe (*Brahmanda-nirmana*). In his reply to Gargi's two questions, he reveals and teaches the true nature of *Brahman*, which is direct spiritual knowledge (*a-paroksha*). In the *Sakalya-brahmana*, the sage has astounded everyone by his erudition in spiritual mysteries.

He earned victory in the Hall of Janaka from the wisest of the land. He sanctified it by his teaching. He met the hard tests of the crooked Bujyu and the harder tests of the eager inquirer, Gargi, with equanimity and skill. He was acclaimed as the crown jewel of scholars.

Of course, he himself acknowledged greatness wherever he recognised it. He was generous enough to recognise the greatness of the teachers who were instructing Janaka until then.

Lastly, he felt that he had no more to learn or earn, so he became a monk. Realising that Maitreyi, his consort, was also eager to attain realisation, he instructed her in the knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*), for in those days women were considered equally fit to practise the path of spiritual wisdom, which leads to liberation.

Chapter VII. Prasna Upanishad

The *Prasna Upanishad* is an appendix of the *Atharvana-veda*. It is so named because it is in the form of questions (*prasnās*) and answers. By this means, it discusses more elaborately some topics dealt with briefly in the *Mundaka Upanishad*. It has thus become a commentary on the *Mundaka Upanishad*.

For example, the *Mundaka* says that knowledge (*vidyā*) is of two types —absolute transcendent and worldly— and that knowledge of the world-related *Brahman* is of two kinds —action and worship (*karma* and *upāsana*). The second and third questions in *Prasna Upanishad* deal with worship. The discipline of action is fully covered in the section on action (*Karma Kanda*), so it is not elaborated on here. When both activity and worship are practised, regardless of the fruits thereof, they promote renunciation and non-attachment. This is the conclusion arrived at by the first question. So, studying the *Prasna Upanishad* after the *Mundaka* makes the subject clearer.

Seekers meet the guru with sincere heart offerings

Of the two entities, the eternal supreme transcendent (*para*) *Brahman* and the worldly or qualified (*a-para*) *Brahman*, the worldly *Brahman* is incapable of conferring the goals of human life (*purusha-arthas*), which are of lasting value. Realising this, and eager to attain the eternal supreme *Brahman*, aspirants approached Pippalada, a competent teacher. The word *seeking* (*anveshana*) used here to signify the attitude of these disciples shows that these disciples, attached to the lower Self (*a-para Brahman*) and unrelated to the Supreme Absolute Over-Self, fail to identify their own basic truth as the *Atma*. That is why they still seek it somewhere outside the truth of their being! The eternal unique transcendent *Brahmic* principle can be known only through the discipline of the scriptures (*sastras*), directed personally by a teacher.

Seekers have to approach the *guru* as holding in the hand sincere heart-offerings, that is to say not simply “holding the ritualistic fuel, the sacrificial fire”. Further, worthy, desirable offerings should be presented.

The seekers meet Pippalada, who tells them, “The rare and precious teaching related to the fundamental mystery of the universe and the Self, known as knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidyā*), cannot be imparted to the uninitiated. Students have first to be kept under observation and tested for a year.”

Beings are born to perpetuate Creation

When the year is over, Kabandi Kathyayana asks Pippalada, “Why are beings born?”

“Those who wish for progeny are the desirers of offspring. The wish is basically to become the progeny, to perpetuate oneself. *Hiranyagarbha*, who is non-separate from the supreme *Brahman* (*Parabrahman*), is the *Prajapathi* (God presiding over creation). *Hiranyagarbha*, as *Prajapathi*, wishes for progeny; he has traces of knowledge of the lower or world-related *Brahman* (*a-Para-vidyā*) attached to Him from past origins, which induce in Him the wish.” This is the reply of the *guru*.

Contemplate on the orderly universe and its principles

Surya (the Sun) illumines all beings in the ten regions with His rays. Surya is the very Self of *Prajapathi*,

so all beings born in the regions so illumined become the very “self” of *Prajapathi*. The word “vital air (*prana*)” therefore refers to Aditya (the Sun) Itself, for the Sun gives the vital essence (*prana*). Since all beings are able to live by consumption of food, etc., the Sun is also known as the Cosmic Universal Personality (*Vaiswanara*). The whole universe is of His nature, so He is also known as Cosmic Form (*Viswa-rupa*).

The year is an indicator of time, according to the position of the sun. Time is but a series of days and nights, and these phases are caused by the sun. The rotation of the moon causes phases in fullness. The twin forces, the sun and moon, are products of *Prajapathi*, so time, which is marked out by the tropics, seasons, months, etc., is also of the same essence. *Prajapathi* also has northern and southern cycles.

The contemplation and worship of *Prajapathi* in this universal aspect is referred to as “spiritual wisdom (*jnana*)” itself. Those who are endowed with this spiritual wisdom and who have mastery over the senses as well as faith in the *Vedas* can easily convince themselves that they are the very *Atma*. Pursuing the northern path (*uttara-marga*), they reach the spiritual stage known as the world of the Sun (*Surya-loka*). That world is the refuge of all living beings. Only those who worshipfully engage themselves in their daily duties, without any desire for the fruits thereof, can enter that world of the Sun.

The seasons like spring are the feet of the Sun, the symbol of time; the twelve months are His personal traits; He is the Cause of the worlds —these truths are expressed in the fourth and sixth *mantras*. The rains are also caused by the Sun, so He is the master of another world too, the third, the heavenly world (*dyu-loka*).

Consecrate the body, a complex of vital elements, by sacrifice

Ether (*akasa*), air (*vayu*), fire (*agni*), water (*jala*), and earth (*bhumi*) —the elements that make up the body— have their presiding deities. The “activating” senses like voice and the “knowing” senses like the eye also have their deities, which reside in them and promote their functions. Finally, the mind and the intellect also have their deities; they are all pillars that support the being and prevent the structure of the body from falling asunder.

The body is a complex produced by a combination of the five elements. The organs of perception (*jnanendriyas*) are the consequences of this combination. So, the body is a bundle of consequences and causes. Like the spokes of a wheel, they are fixed in the hub of vital airs (*prana*). So too, the sacred hymns, the *Yajur-vedic mantras*, the *Sama-vedic mantras*, the sacrificial rituals (*yajnas*) where they are employed, the valour of the warrior (*kshatriya*) who protects the people from danger, the *brahmanic* force consecrating the sacrifices —all these are of the nature of the vital air.

When *Prajapathi* becomes the cloud and pours rain, all beings rejoice and are enabled to live. “All things that contribute to happiness are bound to You; cherish us therefore as the Mother. You cause all wealth and welfare related to spiritual and physical protection. Give us that wealth and wisdom.” The *Rik*, *Yajur*, and *Sama mantras* are the *brahmanic* wealth; riches are the warrior (*kshatriya*) wealth. Thus, the *Upanishad* elaborates on the vital air (*prana*) as *Prajapathi* and its functions and attributes.

The Sun governs the vital air and vital functions

Thereafter, Pippalada takes up Bhargava’s question. Later, Kausalya, from the Aswalayana school, asks him about the vital air (*prana*). Pippalada replies, “My dear boy, like the shadow caused by a person, the vital air is

produced by the *Atma*. The vital air dedicates itself to the *Atma* through the resolve of the mind (*manas*). Like a ruler who arranges for the governance of his possessions, the chief vital air appoints different airs (*pranas*), assigning functions and areas of work for each. The chief vital air has the Sun (Aditya) and other Gods as its impelling force. Like sparks leaping out of the flames of a raging fire, beings emanate from the imperishable supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*) and lose themselves in the self-same fire.” This is mentioned in the *Mundaka* (II-I-I).

The Self abides in all beings

Then, Pippalada answers Gargi, “The rays of the setting sun merge in the Sun itself; they emanate and spread again when the sun rises the next day. In the same manner, during a dream, the sensory world gets merged in the consciousness-reflecting mind, and when one wakes from sleep, the sensory impressions emanate as of old and move out in their native form. That is why the Divine Self (*Purusha*), which abides in all beings, doesn’t hear or see or touch or enjoy. It doesn’t walk or talk.

The *Atma*, which is pure effulgence during the dream stage, sees, hears, and experiences as subconscious impulses (*vasanas*) whatever it sees, hears, and experiences during the waking stage. When the statement is made that “The *Atma* is the base of everything”, the impression is created that everything is different from It. But the distinction that is apparent between the “Base of all” and the “individual souls (*jivas*)” that rest upon It is merely an illusion caused by circumstances; it is mental, not fundamental. Pippalada also said that whatever world (*loka*) is connoted by the deity worshiped through the *Om* (*Pranava*), that world will be attained.

God resides in the heart

Next, Sukesha, Bharadwaja’s son, questioned the master. Pippalada’s answer ran thus: “The Divine Self (*Purusha*) you inquire about is in this body itself, as the resident of the inner sky, the heart. It is on account of His being there that you shine forth in full splendour of attainment and personality. Souls emanate from Him and merge in Him. Like milestones, progressively increasing and interdependent, the Earth, Durga (the mother goddess), food, the supreme Soul (*Purusha*) —all four principles originate from the other (according to the second section of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*). The origin might not be evident to the eye, but, since the origin of the sense organs (*jnanen-driyas*) and the organs of action (*karmen-driyas*) has been described already, the origin of the supreme Soul is as good as said. All rivers join the sea and lose their names and forms therein. The rivers are thereafter called the “sea”. So too, only the supreme Soul or Self remains. He is without any attainment and traits or changes. He is imperishable, endless. That is all I know about *Brahman* and that is all there is to know,” said Pippalada to Kabandi and other disciples.

The never-changing Absolute Reality and the ever-changing phenomenon

This *Upanishad* ends with respectful homage paid by the disciple to the master. The father gives only the body; Pippalada gave them the body of *Brahman* by teaching them the *Atmic* principle (*Atma-thathwa*). The six disciples, who asked six questions in all, were,

1. Sukesha, son of Bharadwaja.
2. Sathyakama, or Saibya, son of Sibi.

3. Souryayani, grandson of Surya, born in the family of Garga (hence, called Gaargya).
4. Kausalya, son of Ashvala.
5. Bhargava or Vaidarbhi, who was born in Vidarbha in the line of Bhrigu.
6. Kabandi Kathyayana, a descendent of Kathya.

The first section of *Mundaka Upanishad* elaborates on both the highest or transcendental (*para*) and the lower or creation- or world-related (*a-para*) aspects, along with the causal or creative aspect of *Brahman*. Although its second section begins by extolling the creation-related aspect, it ends with the firm declaration of the evanescent nature of the creation-related aspect.

In the answer to the sixth question, the *Om (Pranava)* as the core of all methods of gaining the transcendental and the non-transcendental aspects is fully elaborated upon.

The questions and answers in the *Prasna Upanishad* bring out the implications of the *Mundaka* and serve as a nice commentary on that succinct text. The 6 questions are:

1. What exactly is the relationship between the transcendental or non-dual (*para*) and the differentiating or dualistic (*a-para*) principles?
2. Who protects and guards created beings?
3. How does *Hiranyagarbha* emerge from the Supreme *Atma (Paramatma)*?
4. How does creation take place from the Supreme *Atma*?
5. How does the consciousness-full (*chaithanya*-full) principle, the vital air (*prana*), enter the body and get diverted into five channels?
6. Which senses operate in the three stages of waking, dreaming, and sleeping?

These lines of inquiry are followed in this *Prasna Upanishad*.

Chapter VIII. Kena Upanishad

Seek to know the Eternal, not the ephemeral

The *Kena Upanishad* is ascribed to *Sama-veda* and its *Thalavakara* branch, so it is also referred to as the *Thalavakaropanishad*. The name *Kena* is derived from the first word of the stanza of the first section of the *Upanishad*:

Who impels the mind to alight on its object? Enjoined by whom does the vital force proceed to function? At whose behest do men utter speech? What intelligence, indeed, directs the eyes and the ears?

*Keneshitham pathathi preshitham manah, kena praanah prathamah praithiyukthah,
keneshithaam vaacham imaam vadhanthi, chakshuh shrothram ka-u-deveo yunakthi?*

The ear, skin, eye, tongue, nose —these five senses are able to cognise sound, touch, form, taste, and smell respectively. Objects of knowledge are cognised only through these five. The world is experienced through these instruments, which stand intermediate between the knower and the knowable. The inner capacity to understand objects is named mind (*manas*). The mind moves out through the senses (*jnanen-driyas*) mentioned before and attaches itself to objects. At that time, by that very occurrence, the mind assumes the form of that object; this is called a function (*vritti*). The mind is non-intelligent (*a-chetana*), so its transformations and manipulations (*vikaras*) are also non-intelligent, non-vital. A wooden doll has only the property of wood; a sugar doll, the property of sugar. The unintelligent mind cannot achieve knowledge of the supreme Intelligence (*Chetana*), which pervades the Universe.

