Commentaries upon the brahma-sUtra

Owing to its importance, the brahma-sUtra has spawned a rather large number of bhAshhya-s (commentaries) which seek to amplify bAdarAyaNa's very terse writing. Some of the more important bhAshhyakAra-s upon the brahma-sUtra are shaMkara, rAmAnuja, AnandatIrtha, nimbAraka, vallabha, baladeva, etc. Each of these scholars has given his own interpretation of what bAdarAyaNa really means to say. Since the two entities jIva, or the individual self, and brahman, can either be (i) identical; (ii) identical with specialty; (iii) non-identical; (iv) identical and non-identical, one has four basic schools of thought within vedAnta upholding these views.

shaMkara, the bhAshhyakAra of the advaita school, argues that the individual soul and the brahman are in fact one and the same, and that the world of experience is illusory; the purpose of one's existence is to obtain release from the unreal world and attain complete union with the brahman, who also has no attributes.

Shankara
(Sankara, Sankaram, Sankaracarya, Sankaracharya, SankarAcArya)
(788-820)

Shankara was a great teacher of Advaita Vedanta who was likely born in the village of Kaladi in Kerala, South India, in 788 (although some list this date as the beginning of his life as a renunciate). Legend has it that he mastered the Vedas at age eight.

Shankara critiqued the philosophical and religious traditions of his day and singlehandedly brought about a decisive cultural renaissance. He (and other jnanis like him) gave overwhelming testimony to the fact that spiritual renunciation is not synonymous with an inactive, purely contemplative life.

Shankara wrote a large number of Sanskrit commentaries on sacred Hindu literature and founded five important monasteries.

rAmAnuja, the bhAshhyakAra of the vishishhTAdvaita school, argues that a state of qualifed non-duality obtains between the individual self and the brahman, who is identified with vishhNu, and that release from the non-illusory world consists of obtaining a state of bliss similar to that of the ever-liberated brahman, who is endowed with many good qualities.

AnandatIrtha, the bhAshhyakAra of the dvaita school, is a thorough dualist who claims a complete and eternally-unchanging difference between the individual self, and brahman, which is due to their own immutable natures; brahman is identified with vishhNu, and release from the cycle of repeated births and deaths in the world is obtained by service to vishhNu, who alone is the Giver of mukti (liberation).

vallabha, the bhAshhyakAra of the shuddhAdvaita school, also holds that the jIva and brahman are identical, but his brahman is a personal Deity who is to be worshipped with devotion.

nimbAraka, the bhAshhyakAra of the dvaitAdvaita school, tries to reconcile the views held by scholars of dvaita and advaita into one framework.

baladeva, the bhAshhyakAra of the bhedAbheda school, also argues for simultaneous oneness and difference, but rejects the advaitic view completely.

RECONCILING DUALISM AND NON-DUALISM

**Advaita can also not be taught or read about in order to understand it.
Many Indoligists and Philosophers have tried to explain it with their intellectual minds and many times what they say are right, however you can tell by their words they Havant the faintest idea about what Advaita actually it.Likewise, we can read all the Buddhist Sutras and have a Million Buddhist Gurus telling us
things and chant a certain mantra five billion times.But we will still not know what Nirvana is!
Look at Dattreya, he had no Guru nor was he in contact with Advaitas, Vishvadvaitas or Dvaitas and yet he could fully understand all faiths and their hidden truths as he had the Tool of experiencing Brahman and hence knew all about Advaita.
The Upanishads and the Gita, the Tantras and Commentaries about Indian Philosophies can obviously**

help us, however unless we become a Mahabhakta like Chaitanya and experience what Pure Dualism is and then Advaita Vedanta and experience Brahman as Ourselves, can we understand it.But even then, how can we write about the experience, as "Neti Neti" explains it in full.Similarly, if we loose a limb by a knife, how can we describe the pain in words to an audience and make them feel the same pain?
Dvaita Faiths basically = Bhakti (Devotion) and hence are the Istha-Devata (Chosen Deity) aspect of Advaita Vedanta.Hence, Dvaita is in reality a portion of Advaita Vedanta.
Likewise, Brahman of the Advaitan Mayavadis is the Brahmajyothi (Light of Brahman) which is the Effulgence of the Dvaita-God.Ourselves as Separate Forms of Vishnu/Krishna/Shiva in Dvaita Cults is the same as in Advaita where Brahman is One and the Same, however takes differing aspects as the Human, Fish, Deva, Asura,Tree, Mountain etc.Hence, rather than us as "Seperate Jivas" from Brahman like the Dvaitans hold, Advaita reconciles this by Vidya (Wisdom) saying that "Brahman created himself into many".Hence, all is God anyway!
Also, Dvaitas hold that Vishnu himself manifests himself within all Atoms and thus he become Durga or Maya-Prakrithi (Nature Personified).As such, as these "Atoms" are created as the *same as Vishnu, they ARE Vishnu and hence Vishnu is the Creation (Maya) and God (Ishvara) and hence are not really separate as Dvaitas hold, or rather it shows Advaita and Dvaita are the same, there are, in truth, no opposing philosophies, as all is Advaita.
Then there is the question of Maya or Creation as unreal and illusionary.Dvaitas state it is real, it is Brahman as Durga, the Goddess.Advaita state it is also Durga, but is unreal and dreamlike.
Both are correct.As noted, Vishnu expands himself into atoms (hence "makes himself into many, whilst remaining the ONE").Thus, "All is Vishnu", the All-Pervading One as he himself is everywhere, so where infact is the separate "Maya" personality and also as all is Vishnu, all is God and hence the Creation itself, in truth, does NOT exist, only Vishnu exists everywhere.hence we see Advaita and Dvaita are again reconciled!
We also see Dvaitas such as Chaitanya were infact, acting as Advaitas, Non-Dualists, as Chaitanya through his strong Bhakti or Ishta-Devata Dualism created such a Fire of Devotion and Love towards Krishna that he saw all as Krishna and he himself became Krishna himself.Hence his devotee lauded him as an avatar of Krishna.Hence we see that Chaitanya himself had Advaita Realisation-it is his example we should follow.
However, his disciples make a grave mistake, stating "Chaitanya was Krishna as we are his slaves" when infact
this is Avidya (Ignorance), as Chaitanya BECAME Krishna,just as we can.He just taught Dvaita or Dualism so that it acted as a "Divya Vahana" or Divine-Vehicle, so that we thought of Krishna day and night by Supreme-Devotion, so that when we died we became Krishna or God.It is as simple as that.
This derived from a verse in the Gita where Krishna himself states "Whatever one thinks, verily that one becomes" and hence by Bhakti we think of Krishna at death and we become Krishna.Similarly if we are an Advaitan, we think "I am the Atma (Soul) which is Brahman" throughout life and at death we attain Brahman, God or Krishna.

Thus, as Advaita is the Supreme Path, the Dvaita sects should not criticise it, as Advaitans themselves know Dvaita as a Path also leading to realisation, this is Vidya.But criticism is Avidya and not productive in spiritual life.
Hence, we should thus see all paths as one and the same and the same views reconciled into the one sect, Sanatan Dharm, the Eternal Religion.This itself is Brahman and the sects themselves are but his expansions as the Devas or Jivas!

An Analysis of the Brahma Sutra
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CONTENTS

Chapter I

THE FOREST OF THE BRAHMA SUTRA

The greatest truths available for human comprehension are supposed to be documented in the great scriptures called the Upanishads. They are exultations of masters who are deeply involved in the ultimate principles of the cosmos. They are realised souls, called Rishis, but these Rishis in their expressions through the Upanishads spoke in terms of their particular vision of the Ultimate Reality.

A common student of the Upanishads is likely to feel embarrassed over apparently irreconcilable differences and contradictions among the statements of these great Masters. Every kind of philosophy you will find in the Upanishads. There are provisions for establishing the monism aspect of philosophy, the dualistic aspect, the active aspect, the volitional aspect -- everything can be found. Even Sankhya and Mimamsa have a reference.

What is it that you are supposed to take from this big forest of statements on the nature of Reality? To clarify the intention of these sages and to reconcile these statements in a harmonious manner, and to point out that different expressions do not necessarily mean contradictory presentations, Brahma Sutras was written. They can be harmonised by a higher perception of what is there and what is happening. In order to harmonise these multifaceted statements, Bhagavan Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa wrote a new text called the Brahma Sutras. Sutra is a thread that connects different parts of the vision of Truth.

All the statements connected with Ultimate Reality, known as Brahman in the Sanskrit language, have to be threaded together so that instead of the various statements of the Upanishads being contradictory outbursts, they become beautiful pearls in the garland of the knowledge of the Supreme Being, from various points of view. This act of reconciliation is called Samanvaya.

We have problems like this in the Gita also. What is it that the Gita is telling us? 'Go ahead and fight'; 'Think of Me always'; 'I am doing everything' -- what is the point in saying all these things which seem to be negating one another?

When a Cosmic Perception enunciates a Truth, it may look like a multiple proclamation of different hues, colours and emphases, which an ordinary person will not be able to reconcile. You cannot know which is the correct vision and which is lesser or higher. To obviate these difficulties, the great Master Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa wrote the wonderful interpretative textbook called the Brahma Sutras.

'What do you want?' is the first question. 'I want the ultimate Being, Brahman'. This is a terrific question, and a statement. Who is it that wants Brahman?

To avoid the quandary that may arise out of making a statement of this kind, the Sutra - the first one - avoids 'who', 'why' and all that. It simply makes an impersonal statement that Brahman should be known. Who should know It, it does not say, because if you ask such questions you will involve yourself in some kind of preliminary contradiction. Who are you to know Brahman? What right have you? So, avoiding such possible objections, the Brahma Sutra goes directly into the main theme, 'It has to be known'.

What is the meaning of 'knowing'? You know that there is a meeting here, I know that many people are sitting here, you know that I am speaking - this is a kind of knowledge, of course. Is it in this sense that you have to know Brahman? Or is there any other way?

The word 'Brahman' comes from a Sanskrit root, 'Brhm' -- to expand, to be comprehensive, to include and be perfect. If the thing that is to be known you call Brahman is that which is inclusive and comprehensive, it must be including the knowing

individual also. If the knowing person is outside this comprehensive Being, then that being would not be comprehensive, because it has excluded the knower or the person who aspires for it. So, it should include even the aspirant for it. Here is a knotty point before us.

If that which is to be known includes the knower of it also, then what is the answer to this question "Brahman is to be known?" Known by whom? It is already told that nobody is there to know it. Yet at the very beginning itself is a statement, 'It has to be known'. Is Brahman knowing Itself? Brahman is to be known - 'Athato Brahma Jijnasa' -- when thus it is said, does it mean that Brahman is wanting to know Itself? What for is this book which is to be read by people when only Brahman can know Itself and no one else can know It? That is to say, there is no passage to It with which you can be acquainted.

We are all in the world of dualistic perception. We are here seeing something and there is something else which we are seeing. This is how we feel in this world. We cannot even use the word 'world', unless it is seen and confronted by us, because worldly perception which needs a duality, a dichotomy between the seer and the seen, which is the world, creates another difficulty regarding the way in which we can bring together the seer and the seen. The seer is not the seen, the seen is not the seer, is something very clear. You are not the world that is seen and the world which is seen is not yourself.

Such being the case, how would you bring together in a state of harmony the seer and the seen? Who is to work out this mystery? This deep analytical process, which will stun the mind of any person and debar anyone from even approaching it; this wonderful self-identical means of knowing Brahman is called 'Jnana', which cannot be translated into English language easily. People say 'Jnana' means knowledge, wisdom, but they are all inadequate expressions of the operation that is taking place when Brahman is known.

You will be terrified at the very outset when feeling within yourselves the consequences that may follow from attempting to know a thing which can be known only by Itself. The meaning of this situation, if it has entered your mind, would explain to you what Knowledge is. It is not anything that you are thinking in your mind. It is not a degree qualification or a perceptual vision or empirical knowledge.

'Jnana' may frighten away anyone even while approaching it. It can throw you out. You cannot go near It, as it will happen if you go near a powerful magnetic field. It will kick you back; you cannot go near. It is considering this aspect of the nature of 'Jnana', that Bhagavan Sri Krishna mentions in the Gita -- 'this is a difficult path'.
"Klesodhikataras Tesham Avyakta saktachetasam
Avyakta hi gatirdukham Dehavadbhiravapyate"
(BG XII.5)

Body-consciousness is the obstacle to understanding what all this means. Body-consciousness is just individual consciousness, affirmation of this particular individuality, the 'me'. It contradicts that which is inclusive and is complete and is itself, as it were. Brahman is also called Bhuma, the All-comprehensive Absolute, Plenum, including everything. Those who are located in one body only, - ego - are far from this Fullness.

Again the fear strikes us: Including everything? Including me also? 'Oh! This is not for me, this is not for me!' Everyone will say 'this is not for me', 'I will not go near It!'. Brahma-Sutrakara Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa knows all these problems, that people will be turned away by the thought, the very thought of the question regarding Brahman.

The Upanishads define Brahman. Let us see again what kind of thing It is. What kind of thing is Brahman? Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam. This is what the Taittiriya declares regarding Brahman.
"Satyam Jnanamanantam Brahma. Yo veda nihitam guhayam
Parame Vyoman. Soshnute sarvan kaman saha Brahmana Vipashchiteti"

One sentence, this particular declaration in the beginning of the Second Chapter of the Taittiriya Upanishad can make you so happy, thrill you to the brim, if only you could sense what depth of meaning this sentence contains. The moment you know Brahman, the whole Universe of Bliss enters into you and simultaneously you enjoy the whole universe; 'Saha Brahmana Vipashchita'.

You can enjoy so many things in this world. You can eat, you can go on a tour, you can read books, you can go to a drama or a cinema, you can dance - there are so many varieties of enjoyment; but when one enjoyment is taking place, another cannot come. They are all different things. So, successively we are enjoying different things in the world, but not all things at one stroke. Here is the difference.

The joys of all kinds of pleasurable encounters, whatever the number of these be, innumerable, infinite ways of the enjoyment of things in the world - when they all get clubbed together into a melting pot of a single instantaneous expression of Oceanic Bliss - that will be your experience when you experience Brahman, perhaps.

You shudder even to think that such a Bliss is possible. Even the thought of such an unthinkable Bliss can cause terror and tremor in our body. We can be in a state of terror and tremor by seeing fearful things, but here we can have terror even by imagining the superb Absolute -- Brahman, wherein Bliss is a simultaneous completeness.

All disturbing and distracting notions in the mind have to be obviated first before we try to plunge into the nature of Brahman that is to be known.

The Brahma Sutra makes a statement 'Brahman is to be known'. Commentators write pages after pages in explaining the meaning of one Sutra only, "Athato Brahma Jijnasa". Volumes have been written, commentaries have been written, and commentaries on commentaries, and a third commentary on the second and the first! Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Vallabacharya, Nimbarkacharya, all wrote great commentaries on the Brahma Sutras.

