

## AITHAREYOPANISHAD

**T**his Upanishad is incorporated in the Rig Veda. It shines bejewelled by six chapters which describe the absolute Atmic Principle. It is therefore famous as the Atmashataka, or the Atmic Six. The Vision of the Atma which results from the destruction of delusion and ignorance is made possible for the aspirant by this Upanishad. The term is used in two ways: *Vyavahara* and *Visishta*. Used in the *Vyavahara* sense it indicates the Jivi. In every Jivi, the Atma expresses itself through the senses of perception or the jnanendriyas 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.

In the waking stage, it enjoys all the experiences. In the dream stage, all the senses of perception and action hold back their activities, but it 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 too is taken to be conditioned and limited; but that is not its real nature. It is endless, beginningless, changeless. It knows all, can achieve all. It has no attributes. It is eternal, unsullied, conscious, free. It has no second. It is unique, whole, without parts.

The external world is cognised through direct perception, etc. So, 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? “*Idam agre, Atma eva aaseeth*”—“Before this, the Atma alone was”. The Jagath or World is a product which was latent; later it becomes patent. In the latent stage, it was unmanifest in the Atman itself. When the urge to manifest has 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 before him and identifies him as Ranga. The word and its meaning are inseparable. They two were both non-existent before Creation. Therefore, the Atma and the unmanifested Jagath were unreachable by the Intelligence, and the world which 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 which was and is and will be, is the Atma. The multiple manifestation of variety proliferating in name and form, is Jagath. But basically, it is just one Unique Vasthu, or Substance.

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 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 not? The Atma is devoid of distinctions from the same kind or from different species or from one's own characteristic. It is categorically declared as *Ekah eva*: One Only.

But, it does not become clear so soon that all this is one. The idea is just like the rope appearing as the

snake, or the mirage deluding. The Atma too is misleading us as Jagath. It is all a magician's tricks, 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 the Jagath can emanate from the Atma, which is pure Consciousness only.

Everything is Atma, even Maya, which is the delusion of variety. It is so strong that it causes the execution of deeds through instruments like the sensory organs. You then declare that it is our will and power that did that deed, though it is the delusion that was manifested by Atma that accomplished it.

The world thus created is devoid of Consciousness and so, it has to be fostered like a yantra. How can a machine operate after its manufacture and even installation, without a mechanic or machinist? He created the *Viratpurusha* (Cosmic person), from out of the five elements. He also endowed him with head and limbs. Like the figure of clay made by the potter from earth dug up by him, the *Viratpurusha* was produced from the elements. From the limbs of that *Purusha*, the *Lokapalas* were created. Then, each sense was separated and

equipped with an appropriate deity. In front, the face and the mouth, with Agni as the deity of the Vaak or speech which is the function of the mouth, the nose, 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 yet 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 they were yet discontented; so, to answer their prayers, the Purusha was created similar to the Viratpurusha. Since that Purusha was associated with discrimination or Viveka, the gods were delighted. All bodies other than human are merely instruments for the experiencing of the fruits of action. The human is the only instrument for liberation.

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, danseuse Buddhi dances her steps keeping to the timing of the senses, moving from one object to another.

Thus, the Lord illumines everything through the form of the Jivi. The Paramatma, who is limited as Jivatma has three areas of recreation: the eye, the throat and the 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 Jivi 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. He who delves deep into the unity of the Jiva 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. Every human being has two bodies. One's own and that of the progeny. The duties of study, teaching, japam and these assigned tasks are handed down by the father to the son at the time of his death and they are carried on by him as the representative of the father and on his behalf. Then the father leaves this body, assumes another, more in conformity with the actions and tendencies cultivated and established in this birth. That is the third birth of the father. The first three mantras speak about the two births, the

physical and the spiritual. Now, a third one is added; the continuation by the son.

Vamadeva Rishi understood the Atmaswarupa in this form and became liberated from all the constant flux of the objective world.