Just as the unintelligent chariot is directed by a charioteer, a charioteer must direct the unintelligent mind (*manas*), seated in the mind and having it as His vehicle. The motive force that activates the inner instruments, the senses of action, the senses of knowledge, the five vital airs (*pranas*) —that force is God. The questions quoted above imply that this force is distinct from the senses. Naturally, therefore, the motivator of the entire group of senses must be distinct from the mind too, right? Those who seek to know the eternal, convinced that all acts and activities are ephemeral, will not worry about the ephemeral.

The Atma activates and illumines all

That eternal entity is agitationless, so it is not moved by the three-fold urge. It does not order the senses about for this purpose or that. The question then arises: Do the mind (*manas*), the vital air (*prana*), speech, the eye, the ear, etc., carry out their respective functions prompted by the law of cause and effect? Or are they moved by the wish of a conscious force? That is the doubt.

The ear has the capacity to know sound, the eye is endowed with the skill to know and distinguish form. The other senses are also similarly equipped. When the mind passes out through the knowing-senses toward objects and envelops them, you acquire knowledge about them. Therefore, the five senses and the mind are all instruments of knowledge. How could they manage to perform this intelligent function, being themselves devoid of intelligence?

Well, the answer is: It is all due to the presence of the *Atma*, due to the reflection of the effulgence of the *Atma* on the inner instrument of mind, intellect, memory, and ego (*an-thah-karana*). The Sun illumines the world and makes it active in a thousand ways. So too, the *Atma*, by its spiritual power (*tejas*), activates and illumines the world. All instruments of knowledge are activated by the *Atma*. The electric current energises a machine and does various operations —printing, etc.— but it is not visible or concrete. The electric current is the mover of the movement, the machine of the machine. So too, the *Atmic* splendour (*tejas*) is the Ear of the ear, the Eye of the eye. That is the activating current.

The wonder is: the *Atma* is inactive and without qualifications. It does not get anything done with the mind or the senses, remember. They get activated by the very presence of the *Atma*! The rays of the Sun are not at all aware of the activity they invoke; the *Atma* is not responsible for the activity of the senses. (This teaching was given by Varuna to his son, Bhrigu.)

No knower can know the Knower of All: Atma is beyond senses

The eye, when illumined by the splendour of the *Atma*, is able to grasp form, which is its sphere; it can never hope to illumine the *Atma*, which is self-luminous. The lamp illumines objects, but the objects cannot, in their turn, illumine the lamp. Words can describe or denote only such as possess qualifications, like name, form, quality (*guna*), and action (*kriya*). How can they describe or define that which has no qualifications, no name, no form, no characteristic, viz. the highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*)? You cannot describe sweetness or similar tastes by means of words. The *Atma* is not a subject for description. The non-intelligent mind (*manas*) cannot experience the Intelligence. There is no knower who can know the Knower of all. He is beyond all knowable things. When known, He is no longer knower or knowledge.

Brahman is spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) itself, so it can never be “known” by a “knower”. By the process of knowing, other things can be known, not knowledge itself. The lamp will not crave for another lamp to see itself; nor will it crave for its own light. It has light, it is light —that is all. It sheds light on other objects; it does not shed light on its light. So, you are also light, you are *Atma*. The *Atma* in you is of the same nature as the *Atma* in all beings. It is the only one reality; it has no limitation or attribute or qualification.

Those who claim to know Atma don't really know

The *Atma* can be cognised by the study of the scriptures (*sastras*) and by following the injunctions laid down there. That which cannot be illumined by words or speech or by the senses, that which illumines the word, speech, and all senses —that is *Brahman*, or *Atma*. The first section of this *Upanishad* makes clear that *Brahman* is incapable of being limited or discarded or overlooked.

So, for those who claim that they have seen *Brahman*, “It” is yet a subject for further investigation and inquiry. They have not reached the final stage. For theirs is not authentic wisdom (*jnana*); theirs is but a delusion. The *Atma* of the person who knows is itself the very *Brahman*; that is the undoubted verdict of *Vedanta*, isn't it? Fire can't burn itself; how can *Atma* know *Atma*, how can the knower know Himself? Therefore, the statement “I have known *Brahman*” is an indication of delusion, not of real knowledge.

All people are entitled to knowledge of God; experience is the approach, the proof the result

It is said that *Brahman* has various cognisable and countable forms, but that is only in the limited sense of being qualified by name and form. By Itself, the Absolute doesn't have sound or smell or taste or touch or form. It is ever-existing. In whatever activity you become aware of its presence, that activity lends its appropriate characteristic. In whatever sphere the scriptures (*sastras*) discuss and decide, that sphere becomes the characteristic of *Brahman* for that particular scripture. The consciousness that becomes apparent when it is limited by certain bounds or vessels—that consciousness (*chaithanya*) is *Brahman*. Consciousness is attachment-less; yet, when associated with objects like the physical body, It gives the impression that It is attached. From the fact that when the waters of the lake are agitated the image of the Sun under the water shakes, you cannot infer that the Sun in the sky, which is remote and far away, also shakes! The Sun and the sheet of water are unrelated. No relationship can be posited between these two. Similarly when the body undergoes growth, decay, destruction, etc., it gives the impression that the *Atma* is also affected, but the *Atma* is unaffected.

Brahman is beyond the reach of the intellectual seeker; *Brahman* can be reached only by those who give up the intellect as a useless instrument. Experience alone is the method of approach, the proof, the result. The ultimate state of knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*) is the end of all enquiry, all search. Actual realisation (*saksat-kara*) is the fruition thereof. This highest stage is reached in the quietening of all agitations in all levels of consciousness (*samadhi*), though, of course, the preliminary steps of listening, reflection, and profound meditation are concerned with the intellect (*buddhi*). One will acquire the nature of truth if one understands the nature of the *Atma*; if one does not, then it is a big loss, no doubt. Wise souls recognise in every being and every object the principle of the all-pervading *Atma*, and when they leave the world, they become free from birth and death.

Knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*) is the heritage of all; all people are entitled to it. If one is aware of this, and if, by one's efforts, one achieves spiritual wisdom or *Brahman* using the above-mentioned methods, then verily, one's career in this world is worthwhile. Otherwise, it is all a waste.

Snap the strings of worldly attachment

The *Atma*, when cognised in the consciousness, flashes like a streak of lightning; in a second it will reveal its brilliance and splendour. It is impossible to grasp its full majesty. The mind is the cloak of the *Atma*; it conditions the *Atma*, or rather appears to. So it seems to be very close to the *Atma* and makes you believe that it attains It. But the mind is incapable of doing so. Since the mind is closest, the spiritual aspirant imagines that the mind has realised the *Atma* and yearns for the experience again and again. This, of course, is good, for it fosters the search for merging with *Brahman*.

For the knower of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnani*), the opposites of *dharma* and lack of *dharma*, of merit and demerit, are nonexistent. *Dharmic* life offers the upper realms (*lokas*) after death, and unrighteous life leads one to the lower worlds. But both are shackles for the aspiring aspirant, whose eye is on the removal of ignorance and realisation of spiritual truth. He has to seek to snap the strings that bind the heart to the objective world. So, he wants an answer to the question with which this *Upanishad* starts: By what does the mind grasp things? To attain the spiritual knowledge (*jnana*) of *Brahman*, austerity (*tapas*), self-control, *Vedic* rites, and image worship are all good aids. Spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) has truth (*sathya*) as its location.

This *Kena Upanishad* gives all seekers the instruction of knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*); it deals with *Brahman*, which is spiritual truth (*sathya*), spiritual wisdom (*jnana*), and eternal (*an-antha*).

Chapter IX. Chandogya Upanishad

Work, worship, and wisdom

This *Upanishad* is incorporated in the *Sama-veda*. It has eight sections. The first five deal with various forms of contemplative worship (*upasanās*) to approach the Ideal, and the last three explain the manner of acquisition of true knowledge. Purity of consciousness is the essential prerequisite for worship. Single-minded concentration is essential for knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*). These can be obtained by dedicated work (*karma*) and worship; thus is knowledge of *Brahman* won. That is why, in the scriptures, work is described first, worship next, and spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) last.

The first chapter of the *Chandogya* details the contemplative practices that form part of the *Sama-veda*. The second describes the entire ritual of chanting sacred verses. The third presents the contemplation (*upasana*) of the Sun (Surya) known as *Madhu-vidya*, the *Gayatri* contemplation, and the science of devotion. The fourth teaches the science of absorption (*Samvarga-vidya*) and the sixteen-phased science of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*). The fifth elaborates on the three sciences (*vidyas*), vital air (*prana*), the five sacred fires, and the omnipresent Self (*Vaiswanara*).

Being or “is-ness” is the universal quality of all objects

Uddalaka taught his son Swethakethu knowledge that, if known, would make all things known. The knowledge of mud and of gold will give knowledge of all pots and pans, as well as of all bracelets and necklaces. Mud and gold are the truth; their modifications and transformations are temporary, mere name-forms. So too, the world, like the pot and the bracelet, is just an effect, and the cause is Being or “is-ness” (*sat*). Is-ness is common to all objects; the pot “is”, the bracelet “is”. Is-ness becomes manifest through association with the pots and pans, the bracelets and necklaces. Is-ness may not be apparent to gross intelligences, for it needs subtlety to realise it. The rosy colour manifested in the rose “is”, even in the absence of the flower; it becomes apparent only when it “adheres” to the rose. It is not apparent when such attachment is nonexistent.

Similarly, the “is-ness” that is the universal character of all objects persists even in the absence of objects. Prior to creation, there was only just this is-ness. There was no void then —this is-ness was everywhere! When the “is” was reflected in primal activity (*maya*), it resulted in the Lord (Iswara), who partook of that activity to manifest as the universe with the three elements of fire, earth, and wind. All creation is but the permutation and combination of these three.

By knowing Atma, you will know all

Uddalaka’s lineage is steeped in the study of the *Vedas*, so it is famed as a noble high-born family. But Swethakethu, his son, was wasting precious years after his thread-investing ceremony (*upanayana*) in idleness, without using them for *Vedic* study. This caused Uddalaka concern, for one who is born as a *brahmin* but neglects the study of the *Vedas* does not deserve that appellation. Such a one can be called only “one who has relatives who are *brahmins*”! So, Uddalaka took Swethakethu to task and forced him to go to a teacher. There, by the ex-

ercise of his superior intelligence, Swethakethu mastered the four *Vedas* and their meanings before he was 24. He returned proud and pompous, swelling with egotism, declaring that no one was equal to him in scholarship and righteousness.

In order to prick his pride, Uddalaka asked him one day, “You have become so haughty that you have no equal in learning and virtue. Well, did you seek from your teacher the message that reveals the Absolute, the lesson that only practice of the scriptures (*sastras*) can impart, the message that when heard makes you hear all things that are heard, that when imagined makes you imagine all things imagined? Did you learn that? That message would have shown you the *Atma*, which is the fulfillment of all study and scholarship.”

The body decays and dies, but not the Self

The *Atma* is the base of individuals like Swethakethu. The pure consciousness becomes apparently limited in a variety of individuals. In deep sleep, the variety disappears, and each individual lapses back into this “is-ness”. Then, all the manifold activities and experiences, like, “I am Ranga,” “I am Ganga,” “I am father,” and “I am son,” are destroyed. The sweetness and fragrance of many flowers are collected and fused into one uniformly sweet honey, where all the manifold individualities are destroyed.

The river names *Ganga, Krishna, Indus* are all lost when these rivers enter the sea. Thereafter, they are called “the sea”. The individual soul (*jivi*), who is eternal and immortal, is born again and again as a transitory mortal; the soul continues to accumulate activity, prompted by inherited impulses, and the activity produces consequences, which must be shouldered and suffered. The body decays and dies, not the individualised soul. The seed of the banyan tree will sprout even if it is trampled upon. The salt placed in water is recognisable by the taste, even though it cannot be grasped!

The individual soul, befogged by ignorance (*a-jnana*), is unable to recognise its reality. Discrimination will reveal the truth. A millionaire is kidnapped and left alone in the jungle, but he discovers the way out and returns to his home. So also, the individual soul is restored to its millions! Once the individual reaches its real status, it is free from all the change and chance that is involved in the flow (*samsara*) of time and space, of name and form. If the individual doesn’t reach that status, then, like the happy sleeper who wakes into the confusion of the day, it will be born into the world of decay and death.