Sankaracharya's commentary was commented on by Vachaspati Mishra in his exposition called 'Bhamati'. One of the disciples of Sankara, Padmapada, wrote another commentary. Another disciple of Sankara, Sureshwaracharya, wrote a third commentary, in his own way. They approached this subject from three viewpoints. Together they present three angles of vision of Sankara's commentary. Of these Sureshwaracharya treats the entire creation as a cosmic illusion, whose nature cannot be described by a person involved in that illusion. You cannot say Brahman creates the universe because Brahman is eternity, complete, indefinable, infinite, perfect existence par excellence. It has no necessity to create. The appearance of something being created is the result of a peculiar admixture of confusion cosmically called Maya, and individually Avidya.

Vachaspati Mishra's position is that your mind which is conditioned by what is known as Avidya or ignorance distorts correct perception and the world does not exist as it is; it appears to be existing according to the particular form of Avidya or ignorance in which you are involved.

Padmapadacharya is more realistic in his nature. He has written a commentary on the first four Sutras, called Panchapadika. Generally people follow the trend of Panchapadika only, with its great commentary called Vivarana.

Vedantacharyas and people who teach Vedanta generally do not follow Bhamati's view or Sureshwaracharya's. Panchapadika's view is taken usually, with its commentary known as Vivarana. The whole text of Panchadasi written by Swami Vidyaranaya follows the line of Panchapadika of Padmapada. What is its speciality? The objective world must be existing. You cannot simply say your mind is creating the world of trees and mountains and all that. Such fantastic statements should not be made. Supposing it is accepted that your mind is creating things by Avidya operation inside, then you have to agree that the trees in the forest are created by your mind; the cows and the pigs and the dogs that are moving in the streets - they are created by you only; the mountains, the sun and the moon and the stars are created by your mind. You cannot accept this view and you will be repelled by the very idea that your mind is creating the sun and the moon and the stars. You have to follow the dictum of the Upanishads that originally the creation was effected by a Cosmic Being and not by any individual human being. In the process of creation, man is a latecomer. There were the space-time manifestation, the five Mahabhutas - earth, water, fire, air and ether; then the plants, - trees etc. Man came later on. How can the late-comer, man, be regarded as the originator of the universe? An objective creator, Ishwara, is to be accepted and it is futile to say that the human mind created the universe. This is Padmapada's school of thought: 'Srishiti-Drishti' -- creation first, seeing afterwards.

One of the subjects or themes of philosophy which Brahma Sutra refutes vehemently is Sankhya, the duality of consciousness and matter, known as Purusha and Prakriti. We are usually prone to accept the Sankhya doctrine since we ourselves feel that consciousness is inside us and the world is outside. So, there is a duality. Then, what is wrong with Sankhya? Don't you believe that the world is material in its nature and you are conscious inside? This is what exactly the Sankhya doctrine proclaims. There are only two things in this universe, consciousness and matter.

What is the trouble with Sankhya, now? Why are you objecting to its doctrine? The problem is this. Consciousness can never become matter; matter cannot become consciousness. They are totally distinct things. If that is the case, how would consciousness know matter? How would consciousness come in contact with the material world, and know that it exists at all? Contact of dissimilar things is not possible. Only similar things will come in contact with each other. There is a complete disparity between consciousness and matter. Your capacity to be conscious is different in nature from the objects that you see in the form of the world. How could Sankhya explain this problem? Who brings consciousness and matter together? There is no answer. This is a great defect in Sankhya. For that, to save its own skin, the Sankhya says they can come in contact with each other in another way. How?

Suppose there is a pure crystal which is radiating light from all sides. You bring a red rose flower near this crystal. You will see the whole crystal is red because of the reflection of the rose flower in the crystal. You may say this is a form of contact of the rose flower with the crystal. Crystal may be compared to consciousness, rose flower to matter. Don't you agree that they have come in contact with each other? The fact that the crystal has not become the rose, but imagines that it is the rose, is the bondage of the crystal.

That the matter of the world outside cannot touch you and you are pure consciousness, and yet it appears as if the objects have entered your mind and tempt you and repel you, is the tragedy of the whole of life. This is one explanation the Sankhya gives. Two things do not really meet each other. They appear to meet so. If that is the case, bondage would be an appearance only. There will be no real bondage. Here again a contradiction in the Sankhya. If bondage is not real, then liberation also will not be real.

What is all this great effort of Sankhya to attain liberation? What is liberation? The freedom of the crystal from having any contact with the red flower - that is Moksha. That the red flower exists even when it is taken away, far away from the crystal so that the crystal does not appear any more red - can you say that it is the freedom or the emancipation of the crystal? Now, what is emancipation? It is the establishment of oneself in oneself, the establishment of consciousness in consciousness. What is consciousness? The Sankhya establishes the truth that it is infinite in its nature. Consciousness cannot be divided into parts, something here, something there. Because even to imagine a sub-division in consciousness, consciousness has to be present in the division itself. So nobody can conceive a division of consciousness. That would be a self-contradiction. Then, in that case, when the infinite consciousness establishes itself in itself, as the crystal would remain pure and shining as it was, the question arises: 'where is the rose at that time'? As consciousness is infinite, it is omniscient, it knows everything, and there is no rose outside it!

If this state of omniscience of consciousness is Moksha as the Sankhya says, does that omniscient consciousness know that there is a rose flower outside it? The rose flower is only an example of matter, world, Prakriti. If due to the omniscience of consciousness, Purusha, it has to know everything, then it has to know Prakriti also, and even in emancipation it will come in contact with Prakriti. The bondage will be once again there. Prakriti is eternally existing according to Sankhya, it does not vanish in the liberation of a particular centre of consciousness. What does all this mean, then?

Vyasa, in the Sutras connected with this subject, refutes Sankhya philosophy vehemently and takes special pains to see that nobody gets contaminated by Sankhya dualism.

You should not imagine that Brahma Sutra is as simple as I am explaining! I have sugar-coated it and made it halwa-like. Otherwise, as it is, you will not go near it. It is a very long subject.

Chapter II

THE CRITIQUE OF ERRONEOUS DOCTRINES
'Atha atah Brahma-jijnasa.' 'Atha' is an auspicious word. You should utter 'Atha', 'Om Auspicious!', 'Om Auspicious!', 'Om Auspicious'.

'Om Atha', 'Om Atha', 'Om Atha' -- very auspicious words. These words came from the throat of Brahma himself, the Creator. 'Atha', auspicious; now we discuss something most auspicious. 'Om Atha', 'Om Atha', 'Om Atha'.

Atha: Therefore. What is 'therefore'? 'Therefore' means after having equipped oneself adequately for entering into a discussion on Brahman. The other day, we pointed out the difficulty, who is to know Brahman? If I am to know Brahman or you are to know Brahman or someone is to know Brahman, that someone stands outside Brahman. So, a Brahman known by someone else cannot be a complete Brahman, because Brahman is inclusive. Bhuma is the name of this Brahman, as the Chhandogya Upanishad puts it -- the Full.

Where one does not see anything outside, where one does not hear anything outside, where one does not understand or think anything outside - That Great Being, Plenum of Felicity is Brahma. But if there is someone to see, hear see, hear and understand and imagine that one is going to know Brahman, that Brahman would not be the real Brahman because the point to be remembered always is that Brahman is inclusiveness.

'Brhmati iti Brahma'; Everything is inside It. Even the one aspiring to know It is included in It. So there is no such thing as aspiring to know Brahman! This is the problem of Jnana Marga. Nobody can touch Jnana. It will close all talk and people can go crazy because their mind cannot understand what this terrible thing is; no one can know Brahman and yet It has to be known. These apparently contradictory statements appear before a foolish mind, which is not ready to understand what the

Truth is.

There was nobody before creation. Therefore what right has a subsequent created object to try to know Brahman, which is prior to its existence? Yet It can be known. Sankaracharya in his commentary raises some questions. Is Brahman a known thing or an unknown thing? If it is a known thing, why are you worrying about It? If It is an unknown thing, again why are you worrying about It? So It is not a known thing; It is not also a totally unknown thing.

Why is It not an unknown thing? Because It is vigorously asserting Itself through the soul of each person.
'Aham asmi iti vijaniyat'.
No one says 'I am not'.

Nobody says 'I am not'. This affirmation of 'I am' is actually the affirmation' of Brahman. But isn't the word 'I' a very intriguing thing because so many 'I's are there! This is I, this is I, that is I, this is I - which 'I' are you referring to? It is the supreme 'I' that is speaking as the 'I' of all individual beings.

'Iha amutra vishaya tyaga' is necessary. If you have no desire for anything outside; you have accepted that there is nothing outside Brahman and you are therefore wanting to know Brahman. You should not be dishonest to your own self, by saying 'I want something else', 'I have got a desire for something else'. When Brahman is the Only existent thing, how would you allow the mind to long for another thing? This is an erroneous attitude of the so-called seeker of Brahman. Already a warning is given. Unless the longings for the pleasures of this world as well as the other world are abolished and obliterated completely, one cannot become fit for the knowledge of Brahman.

What are the joys of this world? So many sense-enjoyments; beautiful things to see, beautiful things to hear, beautiful things to taste, beautiful things to smell, beautiful things to touch - these are the attractions of the world. Everybody runs after these attractions. Nobody is free from this longing for the objects of the world. Then you are unfit for knowing Brahman, you should not even talk about that word. With these desires that are longings of the earth, touching Brahman would be like touching a dynamite. It may burst on your face. Therefore 'vishaya tyaga', abandonment of the longing for external objects is called for.

External things do not exist at all, really. That is the whole point. They are scintillating apparitions, shadows, deceiving colours and sounds - therefore they do not exist. Asking for pleasures from non-existent things is the worst of defects one can discover in one's own mind. Why not have the longing for the pleasures in heaven? 'Indra is enjoying there; I will like to go to heaven; wonderful, wonderful, wonderful joy! Gods in the heaven do not eat; they have no hunger; they don't wink; they don't sleep; they don't perspire; they are not tired; they don't want anything; they are satisfied with themselves. Oh, that joy is wonderful for me. Let me go!' - this desire also should be abandoned. Because the joys of the heaven are only rarefied forms of sense pleasures, that desire also should go. The joys of this world and joys of the other world also must be rejected completely, by discriminative understanding.

After having attained that, 'atah', 'therefore', one should know Brahman. But the mind gets harassed by hearing so many contrary things. This man is telling that, that man is telling this - what am I to make out of all these? You go to so many places, read so many scriptures and so many philosophies. They are upsetting the mind.

Sankhya said something. The other day we discussed Sankhya. It is a very famous philosophy. Most people accept it. The presence of Purusha and Prakriti, consciousness and matter, is accepted and these words are used in such great texts like Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Manu Smriti etc. Such noble textbooks of highest authority are using words like Prakriti and Purusha. So this will make us feel there is some truth in it. Why does the Bhagavad Gita go on using the word Prakriti and Purusha, when Sankhya is rejected by the Brahma Sutras? Now we shall not enter into the other subject as to why they are using these words.

The main objection against Sankhya is the assertion of duality; One thing is different from another thing. But the Samkhya forgets it is not possible to know that one thing is different from another thing unless there is a third thing which knows the difference. The one thing which is different from the other thing cannot know that the other thing exists at all. So there is a flaw in the argument. The third thing is necessary, which the Sankhya does not accept. It is caught up by a vicious argument of the self-sufficiency of Purusha and Prakriti. And even its concept of liberation is inadequate, because the Sankhya believes that separation of Purusha and Prakriti from contact of each other is liberation. But there is a defect here. Purusha is liberated - all right, okay, from contact with Prakriti, and Purusha is accepted to be omniscient, all-pervading consciousness. But Sankhya contradicting this statement says Prakriti also exists. In liberation, Prakriti is not destroyed; where does it exist? It exists outside Purusha. Then where is the infinity of the consciousness of Purusha?

Is Purusha omniscient, all-knowing? Yes, it is. If it is all-knowing, it must be knowing the existence of Prakriti also. The moment it knows the existence of Prakriti, it gets caught in bondage. And bondage will be permanently there. The idea of liberation in the Sankhya is not acceptable for obvious reasons.

There are other schools which deny the existence of the Atman itself, like nihilism or Sunyavada, a trend in Buddhistic philosophy. 'Nothing is'. This idea that nothing is arose from another series of discourses given by Buddha himself. Buddha did not say that nothing exists, but something followed from his standpoint. He said that everything is moving and nothing is existing at any particular point, even for a moment, like the flow of the waters of a river. Not for a single moment does the water stand at one place. The river is not a stable object; it is movement. That we are unable to perceive the continuous movement of the waters in a river is the reason why we mistake that the river is a solid water reservoir.

In the same way, the mind does not exist. The mind is only an imagined centralisation of a point as is the point imagined in the flow of a river. Not for a moment does anything exist to continue to see. But Buddha accepted rebirth and samsara, from which he advocated freedom. Now what is this he is saying? Who will take rebirth? That person who is to take rebirth does not exist even for a moment, according to the accepted doctrine.

Karma is the cause of rebirth. Karma is the repercussion produced by the action of someone. This someone does not exist, because existence is momentary. Momentariness is almost equivalent to saying that it is non-existent. So who will take rebirth? How will suffering be explained?, which Buddha emphasised very much - there is suffering, we have to overcome suffering.

This peculiar difficulty in understanding the real point behind what Buddha said created a discussion by another set of Buddhists leading to nihilism. If everything is momentary, neither does samsara exist nor does karma exist. Non-existence is the final word of nihilistic philosophy. But the nihilists made the same mistake as the Sankhya doctrine became self-contradictory.

Sankhya looked very logical, very acceptable, very beautiful from outside, but inside it was vacuous due to the defects already pointed out. So is this so-called boast and adumbration of nihilism, Sunyavada. Who is saying that nothing exists? Who is talking? Is the non-existence itself saying that non-existence is there? Does the philosopher of nihilism exist? If the philosopher of nihilism does not exist because nihilism abolishes the existence of everyone, then who is making a declaration that nothing exists?

The Vedanta comes in and says this argument cannot be accepted. Brahma Sutra refutes it. There must be someone to know that nothing exists. That someone must be existing. It is something like the argument which the Western philosopher Rene Descartes posed before himself. Everything may be doubtful; the world may not be existing; I may not be existing; nothing may be there at all; all things are dubious. It may be so. Some devil might have entered my mind and is making me think erroneously. But he concluded as a wise one that the consciousness that everything is doubtful cannot itself be doubted. "Therefore "I am"."

In a similar way, the Vedanta accepts that there should be an awareness of there being nothing. If Sunyavada accepts that there is an awareness which alone can say 'nothing exists', then the doctrine of nothingness is defeated out and out. Something is.

There are various schools of Buddhist philosophy. There is the Ethical Idealism of Buddha, which emphasised the momentariness of things though he was a very highly ethical person. But the others went to extremes and there are four extreme types, offshoots of Buddhist psychology and philosophy. One of them is called Yogachara or Vijnanavada. This is totally refuted by the Brahma Sutras in the second chapter.