Discover omnipresent Brahman in the heart lotus!

Brahman is described as one without a second. All this visible world is denoted as the form of *Brahman* (*Thath-swarupa*); *Brahman* can be realised by worship of the limited, qualified Divinity, just as Sathyakama and others did. The path of contemplation of *Brahman* is also called the path of the spinal nerve current. The Omnipresent *Brahman* can be enclosed and discovered in the firmament of the heart! It is the capital of that kingdom. Since He is seated there, the heart is called the house of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vesma*). That firmament cannot, of course, limit or set boundaries to the illimitable *Brahman*!

Yogis who are turned away from the objective world can attain the supreme *Brahman* (*Parabrahman*), with its splendour of realised knowledge, in the pure clear sky of their hearts. The worlds are fixed as the spokes of the wheel in the hub of *Brahman*. Decline, decay, and death do not affect It. Since that supreme Entity can achieve whatever It decides on, It is called True Desire (*Sathya-kama*) and True Resolve (*Sathya-sankalpa*).

What exactly is the supreme *Brahman*? We can know it by one test. *Brahman* is That which remains after everything is negated as “Not this, Not that (*Nethi, Nethi*)”.

This is The Truth that all aspirants seek. Attaining It, they get the status of emperors and can travel wherever they like. The wise one who is established in the pure Reality sees all desires that dawn in the heart as expressions of that Truth only.

The journey of the soul after death

The *Atma* transcends all the worlds. It is uncontaminated. One who is aware of only the *Atma* is ever in bliss. The student (*brahma-charya*) stage is an important step for attaining *Atmic* wisdom. Holy rituals, fasts, and other vows are equally helpful. The solar energy surges through the countless nerves of the body; the senses merge in the mind at the moment of death; the individual (*jivi*) who has realised that it was all this, while limited by the mind, then escapes into the lotus of the heart space (*hridaya-akasa*) through the nerves. At last, on point of death, the individual soul moves out of the spinal column into the solar rays and from there to the realm of the Sun (*Surya-loka*) itself. The journey doesn't end there. It reaches out into the realm of *Brahman* (*Brahma-loka*).

But the individual who is caught in the mire of ignorance (*a-jnana*), who is identified with the mind and its vagaries, escapes through the ear or eye or other senses and falls into worlds where activities (*karmas*) rule. The feeling of content and joy one gets in deep sleep is the result of wisdom (*jnana*) persisting in the individual.

Expand your consciousness for liberation

The individualised consciousness (*chittha*) is the source and support of resolution. All resolutions, decisions, and plans are products of the consciousness; they are of its form; they originate there; they are registered there. That is why, when death overtakes a scholar of all scriptures (*sastras*), the scholar becomes but the equal of ordinary people and has the same fate as the ignorant person (*a-jnani*). The consciousness has to be saturated with *Brahmic* endeavour; only then will it be an instrument of liberation, freed from the shackles of resolve (*sankalpa*). The mind, etc., cannot free itself, as the consciousness can.

The consciousness discriminates between resolutions; it tests them as duty and not-duty and justifies with proper reasons the classification it has made. Once this selection is made, the word utters it, the name signifies it. The special sound-forms or *mantras* incorporate the resolutions, accepted as duty, by the purified consciousness; the rites become one with the *mantras*. There can be no proper action without consciousness.

Next, about meditation (*dhyaana*), which is superior to individual consciousness. Meditation is the fixing of the intellect (*buddhi*) on the Divine, when it transcends such inferior helps as images, idols, and saligrams (naturally formed linga stones). In meditation, all agitations cease, all modifications are unnoticed. On account of the effect of the quality of inertia (*thamoguna*), and even of the passionate quality (*rajoguna*), all created things—like the waters, hills, mountains, stars, planets, and people with the spark of the Divine in them—are agitation-bound, change-bound.

Spiritual knowledge (*vijnana*)—knowledge based on experience steeped in the scriptures (*sastras*)—is better than meditation. Spiritual knowledge is attained by meditation, so it is more valuable than meditation.

Superior to spiritual knowledge is strength, fortitude, vigour. It illumines the objective world, it sharpens the

intuition (*prathibha*). Intuition is the power by which you can sense the consciousness in all knowledge objects.

Now, there is one thing superior even to intuition: food, sustenance. It is the support of life. Deprived of it for ten days, one becomes powerless to grasp anything. It is life that makes possible study, service of teachers, listening to their teachings, cogitation over what is taught, and the earning of illumination (*tejas*).

Illumination is higher than intuition or food. Illumination is fire, heat, and light. Illumination creates water, and water produces food. Illumination can make even wind lighter. It shines as lightning and sounds as thunder.

Ether (*akasa*) is superior to illumination, remember. It is through ether that sounds are transmitted and heard. Love and play are products of ether. Seeds sprout on account of ether or space.

Now consider this. Memory (*smarana*) is superior to ether. Without it, all experience is meaningless, all knowledge is waste, all effort is purposeless. Nothing can be experienced without the help of memory. Objects like the ether will be unrecognised in its absence. It can be said that memory creates the ether and other objects.

To experience Reality, give up identification of the Self with the body

Thus analysing the value and relative importance of objects and powers, people must give up identification of spiritual Self with the physical body and recognise their true Reality. One who does this rises to the height of the noblest of people, laughing, playing, and moving without regard to the needs or comforts of the body. One who is body-bound is caught in worldly existence (*samsara*); for the one who is free from that bondage, their own true nature is the field of activity. Wind, lightning, and thunder have no permanent existence. When the rainy season comes, they appear in the sky and get merged in it. So too, the particularised individual (*jivi*) appears as separate for a time against the background of *Brahman* and gets merged in It at last.

This eight-section *Upanishad* teaches the series of evolved objects from *Hiranyagarbha*, *Kasyapa-Prajapati*, Manu, and human beings. This lineage and the lessons to ennoble it are vital for mankind. It has to be learned by children and students, from parents and teachers.

Chapter X. Aithareya Upanishad

Freedom from delusion results in vision of Atma

This *Upanishad* is incorporated in the *Rig-veda*. It shines bejeweled by six chapters, which describe the absolute *Atmic* principle. It is therefore famous as the *Atmic Six (Atma-Shatka)*. It makes possible for the aspirant the vision of the *Atma* that results from the destruction of delusion and ignorance. “*Atma*” is used in two ways: worldly activity and supreme. Used in the activity sense, *Atma* indicates the individual (*jivi*); in every individual, the *Atma* expresses itself through the senses of perception (*jnanen-driyas*) into the outer world. The word is derived from the root *ath*, which indicates “expansion, consumption, movement”, among other things. So, the word *Atma* denotes universal immanence, universal assimilation, and perpetual movement. That is to say, it connotes the *Brahman* itself.

Atma is unlimited, endless, changeless, all

In the waking stage, the *Atma*, in the sense of the individual (*jivi*) in worldly activity, enjoys all the experiences. In the dream stage, all the senses of perception and action hold back their activities, but the *Atma* creates its own forms and names on the basis of experiences and impressions collected from the outer world. In the “deep sleep” stage, it becomes immanent everywhere and assumes its basic role of pure bliss, unaware of anything outside or inside.

The meaning of the world is in conformity with the experience of the three stages. On account of the apparent limitation in time, space, and condition, the *Atma* is also taken to be conditioned and limited, but that is not its real nature. It is beginningless, changeless, endless. It knows all, it can achieve all. It has no attributes. It is eternal, unsullied, conscious, free. It has no second; it is unique, whole, without parts.

Atma existed before Creation

The external world is cognised through direct perception, etc. Therefore, all that is capable of being pointed out as this or that, or of being indicated by a name or a form, is subsumed by the idea of “creation (*srishti*)”. Creation means an act, a result. What then was before that act?

Before this, the *Atma* alone was

Idam agre, Atma eva aaseeth.

The world was a latent product; later it becomes patent. In the latent stage, it was unmanifest in the *Atma* itself. When the urge to manifest appeared, the multiplicity of names blossomed forth, and all this variety arose to view. Being perceptible by the senses —this is the test of manifestation.

Name is fundamentally sound, manifesting as word. In the statement “this is Ranga”, when the sound Ranga is produced, the listener turns to the person indicated and identifies him as Ranga. The word and its meaning are inseparable. The two were both nonexistent before creation. Therefore, the *Atma* and the unmanifested creation (*jagath*) were unreachable by the intelligence and the world that it fashions. After creation, since name and form

became the essence of all this, everything can be grasped by words and meaning. The non-dual that was, is, and will be is the *Atma*. The multiple manifestation of variety proliferating in name and form is the creation. But, basically, it is just one unique substance (*vasthu*).

Atma is devoid of all distinctions and beyond the reach of senses

The one uniform ocean appears as foam, bubble, wave, and wavelet; so too, creation made manifest the apparent manifoldness from the changeless One. Manifoldness is due to myopia, ignorance. There is no need to posit a second entity other than the *Atma*. The ignorance or myopia or illusion (*maya*) is but a product of the will of the *Atma*. It is not distinct from the *Atma*. Strength is not distinct from the strong person, is it? The *Atma* is devoid of distinctions, from the same kind, from different species, or from one's own characteristic. It is categorically declared as one only.

But it doesn't become clear so soon that all this is one. The idea is just like the rope appearing as the snake, or the deluding mirage; the *Atma* also misleads us as creation (*jagath*). It is all a magician's trick, manipulated by the wish of the absolute. The rope is the prime cause for the illusion of the snake on the rope. The *Atma* is beyond the reach of the senses; it has no limbs or body. Only the explanation that it is all an unreal illusion can satisfy the critic who questions how creation can emanate from the *Atma*, which is pure consciousness only.

Everything is *Atma*, even the deluding illusion (*maya*) of variety. It is so strong that it causes execution of deeds through instruments like the sensory organs; you then declare that it is your will and power that did that deed, though it is the delusion that was manifested by *Atma* that accomplished it.

Atma governs the "deities" of the senses

The world thus created is devoid of consciousness, so it has to be fostered like a machine (*yantra*). How can a machine operate after its manufacture, and even installation, without a mechanic or machinist? He created the first incarnation of *Brahman* (*Viraat-Purusha*) out of the five elements; He also endowed that first incarnation with head and limbs. Like the figure of clay made by the potter from earth dug up by him, that first incarnation was produced from the elements. From the limbs of that perfect Person, the world-rulers (*loka-palakas*) were created. Then, each sense was separated and equipped with an appropriate deity. In front, the face, the mouth, with Agni as the deity of speech (the function of the mouth), the nose, and the eyes; in this manner, the senses and their respective deities were created and assigned.

These deities bless the senses and see that they function properly. The external appearance of the eye, the nose, and the ear may be quite right, but without the help of the presiding deity, they may not function at all. The cow and the horse were created from the waters and offered to the gods. But the gods were still discontented, so, to answer their prayers, human beings were created similar to the first incarnation of *Brahman* (*Viraat-Purusha*). Since that human being was associated with discrimination (*viveka*), the gods were delighted. All bodies other than the human are merely instruments for experiencing the fruits of action. The human is the only instrument for liberation.

Lord illumines everything through living beings

The Lord, after entering the body, becomes the ruler of the conjunction of the senses and the mind with the

objective world. Like an actor, He contacts the outer world and experiences all the lessons of the previous births. In the presence of the Lord, the ballet-dancer intellect (*buddhi*) dances her steps, keeping to the timing of the senses and moving from one object to another.

Thus, the Lord illumines everything through the form of the individual living being (*jivi*). The Supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*), who is limited as the individual soul (*jiva-atma*), has three areas of recreation: the eye, throat, and heart. The eyes shine with a special splendour when the realisation of *Brahman* is achieved or even attempted. This is an evident fact. When the individual has earned the knowledge of its reality, it may not be able to describe how all is nothing besides *Atma*; but it will achieve the knowledge that *Brahman* itself is appearing as all this. One who delves deep into the unity of the individual and the *Brahman* has certainly discovered the goal of life; there is no doubt of that.

The stages of wakefulness, dream, and deep sleep are unrelated to the *Atma*. They are concerned only with the physical sensory causes and effects.

Human beings have three forms of birth

Every human being has two bodies: one's own and that of the progeny. The duties of study, teaching, repetition of the name —these assigned tasks are handed down by parent to child at the time of death, and they are carried on by the child as the representative of the parent and on their behalf. The parent leaves the body and assumes another, one that is more in conformity with the actions and tendencies cultivated and established in this birth. That is the third birth of the parent. The first three *mantras* speak about the two births, the physical and the spiritual. Now, a third one is added; the continuation by the child.

Sage Vamadeva understood the true nature of *Atma* in this form and became liberated from all the constant flux of the objective world.

Chapter XI. Taithiriya Upanishad

Knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*) is the specific theme of this *Upanishad*. It has three chapters on: instruction (*Siksha-valli*), bliss (*ananda-valli*) or *Brahman* (*Brahma-valli*), and Bhrigu (*Bhrigu-valli*). In the chapter on instruction, certain methods are detailed to overcome obstacles placed in people's way by gods and sages (*devas* and *rishis*) and to acquire one-pointedness in mental exertions. This chapter has twelve sections.

The last two chapters are very important for those seeking knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*). Both chapters give instruction on the knowledge of the sage Bhrigu (*Varuni Vidya*), which leads to liberation, so they are practically the same. For convenience of study, it is dealt with in two sections, that is all.

The objective world is caused by ignorance, with bondage the result

In the *Siksha-valli*, subjects are dealt with that are not antagonistic to action (*karma*), like the combination of letters according to euphonic rules (*samhitha*), and also subjects that are associated with dedicated action, like worship (*upasana*). These lead to self-rule (*swa-rajya*). But the complete destruction of worldly flux (*samsara*) will not be accomplished by just these. Worship exists along with desire, so, like activity, even worship cannot bring about liberation.

All this flux, this objective world (*samsara*), is due to ignorance (*a-jnana*), and bondage is the result. So, when ignorance is destroyed, the bonds loosen and liberation is attained. Ignorance is there, persisting, through natural causes. It is just like the delusion that your train is moving when actually your train is stationary and the train on adjacent rails is moving! Watch only your train, and you know the truth; watch the other train, and you are deceived. There is no use seeking to know the cause of this delusion. Seek how to escape from it. This ignorance, which is the seed out of which the flux sprouts, can be destroyed only by knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*). There is no other method.

Liberation cannot be produced by any action

All that is caused, everything that is a result, is short-lived; this is evident from the scriptures (*sastras*) as well as from experience and reason. The scriptures speak of aspirants who discarded even higher regions like Heaven, which are attainable by persons who perform the prescribed rites, for liberation is beyond the reach of those who dwell therein. Heaven and Hell are results of actions, they are objects made, so they cannot be eternal; they are conditioned by birth, growth, decay, and death. They do not exist from the very beginning; they were made; before that act, they were not. That which once was not and later will not be is as good as “not” even in the present. The fruit of action (*karma*) shares this quality, so it cannot grant eternal joy.

No effort can result in the creation of space (*akasa*) now; what already exists cannot be produced anew. Liberation (*moksha*) exists and is there self-evident. It cannot be produced anew by any action (*karma*). The moment the ignorance (*a-jnana*) that hides it from experience disappears, you are liberated and know your Reality; you are free from bondage. Prior to that moment, you were free, but you imagined you were bound and you behaved as if you were bound. How then are you to get rid of this idea that you are bound? By listening to the teachings of the *Vedas* with faith therein. Only then can ignorance perish. The chapter on *Brahman* in this *Upanishad* has the

task of presenting these teachings.

It is in the nature of things that ignorance prompts people to crave plentiful fruits through the performance of actions. Then, they become despondent, and the cravings only bind them more and don't help to make them free. The craving for fruit is hard to shove off, though this fearful flux of growth and decay makes them shiver in dread.

Brahman is Truth, Omniscience, Eternal

In this *Upanishad*, the three words truth (*sathya*), spiritual wisdom (*jnana*), and eternal (*an-antha*) are meaningfully affixed to *Brahman*, to explain Its characteristics. These are three distinct words, signifying qualities, seeking to mark out the One from the rest, the One *Brahman* from other types of *Brahman* that don't have these traits. That is to say, *Brahman* is not to be confused with anything that is not truth, spiritual wisdom, and eternal. Everything that is limited by time, space, and objectivity is inert (*jada*) material and apparently different from *Brahman*. The characteristics of truth, spiritual wisdom, and eternity help to differentiate and distinguish the real *Brahman* from kindred and similar phenomena. Whichever form a thing is determined to have, if that form is unchanged, then it is referred to as truth. If that form undergoes change, then it is falsehood. Modification is the sign of untruth; absence of modification is the sign of truth.

Brahman is truth (*sathya*), that is to say, It has no modifications. It is eternal (*nithya*), unaffected by time. All that is not *Brahman* —that is, the world (*jagath*)— is subject to change. All objects are subject to the triple process of the intellect (*buddhi*): known, the knower, and knowledge. Hence, the intellect is spoken of as a cave (*guha*) where the three-fold process resides.

Do not swerve from Truth, duty, well-being of all

In the *Thaithiriya Brahmana*, as well as this *Upanishad*, *dharma* is also treated elaborately. It has three forms: desirable (*kamya*), produced by a cause (*na-imitthika*), and eternal (*nithya*). The scriptures (*sastras*) seldom command that action (*karma*) be pursued; there is no need to do so, for action comes naturally to people. Desire (*kama*) is the prompter of such action, and people get various fruits thereby. The scriptures teach only the ways of directing this natural activity to ensure desirable objects.

The *Upanishad* exhorts you not to swerve from duties of learning and teaching, saying,

Swerve not from the true and the truth. ... From the true, it will not do to swerve, nor from *dharma*, nor from welfare and well-being, nor from duties to gods and fathers. Treat thy mother as God. Works that are free from fault should be re-sorted to, not others

The science of spirituality is the highest field of experiential knowledge

Listening, rumination, and concentration are the three steps in realisation. Listening refers to the *Vedas*, which have to be revered in faith and learned by heart from a spiritual teacher (*guru*); this confers the knowledge of the Unknowable. Rumination (*manana*) is the austerity (*tapas*) taught in the chapter on Bhrigu. By this process, the essence of *Brahman* can be fixed in the mind. Concentration helps the development of single-minded attention on the principle so installed. The two chapters on Brahma and Bhrigu expound on the discipline that ensures

the realisation of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*). The chapter on *Brahman* teaches; the chapter by Bhrigu proves by experience.

Bhrigu, Varuna's son, tells him that *Brahman* is food (*anna*), life-breath (*prana*), the senses, the mind (*manas*), speech (*vaak*), etc. But, since the son soon learns that these are not *Brahman*, he declares that *Brahman* is that from which these are born and by which they live and function. He first believed that food is *Brahman*, since all beings exist on food, but, later, he feels that *Brahman* is much more inclusive. He asks for direct teaching of the Real, the *Brahman*.

Thereafter, he is told that austerity (*tapas*) is *Brahman*, for it is that by which *Brahman* the Reality is known. He discovers by austerity that the highest wisdom (*vijnana*) is *Brahman*, for wisdom is that in which creatures are born and it is that by which creatures live.

Thus, it is announced that of all disciplines and subjects of study, the realisation of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*) is the most sacred, holy, and esoteric.

Contemplate on the five sheaths of the human

Food (*anna*) is not to be decried; that should be the vow of the wise. The vital airs (*prana*) are all food. The physical body is the gift of food, and the vital airs have the body as the vehicle. So, food should not be slighted. That should be the resolution.

The waters, in conjunction with the fire in the stomach, become food. In the water that comes down as rain, the “fire” of lightning is inherent. So, whoever is established in the splendour of water is aware of the splendour of food and is persuaded to revere it. Food is the *guru*, for it leads you on to the knowledge of *Brahman*. Therefore, it should not be treated with disrespect. That must be observed just like a vow by the aspirant.

Since the physical body is the transformation of food, it has a food sheath (*anna-maya kosa*). The vital airs form the vital-air sheath (*prana-maya kosa*). Weighing between good and bad, right and wrong is the function of the mind sheath (*manomaya kosa*). Fixing upon a step, with a purpose in view, is the function of the sheath of intuition or spiritual wisdom (*vijnana-maya kosa*). Finally, the joy of achievement is tasted by the sheath of bliss (*ananda-maya kosa*).

Rise from the gross to the subtle stage by contemplating on the vital breath

The vital-air sheath is the first instrument in order to progress with the *Brahmic* outlook—that you are *Brahman* and not the body, etc. It is subtle, separate, and different from the body. It is activated by and saturated with the God of Wind (*Vayu*). It pervades and subsumes the entire food sheath.

You can say that the vital-air sheath is the soul of the food sheath, for it makes it function from head to foot. It cannot survive without the vital air (*prana*). It is the motive force; it has five varieties: breath, downward breath, diffused breath, rising breath, and digestive air (*prana, apana, vyana, udana, and samana*). By contemplating that the vital-air sheath is the *Atma* of the food sheath, the notion that the body is the Self will disappear. You rise from the gross to the subtle. Breath (*prana*) is like the molten metal in the crucible. By effort, the vital-air sheath can be experienced.

The vital air appears in the form of the breath. The vital air activates the head, diffused breath the right part of

the body, rising breath the left, digestive air the central, and downward breath the lower part of the body. The vital air moves from the heart through the nerves to the face, nose, etc., and reaches the head. From there, it motivates the various nerves flowing through the body under different names, with distinct names and distinct functions. The vital air that functions around the navel is, for example, called the digestive air.

Mantras illumine the Atmic splendour

For the mind sheath, the *Yajur-veda* is the head. The hymns form the right wing; chanting the left wing. *Brahmanas* are the soul and the *Atharvana-veda* is the tail. The *mantras* of the *Yajur-veda* are used very much in sacrifices; with them, food is offered ceremonially in the sacrificial fire. Hence, it is considered as the head. The sound of sacrificial prayer (*yajus*) produces auspicious modification. That is also the reason for the significance attached to the other *Vedas*. Thus, all *mantras* become the causes of mental modifications. These in turn illumine the splendour of the *Atma*. So, the *Vedas* and the mystery of their syllables belong to the science of the *Atma* itself. The *Vedas* become eternally valuable and eternally existent. The *Atharvana-veda* treats various rites to win relief from evil forces and ailments, so it is described as the tail.

The mind sheath merges in the sheath of intuition and later into the bliss sheath; finally, the aspirant passes beyond even that, into the region of pure being (*sat*).

Chapter XII. Brahmanubhava Upanishad

Nonduality is the essence of all Upanishads

The traditional scriptures (*sruthis*) declare “*Brahman* is one only, without a second (*ekam eva advithiyam Brahma*)”. That is to say, there is nothing besides *Brahman*. Under all conditions, at all times, everywhere, *Brahman* alone is. In the beginning, there was just being (*sat*) and nothing else, says the *Chandogya Upanishad*. The *Mandukya Upanishad* calls it peace, auspiciousness, and non-duality (*santham, sivam, a-dwaitham*). Only the evolved or the manifested can appear as two. That which is seen is different, one from the other and all from the seer. Moreover, the seen is the product of the seer’s likes and dislikes, their imagination and feelings, their impulses and tendencies. When the lamp is brought in, the “snake” disappears and only the rope remains and is understood as such. When the world is examined in the light of knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*), the “illusory picture that attracted and repelled, the picture of duality” disappears.

It is the “two” that causes fear. If one is oneself the listener, the seer, the doer, the enjoyer, how can fear arise? Consider your condition when asleep! The external world is then absent; you are alone with yourself. The state is “One, without a second”. Contemplation of that One and worship of that One leading to the realisation of secondlessness gives you that experience. Like the other, He is immanent; like the vital air, He is the secret of all consciousness (*chit*), activity, movement.

Brahman is described by five attributes

Being, consciousness, bliss, fullness, eternity (*sat, chit, ananda, paripurna, nithya*) —*Brahman* is described by these five attributes. Through an understanding of these, *Brahman* can be grasped. Being is unaffected by time. Consciousness illumines and reveals itself as well as all else. Bliss creates the utmost desirability. Fullness knows no defect or diminution or decline or defeat. Eternity is that which is unaffected by the limitations of space, time and objectivisation.

In light of this knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*), the world is a mirage, temporary, unreal, and negated by knowledge. The world is but another name for “things seen, heard, etc.”. But remember that “you”, the individual (*jiva*), the seer, are “being, consciousness, bliss, *Brahman*”. Get fixed in that assurance; meditate on the *Om*, which is its best symbol. Become aware from this moment that you are the *Atma*. When the fog of ignorance vanishes, the *Atma* in each will shine in its native splendour. Then you know that you were pursuing a mirage in the desert sands, that you were taking as “real” objects that had a beginning and therefore had an end.

Give up desire, attachment, and ego

The mind becomes bound with attachment when it dwells upon, desires, or dislikes an object. To get free from such bondage, the mind should be trained not to dwell upon, desire, or dislike any object. It is the mind that binds and unbinds. If dominated by passion (*rajas*), it easily falls into bondage; if purity (*sathwa*) predominates, it can achieve freedom.