All that you see outside is the creation of the mind. This is the basic principle of Vijnana-vada. Vijnana is the consciousness in the mind or consciousness itself as the mind, which projects itself as an outside world of perception. The world actually does not exist. The Vedanta refutes this position. The Commentary of Acharya Sankara is long on this particular Sutra. "The non-existence of the world cannot be accepted."

Oh! Some people open their eyes. What is Sankaracharya saying? What is Sutra telling? Is the world really existing? Are you contradicting your own Vedanta doctrine that the world ultimately does not exist? Why are you fighting with this Buddhist psychology?

The Vedanta is a difficult subject. Very difficult subject. Any amount of probing into it can put you out of gear. 'In what

sense is the world existing and in what sense is it not existing?' - must be first clear to the mind.

That there is nothing at all outside, and it is only the mind moving outside as is proclaimed by the Vijnanvada theory of Buddhism, is refuted. Why is it refuted? Acharya Sankara's commentary is elaborate, worth reading again and again. Beautiful! If there is nothing outside, if the consciousness appears to be outside according to your doctrine, this doctrine cannot be accepted because "how did the idea of 'outsideness' arise in the mind?" If the mind is wholly inside and is not outside, and it only projects itself as if it is outside, how did the idea of outsideness arise at all? A non-existent idea, an impossible idea cannot arise in the mind. Every idea has some meaning. Nonsensical ideas cannot arise in the mind. Even if you agree that there is some appearance outside, and really things do not exist, the appearance has to be outside. This outsideness must be accepted first. How did things appear 'outside' even though they may be only mental? The mind is inside; you will see the whole world dancing inside your head. Why does it not happen? Why is there the idea of 'an outside'?

There is an outright condemnation and criticism of Vijnavada that you cannot go on saying that there is an appearance of something being outside unless there is really something outside. A rope appears as a snake but even for that appearance, the rope must be existing. If rope also does not exist, then the snake will not be there.

Now, the other side comes in. Does Vedanta accept that there is a world, when it says that Vijnanavada is wrong? There are two degrees of reality. One degree is called 'Vyavaharika satta'; another degree is called 'Paramarthika satta'.

The object and the subject are on par with each other. Anything that is above your mental operation cannot be known. by you. Anything that is below your mental operation also cannot be known. You cannot know heavens because they are above the operations of your mind. You cannot know hell because it is below the operation of your mind. You can see only empirical existence because the mind is an empirical phenomenon. Now, the question whether the world exists or not should not arise at all, because the existence of a thing is nothing but the acceptance by the mind that something outside is existing. When consciousness accepts that there is something, it exists. You cannot deny its existence, because who will deny it? Consciousness accepts it. The world is seen; now, which consciousness is accepting it? The empirical consciousness which is subjectively engaged in this physical body is accepting that there is something outside, because anything that is inside should also accept that there is something outside. You cannot say 'my mind is inside'. Who told you that the mind is inside? Because you have differentiated your mind from something outside. If the outside thing does not exist, the inside also cannot exist. There is a clash between the inside and the outside in ordinary perception. The subject and object contradict each other. Therefore the mind cannot know the nature of the world correctly, nor can the world enter into the mind.

Chapter III

ERRONEOUS NOTIONS REFUTED

Desires pertaining to the objects of the world cannot be fulfilled for the reason that the mind accepts them to be outside. An 'outside' thing cannot become an 'inside' thing. So, all desires are futile in their nature. They are a will-of-the-wisp, a phantasmagoria that you are pursuing. In the 'Vyavaharika satta', in the practical and pragmatic state of existence, the world seems to be on par with you. You can shake hands with it. But you cannot shake hands with Brahman, the Absolute.

The world exists as an empirical, practical, pragmatic reality. Therefore Vijnanavada is not correct in saying that the world does not exist at all in any way. It exists in some way, though not in all ways. 'Vyavaharika satta' is the accepted, empirical reality of the world outside with which we come in contact every day in our dealings of the world, and the business of the world goes on.

Therefore, we have to take the doctrine of the existence or non-existence of the world with a pinch of salt, very carefully. We should not go to extremes. Unpurified minds should not go for philosophy.

A Guru told the disciple, 'All is Brahman'. 'Very good, very good', the latter said. He was walking on the road one day. An elephant was coming in front. The mahut said 'Get away, get away, get away!' The student thought, 'Why should I get away? The elephant also is Brahman, and the Guru has said it!' The disciple would not move. The elephant caught hold of the man, and threw him out, which broke his legs. The student ran to the Guru and said, 'Guruji, what have you told me? You said everything is Brahman and I thought that the elephant also is Brahman. It broke my legs.' 'Oh foolish man! Did you not believe that the mahut also is Brahman? He told you not to stand there. You have not understood the thing properly,' he said.

A partial understanding of Reality is no good. The Yoga-vasishtha warns us:
'Ardhavyutpannabuddhestu Sarvam Brahmeti yo vadet;
Mahanaraka-jaleshu sa tena viniyojitah'
If you speak the doctrine of Brahman to an unprepared mind, you yourself will go to hell together with that student! Do not

talk about that carelessly. It is mischievous to tell an unprepared person that all is Brahman. That would ruin the sanity of the person and he will get nothing out of it, and he would lose whatever he has.

Again the warning -- Vedanta should not be studied in the beginning stage of learning. In the earlier stages, there is Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga, Upasana and other things prescribed. The Upasana method also will be mentioned in the Brahma Sutra itself, in the third chapter. You have to pass through the Upasana stage, Bhakti as you call it, until the mind is purified thoroughly.

We have seen how Brahma Sutra refutes the Buddhistic view of a fluxation of things, the momentariness of things and the nihilist aspect of Buddhism.

There are other doctrines like the atomic theory. Everything is only atoms. The coming together of atoms creates forms of things and the qualities of the causes produce new qualities in the effect. Who created the world? Atoms created the world. Atoms joined one with the other and created the sense of objectivity, solidity, perceptiveness etc. This doctrine is refuted in the Brahma Sutra. Atoms cannot join one with the other, because atoms have no shape or dimension. The Nyaya and the Vaiseshika who adumbrate this doctrine themselves accept that atoms have no shape and dimension. If there is no dimension of one atom, how will that atom be joined with another atom which has also no dimension? So, the theory of the joining of atoms is not acceptable. Also, even supposing there is a possibility of one atom joining another atom, who will make the atom join with another? Who causes the coming together of two atoms into a dyad, a bi-atom or a tri-atom, as they call it? Unless there is an impelling force beyond the so-called activity of the atoms, the activity cannot take place. Accepting for the sake of argument that atoms join together and create this world, there must be some force to make the atoms come together. The atomic theory is not complete when it says that atoms are sufficient and everything is created by the automatic action of the atoms. This theory is refuted. The Nyaya, however, finally accepts the existence of an Extra-Cosmic God shaping creation, but this extra-cosmicality would actually prevent God's interference with the world of creation.

There are other theories which hold that the Atman or the Self or the soul or consciousness, is also like an atom -- 'Anumatra'. This word used in the Upanishads is not to be understood as atomic but as subtle. It means something very fine, incapable of grasping; therefore, it is called 'Anu', metaphorically.

'Anuh pantha Vitatah', says the Upanished. The path to perfection is 'Anu', atomic. Atomic does not mean little, little as particles. You have to understand it in the proper connotation. It is extremely subtle, cannot be grasped by the senses or the mind, therefore it is referred to as Anu, extremely subtle, imperceptible.

'Kshurasya Dhara Nisita Duratyaya
Durgam Pathasat Kavayo Vadanti'
(Katha Upanishad)
The path to Heaven, the path to the Gods, the path to the Absolute is sharp, subtle, incapable of comprehension as the edge of a razor, on which one has to tread.

Why does it say, then, that the Atman is inside? The idea that the Atman is inside gives the impression that it is not outside. Is it so? The idea of the Atman, whether it is inside or outside, is to be cleared first. What do you mean by the Atman at all? What is it? What is it made of? It is not a physical substance, because all physical things are perishable. The Self is imperishable, immortal. Every doctrine, every philosophy accepts that the Self is imperishable. If it is imperishable, it should defy dimension and temporality of every kind. It should be dimensionless. If the consciousness which is the Atman has a dimension, a limitation, then it will be finite and not be immortal. Finite things aspire to become Infinite. No finite thing can remain satisfied with itself. There is a struggle of every finite centre to become the Infinite. Therefore the Atman cannot be a finite centre. It is all-pervading consciousness.

The idea that the Atman is inside is also to be understood properly in its proper connotation. 'Inside' does not mean 'inside me', 'inside you', etc.; rather it is inside everything. A thing that is inside everything is everywhere. Inasmuch as it is everywhere, it is safe not to use the word 'inside' and 'outside' in the case of the Atman. Do not say the Atman is inside or outside. It is everywhere, and so incomprehensible. If something is outside, you can comprehend it; if it is inside also, you can comprehend it to some extent. But if it is everywhere, who will comprehend it?

Again the same question of knowing Brahman arises here. That which is everywhere includes even the person who tries to know It. So, That which is everywhere cannot be known unless the knower also becomes That. Knowing Brahman is being Brahman. Knowing Reality is being Reality. Thought and Reality coalesce and become Absolute Being. Thus, the Atman is not an 'Anu' or a little spark as sometimes people think. The atomic doctrine or Anuvada of consciousness being inside only also is refuted.

Very surprisingly, this is why the Brahma Sutra should not be read by all and everyone; -- it refutes even theology like Vaishnavism, Saivism etc. You will be surprised why it refutes Vaishnavism and Savisism. Towards the end of the second chapter, the Brahma Sutra goes into detail of the impossibility of conceding validity to the Vaishnava concepts and Saiva theology, wholesale. This is something unpleasant to hear for devotees. Philosophy is not religion; it is the deep analysis of the modus operandi of the attractiveness of religions.

Why does the Brahma Sutra go to that extent of defying the religious beliefs of people? Again, the point is that people are not fit for the knowledge of Brahman, and they should not study the Brahma Sutra in the beginning of the educational process. Prior knowledge of the logic of desires and emotions is necessary.

'Vyuha' means a group of divinities. These groups are called Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Vasudeva is Lord Krishna. Pradyumna is his son, Aniruddha his grandson and Sankarshana his brother. Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna, Aniruddha - these are the categories of divinities, compared to God, individual, mind and ego, according to Vaishnavism.

The Brahma Sutra says that there cannot be categories of divinities. It is one indivisible mass, and if Vasudeva produces Sankarshana, Pradyumna, Aniruddha etc., each one will be perishable. That which produces another has an end. A cause that transforms itself into an effect has already undergone a transformation within itself and it has ceased to be a cause; the effect has destroyed the cause.

Brahman cannot become Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha unless it modifies itself into these gradations or objects which we are worshipping religiously. When milk transforms itself into the thing called the curd, it cannot be called milk anymore. Then when curd is seen, milk ceases to exist. If you accept this doctrine of the manifestation of vyuhas according to Vasihnava theology, then it would mean that Brahman has modified itself into these vyuhas, as milk has modified itself into curd. Then as curd has destroyed the milk completely, these vyuhas will destroy Brahman also. Therefore, this theology cannot be accepted. For analogous reasons, the Pasupata and Saiva cosmologies are set aside.

The Personality concept of God is prevalent in all the religions of the world, whether it be Christianity or Islam or Zoroastrianism and all the Semitic religions. In Indian religions, God is considered as the Supreme Person. You may call Him Allah, you may call Him Father in Heaven, you may call Him Narayana, Vishnu or Siva - it doesn't matter what the name is, you are accepting the Personality of God.

What do you mean by Personality? We must explain it first. Personality is a limitation you are imposing upon the all-pervadingness of God. You have a personality, and you are only expanding the concept of your personality to an infinite extent in order to conceive the Personality of God. God looks like a huge human being. You cannot avoid this defect in thinking. Even if God is an infinitely extended Person, there would be space and time outside Him. The idea of a person cannot arise unless there is a space outside. If space also goes inside the Person, the personality of the conceived object will become Impersonality. Brahma Sutra emphasises the impersonality of God, and permits personality for the purpose of worship and contemplation.

The Brahma Sutra is not studied in the beginning of the Vedanta Sastra. There are preliminary texts like Atma Bodha, Tattva Bodha, Vedanta Sara and Panchadasi, etc., which are introductory texts meant to clarify the knotty points of the Vedanta doctrine. You must go slowly. Never go to the Upanishads suddenly. Nowadays people say 'I study Upanishads', and all that. The mind is not clear, it is not purified, the heart is full of desires, longings, prejudices, egoism, lust, anger, greed -- everything is there. These distractions should be obviated before the longing for the All-Being, Brahman, can arise.

Chapter IV

THE ORIGIN OF BONDAGE

The Brahma Sutra is a Moksha Sastra, dealing with the subject of the salvation of the soul. How did you get into bondage and how will you retrace your steps to the original liberated condition -- that is the main subject of this wonderful scripture, the Brahma Sutra. How do you get into bondage? This subject is dealt with in the Chhandogya Upanishad and the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad under the chapter called the Panchagni Vidya.

When a child is born, it enters into bondage. Also, how does the child get into the womb of the mother? How does it become necessary for the child to enter the womb of the mother? How does it know who is the suitable parent? There is an endless number of parents in the world. Why does it choose only one particular set of parents?

When this subject is discussed, we must first of all know what we mean by the soul that takes birth. What is soul? What is it

made of? We have a wrong notion of the word, generally speaking. People imagine that the soul is a kind of substance -- a little ball, mercury-like -- moving inside the body. All sorts of funny ideas everybody has about the Jiva, Atma, soul, and all that. It is nothing of this kind, really.

Jiva or soul, for the purpose of our subject, is a concentrated point of desire. The soul that we are discussing about here is not the Universal Soul; it is rather the bound soul and no one can be bound unless there is a concentralisation of desire at a spatio-temporal point.

It is desire that is born, not a child. The human being is a shape taken by a mass of desires. Every cell of our body is made up of desires. It vibrates with desires -- any number of desires. But since any number of desires cannot be fulfilled through a single body, a certain set of desires is chosen intelligently for the purpose of fulfilling them through a single incarnation.

The desire of a person is infinite in its nature. It would like to swallow the whole world, if it is possible. That it is unable to do so is a different matter; but if it could be possible, it would do it. It would swallow the whole sky also! Such is the rapacious, insatiable nature of desire.

What is desire? It is a concentration of consciousness at a finite point. Just as we can centralise into a point of concentration sunlight by allowing the rays of the sun to pass through a lens, and make it appear that the sun is totally concentrated through the lens, in a similar manner, as it were, the Universal Consciousness arranges itself into a point of concentration and finitises itself. When it finitises itself, originally, it is said in the Upanishads, that it looked like a spark of fire. As from a huge conflagration several sparks may jet forth in all directions, so from this great conflagration of 'Brahma Fire', many little sparks shot out which are the individuals. So far so good. But creation did not end with that only.

The 'shot-off' sparks asserted individuality of their own, something like each appointed official in a centralised government assuming independence. This is called seceding. A district collector may say 'the whole district is mine only. Don't talk to me!' and so on. A patwari may say 'this village is mine'. Though they are all sparks of a central operation called the government, they can attempt to secede by an arrogance developed in themselves and wind themselves up on a cocoon of involvement in a little area of functioning -- it may even be a little mohulla -- you may say 'I am the lord of this mohulla'. In a similar manner, tragedy has befallen the individual soul.

Desire is the nature of the soul that incarnates, but desire is nothing but a necessity to fulfil a need; an unfulfilled desire is a malady. Desire is an intensely concentrated onward march of a point of consciousness in some given direction, which is the eagerness to fulfil desire.

What happens? Fulfilment of desire is possible only if there is an object through which the desire can be fulfilled. The objects of the world are material in their nature. A mere spark of the flame cannot come in contact with material objects. So it assumes simultaneously a materiality of bodily encasement also, for which purpose it draws particles of matter, -- earth, water, fire, air and ether into itself, -- and here we are in this position, internally centralised points of desire for something or anything outside. This physical embodiment assumed is called the body.

What are these physical embodiments? They are nothing but the segregated parts and formation of the five elements. The five elements are everywhere but particles of all these elements are drawn in and centralised around a point of concentration like a magnetic point. The desiring centre which is the individual soul is a point which is like the centre of the eye of the magnet. It pulls everything into itself. This centre is also called the ego. Its purpose is to pull everything into itself and reject everything else, which are the dual functions of desire, -- ego.

Having taken birth for the purpose of fulfilment of desires, the desiring centre forgets that the body cannot last long since it is like material out of which a house is built. How long will the house be standing? It will wear out one day. You whitewash it, cement it and decorate it by taking bath, dressing, washing and cleaning -- so many things we are doing but how long? How long can you decorate a house? One day it collapses. This is called the death of the body.

The span of life, the length of the life of a person, depends upon the extent of the capacity of the body to tolerate the action of desire. This is very important to remember. A particular desire has a particular force attached to it and the body will continue to exist as long as the force continues, like the voltage of an electric current. If it is 'high voltage', the body will last longer; if it is 'low voltage', it will be less. But desire cannot be fulfilled merely by the breaking of the body; desire is not meant to come in contact with one object only. It wants everything. Inasmuch as this point of desire has lost everything by disconnecting itself from the Universal Being, now it artificially wants to possess everything. A person who has lost everything wants everything, in a negative way. One who has starved for months will have such ravenous appetite that he will try to eat even stone.

You have lost the Infinite and therefore now you want an infinite desire to fulfil itself through contact with numberless finite objects. This is a brief story of birth and death, an endless chain of metempsychosis, -- Samsara. Numberless finites do not make the Infinite.

When death takes place, what is actually the experience? The Panchagni Vidya is very interesting. The body becomes weak; the house says 'I am going to collapse!'; the bricks are weak, plastering is falling down; there is leaking on the top -- everything will be gone completely. 'I am sneezing', 'I have got joint-pain', 'Oh' -- it will go on crying. These are the symptoms of the coming of a time when the body is to be shed.

What happens? When the impending time comes for passing, the hearing stops. The body and the individuality are constituted of the five elements. The elements withdraw themselves one by one. Hearing is connected with space. The divinity of space will withdraw itself and then the hearing stops. A person who is about to die will not hear what one is saying. But then, what remains? The next element of descent in the process of creation is Vayu, the touch principle. The tactile sensation ceases. The hearing goes, the sensation also goes. Then the fire principle: the body becomes cold; the feet are chill, hands are chill; people say, 'Oh! he is going, he is going.' 'He is becoming cold.' Then the body shrivels; the water principle also gets dried up.

The Prana which was connecting itself to all these layers of physical personality trembles inside. There is an agony all over. And the spark that was the individual now manifests itself once again as a little glow at the tip of the heart. That glow is not visible in ordinary life because of the cloud of desire covering it and the busy occupation of the person with all kinds of activities. The glow is covered over and we do not know it. Now when all embodiment is going to be shed, the glow sparks forth. At the tip of the heart, a glow illumines. That is the symbol of the Jiva wanting exit from the body. With a jerk, the flame -- the little spark -- leaves this body; drawing the vital energies (Pranas) with itself.

Is there pain at the time of death or is there no pain? This can be known only by judging the extent of desire that was sustaining the body. Desires also are of various kinds. Intolerable longings are one kind of desire. Normal longings are anther kind. A person who eats three times a day will feel greater agony when Ekadasi comes; a person who takes only two times will feel less agony of Ekadasi; a person who takes only one meal will feel still less. In a similar manner, the desires which are Sattvika (pure), Rajasika (distracted) and Tamasika (dark) will determine the feelings at the time of passing.

The agony that is felt depends upon the intensity of the desire that is entertained through the personality during lifetime. Those who have been doing prayer, worship, meditation etc., throughout their lives and leading a holy life of goodness, compassion and servicefulness will not feel the agony of death as many others may feel. Those who are utterly corrupt, those who have swindled, smuggled, destroyed other peoples' peace and worked like dacoits and done the worst of things in the world will feel a terrible stroke on their head when they die.

Why should you feel like that? If you lead a really religious life of prayer, meditation, service, goodness and compassion and love of God primarily, that will act as a palliating influence at that time of passing.

If you have served your Guru, Guru's Grace will work at that time. It is said that if the Sadhana that is practised is intense, expected tragedies may pass away in dream-experience, by the Grace of God or the Grace of Guru. Suppose a person has the prarabdha of falling from a tree and breaking one's leg, by the power of devotion, worship and prayer, and Guru's Grace, that event will take place in dream. In dream, you will fall down and break the leg; actually when you wake up, you will feel the imaginary pain also. Instead of actually breaking the leg, a symbolic breaking takes place due to the Grace of God, Grace of Guru and the power of Sadhana. In a similar manner, the agony of passing will be mitigated if we have lived a good life, a God-loving life.

The Brahma Sutra, in the Panchagni Vidya discourse, goes on describing the story of the passage after death. Where does it go? We do not want to know it! We eat well, sleep well and have a joyous life in this world; who bothers about what happens afterwards?

The soul will go to that place or thing which it has been thinking in its mind throughout its life. Now, let each one find out what it is that you have been thinking throughout your life. You may say 'I am thinking many things'; even then there is an opinion about yourself; that will continue. Your soul will gravitate like a jet to that place and you will take birth there.

Chapter V

TOWARDS LIBERATION

What is birth? All the elements joining together to produce a form. But suppose a person has done immense charitable deeds

-- the good exceeds the bad -- seventy-five percent are immensely good and twenty-five percent are not good, such people will go to the moon after passing and enjoy the nectar of the gods, pitris (forefathers). When the momentum of the good deeds gets exhausted, there will be a coming back from the moon, to rebirth into this world.

There is another interesting feature mentioned in the Chhandogya Upanishad. What happens to the bad deeds which are twenty-five percent? The seventy-five percent has taken the soul to the Chandraloka and it enjoyed blissful experience there and after the exhaustion of the blissful experience there, subsequent to the exhaustion of the momentum of those deeds, there is a reversal, a coming back. Is it that the person is exempted completely from the results of the twenty-five percent bad deeds? No, there is no exemption. The next birth will be determined by the twenty-five percent balance of the karmas.

But suppose you are a devotee of God primarily and not merely a rich person doing charity and building houses and temples, and planting trees on the roadside and digging wells, building choultries etc., -- not merely that -- but you have been an ardent worshipper of God, -- such a soul after departing does not go to the moon. Highly purified souls bright in their behaviour, shining in their character, travel through the rays of the sun to the orb of the sun. The rays of the sun are the paths through which the soul travels higher and reaches the Sun. In order to go to the sun, the soul has to be as bright, as powerful, as pure as the Sun. The soul gets purified in Surya Loka (Solar Region).

Surya Upanasa (Sun-worship) is a very important means of Sadhana because one day or the other you have to go to the sun, provided you are fit for attaining Moksha. Otherwise, you will go somewhere else and come back; any number of births can take place. The Upanishad goes on describing several stages of ascent. There is no sudden jump into the Supreme Being. The soul crosses through the worlds above, the five elements, the physical embodiment of the fourteen lokas -- Bhu-loka, Bhuvar-loka, Suvar-loka, Mahar-loka, Jana-loka, Tapo-loka, up to Satya-loka. It moves direct towards the borderland of the Universal Being, -- Brahma-loka. The consciousness of individuality is maintained for sometime. The soul knows that it is moving in some direction. But at one point, it loses that consciousness.

The nearer you go to the border of the Universal Being, the less you become conscious of your individuality. You feel at that time that you are withering away and vanishing like a burnt camphor. Yet the individuality in a very rarefied form persists. Only the individuality which is Rajasika (distracted) and Tamasika (dark) will have a consciousness of itself. Pure Sattva-dominated 'jivatva' (individuality) will not be conscious of itself because it will be so transparent then. It is like a clean glass. The glass, if we imagine that glass has consciousness, may not know that it is existing because of the transparency of the glass. The glass attains a transparency of the highest Sattva-guna, and loses self-awareness, individual consciousness. At that time, says the Upanishad, the Great Creator sends a messenger. A being who is not human comes and leads the soul along the path of the Supreme Creator. This is the stage of cosmic consciousness but it is not liberation fully, because to have cosmic consciousness there must be some object of which one must be conscious. Thus, it is still a lower stage.

Saguna Brahma Upasana and Nirguna Brahma Upasana are two types of meditation. In the third chapter of the Brahma Sutra, the various types of Upanishadic meditations are described. It is a subject by itself.

The worship of God can take various shapes. It may be an individualised, particularised god located in one place or it may be a devotion to multiple gods like Vishva-Devas or it may be devotion to One, Creative Power, whatever be the name that we give to It. We cannot imagine what the Creator could be. Saguna Upasana also is not an easy thing, because it is concentration on the Creator Himself. Who can think of the Creator? You cannot think even the world in its entirety; it is so big and so diverse. But by the purity of your purpose and intention, if it is possible to expand your love to the dimension of the Supreme Creative Principle, you will be the highest, most blessed person.

The Upasaka remains distinct from the Upasya Devata, and therefore it is called Saguna. What is the meaning of Saguna? 'Saguna' means 'with attributes'; we conceive God with attributes. We, as human beings, can think only as human beings even in respect of God. We think of a vast dimension of the comprehension of God's Existence.

'All-knowingness', All-power', 'All-freedom', 'All-bliss' -- these are the characteristics that we are able to conceive and attribute to God Almighty. Mighty God! Some religions consider God as mighty; that is why he is called as Almighty. Every religion considers God as a Mighty Being, supremely powerful; Indian religions or Western religions, whatever they are, maintain the concept of God as the supremely powerful Being. This feeling is common to all.

But there are other ways of conceiving God, also. God can be the most beautiful Being. The aspect of Sadhana which conceives God as the most powerful Bliss is called 'Aishvarya-Pradhana' Bhakti -- Bhakti which takes into consideration the Glory and the Might and Power of God for meditation. 'Oh Almighty! Oh Great One! Oh Almighty!' -- you feel stupefied even by the word 'Almighty'. The emphasis is laid here on the Power and Glory of God.

But there is also beauty in God. Generally we cannot imagine that God is a beautiful person. It never enters into our heart; we think He is an old man with beard, etc. The beauty of God is surpassing; it can melt your heart. Are there beautiful things in this world? You might have seen some beautiful things. These are like distorted drops of the beauty of God; they are not even real drops, they are distorted ones, shadows, mutilated drops; and they look so beautiful; 'Oh, how beautiful!', you say sometimes. There are many things in this world which make you feel, 'Oh, how beautiful!' Then what will be the beauty of the Supreme Being!

The Power is stunning, the Beauty also is stunning! We cannot tolerate excessive power, we cannot tolerate excessive beauty also. Mortal is our mind; stupid it is; it cannot enjoy even Beauty; only broken beauty it can enjoy because the mind is a broken substance! So it reflects only broken beauty.

God can be meditated upon as the Greatest of Powers and the Greatest of Beauties. Truth, beauty and goodness are considered as the highest characteristics of God. Truth means not truth-speaking merely; It is an eternally existing Principle. A thing that passes away sometimes cannot be regarded as Truth; that is relative truth. The Goodness of God, the Power of God and the Beauty of God, -- it is difficult to conceive these together!

How could you imagine the extremely powerful God being compassionate, good and loving also? This is why we cannot conceive God fully. But when we try to conceive God in our meditations, we segregate these qualities. All of these things do not come to the mind simultaneously.

Madhurya-pradhana bhakti is the type of devotion where the Beauty of God and the Bliss of God is the object of meditation. 'Beautiful! Beautiful! Beautiful! Oh! Tasty, tasty, tasty! Honey, honey, honey!' There were some saints who used to call God as honey; 'Oh Honey! Oh Honey! Oh Honey!' What can you say? In what way do you call God? Because in this world, the most delicious thing is supposed to be honey; -- so you consider God as most delicious. 'Honey, honey! Mighty honey! Come, come, come, come!' 'Oh! My dear', people cry -- as a mother cries for her little child -- 'Oh! My dear! Oh, my Beloved!' There are no words to describe God!

You can consider God as your Supreme Father. Most religions consider God as Father; 'Father in Heaven! Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come.' Some people consider God as their Mother; -- 'Devi, Bhagavati, Virgin Mary'. God is Father and Mother also. Protectively He is Father and lovingly He is Mother.

He is also your Friend, and Arjuna and Krishna were of that relationship. You can ask Him to do something for you, and He will do it for you. 'My dear friend! Will you kindly do this service for me?' The friend will do it for you. You will be amused: can I tell God like that? He will sweep your floor; He will do that also. You should not be amused to hear all these things.

In Maharashtra there was a saint, whom Sri Krishna served as a little boy, washing his clothes and sweeping the floor and cleaning the vessels and the like. Another saint went to Pandharpur to have Darshan. A voice told 'Vitthala is not here! He is serving the other saint there and washing his vessels; His name is Srikhandiya.' The saint ran to find out where Srikhandiya was; by that time the boy vanished from that place. You can consider God as your friend, as your beloved, as your father, as your mother or as your master.

In the 'Song of Songs' that we have in the Bible and 'Gita Govinda' of Jayadeva and in the 'Rasapanchadhyaya' of the Srimad Bhagavata, we have another type of devotion described. It is the lover and the beloved relation -- impossible to describe. They are not meant to be described at all because when you start describing things, they become mathematical like an engineering expert describing a house and a project. It has no meaning. Beauty cannot be described mathematically. So this kind of 'madhura', 'rasa' -- the beauty and tasty aspect of God's Love -- is incomparable.

All these come under what you call Saguna Bhakti. There is an 'otherness' of God to some extent here. Whether He is a father or a mother or a beloved or whatever He is, He is 'other' than you. A distinction is maintained for the time being. You attain to Brahma Loka with this kind of devotion, -- you are not the Creator, Brahma, yourself.

At the end of the universe, when the universe is dissolved; everything gets absorbed and the purified soul which was living in Brahma Loka as a scintillating part of the Cosmic Being merges in the Absolute.