He who feels one with the gross body feverishly pursues the pleasure derivable through the senses. Desire

is the consequence of identification with the physical frame. Give that up and you are given up by desire. Joy and grief are like right and wrong, to be transcended. Affection and hatred are of the nature of the internal instruments of people. They don't belong to the "Liver" who lives with them, to the individual soul (*jivi*), or to the *Atma*, the essential reality of the individual.

Atma is ever full, ever pure, and Self-luminous

The *Atma* is ever pure, ever free from attachment, for there is no second to get attached to. The *Mundaka Upanishad mantra* (III-I) says,

Two birds, ever together, with significant and subtle wings, are perched on a tree. One bird is engaged in tasting the fruits. The other just watches.

The tree is the body, and the twin birds are the individual Self (*jiva-atma*) and the highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*). The individual Self experiences the joy and grief from the deeds in which it engages. The Supreme *Atma* is subtler than the subtlest and just watches, is just a witness.

How can this gross physical frame of plasma and pus be the pure, the self-luminous, the ever-witnessing *Atma*? This is built up by food; this is ever in a flux. Before birth it was not, and after death it is not! It is perishable any moment. It can live on without a limb or two, but the moment the vital air stops flowing, it starts to decompose. So, the body should not be taken as the chief or as the be-all and end-all.

The *yoga* you should practise is: watch the agitation in the mind as a witness, free yourself from resolutions and even decisions, for and against. Have your mind and its journeys always under control. *Yoga* is the parallel progress of the individual soul (*jiva-atma*), with every step in tune with the supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*). The goal is the merger of both; then, all grief ends. One who steadily takes up *yoga* with faith and is prodded on by unswerving renunciation (non-attachment) can certainly win victory.

Give up desires, attachments and negate the mind

The awareness of consciousness (*chit*) in being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*) means the super knowledge (*vijnana*) that confers perfect equanimity and purity, in fact, *Atmic* wisdom (*Atma-jnana*), which can be experienced by one and all. In common parlance, super knowledge is used to indicate the sciences, but really it means the Higher Wisdom. In that "Self-form", there is no room for "impressions from action (*karma*)" or for wishes that prompt actions. Wishes vitiate the mind. Wishes lead to action, action leaves a scar (*vasana*) on the mind. Be alone with yourself; then the mind can be negated. For this reason, *yogis* retire into caves.

The impressions (*vasanas*) fall into two categories: beneficent (*subha*) and maleficent (*a-subha*). Beneficent impressions help liberation. Repetition of the name, meditation, good works, charity, justice, unselfish service, gratitude, compassion —these are beneficent. The maleficent tendencies of anger, cruelty, greed, lust, and egotism have to be uprooted with the help of the beneficent. Finally, just as the thorn with which the thorn in the foot is removed is also thrown away, the impressions that were used to overcome the impressions that hurt are also to be discarded.

The beneficial impressions are the products of attachment and produce further attachment, which may persist through many births, so the liberated soul (*jivan-muktha*) also has to conquer the beneficial impressions. For such

a soul, they should be like a burnt rope that can't bind. In fact the entire group —sensual craving, desire, greed, etc.— gets burned the moment the *Atma* is visualised. One will not be inclined toward anyone or anything; one will be unattached. Where the sun sets, there one lays down for rest. One moves among people unknown and unrecognised, seeking no recognition, why even avoiding it.

When the seer and the seen are the same, the joy is described as that of the fourth stage (*thuriya*). Beyond this, the *Atma* is certain to be reached. By dwelling constantly on the *Atma* and its reality, attachment to the world will fall off. The spiritual discipline must be without break. Genuine spiritual seekers must, with all their resources, redirect the mind from the affairs of the world and the objects that entice the senses and concentrate on the austere purpose of knowing *Brahman*.

Ignorant (*thamasic*) resolutions spell grief; pure (*sathwic*) resolutions promote *dharma* and help sustain society and individual; passionate (*rajasic*) ones plunge you into the worldly flood. Give up these three, and you become entitled to the honour of knowledge of *Brahman*.

Attain Brahman by the process of negation of senses

Brahman is of immeasurable depth; how can It be measured and comprehended by this petty mind? It is beyond all possibility of being described by categories, without limit, beyond denotation. To grasp It through the senses is impossible.

The *Brahman*, which *Vedanta* declares can be spoken of only as “not-this, not-this,” is I-Myself. My reality is the *Brahman* in the cavity of my heart; I am the *Brahman* that spiritual aspirants strive to know and succeed in reaching. *Brahman* is that which remains after subtracting the body, the mind, the vital airs, the brain, etc.

This knowledge is reached by the discipline of negation. Just as by this method of partial elimination you arrive at the conclusion, “So, this is Devadatta (a person),” by this principle of appearance or presumption and its later removal the truth “That thou art (*thath thwam asi*)” is established. When the veil hiding the individual soul (*jivi*) is removed, the individual soul is revealed as the highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*) or supreme *Brahman* (*Para-brahman*). The true Self (*jiva-atma*) is of the essence of the highest *Atma*.

“I” refers to this reality, the being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*); it is only ignorance that can use it to indicate the body! This ignorance and this wrong identification are the causes of continuous cycles of grief and joy. So, use the word “I” with discrimination to mean only your *Brahmic* reality; that will win knowledge of *Brahman* (*Atma-jnana*) for you.

For experiencing the *Atma* as your Reality, control of the senses, removal of physical attachment, and truth are essential.

God is encased everywhere

Brahman is the teacher of the gods (*brihaspathi*) prompting the intellect (*buddhi*), the Mind of the mind, the Ear of the ear, the Eye of the eye, the Illuminer of all, the Self-illuminant One. His splendour is the light from which everything else emanates. He is the basic support and sustenance. In the mind, He is wisdom. The mind and the intellect do envelop the senses, and without Him, the mind and intellect are helpless to function. They emerge from Him and merge in Him like grass that is born from the earth and becomes part of it. Iron placed in

fire becomes red and turns black again when cooled; so too, intellect becomes resplendent with spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) by dwelling on the highest *Brahman* (*Parabrahman*), who is the true nature of spiritual wisdom (*jnana-swarupa*). God is encased everywhere, as the child in the womb.

Discover Divinity through the eye of wisdom or of love

Some declare that they will believe only in a God that can be seen or demonstrated. This is the usual argument of the worldly minded. But it is not easy to see the Highest *Atma*, which is subtler than the subtlest, with gross physical eyes. You must first get command over a powerful microscope, one fit for the purpose. Either the eye of wisdom or the eye of love is wanted; only with these can you see God.

Can you show others what the thing called “pain” is, or “sweetness”? The eye cannot see an abstract thing like love, pity, mercy, virtue, faith; it is beyond its capacity. But by words, actions, and behaviour we infer that a person has love in the heart. So too, it is possible to judge whether people are knowers of *Brahman*, how deep they are established in their own reality, whether by fits and starts or steadily and securely. Divine wisdom, divine treasure, harmony with nature —through these He can be identified and discovered. Therefore, try by all means to earn either the eye of wisdom or the eye of love.

Just like sugar in cane juice or sweetness in sugar, the supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*) is ever immanent in creation; He is the inner core of all beings. He is everywhere, always in everything; He has no form; *Atma* is “without body (*a-thanu*)”. It is the in-dweller (*Purusha*). Only by throwing off attachment to the body and purifying the mind and intellect can you merge in your truth and earn the eternal bliss, highest peace (*prasanthi*), the purest wisdom. Thus only can one earn liberation from the bond-age of birth and death.

Joy and grief, vice and virtue are binding products of the mind

Deha, meaning the body, is derived from the root *dhah*, meaning burn. It implies that which has to be burned. But, the wise man (*jnani*) has three bodies: the gross, subtle, and causal. Then what is burned? The fuels are the material world (*adi-bhauthika*), fate (*adi-daivika*), and the individual soul (*adi-atmic*), called the three penances or the cavity of the heart (*hridaya-akasa*). They can burn and consume the three bodies more quickly and completely than fire. However informed one may be, if one identifies with the body, one must be pronounced foolish.

On the other hand, one who is fixed in the faith that one is being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*) will be transformed into divinity Itself. Don't identify the individual with the gross body of flesh and bone or even with the subtle and causal. The *Atma* must be identified only with the Highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*). Only then can permanent bliss emerge. Joy and grief, good and bad belong to the realm of the mind, not to you. You are not the doer or the enjoyer of the fruits of the deeds. You are ever-free.

Virtue is *dharma*; vice is *a-dharma* (not *dharmma*). Both are products of the mind, strings that bind the heart. When people experience this higher truth, they become free from both and achieve the vision of reality. Just as the silk worm gets entangled and imprisoned in the cocoon that it spins around itself, so people spin cocoons of wishes around themselves and suffer.

The *Atma* is ever disentangled. It is “not-bound by worldly flux.” Its nature is purity, wholeness, joy, wisdom. Where ego is, bondage persists. Where there is no “I”, freedom holds sway. The “I” is the real shackle.

Overcome the triple distinctions or illusions

The three obstacles in the path of the seeker of *Atma-jnana* are the past, present, and future. They must be overcome. The liberated soul (*jivan-muktha*) is not worried by these. It has gone beyond the triple distinction of the seer, the seen, and the sight; it has known that the distinction is artificial, a product of the mind. Once you have conquered the triple illusion, you will experience *Brahman* in all things and at all times.

Glossary

This glossary contains Sanskrit words, people, places, and literature that appear in *Upanishad Vahini*.

Some Sanskrit words have made their way into English and appear in English dictionaries. A few of them are used without definition in the text, but they are defined in this glossary. Among them are *Atma*, *dharmā*, *guru*, *karma*, *yogas*, and *yogi*.

The text uses standard spellings for Sanskrit, and this glossary provides the same spellings. But some of the Sanskrit compounds have been hyphenated between their constituent words to aid those who want to analyze the meanings of individual words. When compound words are broken, individual words are given.

Aagama. That which has come or originated. The primeval source of knowledge. A name for *Vedas*.

aapo-jyoti. Splendour of water.

abhāsa. Appearance, superimposition of false over real.

a-bhaya. Fearlessness.

a-chetana. Non-intelligent, unconscious, inert, senseless.

a-dharma. Evil, injustice.

adhyasa. Superimposition.

adi-atma. Pertaining to the individual soul, spirit, or manifestation of supreme *Brahman*.

adi-atmic. Pertaining to *adi-atma*.

adi-bhauthika. Pertaining to the physical or material world; the fine spiritual aspect of material objects.

adi-daivika. Pertaining to divinity or fate, e.g. natural disasters.

aditya. Sun.

Aditya. Son of Aditi; there were twelve of them, one of them being Surya, the sun, so Surya is sometimes called Aditya.

a-dwaitha. Nondualism or monism, the *Vedantic* doctrine that everything is God.

a-dwaithic. Of or pertaining to *a-dwaitha*.

agni. Fire element.

Agni. God of fire.

Agni-Brahmana. Another word for the Section on horse sacrifice.

agnihotra. Ritual of offering oblations in the holy fireplace. Three kinds are: daily obligation, occasional obligation, and optional fire.

Aithareya Upanishad. One of the ten important *Upanishads*. It deals with the world and the human as the creation of *Atma*, the three-fold birth of *Atma*, and the nature of the *Atma*.

a-jnana. Ignorance, stupidity.

a-jnani. Ignorant person.

akasa. Sky, space, ether, the subtlest form of matter.

a-kshara. Imperishable, indestructible.

alatha-santhi. Extinction of the fire-brand circle; refers to analogy of the gleam of the world with circle made by the fast swinging of a fiery stick.

a-manaska. Blissful state of realization when seer realizes that entire creation is created by Self; mindless; free from all mental activity.

a-manobhava. Mindless state.

ananda. Supreme bliss, unending joy.

ananda-maya kosa. The sheath of bliss, the innermost sheath of the body.

an-antha. Endless, eternal, unending; infinity.

anga. Limb, part, fact, feature, “earth bit”.

Angiras. A sage-hermit born from the mind of Brahma. Indra gave him the name Atharvangiras when Angiras paid him homage by reciting the hymns of *Atharva-veda*.

angushtra-matra. Thumb-sized.

anna. Food.

anna-maya kosa. Food sheath, the material or gross outer layer of man.

antar-yamin. Inner ruler or Being that guides all creatures.

anthah-karana. Inner psychosomatic fourfold instruments of mind, intellect, memory, and ego.