Chapter VI

THE CONTROVERSY OVER ACTION AND KNOWLEDGE

The Brahma Sutra throws light on the bondage of the soul and its passage through various stages of spiritual development --

one passage leading to enjoyments in heavenly region and then subjecting oneself to rebirth; another way of ascent through the solar orb by the passage of the rays of the sun, which is a blessing that is accorded to highly purified souls, who are shining inside in their purity, desirelessness and ardent love for God; such persons are chosen to travel through the rays of the sun and gradually reach Brahma Loka, leading further to salvation.

What are the means to Moksha? What are we supposed to do for that? The age-old royal paths to spiritual freedom have been the paths of action and knowledge, traditionally known as Karma and Jnana. There have been historical controversies and endless discussions on the meaning of action and knowledge, and even today we cannot say that people have come to a conclusion as to what action means and what knowledge is.

Among the six schools of philosophy, a prominent school which advocates ritualistic sacrifices and karma for the freedom of the soul is called Purva Mimamsa or Karma Mimamsa. Nyaya, Vaiseshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa or Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta are the six schools of philosophy.

Purva Mimamsa is the system of the study of the Veda Samhitas, discovering the true meaning of the mantras of the Samhitas and their application in sacrificial deeds as expounded in the ritualistic portion of the Vedas known as the Brahmanas. The whole system is concerned with this subject, -- satisfying the gods in heaven for benefits of every kind. Brahma Sutra points out the inadequacy of sacrificial rituals as means to ultimate freedom, Moksha. Action is a process, and process is not an immutable reality. Action has a beginning, and so it has an end. Action, Karma, or Sacrifice is perishable, and the perishable cannot lead to Moksha. Action is a purification process.

What is the purpose of the Veda and the Karma Kanda of the Brahmanas? The satisfaction of the gods is the purpose. If the gods are satisfied, we shall also be satisfied. How would you satisfy the gods? By yajna. Reference to this is made in the Bhagavad Gita also:

"God created -- Prajapati created -- human beings with a sense of duty and proclaimed, 'Worship the gods (Devas) and in reciprocatory gesture, the gods will bless you.' Here is the seed of the Karma Kanda, which is adumbrated in great detail in the Purva-Mimamsa.

But mere sacrifice in the form of pouring ghee into the fire is not what is intended, because the word Deva is used as an intermediary principle responsible for the fructification of the results of the performance. We have been discussing earlier on certain other occasions that the subject and the object are related to each other by a third principle called Adhidaiva, a divine Superintending Principle.

The perceiving and cognising consciousness is Adhyatma and the object that is perceived is Adhibhuta -- the world. How does perception take place? It is effected by the action of an intermediary principle which is the transcendent consciousness known as Adhidaiva. This Adhidaiva is what you call 'god' and there are endless gods as there can be endless varieties of the relationship between a subject and an object.

People sometimes ask 'Why are there so many gods?' They are not so many gods as crude village folk may think; it is not like that. They are necessary interlinking processes of consciousness in every act of perception. If there are infinite types of perception of objects in the universe, there are infinite gods also, as there can be any number of triangles whose apex is like the god and the two points of the base are the subject and the object.

The varieties of perception are known to everybody. We do not perceive things in the world in a uniform manner, and added to this, there is another complication. There are degrees of the ascent of perception. We are now in the lowest and crudest form of the perceptional process of the physical world. We know only the physical world and nothing below or nothing above. But there are seven planes of existence mentioned in the Puranas and epics -- Bhu-loka, Bhuvar-loka, Suvar-loka, Mahar-loka, Jana-loka, Tapo-loka, Satya-loka. These are all higher degrees of Reality, where perception continues in a more and more ethereal form reducing the distance between the subject and the object until the subject merges with the object in Brahma-Loka.

But until that state is reached, the perceptual process continues and this intermediary principle also continues to act and there are so many varieties of perception in varieties of levels of being. So, it looks as if there are endless gods.

However, the point made out by Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita is that merely offering objectively some sacred stuff in the holy fire will not satisfy the gods. The gods will have to be invoked in the middle of the performance. 'I have to be grateful to the gods who are making it possible for me to perceive that you are sitting here.' Gratitude to gods is the greatest

sacrifice. We cannot hear, we cannot sense anything, we cannot breathe, we cannot eat, we cannot even exist as individuals unless the gods co-operate with us.

The gods are the cosmic counterparts of individual functions. Meaningless chanting of some slokas and throwing some ghee into the fire does not mean sacrifice, according to Purva Mimamsa or even the Bhagavad Gita. The performer of the yajna should be conscious of the divinity which is being invoked in the offering. The offering physically in the form of charu, ghee etc., is symbolic of a prayer offered to the divinity which is the presiding principle over the mantras of the Veda. With this we can reach celestial freedom is the contention of the Purva Mimamsa.

But the great commentator Sankaracharya, during his exposition of the Brahma Sutra, while touching upon this subject, cautions us. Action can bind you and liberate you, also. The binding action is that which you do for the sake of somebody else, or one's own personal benefit.

People do not like work! 'Why should I do, unnecessarily, drudging for the sake of somebody?' That feeling of dislike for the performance of any kind of work which wrongly is interpreted as the work for somebody else is binding in its nature. But action is not always for the sake of other people. Actually, it is never for the other people because there are no other people in the world. This subject also we have been touching upon earlier on different occasions.

The idea of the 'other' should be shed, first and foremost, while stepping into the spiritual path. Who are the 'other people'? Are you not one of the 'other people'? Knowing that you are one of the 'other people', how would you call anybody as 'other'? So when you say, 'I am working for others' -- who are the 'others'? You yourself are included in the conglomeration of people called the 'others'. Everyone is an 'other' to someone. If this principle is borne in mind and you do not commit the mistake of isolating yourself from people in the world whom you regard as 'others' -- but include yourself also among the 'others' -- then working for the sake of the 'others' would mean working for the total humanity. You are not doing the work for somebody else because you are included in that 'somebody else'! This is a subtle point.

A person performs sacrifice, serves people as they call it, for the sake of other people as it is said -- in social welfare circles -- "you work for humanity". Who is the humanity? A person who is working also is a part of humanity. This is never borne in mind by any person. The externalising ferocity of the sense organs is so intense that it always sees things as something 'outside', and oneself as 'inside'. This is a tragic experience which everybody passes through in utter ignorance of not knowing that one is also included in the objects of perception.

Each one who seems to be perceiving objects is also an object of perception. Therefore, there is no such thing as 'objects'; there is only a total inclusiveness. This is what Bhagavan Sri Krishna instilled into the mind of Arjuna -- 'Look at Me, who I am!' -- all the objects were in the subject itself!

Action performed in this spirit of total objectivity is liberating. That cannot bind.
'Kurvanneveha karmani jijivishet satam samah
Evam tvayi nanyathetosti no karma lipyate nare'
(Isha Up. (2)

'Isavasyam idam sarvam' -- this is the first word of the Isavasya Upanishad. Based on the consciousness of the all-pervasiveness of Ishvara, if one starts acting, it does not become an individual action.

The first two verses of the Isavasya Upanishad are a prescription for the combination of Jnana and Karma, Knowledge and Action. Thse two verses or mantras of the Isavasya Upanishad, we may say, sow the seed for the whole discourse in the Bhagavad Gita. The entire Bhagavad Gita's Gospel of Karma Yoga is in these two mantras. Live a long life, for a hundred years. The doer of the action is not me, is not you or anybody else. It is the total blending together of the so-called 'perceiver' and the so-called 'object' and the divinity combined operating; it is an unthinkable majesty of the principle of Action -- World-Action! There is only one thing that does everything.

When you act, when you speak, when you operate anything through the sense organs, all the three factors combine together and there is a Total Action taking place. Spiritual Action is Total Action -- it is not your action or my action or anybody's action. So, karma or action is not done for 'other' people. The idea must be shed immediately. If the 'otherness' is introduced into the action performed, it will certainly bind. But if the 'otherness' is removed and it becomes a Total Action, it is liberating. Thus, there is a grand connection between action and knowledge.

Mere intellectual, paroksha jnana, conceptual knowledge is not Real Knowledge. There are professors who are 'embodiments'

of knowledge. Well, it is beautifully said that they are professors only, not possessors. You can profess but not possess. So, this professional knowledge is of no use. We must be possessors of knowledge. That kind of knowledge, theoretical, is condemned in the Isavasya Upanishad as useless -- it will lead to further bondage because it instils egoism into one's nature (Isa Upd. 9). Learned people -- panditas -- professors can be boasting of their knowledge while that knowledge is outside their personal being and does not touch them at all. Professorial knowledge or intellectual comprehension of the subjects of philosophy and science and religion etc. -- all these are something like a beautiful shirt that you put on making you look beautiful, but you know you are not the shirt; you are something else inside. Panditas are mostly miserable in their personal lives; they complain more than you complain!

The Brahma Sutra has many things to tell us on the relationship between action and knowledge. Purva Mimamsa is set aside as an inadequate process of spiritual liberation as it has set aside Charvaka, Bauddha, Pasupata, Sankhya, and even the personalistic conception of God. The prescription of Brahma Sutra is very severe, severe in the sense that your notions of God do not always coincide with God-Being.

Action and Knowledge are the two great paths, but the Bhagavad Gita mentions that they are not two paths -- they are one and the same. Properly understood Action, Universal Action, is the same as Contemplation or Meditation.

People generally speak of 'Contemplation in Action' and 'Action in Contemplation'. We are body-bound individuals; we cannot see 'Contemplation in Action'. Contemplation is Action in a universal sense and Action is Contemplation also in a universal sense. The Path of the Spirit is Universal Inclusiveness.

I mentioned to you that the path of the gods leading to Brahma Loka is marked with various stages of ascent through the divinities of every element in the universe -- earth, water, fire, air, ether; space, time, causation -- you have to traverse higher and higher. Earth is a divinity; water is a divinity; fire is divinity; Wind-air-Vayu is a divinity; Space is divinity; Time is divinity; Causation is divinity; the impulse to create and be individual is a divinity -- all these have to be traversed. These are the passages through Krama Mukti, 'Gradational Salvation', taking a long time.

But there is another way, the Path of Immediate Salvation. It is a terrifying thing even to think what it could be. You attain salvation at once, not struggling through various stages like the crawling of an ant. There are two paths known as 'Ant's Path' and the 'Bird's Path', Pipilika Marga and Suka Marga as they call it; Pipilika is the ant, Suka is the bird. If the ant is to reach a particular destination, it has to crawl little by little with its tiny legs, -- it will reach of course but it will take a lot of time; but the bird will fly straight to that destination without any obstacle. The 'Ant's path' is Yoga; the 'Bird's path' is Immediate Identity with Brahman.

A great passage in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, which is the final instruction of sage Yajnavalkya to King Janaka, states that those who have no desires, those who have obtained everything connected with their desires, those who desire only the Universal Self, -- their Pranas do not depart. They merge in Brahman at once. Where will the water of the ocean 'depart' in order to find the water? If the wave or bubble on the surface of the ocean wishes to become the ocean, what long a distance has it to travel? No travelling is necessary!

'Atraiva samavaliyante' The dissolution of individuality takes place just now, here itself. Being the Universal, one becomes the Universal, with no time process and no spatial distance!

Can you understand what it could mean? Would it not make you feel a shudder inside yourself? The nerves will crack, the muscles will twitch inside even to hear such a thing, because it is the liquefying process of the whole hardened ego and individuality. These are great promises given to us, and we should be happy that the promises have been given, and one day we may reach that state!

But to desire It, to want It and to contemplate only That and to be merged in That thought day and night, in spite of the activities one is engaged in -- can anyone feel that Blessing is available to any one of us?

If there is anyone of us who has the time to think only This and find only This in everything which you call 'external' -- if we can see the Universal in the internal as well as the external and also that which is in between the internal and the external and plunge into the Sea of such a Universality of Perception even when we are busy in this world, even if you are selling vegetables in the market -- then action does not bind. "We do not want to do any work; we will close the eyes and merge." There is no necessity to say such a thing. You need not close the eyes; you can open the eyes; you can walk! You can do anything but 'all these things are within Me, the Compass of this Oceanic Pervasiveness of Total Action'.

If anybody's heart is so pure as to understand this Truth and feel a tremor in the whole system by the very thought of It, such a person will not take another birth; such will attain the Supreme Being. This is called 'Sadyo Mukti' -- Immediate Salvation.

Great Blessing! Great Blessing! Even the hearing of it is a great sadhana. What you have done now is 'sravana' -- you have heard; it has inundated you with the possibility of a Great Achievement ahead of you. Go to your room and sit; "What have I heard today? Oh! Is it like this? Is it like this? I must think like this! I must do like this! Oh! I want this; I want this" -- go on analysing what Krishna says, what Brahma Sutra says, what Mimamsa says, what Isavasya Upanishad says -- "Oh! Oh! Oh!" -- Go on ruminating within yourself 'This is what it is…!' "Oh! How happy! How happy I am! Wonderful!". Go on thinking That only, "Oh! How will I get It? How will I get It? I want It, I want It. How will I get It? How will I get It? I want only This; I want only This!" -- go on telling it to yourself. "Oh! What to do? What to do? How will I get? How will I get?" Go on with this affirmation until it sinks into your being.

Chapter VII

SPECIMENS OF VEDANTIC MEDITATIONS

The third chapter of the Brahma Sutra is concerned with meditations. These meditations are different entirely from the usually well-known types of meditation in Bhakti Yoga Marga. What is the difference?

You can consider Lord Krishna as standing in front of you, Rama as pervading around or Krishna as in Brindavan, Rama in Ayodhya, Devi in Manidvipa, Narayana in Vaikuntha. All these ideas are accepted in Bhakti Yoga meditations.

But here is a uniqueness. Brahman is the central point. It is the God of meditation. It is not in Kailasa or Vaikuntha. It is not anywhere. That the object of meditation is not somewhere but is everywhere distinguishes Vedantic meditations from other well-known meditations.

So, according to the technique advocated in the third chapter of the Brahma Sutra, which are all fairly hard to conceive and are based entirely on the Upanishads, the first thing that a person should do is to expand the mind to a universal, comprehensive Inclusiveness. Then you bring any point to it; it will work.

'Taddha Tadvanam nama Tadvanam
iti upasitavyam'
(Kena Up.)

"That is Adorable; one should meditate on It as 'Adorable'." This is one Upanishadic meditation, in the Kena Upanishad. Brahman is the most adorable and we should conceive Brahman as the most adorable and you will become the most adorable in the world. Can we imagine such a thing? There is nothing which Brahman cannot do. It does not take time also to do a thing. All gods may take time to act -- they have to come from Vaikuntha, Kailasa, Brahma-Loka and all that, but Brahman does not take time to act. It is instantaneous action. When you meditate on Brahman as the most adorable, you must remember you should not think Brahman as being somewhere, far away. This is the difference between Vedantic meditation and other types of meditation. The All-pervadingness, Inclusiveness, Omnipresence is the central fact that has to be borne in mind when meditating on Brahman. Meditate on It as the most adorable.

'Most Adorable Being! I am contemplating on you.' Now who is contemplating? Rather, It is Itself contemplating on It. In a Vedantic meditation, somebody does not meditate on something else, because an omnipresent thing cannot be meditated upon by anybody else. When the consciousness inside is tuned up to the Universal Omnipresence as the most adorable, that meditator becomes the most adorable in the world. 'Namyante asmai kamah' The world will prostrate itself before you. If you want that the world should bow itself before you, do this meditation. The world will fall at your feet. But, beware, you are not the meditator; the Universal is meditating on Itself!

There is another illustration in the Kena Upanishad, which is also a meditation. Gods and the demons engaged themselves in a war and the gods won victory. They celebrated their victory with great eclat. The Great Brahman realised, 'these fellows are thinking that they have won victory; let me teach them a lesson.' It appeared in a gruesome form and sat on a tree. It made a sound and all the gods were frightened. They ran to Indra; 'Oh! Something is sitting on the tree and is frightening'; 'Go and find out, Agni. Go, find out who he is', said Indra.

Agni looked up. That Yaksha asked: 'Who are you?'; 'I am Agni'; 'I see, Agni! What can you do?'; 'I can burn the whole earth'; 'Hm!' It placed a blade of grass, -- 'Burn it'. It was humiliating to Agni; 'I can burn the whole earth and you are telling me to burn a blade of grass!'; 'Do it then'; Agni ran and tried to reduce it to ashes, but it wouldn't even shake. Three times did Agni try, but to no effect. Humiliated, Agni ran back, and told Indra, 'I don't know anything. You send another person.'

Indra sent Vayu, the Wind-god. It asked, 'Who are you?'; 'I am Vayu'; 'What can you do?'; 'I can blow the whole earth'; 'Blow this grass'; 'Eh! You are asking me to blow a little blade of grass; I will blow the whole earth!', he said; "Do it!' When he went, that grass would not move! Humiliated he went back. This allegory is to show that any experience is Brahman's experience. If you have won success, Brahman has won success.

'Brahma ha Devebhyo Vijigye', says the Kenopanishad. For the sake of the gods, Brahman won victory. For the sake of the Pandavas, Sri Krishna won victory. Arjuna was a very dexterous man and nobody could stand before him; Pandavas won victory, -- even now we are saying Pandavas won victory! Nobody won victory; -- Sri Krishna won victory.

Unless the Universal Being works through your stomach, you cannot even digest your food. Don't say 'I have a stomach; I will eat well'. You cannot even see, you cannot hear, you cannot do anything without It, -- That Being. Every function, apparently individual, is Its function. If that is the case, human egoism will vanish in a second.

The Kathopanishad has also a meditation:
'Ye Ye Kama durlabha martyaloke
Sarvan kaman chhandatah prarthayasva
Lord Yama speaks to Nachiketas: "All that you want, you can ask; whatever you want! Any desire, any longing that a human being can conceive in the mind -- ask! It will be granted just now!" Great temptation before Nachiketas.

Just as the gods felt that they won victory while somebody else had done the work, here a duping situation has arisen: 'All the glory of the whole world is here before you; Take it but don't ask me any unnecessary question!' Nachiketas asked a question to which Lord Yama does not want to give the answer. We may say, "What is there? We will reject all these offerings". Even the beauties and the glories of the world, nobody has seen. Has anyone seen the entire glory of creation?

The Taittiriya Upanishad gives the gradations of the joys in the universe. Consider a human being who is the king of the whole earth, very healthy, never falls sick, most learned, has every knowledge under his master, most beautiful, handsome youth, has control over the whole earth, is emperor of the whole world -- what would be the joy of that king? This is one unit of joy we can conceive. There is no such king in the world -- even conceiving such a thing is impossible. One hundred times the happiness of such a conceived emperor of the world is the happiness of the pitris (forefathers in the astral realm). One hundred times this happiness is the happiness of gandharvas, the musicians in heaven. One hundred times the happiness of gandharvas is the happiness of the gods in heaven. One hundred times the happiness of the gods is the happiness of Indra, the ruler of the gods. One hundred times the happiness of Indra is the happiness of Brhaspati, the Guru of the gods. One hundred times the happiness of Brhaspati is the happiness of Prajapati, the Creator of the Universe. Endless, endless is the Bliss of Brahman, not multiplied in this manner. It is not a mathematical total of the joys of the world that is Brahman's Bliss. It is super-computative, impossible to think.

'Do you want the happiness of the whole world? Of all the gods?' That you cannot reject. Nobody can say, 'I do not want these joys'. The joys of the world are so attractive that the thought of them, very sight of them will melt the heart of a person. Such glories and beauties and majesties are available in this world itself. Why talk of Gandharvas and all that? If you are offered the kingship of the whole earth, -- what will you feel at that time? Anyone of you -- a chance comes for you to be the ruler of the earth, not of one country or two countries. The whole world is your property. You cannot exist at that time; you will melt away in the joy. Such a thing is rejected by Nachiketas, the seeker.

How much effort is necessary to conceive the universality of Brahman? 'As long as the universe lasts, so long you can live' -- do you want this blessing? Nachiketas said "All right, I may live for as long a time, as long as the universe lasts, but when the universe ends, I will also end. What is the good of your blessing?" "You have given me all the joys of heaven and earth. But they wear away the sense organs. The enjoyments, whether of earth or heaven, are possible only if the sense organs are active. If they are worn and are drooping down, what then? A corpse cannot experience the joys of the earth and heaven." This is one meditation available from the Kathopanishad.
'Tad Brahmanah parimara iti upasita
Paryenam mriyante dvishantah sapatnah'
(Taitt. Upd.)

What does this prescription mean? If you tune yourself to the Universal and through the Universal if you think that somebody should die, immediately that person will die; -- enemies will perish. It is not however meant that you should try this practice. I am just mentioning that there are techniques like these, to achieve anything.

The varieties of meditations mentioned are almost similar to Patanjali's description of the various Samadhis, -- Savitarka, Nirvitarka, Savichara, Nirvichara, Sananda, Sasmita, Sabija, Nirbija. Practically, all the scriptures say the same thing with

variations of emphasis and style.

The Kathopanishad says,
'Mahadbhayam Vajram udyatam
Ye etatdviduh amritah te bhavanti'
What kind of Brahman is this? Is it a sweet, soft, butter-like thing? No, It is a thunderbolt! 'Mahat bhayam' -- It is the fear of everyone. One cannot even think It without shuddering within. You know thunder? Have you heard thunder in the skies? What sound will it make? Such, as if the earth would break. Your heart also will miss a beat at that time. The fear that is instilled into the hearts of people by Brahman is of another kind. It is the thunder coming from all sides. You have to love It, it is already mentioned, you have also to dread It. You have to fear It because you are opposite to Its nature.

'Bhyayat agnih tapati', -- Fire burns due to the fear of Brahman. 'Bhayat tapati suryah' -- because of the fear of Brahman, Sun shines. 'Bhayat Indrascha Vayuscha' -- Indra and Vayu perform their functions due to the fear of That. 'Mrtyurdhavati panchamah' -- even Death performs its duty due to the fear of Brahman.

The Kathopanishad has some meditations like this. "The sense-objects are above the senses; above the objects is the mind which determines them; beyond the mind is the intellect; beyond the intellect is the Cosmic Intellect; beyond still is the Causal Source of the Universe; beyond all these is the Supreme Being, -- Purusha. The Prashna Upanishad has also meditations. When you are in deep sleep what happens? The Tanmatras -- potential forces of earth, of water, of fire, of air and space -- enter into the deepest recesses of your being at that time. They stand balanced, as it were, without any disbalance among themselves. This is unconscious activity taking place in sleep. What happens unconsciously in sleep happens consciously in meditation. This is the difference. Sleep is also analogous to meditation in a negative sense. There is no externalised consciousness in sleep and there is no externalised consciousness in meditation. In that sense, they look, alike strangely.

But there is a difference. A poor person who has lost everything does not want anything; he is so sunk in sorrow. A king who has everything does not want anything. These are two different kinds of 'not-wanting'. One is not wanting due to the depth of sorrow, the other is not wanting due to the height of joy. So is the difference between sleep and meditation. The Prasana Upanishad says, Prithvi, earth, and the Tanmatra of earth; water and the Tanmatra of water and similarly in the case of other elements with their Tanmatras -- enter into the state of deep sleep, so that you do not know that they are existing at all. Thus do consciously meditate now. Withdraw the earth into yourself, the water-principle, the fire-principle, the air-principle, the entire space itself into yourself.

Whenever you want a thing, ask for everything. Why are you asking for little, little things? We should never ask for 'one, two, three, four, five…' -- then nothing will come. You are converting the Great Glory into fragments. If someone says 'I am going to give you everything', you say 'No, no, I don't want everything'! There is poverty even in the desire to fulfil desires. What kind of mind is this? The Taittiriya Upanishad and Mundaka Upanishad both say it is Brahman which is Truth, Knowledge, Infinity, that is hidden in the deepest recesses of the heart and in the highest Heavens; whoever knows this enjoys the world at one stroke. How much time does it take? 'Saha Brahmana Vipaschita' -- As Brahman has no time process, it does not take time for one to enjoy the Bliss of oneness with Brahman. A bursting of the joy of the entire cosmos takes place and is simultaneously experienced without temporal succession.

If you cannot conceive this grandeur and it is all too difficult, imagine that from this Great Source arose Space; from space came Vayu, from Vayu came Agni; from Agni came Apas, and then below is the earth. From earth arise plants, trees etc., vegetables, and foodstuff that we eat. The food that we eat becomes the body that we have. Individuality arises out of the action of superior forces, which are causative in their nature -- all emanating from Brahman Itself. Meditate like this. It is a potent prescription of the Taittiriya Upanishad and the Mundaka Upanishad.

'Yatha nadyah syandamanah samudre
Astam gacchanti namarupe vihaya;
Tatha vidvan namarupad vimuktah
Paratparam Purusham upaiti divyam'
(Mund. Upd.)
When you enter the Supreme Being, what happens? As all rivers of the world enter the Ocean, and stand united with the Ocean, -- there is no Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvati -- nothing of the kind is there in the Ocean; in a similar manner, the individual loses itself in the Ocean of All-Being, Brahman.

At the time of departure, the Pranas depart -- is what we are hearing generally. But Sage Yajnavalkya tells us, in his instruction to King Janaka:

'Yo'kamo Nishkamah Aptakamah Atmakamah
no tasya prana utkramanti;
Brahmaiva san Brahmapyeti'
That person who is 'Akamah', who desires nothing because he has all things within himself; 'Nishkamah', not having any further desire; 'Aptakamah', who has fulfilled all the desires; 'Atmakamah', who desires only the Universal Self. For such a person, the Pranas do not depart; they dissolve then and there, as a bubble dissolves in the Ocean. This is called Sadyo Mukti, Immediate Salvation.

There is another way of Mukti called Krama Mukti or Gradual Salvation; you go step by step, from stage to stage until you reach Brahma-Loka. That is the result of Saguna Brahma Upasana. Saguna Brahma Upasana is the way of contemplation on the Supreme Being as an object outside, as it were. Even God Himself you may feel as something outside you. You cannot suddenly think that He is pervading and is everywhere. The 'outsideness' conceived in the mind prevents you from entering It directly. This is the fruit of Saguna Upasana, but it will take you much time to attain That State, through stages innumerable, all which are detailed picturesquely in the Upanishads.

If that which you are trying to attain has become identical with you, and It Itself is meditating, then Sadyo Mukti takes place -- Immediate Salvation. Whether it is daytime or night time when you die, whether you die in a temple or in a pariah's house, it makes no difference. This is what Swami Vidyaranya teaches in his Panchadasi. Some people say that if you die during the 'Northern Path' of the Sun, you will attain Moksha; but if it is the Southern Path, you will come back. The Brahma Sutra, however, says; 'No such rule applies to a Jnani', because the solar effect is felt by the earth even in the night time. The sun is shining on the earth during night also. The Sun's rays flood the earth perpetually. For a Jnani who is one with Brahman, the Northern and Southern movements of the Sun are no more a concern.

To a person who is entirely dedicated to the cause of the Ultimate Reality, Brahman, 'Uttarayana' (North) and 'Dakshinayana' (South) do not apply. But it applies to those who are mediocre types of sakhakas. And where should you die? People generally say, 'Die on Ganga bank, holy place, Prayaga, Kashi'. This rule also does not apply. He may die anywhere. That Great Being will come and take care.

Chapter VIII

UPASANA -- UPANISHADIC MEDITATIONS

The method of Upasana -- meditation -- as prescribed in the third chapter of the Brahma Sutra follows the principle laid down in the Upanishad itself. What is that principle?
'Tam yatha yatha upasate, sa Tathaiva Bhavati'

As one adores, so does one become. Who will not adore from the deepest recesses of the heart the best of things conceivable, which goes deep into the feelings, on which one broods for ever and ever? That brooding, that deep thinking, creates an impress on the mind, like a groove on the gramophone plate; we can sing the same song again and again by replaying it. This impression created by continuous thinking, wanting and adoring whatever objective may be in one's mind -- that concretises itself into a form and presents itself before oneself, which is what we attain through meditation on anything.

Most people imagine that meditation is done to achieve something. You ask any person, 'What do you want through meditation?'. 'I want to achieve peace of mind'. Some may even meditate for acquiring wealth, prosperity, name, fame, long life, but such achievements do not change the person. The purpose of meditation is the change that should take place thoroughly inside and outside. Acquisitions or achievements will pass away one day or other. Wealth will pass away, long life also will have an end, name and fame will vanish, authority passes away -- nothing lasts.

The Upanishadic meditations or the Brahma Sutra prescriptions should not be considered as recipes for ulterior achievements. What else is it? It is the doctrine of what you want to become and not what you want to achieve. There is a difference between achieving and becoming. People can easily answer the question, 'What do you want to achieve?', but nobody can answer the question, 'What do you want to become?'!

'Oh! You are asking this question -- what I want to become!' Nobody can give the answer. 'What do you want to become?' Who can answer this question, 'What do you want to become?' Unless this point is clear, the meditations would not be finally successful. There are two categories of meditation -- one to achieve something, another to become something. The latter meditation will also help in achieving things; you can achieve anything -- even up to the skies. But what would you like to become? Here comes in the Upanishad, and the Brahma Sutra. If you cannot answer this question, the Brahma Sutra answers the question.

You would like to be free from the shackles of limitation of every kind. This attainment is called Moksha, Liberation. Freedom from every kind of limitation or finitude is Moksha. It is not just some achievement. Even if you achieve the greatest authority and power in the world, that will not make you a different person -- you will be the same mortal as you were. There should be no mistake in this regard. People are silly and childlike in thinking that it is for the peace of mind. They understand nothing, really.

Meditation, in the sense of the Upanishads and Brahma Sutra, is to remove all conditioning factors which make you feel you are finite, that you are localised in one place -- this is one kind of limitation; you cannot be in two places at the same time; you feel very much agitated over this matter -- 'you see I am stuck to one place only and the world is so big! What is the good of this? I want to know all things and I want to see everything -- all places'! You would like to become as wide as the world itself, and you would like to see everything in the world. You would like to know all things and be and know everything for all time to come. This is possible only if you can defy the limitation of space and the limitation of time.