Anusasanaparva. Famous section of moral principles in the *Mahabharatha*.

anuvaka. Section.

anveshana. Seeking, enquiry.

apana. Downward breath expelled through the anus.

a-para. Immanent, materialised, lower, ordinary.

a-para-vidya. Secular science, western knowledge.

a-paricchinna. Without limit or break.

a-paroksha. Inner knowledge; direct spiritual knowledge.

a-prameya. Beyond all possibilities of being described by categories, immeasurable.

aranya. Forest, relating to forest.

aranyaikas. Religious or philosophical texts closely connected with the *brahmins*, either composed in the forest or studied there.

Arjuna. Krishna’s disciple, in the *Bhagavad Gita*; third of five Pandava brothers. See *Mahabharatha*.

artha. Wealth, prosperity, material object, thing, aim, purpose, desire.

a-samsari. Not bound by worldly illusion.

a-sat. Falsehood, unreal, non-existent, bad.

a-sathya. Falsehood.

a-subha. Inauspicious, maleficent.

Aswa-Brahmana. *Brahmana* relating to horse sacrifice.

Aswalayana. *Vedic* school founded by Sounaka.

aswamedha yaga. Horse sacrifice to absolve a king of all sins. A horse is marked with a victory card and allowed to roam about freely. If anyone stops it, the king should go and defeat him in battle and bring it back.

a-thanu. Without a body.

Atharvana-veda. The fourth *Veda*. *Atharva* means “fourth”. Steady, unmoved person, of stable nature.

Athri. A sage; father of Dattatreya. Also, one of 10 mental sons of *Hiranyagarbha*.

Atma. The real Self, one’s divinity, God, the substance of everything, the unseen basis, the God within. The *Atma* is unchanging and immortal; It does not die.

Atma-chaithanya. Consciousness.

Atma-jnana. Self-knowledge.

Atma-jnani. Self-knower.

Atma-sakshathkara. Direct vision of the *Atma*; Self-realisation.

Atma-shatka. The *Atmic* Six, referring to the six sections of the *Aithareya Upanishad*.

Atma-swarupa. Embodiment of the all-pervading divine Self.

Atma-thathwa. True nature of *Atma*, the *Atmic* Principle.

Atma-vichara. Inquiry into the *Atma*.

Atma-vidya. Knowledge of supreme reality or *Atma*.

Atmic. Of or pertaining to the *Atma*.

Aum. *Om*; Designation of the Universal *Brahman*; sacred, primordial sound of the universe.

Avatar. Incarnation of God. Whenever there is a decline of *dharma*, God comes down to the world assuming bodily form to protect the good, punish the wicked and re-establish *dharma*. An *Avatar* is born and lives free and is ever conscious of His mission. By His precept and example, He opens up new paths in spirituality, shedding His grace on all.

avayava. Limb, part, member.

a-vidya. Ignorance.

a-vyapadesa. Beyond denotation.

Ayodhya. City where Rama was born and ruled.

bala. Strength, vigour, power, force, validity.

bija. Seed, germ, primary cause; mystical letter or syllable that forms the essential part of a *mantra*.

Bhagavad Gita. Literally, Song of God. Portion of the *Mahabharatha*, a dialogue between Arjuna, one of the Pandava brothers, and Krishna. See *Mahabharatha*.

bhakthi. Devotion to God.

Bharadwaja. Celebrated sage who taught the science of medicine; seer of *Vedic* hymns.

Bhargava. Sage of the Bhrigu dynasty, author of *Vedic* hymns. Also called Vaidarbhi.

bhava. Being, becoming.

Bhima. Second of five Pandava brothers; named for his size and strength. See *Mahabharatha*.

Bhishma. The guardian and patriarch of the Kauravas and Pandavas. Son of King Shantanu. Remarkable for his wisdom and unflinching devotion to God. Trapped by his fate to fight on side of evil Kauravas; bled to death on a bed of arrows while thinking of God. See *Mahabharatha*. He also vowed life-long celibacy to ensure that his offspring would not claim the throne.

Bhrigu (or Bhrugu). Great sage son of Brahma. Also, one of ten great sages created by the first Manu.

bhumi. Earth.

Brahma. The Creator in the trinity *Brahma*, Vishnu (the Preserver), and Siva (the Destroyer).

Brahma-ananda. Bliss of *Brahman*.

brahma-charya. Path to knowledge of *Brahman*; state of an unmarried religious student; first stage of life of a *brahmin*; spiritual studentship.

Brahma-jnana. Knowledge of *Brahman*.

Brahma-jnani. Knower of *Brahman*.

Brahma-loka. Region of *Brahma*, the Creator.

Brahman or Brahmam. Impersonal Supreme Being, primal source and ultimate goal of all beings. Identical to *Atma*.

Brahmana. A section of each of the four *Vedas* dwelling on the meaning and use of *mantras* and hymns at various sacrifices.

Brahmanda-nirmana. Evolution of the universe.

brahmanic. Relating to *brahmins*.

Brahmanubhava Upanishad. One of the *Upanishads*.

Brahma Sutra. Spiritual text of *Vedantic* teachings attributed to Badharayana or Vyasa.

Brahma-thathwa. Formless God, *Brahman* principle.

Brahma-vid. Knower of *Brahman*.

Brahma-vidya. Spiritual attainment, knowledge of *Brahman*.

Brahmic. Related to *Brahman*.

brahmin. First of four castes of social order, priestly or teacher caste; a person belonging to this caste; a man of wisdom.

Brighu. A son of *Brahma* and a great sage. He had two incarnations. The second was when he was reborn from fire at Varuna's sacrificial rite and was brought up by Varuna as his son. One of 10 great sages created by the first Manu.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. One of the ten important *Upanishads*; it sets forth teachings maintained by Yajnavalkya regarding *Brahman*.

brihaspathi. Teacher of the gods.

brihath. Big, enlarged, gross, high.

buddhi. Intellect.

Bujiyu. Royal sage; son of Thugra.

chaithanya. Consciousness, intelligence, spirit.

chakshu. Eye.

Chandogya Upanishad. One of the ten important *Upanishads*; a great collection of theological-philosophical-allegorical utterances. Includes glorification of *Om*, *Gayatri*, *Brahman*, tale about Uddalaka instructing son Swethakethu, and Sanatkumara instructing Narada.

chandra. Moon.

chetana. Super-consciousness, consciousness.

chit. Consciousness, knowledge, awareness.

chittha. Mind stuff, memory, subconscious mind.

chittha-spandana. Pulsating subconsciousness.

Dasaratha. Son of Aja and father of Rama; King of Ayodhya; the name means “ten chariot hero”.

deha. Body

deva. Deity, celestial being, God.

deva loka. World of the gods.

devatha-jnana. Knowledge of the gods.

dharmā. Righteousness, religion, code of conduct, duty, essential nature of a being or thing. It holds together the entire Universe. Man is exhorted to practise *dharmā* to achieve material and spiritual welfare. The *Vedas* contain the roots of *dharmā*. God is naturally interested in the reign of *dharmā*.

dharmā-karma. Act of duty, virtuous action.

Dharmaraja. Name for Yudhistira, eldest of the five Pandava brothers. Born to Kunthi by the grace of Yama Dharmaraaja, Lord of Death. Named for adherence to *dharmā*. See *Mahabharatha*.

Dharma Sastras. Codes of law and ethics concerning virtuous living.

dharmic. According to *dharmā*, righteous.

Dhritharashtra. Father of Kauravas; holder of ruling power.

dhyana. Meditation.

Durga. Goddess of the universe; mother Earth; daughter of Himaval and wife of *Siva*.

Dwapara-yuga. Third in cycle of four ages. See *yuga*.

dwaitha. Dualism, the doctrine that the individual and the Supreme Soul are two different principles or entities.

dwesha. Hatred, anger.

dyu-loka. The heavenly world.

Gaargya. Souryayani —grandson of Surya; born in Garga’s family.

gandha. Smell, fragrance.

Ganga. The 1560-mile-long Ganges river; starts in the Himalayas and flows generally east into the Bay of Bengal; the most sacred river of India.

Garga. Elderly sage son of Bharadwaja.

Gargi. Celebrated female sage Vachaknavi, born in the family of Garga.

Gargi. Celebrated female sage, born in the family of Garga.

Garuda. Celestial bird, white-crested eagle, king of the feathered race, vehicle for Lord Vishnu.

Garuda Purana. Seventeenth *Purana*.

Gautama. Father of Nachiketas; also known as Yajnasravas.

Gayatri mantra. Ancient *Vedic* prayer to awaken the intelligence and lead to enlightenment. It is repeated piously at dawn, noon, and twilight devotions.

Gita. See *Bhagavad Gita*.

guha. Cave.

guna. Quality, characteristic. The qualities of *sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas* are general universal characteristics of all kinds of mental tendencies and actions/thoughts, which are prompted by specific kinds and mixtures of these three qualities. For example, *sathwic* food is health-giving, strength-giving and delightful; *rajasic* food is spicy, sour, or salty and brings on diseases; and *thamasic* food is impure, old, stale, tasteless, or rotten. See *thamas*, *rajas*, *sathwa*.

guru. Preceptor, teacher, guide to spiritual liberation.

Hiranyagarbha. Cosmic divine mind; cosmic womb; golden egg first created by *Brahman* from which all creation issued.

hridayakasa. Firmament of the heart.

Indra. Lord of the *devas* (celestials). Indra is one of the chief deities in the *Rig veda*.

indriyas. Senses.

Indus. The river Sindhu; see Sindhu.

Isa. Supreme, Lord.

Isa Upanishad. See *Isavasya Upanishad*.

Isavasya Upanishad. One of the ten important *Upanishads*; it deals with supreme truth of liberation and its attainment.

ishta. Also *ishtam*. Beloved, cherished, desired

Iswara. Easwara. A name for *Siva*. The Supreme Ruler, the Personal God. He is *Brahman* associated with illusion (*maya*) but has it under His control, unlike the individual soul, who is illusion's slave. He has a lovely form, auspicious attributes, and infinite power to create, sustain, and destroy. He dwells in the heart of every being, controlling it from within. He responds positively to true devotion and sincere prayer.

ithihasa. Historical legend, traditional account of former events.

jada. Inert matter.

jagath. Cosmos, world of change, creation.

jala. Water.

Janaka. A self-realized king; father of Sita and father-in-law of Lord Rama. His ancestor was Nimi, a great

emperor.

japa. Soft prayer or repetition of the name of God.

jiva. Individual or soul, in a state of non-realisation of its identity with *Brahman*. It is unaware of its own nature and is subjected to sensations of pain and pleasure, birth and death, etc.

jiva loka. World of the living.

jivan-muktha. One who is liberated in this life.

jivan-mukthi. Liberation while alive.

jiva-rupa. Individual body.

jiva-atma. Soul or true Self, at the individual level.

jivi. Individual or soul.

jnana. Sacred knowledge; knowledge of the spirit, pursued as a means to Self-realisation. It is direct experience of God, as the Soul of the souls. *Jnana* makes a man omniscient, free, fearless, and immortal.

Jnana-kanda. Portion of the *Vedas* that deals with knowledge of *Brahman* through the path of spiritual wisdom or discriminative knowledge.

jnana-marga. Path of spiritual wisdom.

jnana-nishta. Intent on acquiring spiritual wisdom.

jnana-swarupa. The embodiment of spiritual wisdom.

jnana-driyas. Five organs of perception: eye, ear, tongue, nose, and skin.

jnani. Wise person, realized soul.

jneya. That which is known, the object of knowledge.

kaanda. Section, chapter.

Kabandi Kathyayana. Descendent of the great sage Kathya and disciple of Pippalada.

kaivalya. Absolute oneness, final beatitude.

kama. Desire, lust, worldly fulfillment; one of four goals of humans

kala. Time, death (*yama*).

Kali-yuga. Fourth in a cycle of four ages; the evil age; the one we are now in. See *yuga*.

kalpa. Age; a day of *Brahma*, a period of 4,320,000,000 years.

kamya. Desirable.

kanda. Section, chapter.

karana. Causal or cause.

karika. Verse.

karya. Effect, product.

karma. Action, deed, work, religious rite, the totality of innate tendencies formed as a consequence of acts done in previous lives. Every *karma* produces a lasting impression on the mind of the doer, apart from affecting others. Repetition of a particular *karma* produces a tendency (*vasanas*) in the mind. *Karma* is of three kinds: (i) *praarabdha*, which is being exhausted in the present life; (ii) *aagami*, which is being accumulated in the present life, and (iii) *samchitha*, which is being accumulated or stored to be experienced in future lives.

Akarma is action that is done without any intention to gain the consequences; *vikarma* is action that is intentionally done.