The prescription of the Chhandogya Upanishad, which is discussed in the Brahma Sutra also, is 'Yo vai Bhuma Tat Sukham' -- Perfection, utter freedom is in that which is not finite. The Infinite alone can be considered as utter Perfection, where every kind of finitude is abolished. Can we imagine what Infinitude is? You will have nothing to see outside you, because that which is Infinite is also that which is everywhere. What is the point in 'seeing' and 'hearing' through the ears what is everywhere, and what is the point in trying to worry the brain in understanding what is everywhere? The Upanishad discards this situation: Yo vai Bhuma tat amirtam (The Full is the Immortal).

'Yatra na anyat pasyati, na
anyat srinoti,
No anyat vijanati, sa Bhuma.'
-- Infinity is that where you need not have to see anything, nor hear anything or try to understand anything through the mind. But,
'Yatra anyat pasyati, anyat srinoti,
Anyat vijanati, tad alpam'
That is futile whereby you see something outside you, hear something outside you and try to understand and think something outside you.

The Infinite is not inside or outside, It being everywhere. Therefore these organs of perception, which take you in the direction of what is outside, are useless in such meditations. Meditation is not done by the sense-organs. Actually, it is not even the mind that meditates, because the mind, unfortunately, is a principle of collecting information from the sense-organs, who give various kinds of reports, analysing them, synthesising them and forming an organisation of all the reports that the sense-organs bring to the mind. The mind, thus, cannot think something more than what the sense-organs give. It is only an organiser of sensory operations. If senses cannot be the means of meditation, the mind is also not the means. Then who meditates? That which wants to become something different -- That meditates.

You want to become different from what you are. That 'you' is what is meditating. Here in this connection we have to add that it involves also the liberation from the shackles of the five sheaths of the body. The physical body is a source of limitation; the sense organs are a limitation; the mind, for the reason mentioned, is a limitation; the understanding which is only a judgement passed on what the mind thinks is also a limitation. All knowledge in this world is artificial knowledge, a shadow of the Real Knowledge, a reflection of the Original Knowledge; and so, who meditates?

You meditate. Who are 'You'? Can you say you are the body? 'My body is meditating'. Body does not meditate. Do the sense-organs meditate? No, it is also ruled out. Is the mind is meditating? No, because for the same reason again, it is not the meditator. Is the understanding, intellect meditating? No, because it is only a co-brother of the mind. Who meditates? You meditate. Who are 'You'? Neither the body, nor the sense-organs nor the mind nor the intellect. All that you consider as what you are, is not really what you are. There is a confusion in everybody's mind in regard to one's own self! This is called superimposition, Adhyasa, -- confusing one thing with the other.

Look at it! All those things which you consider as yourself are not yourself. The 'I' that you refer to is an important thing to remember. When you say, 'I am here', do you mean that the sense-organs are here or the mind is here or the intellect is here? You do not mean that. You would not like to say, 'My intellect is here', 'my mind is here'. You have already agreed to the conclusion that the senses, the mind, the body and the intellect are not you. Everybody knows it but still you say 'I am here'. This 'I' is the principle that really meditates. The 'I' is the meditating principle.

The little 'I' that oneself is wishes to transform itself into the bigger 'I', even the Infinite 'I', -- this is the purpose of meditation. Otherwise, any amount of meditation sessions will bring no proper result. The mind has to be clarified first. You must know

what you want, before saying 'I want something'. What you think and affirm about yourself, that which you are will come to you; that which you are not will run away from you. (Sarvam tam paradat yah anyatra atmanah sarvam veda).

The cobwebs of mistaken thinking should be cleared first. We must take enough time to do this. We should not say, 'I am very busy; I am doing this work, that work'. Well, then you go on doing the work and be what you are. We have already mentioned that work and meditation are not contradictory. The bogey that people bring before them, 'I am so busy, I have no time to meditate' is meaningless. That is to say, they are neither doing right work nor doing right meditation. Mostly, the life that people live is a confusion. It is neither an achievement nor anything worthwhile.

To achieve this, to attain this path of Perfection which is what is known as meditation, continuous thinking is necessary. Close your doors in the room, put down the telephone, do not read any books, close your eyes or open your eyes as the case may be, go on thinking 'what kind of person am I?'. This subject also we have touched previously -- what kind of person you are. Nobody could answer this question. Now you need not ask somebody what kind of person you are. You ask yourself 'What kind of person am I?'. Sincerely put this question from the bottom of your heart, 'What kind of person am I?' Very uncomfortable answer may come. 'I am certainly not what I appear to be'. Dangerous is this answer, shocking is the conviction.

Are we leading a life which is contrary to what we think we are? This is the reason why it is said you must have a concourse on this subject with people who are treading this path. In this world, where a single Guru is difficult to find and people run from one to another, it is better to have a congregation of well-meaning people. We are all seated here and I would believe we are all well-meaning people and I can understand that everyone here is wanting the same thing and not different things.

Discuss among yourselves: 'My dear friend! How are you progressing in your meditation?' I will ask you, you ask me, I ask this man and that man -- like schoolboys, collegiates discussing among themselves on subjects of examination ensuing tomorrow, let us discuss about this matter, thrash it.
'Tat chintanam tat kathanam
Anyonyam tatprabodhanam
Etadekaparatvam cha
Brahmabhyasam vidur Budhah'
[Panchadasi (7.106)]
Meditation is the practice of Brahman; in Sanskrit it is called 'Brahmabhyasa'. What does it mean?

'Tatchintanam' -- like a mother who has lost her only child, like a husband who has lost his newly-wed wife, like a wife who has lost her newly-wed husband, like a person who has lost all his wealth -- what does he think? There will be one thought only at that time. So 'Tatchintanam' - thinking only that. 'Oh! I want That; Oh! I want That'! Mother cries when the child is dead: 'Oh! My dear! I want you; where have you gone? Oh, my dear! Oh, where is my child? Where is my child?' They won't sleep, they won't eat, they will cry. Like that you have to cry before the Almighty: 'Oh! Where are you? I want you'! You need not say like that before other people because they will think that you are a little out of wits. You can do it within your room only. 'My dear Almighty! Where are you?' Like a child, put this question to your own self. Cry before That; 'Where are you?'; 'I want you only, I don't want anything else; Don't forget me; Don't desert me; come now! I am eagerly wanting you'! Like a bereaved person in the world, you speak to God. You have lost Him and so you are bereaved. What a wretched condition! You don't like to say anything; you don't want any comfort in this world; you don't want to talk to any person. 'My dear God, where are you? I have lost You'. Go on brooding, brooding. This is called 'Tatchintanam' -- thinking only That, that which you have lost.

'Tatkathanam' -- talking to people on this subject only; if you meet anyone, you speak only this subject; don't chit-chat on climate, country, how the country is going on, what is the international system -- these chats are all no good! You talk to anybody, your friend, only this. 'How are you progressing? How are you getting on? All is well with you in this matter? Let us discuss. Come on, let us sit, let us discuss this matter. What do you think? What is the difficulty?' This is 'Tatkathanam'. Thinking deeply only That, speaking only about That.

'Anyonyam Tat prabodhanam' -- awakening each one by mutual conversation. Sometimes people go for a walk -- some three, four, five people go for a walk. Why don't you think only this at that time? 'Hello, how are you? Yesterday I was thinking like this and I am feeling like this. What are you thinking about this matter?' Instead of looking here and there -- the shops and market places and monkeys, etc. -- why don't you discuss this even when you are walking? You must have no other thought. 'Anyonyam Tat prabodhanam' is the third method.

'Etadekaparatvamha Brahmabhyasam Vidur Budhah' -- depending entirely on That. What do you mean by 'depending entirely'? You simply efface yourself. You have merged your thought in It. You are going to sink into It. You have lost

interest in everything else because there is no 'else' to God Almighty. This is Brahmabhyasa, the practice of meditation on Brahman.

The Upanishad goes further: 'Sa eva adhastat, sa uparishtat' [Ch. Up. 7-25]. Where are you, God? 'Sa eva adhastat' -- He is below; 'sa uparishtat' -- He is above; sa purastat' -- He is in front; 'sa paschat' -- He is behind; 'sa dakshinatah' -- to the right; 'sa uttaratah' -- to the left; 'sa eva idam sarvam' -- everywhere you are. Oh God! This is what you are!

Whoever thinks like this, whoever understands like this, whoever meditates like this, that person does not want a friend. He or she, himself or herself will be the friend. 'Here in this state, I am my friend; I do not want another friend; I do not want to rejoice over something else; I rejoice over myself. I am wonderful.' 'O Wonderful, O Wonderful', says the Taittiriya Upanishad.

'Ha-a-a-vu, ha-a-a-vu, ha-a-a-vu' -- you go on making sounds like this; that is, ecstasy is boundless; make any sound because you don't know how to express ecstasy!

'Aham annam; aham annadah'
'I am the eater of food; I am also the food that is eaten because this 'I' is sitting in the food also -- it is not sitting on the plate; I am the eater of the food; I eat myself as the food.' These are Upanishadic statements. These are ecstasies of great Masters of yore. This is something wonderful to hear for everyone who would like to meditate for the sake of the realisation of Brahman.

There are essentially two types of meditation, -- one is Saguna and the other is Nirguna. Meditating on God Almighty as a Supreme Person is Saguna Upasana; 'Father in Heaven', Narayana, Vishnu, Rama, Devi, Jesus Christ, Allah, -- whatever be the name you give to God -- this is the name of a personality which is Cosmic in its nature. The Cosmic expansion of the human concept of personality is the concept of God also, usually. If you meditate on this concept of God, you will achieve That. But the Infinite Personality is not sitting just here; there is a distance involved in It. So it takes time for you to reach the Personal God. Even when you consider God as a Person Infinite in nature and most powerful, you still stand outside It in your meditation. You cannot involve yourself in the largeness of the Personality of God. Acharyas like Ramanuja, Madhva and the Vaishnava theologians tell us, "you praise God, meditate on God, worship God but keep yourself at a distance from Him, because under no stretch of imagination can you imagine you yourself will be like God. According to Vaishnava scriptures, there are four types of salvation known as Salokya, Samipya, Sarupya, and Sayujya. This is purely a devotee's idea, of closeness to God by degrees of nearness.

To live in the same domain as God is one kind of attainment. If God is in heaven, you also are in heaven; you may not be very near God, you may be far away, but you are in the same kingdom; where the king rules, that country is your abode also; you may not be able to see the king but you are happy that you are in the same land which is ruled by the king. This is Salokya Mukti. This is also a great thing. After all, you are in the Land of God though you may not see God.

Samipya means nearness to God; you are living just by the side of the Ruler of the country; you will feel some elation -- the King's Palace is just here and I am here. Though you have nothing to do with that Palace, you will gain nothing by the nearness, but the mind will say 'I am so near the Palace of the King; He is here only!' Thus, nearness to God also is a stage in liberation. This is Samipya, closeness.

Still greater freedom is Sarupya, assuming the same form of God; you become an ambassador of God. God has given you the powers which He wields. The ambassador has practically all the powers of the kingdom which he represents; he can speak for the whole country of which he is the ambassador. The Vaishnava scriptures say Sarupya means not merely becoming an ambassador, because the ambassador does not himself look like the king, though he can be adored and invested with all the paraphernalia of the king also, there is something more here. In Vaikuntha, Abode of Vishnu, Narayana, they shine like Vishnu Himself. When you see the attendant of God, you cannot know whether He is God Himself or is an attendant; he will shine like God Himself, though he is not God. This is called Sarupya. The last one is Sayujya, merging in God, the Highest attainment. All these come under what is known as Saguna Attainment, meditation on God as adorned with all the good qualities -- Kalyana guna sampanna; Ananta koti kalyana guna sampanna -- all the blessed things are there in God. Here 'merging' is something like merging, union of milk and water, though looking one, still not one.

This is qualitative meditation but still you are different from God. This is what the Acharyas of the Vaishnava cult emphasise again and again. They consider the aspiration to become 'one' with God is blasphemy. The Vaishnava Sampradaya follows Dasa sampradaya. Dasas, Madhvacharya's followers, consider themselves as dasa, servants of God, and Ramanujacharya's followers think they are 'seshatvam'; Sesha and seshin -- these are the words they use to describe the relationship between the individual and God, 'You are a quality of God but not God Himself; you are an attribute of God'. All the cells of the body are

yourself in one sense and yet the cells are not you. We don't feel ourselves as a bundle of cells sitting here. No! I am here; why do you say 'cells'?!'. Similarly, though you are an attribute of God, like cells as it were in the body of God, you are not the same as God.

This is the Vaishnava doctrine of seshatva and dasatva -- 'I am a dasa-dasa, servant, servant'; Vaishnavas emphasise this type of devotion.
Aham tu Narayanadasadasadasa-
syadasasyachadasadasah
the devotee says -- 'I am the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of Narayana', -- they will walk with lowered head, not with raised head. So humble before God one has to be.

Such people who adore God in this manner will attain the Kingdom of God but will not become God. In this connection, the Brahma Sutra says they have all the glory of God to enjoy but they do not have the powers of God; they cannot create the world; they cannot sustain the world; they cannot destroy the world. You can live in the palace of the President and enjoy all the goodies there in the President's palace, but you cannot do what the President does. You may be the brother of the President himself living in his palace, but you are not the President. Enjoying the glories of God is different from being God.

This is the result of Saguna Bhakti, where according to the Brahma Sutra -- Jagat vyaparavarjam -- all things are yours except the Power of creation, preservation and destruction. Here a controversy is raised by commentators on the Brahma Sutra. It is very good to hear all these things: God is great; you have to be humble; love God as a master, as a beloved, as the most high, Glory of all glories -- 'Very wonderful! We shall do that', but some rational questions arise which are also discussed in some of the commentaries.

If you are not one with God, you maintain a distance from God even at that height of achievement. Then, what will be your future?! How long will you be in Vaikuntha-Loka, Kailasa, Brahma- Loka or the Heaven where God abides? How long will you stay there? To be in that condition will be to enjoy the contemplation of the Infinite but not to become the Infinite. You have the happiness of contemplating the Infinite but you cannot become the Infinite and do what the Infinite can do. This is a peculiar aphorism in the Brahma Sutra.

Sri Sankaracharya particularly, who comments on the Brahma Sutra elaborately, is, as I could understand, caught in the net of this kind of statement, because Acharya Sankara, whose commentary is the best, cannot agree that some limitation continues even in liberation! But he cannot say that the Sutra is wrong. Sankaracharya finds himself often in a difficulty of this kind. There are some places where he is between the accepting of the Brahma-Loka Attainment as the meaning of the Sutra and the insisting on the utter absorption in Brahman as true Moksha.