Karma-kanda. The section of the *Vedas* dwelling mainly on rituals; the *samhithas* and the *Brahmana* of the *Vedas*.

karma-mukthi. Progressive liberation.

karma-nishta. Dedicated action.

karmen-driyas. Organs of action: larynx, hands, feet, anus, sex organs.

Kasyapa-prajapathi. Chief of the progenitors; son of *Brahma*. All living beings took their origin from Kasyapa.

Katha Saakha. A branch of the *Black Yajur-veda*.

Kathopanishad. Also *Katha Upanishad*. One of most popular *Upanishads* because of its clarity and brevity in expressing mystic truths; contains famous dialogue between Nachikethas and Yama, God of death..

Kauravas. Family that fought Pandavas. See *Mahabharatha*.

Kausalya. Daughter of the King of Kosala, first wife of Dasaratha, and mother of Rama. Also: A sage, son of Ashvala, from the Ashvalayana school.

Kena Upanishad. One of the ten most important *Upanishads*; it is divided into two parts: the first expounds the unknowability of the *Brahman* without attributes, the second the relation of *Brahman* to the *Vedic* gods.

khila. Appendix.

Khila Kanda. Third section of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

kosa. Sheath.

krishna. Black.

Krishna. The *Avatar* of Vishnu in the *Dwapara yuga*, prior to the present *Kali yuga*.

Krishna. A holy river.

Krishna Yajur-veda. “Black” *Yajur-veda* —a recension of the *Yajur-veda*, promoted by Veda Vyasa.

Kritha-yuga. First age of man, Golden age of truth. See *yuga*.

kriya. Action, activity, will.

kshatriya. Protector, warrior; see caste.

Kunthi. Also **Kunthi Devi**. Mother of Pandavas, wife of King Pandu (the younger brother of emperor Dhritharashtra), and sister of Krishna’s father, Vasudeva.

Kuru. Famous King born in the Puru dynasty. Kurukshetra became holy and sanctified because of Kuru’s penances.

Kuru-Panchala. Combined name for Panchala, Punjab.

lingam. Also *Sivalingam*. Egg-shaped stone; symbol of *Siva*; the form of the formless; symbolizes merger of the form with the formless.

loka. Region, world. Usually refers to the three worlds of earth, atmosphere, and sky, but it can mean 7 or even 14 worlds (7 above and 7 lower).

loka-palaka. World protector.

loukika. Connected with this world.

Madhu Kanda. First two sections of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

madhura. Sweet, attractive.

Madhu-vidya. Special ritual worship of the Sun.

Mahabharatha. The Hindu epic composed by Sage Vyasa, which deals with the deeds and fortunes of the cousins (the Kauravas and Pandavas) of the Lunar race, with Lord Krishna playing a significant and decisive role in shaping the events. The *Bhagavad Gita* and Vishnu *Sahasranama* occur in this great epic. It is considered to be the Fifth *Veda* by devout Hindus. Of this great epic, it is claimed that “what is not in it is nowhere.

Maitreyi. Female consort of Yajnavalkya; one of greatest sage-philosophers in the *Upanishads*. Maitreyi was known for her wisdom. See the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

manana. Reflection, meditation, understanding.

manas. Mind, the inner organ, which has four aspects: (i) mind (*manas*), which deliberates, desires, and feels; (ii) intellect (*buddhi*), which understands, reasons, and decides; (iii) the ‘I’ sense, and (iv) memory (*chitha*). The mind, with all its desires and their broods, conceals the Divinity within man. Purification of the mind is essential for realisation of the Self.

manasa-putra. Mental son.

Mandukya Upanishad. One of the ten most important *Upanishads*; it sets forth the doctrine that the whole world is present in the syllable *Om*.

manomaya-kosa. Mental sheath of the body.

mantra. A sacred formula, mystic syllable or word symbol uttered during the performance of the rituals or meditation. They represent the spiritual truths directly revealed to the *rishis* (seers). The section of the *Veda* that contains these hymns (*mantras*) is called the *Samhitha*.

Manu. The first father of mankind; author of the codes of righteous conduct (*Dharma Sastras*); son of Surya (the sun) and father of Vaivaswatha Manu, the present progenitor of mankind.

manushya. Human being.

marga. Path.

Marichi. Mental son of *Hiranyagarbha*; one of the ten sages. Dasaratha’s ancestral line goes back to Marichi.

maya. Delusion. The mysterious, creative, and delusive power of *Brahman* through which God projects the appearance of the Universe. *Maya* is the material cause and *Brahman* is the efficient cause of the Universe. *Brahman* and *maya* are inextricably associated with each other like fire and its power to heat. *Maya* deludes the individual souls in egoism, making them forget their true spiritual nature.

Mitra. God always mentioned together with Varuna as rain god(s).

moksha. Liberation from all kinds of bondage, especially the one to the cycle of birth and death. It is a state of absolute freedom, peace, and bliss, attained through Self-realisation. This is the supreme goal of human endeavour, the other three being, righteousness (*dharma*), wealth and power (*artha*), and sense-pleasure (*kama*).

mukhya. Chief, foremost, first.

mukthi. Liberation; final release of emancipation from the cycle of birth and death.

munda. Head.

mundaka. Shaven.

Mundaka Upanishad. One of the ten most important *Upanishads*, of *Artharva-veda*; it presents the *Vedantic* doctrine of knowledge of *Brahman*.

Muni Kanda. The second set of two sections of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

naadi. Nerve.

nama. name.

Nachiketa Agni. Name given to a ritual by Yama because Nachiketas grasped its details so quickly.

Nachiketas. Son of sage Vajasravas; given to Yama, the Lord of death, for questioning his father's mean gift of old and useless cows to pious people.

naimittika. Associational or occasional.

nakshatra. Constellation.

Nakula. One of the Pandava brothers. See *Mahabharatha*.

Narada. Sage-bard; traveled the world chanting Narayana. Famous for creating disputes, resulting in solutions for the spiritual advancement or victory of the virtuous. Expert in law and author of texts on *dharmā*.

Narayana. The Primal Person, the Lord, Vishnu.

nethi. Not this.

nidi-dhyasana. Inner concentration, profound meditation.

nimitta-karana. Instrumental cause.

nir-vikalpa-samadhi. Undifferentiated deep communion, transcendental absorption.

nishta. State, condition, steadiness, regulated behaviour, excellence.

nithya. Eternal, permanent.

nithya-swayam-prakasa. Eternally self-effulgent.

nivritti. Withdrawal, detachment, renunciation..

Om. Designation of the Universal *Brahman*; sacred, primordial sound of the universe.

Omkara. The form of *Aum*, or *Om*.

pada. Verse, word, speech, sign, cause.

pancha. Five.

Pandava. Sons of Pandu; family of 5 brothers that fought the Kauravas: Dharmaraja, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva. See *Mahabharatha*.

panditya. Scholarship.

papa. Evil deeds, demerit, sin.

para. Higher, beyond, transcendent, supreme, best.

Para-brahman. Universal Absolute *Brahman*.

Param-ananda. Highest bliss.

Parama-purusha. The supreme Spirit.

Param-atma. Supreme Self, Supreme *Atma*.

Param-atma-thathwa. Supreme *Atmic* principle.

para-vidya. Knowledge of the transcendent supreme Principle.

paripurna. Full, complete, entire.

Patanjali. Author of the *Yoga Sutras*, which form the foundation of the *yoga* system of Indian philosophy. See *raja-yoga*.

Pippalada. Ancient sage and preceptor of spiritual knowledge.

pitri. Ancestor, father.

pitru-loka. World of the fathers.

praja-kama. Desiring progeny.

Prajapathi. Creator of this world; God presiding over creation. Also called Manu, Surya's son.

prajna. Deep sleep state.

prakriti. Nature, the Divine Power of Becoming. Also known as *maya*, *avidya*, and *sakthi*; the world of matter and mind as opposed to the spirit. *Prakriti* has three dispositions or *gunas* (*sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas*), which go into the make-up of all living and non-living beings in the Universe, in varying proportions leading to the appearance of infinite multiplicity in form, nature, and behaviour.

prana. Life-breath, life force, vital energy, the five vital airs of the body. English doesn't seem to have names for these vital airs, so we list them with their Sanskrit names: *prana* (located in lungs), *apana* (flatus, which moves downward through the rectum), *vyana* (diffused throughout the whole body), *samana* (navel; essential to digestion), and *udana* (rises through throat to head).

prana-maya kosa. The second, subtle sheath of man, consisting of the vital airs and the nervous system.

Pranava. *Om*; the sacred seed-sound and symbol of *Brahman*. "The most exalted syllable in *Vedas*". It is used in meditation on God. It is uttered first before a *Vedic mantra* is chanted..

pranava-swarupa. Embodiment of *Om*.

prasanthi. Supreme peace, equanimity.

prasna. Question.

Prasna Upanishad. One of the ten most important *Upanishads*; it deals with six questions concerning *Brahman* by spiritual seekers to the sage Pippalada.

prathibha. Intuition, thought.

prema. Ecstatic love of God; divine love of the most intense kind.

preyas. Pleasing, pleasurable sensation, worldly joy.

pundit. Learned scholar, wise man.

punya. Virtuous deeds, good works, meritorious actions.

Puranas. Any of a number of collections of ancient legends and lore embodying the principles of the universal, eternal religion and ethics. There are 18 *Puranas*, the most famous being the *Mahabhagavatham* and the *Devi Bhagavatham*.

purtha. Act of charity.

Purusha. Primeval Person, Supreme Spirit, Lord, God..

purusha-arthas. Goals of human life.

raga. Sense of attachment, passion, affection.

rajas. One of the three *gunas* (qualities or dispositions) of *maya* or *prakriti*. Passion, restlessness, aggressiveness, emotions such as anger, greed, grief. Associated with colour red. See *guna*.

rajasic. Adjective form of *rajas*, passionate, emotional.

raja-yoga. Royal *yoga* of meditation, detachment, and desirelessness. Eight-fold path of *yoga* developed by Patanjali, which includes control of the mind and withdrawal of the senses from the external world

rajoguna. Quality of passion, restlessness, aggressiveness. Associated with colour red. See *guna*.

rajya. Kingdom.

Rama. *Avatar* of the *Thretha-yuga*. Hero of the *Ramayana*; killed the wicked Ravana to rescue his wife Sita, who had been kidnapped. “Rama” means “he who pleases”.

Ramayana. This sacred epic, composed by Sage Valmiki, deals with the incarnation of Vishnu as Sri Rama, who strove all his life to reestablish the reign of *dharmā* in the world. The *Ramayana* has played an important role in influencing and shaping the Hindu ethos over the centuries.

rasa. Taste, sweetness, essence of enjoyment.

Ravana. Lord of demons and king of Lanka, who abducted Sita (Rama’s wife).

rekha. Geometry, line.

Rig-veda. First *Veda* composed by the sages, consisting of 1028 hymns. Oldest religious text in world.

Rig-vedic. Of or relating to the *Rig-veda*.

rik. Hymn or sacred verse, from the *Rig-veda*.

rishi. Sage, wise man.

rithwik. Sacrificial priest.

rupa. Form, figure, appearance.

saama, saamana. Particular kind of sacred hymn; song from *Sama-veda*; chanting.

sabdha. Sound.

sadhaka. Spiritual aspirant.

sadhana. Spiritual discipline or exercise; self effort.

sa-guna. With qualities, with form, materialized.

sa-gunopasana. Worship of the qualified divinity.

Sahadeva. One of the Pandava brothers. See *Mahabharatha*.

Saibya. Also named Sathyakama.

Sakalya-brahmana. Part of collection systematized by sage Sakalya.

saksat-kara. Divine spiritual experience, vision.

Sama, Sama-veda. Collection of certain verses of the *Rig-veda* arranged for liturgical purposes.

samadhi. Literally, total absorption. The state of super consciousness resulting in union with or absorption in the ultimate reality, the *Atma*; perfect equanimity. The state that transcends the body, mind, and intellect. In that state of consciousness, the objective world and the ego vanish and Reality is perceived or communed with, in utter peace and bliss. When people realise in this state their oneness with God, it is called *nirvikalpa samadhi*.

samana. Digestive air; even breath.

samhitha. Collection of methodically arranged verses or text; continuous text of the *Vedas* as formed out of the separate words by proper phonetic changes.

samithpaani. Holding the sacrificial fire.

samsara. Worldly life; life of the individual soul through repeated births and deaths. Liberation means getting freed from this cycle.

samsara-vriksha. Tree of worldly illusion.

Samvarga-vidya. Science of absorption.

samvathsara. Year.

Sanathana Dharma. Eternal religion. A descriptive term for what has come to be called Hinduism. It has no single founder or text of its own. It is more a commonwealth of religious faiths and a way of life.

Sandilya-vidya. Science of devotion given by the great sage Sandilya.

sankalpa. Will, resolve.

Sankara. Also **Sankaracharya.** Celebrated philosopher, preceptor of non-dualistic *Vedanta*. Defeated all religious opponents in debates throughout India.

sankhya. Measurement, calculation, number.

santham. Equanimity, serenity, tranquility.

santhi. Peace, equanimity, serenity, tranquility.

sanyasa. Renunciation-detachment, mendicancy.

sanyasi. Also *sanyasin*. Renunciant, mendicant.

sarira. Body.

sarva-antharya-mithwa. All-pervasiveness.

sarva-jna. Omniscient.

sarva-karma-sanyas. Withdrawal from all activity.

sarva-kriya-parithyaga. Renunciation of all action.

Sarvatma-swarupa. Total being or nature, universal soul.

Sastras. The Hindu scriptures containing the teachings of the sages. The *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *itihisas* (epics), the *Puranas*, the *smrithis* (codes of conduct), etc., form the *Sastras* of the Hindus. They teach us how to live wisely and well with all the tenderness and concern of the Mother.

sat. Existence, being, good, real.

sat-chit-ananda. Existence-knowledge-bliss, or being-awareness-bliss.

sathwa. One of the three *gunas* (qualities and dispositions) of *maya* or *prakriti*. It is the quality of purity, brightness, peace, and harmony. It leads to knowledge. Man is exhorted to overcome *thamas* by *rajas* and *rajas* by *sathwa* and finally to go beyond *sathwa* itself to attain liberation.

sathwic. Adjective form of *sathwa*; serene, pure, good, balanced.

sathya. Truth.

sathya-jnana. Wisdom concerning the Reality, Truth.

sathya-kama. Desirous of Truth.

Sathyakama. Also named Saibya; noble hermit son of Sibi and disciple of Pippalada.

sathya-sankalpa. True Resolve.

sathya-swarupa. Nature of truth.

Sibi. Emperor of India, noted for generosity; offered pound of own flesh to save Agni in the form of a dove from Indra in the form of a hawk.

siksha. Instruction, learning, knowledge, phonetics instruction, teaching.

Sindhu. *Indus* river; one of two main Indian river systems. Persians called the whole country Hindu from this river name. Originates in Kasmir and joins Arabian Sea in Karachi.

siras. Head.

Sita. Wife of Rama; brought up by King Janaka who found her in a box in the earth. Also, a tributary of the Ganga, flowing westward.

siva. Also *sivam*. Temple, the divine; refers to Siva. Also, grace, auspiciousness, goodness.

Siva. The Destroyer, the Third of the Hindu Trinity of *Brahma* (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver), and Siva (the Destroyer).

Siva Purana. One of the *Puranas*.

Skanda Purana. One of the eighteen *Puranas*, the epic story of Skanda.

sloka. Verse.

smarana. Remembering the name of the Lord.

smrithi. Code of law; traditional law delivered by human authors.

Sounaka. Renowned sage; teacher of Aswalayana and author of *Brihad Devatha* and *Rig-veda Pratishakhya*.

Souryayani. Grandson of Surya, born in the family of Garga (and hence called Gargya).

sparsha. Also *sparshana*. Touch, contact.

sraddha. Faith.

sravana. Listening to discourses on the scriptures.

sreyas. Blessedness, ultimate good.

srishti. Creation.

sruthi. Sacred revelations orally transmitted by *brahmins* from generation to generation, differing from traditional law codes (*smrithi*). Divinely sourced scripture; *Veda*; divine words known by revelation; that which was heard or listened to.

sthula. Gross, material, superficial.

subha. Good, beautiful, auspicious.

Sukesa. A sage, the son of Bharadwaja.

sukla. White.

Sukla Yajur Veda. One part of the *Yajur-veda*, the White *Yajur-veda*, promoted by Yajnavalkya.

sukshma. Subtle.

surya. The sun.

Surya. The sun god, the father of time. A name for the sun. Also, son of Kasyapa and father of Manu.

Surya-deva. Sun-god; same as Surya.

surya-loka. Region of the solar principle.

sushumna. Nerve current passing through the spinal column from the basal plexus (*muladhara*) to the crown of the head (*sahasrara*).

swa-bhava. Essential nature, essence, reality, truth.

swa-rajya. Self-rule.

swarga. Heaven.

swa-rupa. Form, essential nature, true nature of Being, embodiment.

swa-swarupa. One's true nature.

swayam-prakasa. Self-illuminating.

Swethakethu. A great sage; the first person to argue against the evils of drinking and adultery by the *brahmins*; son of Uddalaka.

taijasa. Entity associated with dream state composed of mind, intellect, five vital airs, five senses of perception, and the five elements; the experiencer of the dream or subconscious state, "light" of the subconscious.

Taithiriya Upanishad. One of the ten most important *Upanishads*; it is the philosophical portion of the *Black Yajur-veda*; the other part is called the *White Yajur-veda*.

tapas. Concentrated spiritual exercises to attain God, penance, severe austerities.

tarka. Philosophical system based on reasoning or logic.

tejas. Spiritual power, splendour.

thaapathraya. Threefold afflictions.

Thalavakara. A branch of the *Sama-veda*.

Thalavakaropanishad. Name for *Kena Upanishad*.

thamas. One of the *gunas* (qualities and dispositions) of *maya* or *prakriti*. It is the quality of dullness, inertia, darkness and tendency to evil. It results in ignorance.

thamasic. Adjective form of *thamas*, dull, ignorant, passive.

thamoguna. Quality of dullness, ignorance, delusion, inactivity, inertia, sloth. Associated with colour black. See *guna*.

Thath. That, the Godhead.

Thath-swarupa. The form of *Brahman*.

Thathwa. Principle, truth, essence. That-this entity. *Thathwa* is regarded as made up of That (*Thath*) and you (*thwam*).

Thath twam asi. You are That. One of four great *Vedantic* statements expressing the non-difference of individual soul and *Brahman*, the supreme absolute Self.

thithi. A lunar day; the moon increases for 15 *thithis* and decreases for 15.

thithiri. Partridge.

Thretha-yuga. The second in the cycle of four eras. See *yuga*.

thripata. Three-fold.

thuriya. “Beyond” stage in *samadhi*; fourth stage beyond waking, dream, and deep sleep. Superconscious state.

udana. Breath that moves upward from the throat.

Uddalaka. Sage father of Shwethakethu.

upaasya. Thing worshipped or contemplated.

upadana. Proximate or material basis.

upadesa. Teaching; advice; initiation; communication of an initiatory *mantra* or formula.

upanayana. Sacred thread ceremony in which a boy is initiated with a sacred thread and is then qualified to learn *Vedas*.

Upanishadic. Relating to the *Upanishads*.

Upanishads. The very sacred portions of the *Vedas* that deal with God, humanity, and universe, their nature and interrelationships. Spiritual knowledge (*jnana*) is their content, so they form the *Jnana-kanda* of the *Vedas*. Principle message is nondualism: unity of *Brahman* and *Atma*.

upasaka. Worshiper.

upasana. Worship, devotion, meditation practice, acquisition of the presence of the Lord, a method for approaching or getting close to a deity or God, the act of being near or at hand.

uthama-purusha. Noblest of men.

uthpatthi. Creation or cause of creation.

uttara-marga. Northward path of the sun.

vaak. Vocal organs, word, word of mouth.

vahini. Stream or flow.

Vaidarbhi. A disciple of Pippalada, born in the line of Bhrigu. Also named Bhargava.

vairagya. Detachment, renunciation.

Vaiswanara. Omnipresent, Supreme Self. Name for Sun; means “sum total of created beings”.

vaitathya. Falsehood.

Vajasaneyi. Section of the *Vedas* taught by the Sun in the form of a horse (*vaji*).

vaji. Horse.

valli. Section, chapter; literally, creeper.

Valmiki. The saint-poet who wrote the *Ramayana*.

Vamadeva. Ancient hermit. Friend of Vasishta and a priest of Dasaratha; he composed *Rig-vedic* hymns.

vasana. Inclination, impression of anything remaining in the subconscious mind from past action.

Varuna. Chief *Rig-vedic* god associated with Mitra; god of rain, water, the ocean, night; a great sage.

Varuni Vidya. Knowledge of the sage Bhrigu.

vasantha. Spring season.

Vasishta. One of the greatest *rishis* (sages) of ancient times; priest of the solar race of kings; revealer of several *Vedic* hymns. Had sacred, wishfulfilling cow called Nandini.

vasthu. Thing, object.

Vasudeva. Father of Krishna.

vayu. Wind, air.

Vayu. God of wind.

Vedangas. Subsidiary treatises of the *Vedas*: Six sciences of proper pronunciation, grammar, metre, etymology, astronomy, ritual.

Vedanta. Means “the end of the *Vedas*”. It is the essence of the *Vedas* enshrined in the *Upanishads*. The philosophy of non-dualism, or qualified non-dualism, or dualism based on the *Upanishadic* teachings, is denoted by this term.

Vedantic. Of or pertaining to *Vedanta*.

Vedantha. Meaning or goal of the *Vedas*.

Vedas. The oldest and the holiest of the Hindu scriptures, the primary source of authority in Hindu religion and philosophy. They are four in number: the *Rig-veda*, *Sama-veda*, *Yajur-veda*, and *Atharva-Veda*.

Veda Vyasa. Another name for Vyasa.

Vedic. Of your relating to the *Vedas*.

vesma. House.

vichara. Inquiry, analysis and reflection of the nature of the Self or truth.

Vidarbha. An ancient country in India.

Videha. Royal dynasty of Janaka; the kingdom of Mithila, native country of Sita.

vidya. Spiritual education, spiritual knowledge, learning, that which illumines, that which gives light, supreme teaching.

vi-jnana. Highest wisdom; discriminating faculty of the intellect; spiritual wisdom beyond the material plane.

vi-jnana-maya kosa. Body sheath of intellect, intuition.

vi-kara. Modification, adaptation, change.

Viraat-purusha. First incarnation of *Brahma*; Cosmic Divinity; Lord in His form as the physical manifested cosmos.

vishaya. Object and perception.

Vishnu. The Preserver, the Second of the Hindu Trinity of Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver), and

Siva (the Destroyer).

visishta. Supreme, distinguished.

visishta-adwaitha. Qualified nondualism. The doctrine that a person's spirit has a qualified or partial identity with God.

viswa. Waking state, gross body.

Viswa-kartha. Creator of the world.

Viswa-rupa. Cosmic form, form of creation, name for the sun.

viveka. Discrimination.

vriksha. Tree.

vritti. Occupation, activity.

vyana. One of five vital airs; that which is diffused throughout the whole body.

Vyasa. Compiler of *Vedas* and author of the *Mahabharatha*, *Mahabhagavatham*, and *Brahma Sutra*.

vyavahara. Change, worldly activity.

yaga. Oblation, sacrifice, ceremony in which oblations are presented.

yajna. Holy ritual, sacrifice, or rite. Also, personification of rite (when capitalized).

Yajnasravas. Father of Nachiketas; a name for Gautama.

Yajnavalkya. Great *Upanishadic* person. Priest and *guru* of King Janaka. Taught monistic (*adwaithic*) doctrine of identity of *Atma* and *Brahman* in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

Yajnavalkya Kanda. Third and fourth sections of the *Brihadaranyakopanishad*, which deals with the spiritual teaching of Yajnavalkya to Janaka.

Yajur-veda. Second *Veda*, consisting of a collection of sacred texts in prose relating to sacrifices.

yajus. Sacrificial prayer.

Yama. God of Death; death personified.

yantra. Mechanics; instrument.

yoga. (a) Union of individual self or *Atma* with Supreme Being or Universal Self; act of yoking. (b) Spiritual discipline or exercise aimed at control of the senses. (c) Science of divine communion. (d) self control. Patanjali's *Yoga-sutras* define *yoga* as a series of 8 steps leading to union with God.

Yoga-sastra. Scripture or science that deals with *yoga*, esp. by Patanjali.

Yoga Sutras. An aphoristic treatise on *yoga* by Patanjali.

yogi. One who practices *yoga*.

Yudhistira. Eldest Pandava brother; also called Dharmaraja.

yuga. Era or age. There is a cycle of four *yugas*: the *Kritha yuga*, *Thretha yuga*, *Dwapara yuga*, and *Kali yuga*. The present age is the *Kali yuga*.