If the Sutra is correct, the Identity doctrine of Sankara is not correct; if the Identity doctrine of Sankara is correct, the Brahma Sutra is not correct. But we must consider both as correct. We cannot reject Sankara's idea or reject the Brahma Sutra. Sankara reconciled himself to the feeling that here the Brahma Sutra is not concerned with Nirguna Brahman even when it says in the end, Anavrittih shabdat, Anavrittih shabdat (no return); and that it just means attaining the Cosmic Creator, but not the Absolute.

A great difficulty arises here in understanding the Sutra's intention. Ramanuja and the Vaishnava Acharyas have no difficulty! They say 'Yes! It is like that only!', because you cannot become God. But Acharya Sankara cannot accommodate himself to it -- if you cannot become God, you will be finite again; if you are finite, then you have to return, having not attained Moksha.

Chapter IX

THE CAUSAL LAW AS A LIMITATION

Inasmuch as we cannot forget that we are just physical bodies, however much we may theoretically say that we are not the bodies, the inveterate feeling that we are just the body only situated in one place only does not easily leave us. That there is something outside the body -- there is a big world outside, -- this feeling also one cannot avoid. That there is a world outside is a feeling consequent upon the feeling that we are inside the body. So, if we feel that we are not inside the body really, then the world is not outside us. But who can say that we are not in the body? Whatever be the learning of a person -- saint or sage -- whoever he is, he will feel 'I am sitting here only'! No one can feel, 'I am everywhere'.

There is a devil catching hold of everyone. This idiocy of attachment to the body as the only reality compels us to commit many other mistakes. What is the mistake? One is: 'As I am here, therefore the world must be outside' -- it follows. But the third question arises -- from where has the world come?

There is a peculiar trait in the mind which has been discussed by all philosophers of East and West, namely that it can speak only in terms of cause and effect; Everything must have a cause -- otherwise the question arises 'From where has it come?'! Why should the world come from somebody? Who told you that it must come from somewhere? But the causal law, which is sitting inside the mind as the very texture of the mind -- the very fabric of it -- without which the mind cannot think, compels the individual to feel on the one hand that it is in one place only, that the world is outside, and there must be somebody to create the world. This unavoidable predicament should be taken into consideration before we conclude whether God is a person or God is not a person.

'Are you a person?' -- you put a question to your own self -- 'Am I a person or am I not a person?' Who will say, 'I am not a person'? Therefore, a universally extended counter-correlative of this 'my existing here' projects itself automatically through the causal law that there must be a world and a God who is above both. Nobody says that God is sitting just here -- He is far away -- very far! If that is the case, to attain God a lot of time is necessary; one cannot reach God just now, because of the distance involved between oneself and God. Whether there is really such a distance or not is immaterial; once it is confirmed by the mind that there is a distance, then it will stick to it, just as there is what is known as imaginary illness; for reasons which are many, one can feel one is sick. Before examination -- one day before -- the student may fall sick; when war takes place, a soldier may fall sick and take leave and go. In a similar manner, everybody is in a sort of sickness. So, when you say 'we want Moksha -- Liberation', liberation from what? Where is the bondage? This, in spite of it being elucidated everywhere in books and commentaries. Can anyone of us say where lies the bondage? Has God created bondage? We all go on saying that God created the world. If God created the world, he must have created the bondage of the world also. If God cannot be attributed to have created bondage, who will create bondage? We would not ourselves create a bondage of our own selves. Will I imprison myself deliberately? God does not create bondage, and it will be a blasphemy to say that God created bondage. Who else can create bondage? As this question cannot easily be answered, one cannot also easily know what Moksha is. Howevermuch you may scratch your head, nothing will come. The erroneous notion enveloping our existence is such that whatever we touch creates a difficulty for us:
'sarvarambha hi doshena
dhumenagnirivavritah'
(B.G. 18.48)
"Anything that one does produces a cloud of reaction; It will not bring satisfaction!"

Actually, liberation means liberation from the notion of cause and effect, that something comes from something. As the mind is involved in the web of causal law, who will liberate the mind from the network of 'cause and effect'? This is why Jnana Yoga path is considered difficult. It is like trying to melt down one's own personality.

However, coming to the point, whether Moksha is the attainment of a personal God or it is something else, the Brahma Sutra does not clearly mention what kind of thing it is finally. If it had been clear, there would not have been so many commentaries on the Brahma Sutra -- Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, etc. Every Sutra is somewhat vague. In some places, the Sutra says that the Jiva or the individual is dependent on God. The dispensation of justice and the retribution of the Karmic Law is done by God and not by one's own self. Now, we have already got into trouble by defining God as a far-off Being. How does God touch us and have any relationship with us, if His distance from us is infinite?

These kinds of problems have made Acharya Madhva, who wrote a commentary on the Brahma Sutra, to feel there is no connection between the individual and God. This conclusion is frightening even to hear. Madhva's philosophy is that the individual soul, Jiva, is a servant of God, dependent entirely.

The three Acharyas -- Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva -- have their own definitions of liberation. 'You become one; -- that is liberation. Now, what is the meaning of becoming one with another thing? When water is mixed with milk, the two join together and become one substance as it were; you cannot see water separately sitting in the milk, yet water is not milk. The existence of the water is merged in the existence of the milk, notwithstanding the fact that one is different from the other. Ramanuja's view is some such thing; You may feel you are one with God as water may feel it is one with milk or milk may feel that it is one with water, but they are different; though for certain purposes, they look like one. The intimate relationship between God and the soul is such that one may feel it is the same as the other, though it is not. Ramanuja's conclusion is that the soul does not get identified with God, just as milk and water do not identify themselves with each other.

Madhva's view of liberation is like loss of individuality which is possible by getting mixed up with other individualities. Say, there are grains of rice and grains of sesame (til), -- if sesame seeds and rice seeds are mixed together, each seed may think that it has lost its individual existence by communicating itself with other seeds -- til with rice and rice with til. This is Madhva's idea of 'union' with Reality, but yet til cannot become rice; rice is quite different from til. In the case of milk and water at least, there is an appearance of identity but in til and rice, there is no such question at all. Here is the difference between Ramanuja's opinion about Moksha, and Madhva's.

But in the case of Sankara, Moksha is like 'water mixing with water'; It is total oneness. If hundred drops of water unite themselves, they become one drop only. But, mixing up one hundred rupee coins together would not convert them into one big rupee -- they remain one hundred only. But here in the case of water, it is not like that. Any number of drops of water mixed together will become just one big drop. Finally it can become one huge drop like the ocean. This is Sankaracharya's standpoint, basically.

What does Brahma Sutra say? It does not say clearly anything! Otherwise why are all these people differing like this?! There are indications that all the three are correct from different points of view. The Upanishads have passages corroborating all these views.

Whether something exists really or not is not important. Does the consciousness believe that something is existing, or not, is what is important. Bondage is the belief of consciousness in the existence of certain factors which are binding. 'The world is binding; all people are sources of trouble and limitation' -- this notion of the individual has to be overcome in order that the 'trouble-creating' elements may depart from the soul that is troubled, which is possible if the individual cuts itself off from the causal world completely or identifies itself with the world totally. The individual cannot cut itself off from the world as it is a part of the world; the only way is to unite itself with the world. The first attempt is ostensibly dangerous and unpractical. The second is laudable, and is the proper way of self-integration.

Chapter X

VAISHVANARA VIDYA

The loftier aspect of meditation is the principle of Vaishvanara Vidya. Isolated meditations on different conceptual entities were considered by the great teacher, Ashvapati, the king, mentioned in the Chhandogya Upanishad, as defective. If you meditate on any particular thing, you are excluding something thereby. You cannot think one thing without excluding something else. The thought that something is excluded -- you must be very careful to hear this -- the thought that something is excluded from the thought that something is being concentrated upon is also a thought. Exclusion of the thought of some object from the thought on which the concentration is carried on is not possible because the thought that something is excluded persists, while the intention is not to think of the excluded object. It is like a story: someone told 'When you drink milk, do not think of a monkey'; then every time the milk was taken, monkey only came to the mind.

There is no such thing in the history of the cosmos that one thing can be excluded entirely from the other. The idea of exclusion is futile, because to exclude another thing from one thing, the mind that excludes should be present in that object also which is excluded. This is a trick that is played by the mind. This is why the great teacher Ashvapati mentions to the six great sages who went to him for learning the art of meditation on the Atman that they are all defective. He asked questions, 'O Great Sages!' On what do you all meditate?' They gave different answers. Various, different, totally isolated concepts were the objects of their meditation. The king said, 'You are all making two mistakes: one thing is that the thing that you are meditating upon is outside you; this is one mistake; the other mistake is that the thing on which you are meditating is in one place only'.

That the object of concentration cannot be in one place only becomes clear from the fact that the mind cannot exclude anything from the object of its meditation. If excluding something is not possible because excluding involves the consciousness of excluding, the only way of success in concentration is to include everything and not exclude anything.

If some idea arises during meditation that something is outside the object of meditation, bring that object also into the point of concentration. 'I am meditating on banana and it excludes oranges'; you bring the orange also into the banana and let them sit together; now orange and banana have become one fruit only; then you will see that jackfruit is excluded; bring that also! Whenever you feel that something is excluded, that thing which is seeming to be excluded -- bring it back to the point of concentration, so that the object of concentration becomes wider and wider by the inclusion of every other thing which appears to be excluded. Then meditation becomes Cosmic, because there is nothing to exclude -- so said the Great King. 'Do not meditate on any particular thing, because if you meditate on any particular thing, you have excluded something else. That which you have excluded wrongly will disturb your meditation.' The world is made in such a way that nothing can be excluded from the world. You cannot say 'I want this only and not that thing'; you cannot want one thing without the interference of the other thing which you thought is not wanted.

Very different is the art of thinking in this way. One question was answered by the King: 'never think that the object of your meditation is in one place only, because if it is in one place then there is something else outside that object of meditation, which outsideness is impossible by the very psychology of thinking in wholes and not fractions.

Thus the entire thing conceivable becomes the object of meditation -- even beyond the skies, the mind can go. You take the

mind beyond, beyond the limit of conception and if it feels there is something outside -- bring that outside thing also inside it, so that there is a tremendously inclusive inside. This is how the location of the object in one place is avoided. The second thing: it is not inside; because if the object that you think is inside your mind, then it cannot be called an object -- it becomes part of your subjectivity; nobody will want to have a thing which is inside the mind itself. So it has to be outside, but truly no object can be entirely outside the mind because if a thing is outside, one cannot be even conscious that it is outside. The pervasion of the consciousness over the so-called 'external' object is necessary in order that even the concept of externality may arise. If the consciousness has moved out of itself and pervaded the object outside, then the 'outsideness' of the object ceases -- it becomes part of the 'insideness'; here also you touch the cosmicality of things. Either way it becomes a Universal Meditation -- very deep subject into which the sages were introduced by King Ashvapati.

This is a most potent way of meditation for melting down the ego-consciousness, which locates itself in one place and considers God as something far away above the skies. This also is, in one way, a Saguna Upasana. Even to think everything together is a qualitative meditation; even if you entertain in your mind the consciousness of the whole creation, it is still Saguna only. This kind of meditation is supposed to make one reach the highest Creative Principle, Brahma-Loka, in the language of the Upanishad.

Personality can be of two kinds -- one is the human personality; God appearing as a Huge Person sitting on the throne of Heaven, as is usually described by the religions of the world. Whenever we think of God we think of Him as some Person, filling all space. The other personality consciousness of the Ultimate Reality is as Vaishvanara.

If this meditation through the Vaishvanara Vidya process becomes intense, you will no more be there as a meditator of the Vaishvanara because of the Inclusiveness of the same. It is an All-Consuming Fire and you will not be there to behold It. You will be reduced to the Fire Itself.

Then what remains? A big blaze of Self-Identity, Universal in its nature. We cannot speak much thereafter about this, but if this Universal Conflagration of the Fire of Vaishvanara can engulf us, thrice blessed we would be and it will lead us to Sadyo Mukti; you become liberated at once.

Chapter XI

THE PRELIMINARIES TO SADHANA

That so many commentators and Acharyas who expounded the meaning of the Brahma Sutra did not give a uniform definition of the nature of liberation should imply that the attainment of liberation is not an easy thing. It is not a joke. The difficulty whether in understanding the meaning of liberation or in knowing the method of attaining liberation arises because of our intricate involvement in the world of sensory perception and body-consciousness. These things prevent us from thinking rightly. Any amount of logical argument will finally be based on the body-consciousness and the perception of the world through the sense-organs from which conditioning none is free.

Nobody will deny the value and validity of sense-perception; none can also deny body-consciousness. With this kind of impediment we are trying to understand Brahman. Even the commentators are, after all, this kind only. With all their good intentions and well-meaning, the Acharyas also see the world through the sense-organs and they have a personality, though all these great ones have a special intuition of their own.

To divest ourselves from this inescapable impediment what kind of Tapas have we to perform in order to attain liberation. Our notions of value have no ultimate meaning in the path of the spirit. We have to decondition our mind first of all, and get reborn. The idea is that we must be reborn into the spirit. We never belong to this world at all -- in your mind at least; you should not think in terms of your body or the world if you wish to have an impartial opinion on anything. All the laws and regulations are made by human beings. Anything that you say, any law, regulation, discipline which people speak of, codes of behaviour, have no final significance because they are born of certain basic wrong notions of the mind which is conditioned and determined by sense-organs and body-consciousness. Great reason indeed why Yama would not answer the crucial question to Naciketas: 'You little boy! Do not talk to me too much!'

But we want liberation. The arduous task before us is Sadhana. What is Sadhana? It is not just merely chanting something and reading a book and getting up in the morning for prayer. Sadhana is a slow and graduated disentanglement of the mind from thinking in terms of the body and the world of objects..

God is not so easy to attain. He is easy to attain also, in one sense but because of the obstruction of body-consciousness, it is hard to attain. Most educated people, most learned, great scholars, even saints and sages get angry if one insults them. There were Visvamitra, Durvasa -- great sages -- irritable types; Why are they irritable? Because whatever big Tapasya they did,

they could not forget that they are in the body. This is the vicious veil that has entered everyone's consciousness.

Honesty with God is real honesty. Human honesty with other people, shopkeepers -- that is one kind of social honesty; To be honest with God, that is a different matter altogether -- it does not come under the ethics of the world. Spirituality is above human ethics in the sense that God has no binding ethics. To think like this is a veritable blow on the human way of thinking. You cannot carry the human way of thinking and enter God, and if you do not want to shed the human way of thinking, be happy here!

'I will give you everything that you want, all the beauties, all the gold, silver, long life, good dishes!', Yama told, 'Be happy! Why are you worrying about the 'Beyond', and all that?!' Everybody should read the Kathopanishad. There are some Ashrams in India where it is made compulsory to recite the Kathopanishad every day. This is a brief presentation of the whole of spirituality, right from the initial stage to the ultimate; and in beautiful poetry; very sonorous and pleasing to read and hear.

If any one of us is a student of liberation, we have to find time to probe into ourselves. You are not what other people think you are. 'I am not what other people think I am' -- this must be accepted by everybody. Go to your bathroom, go to your kitchen, go to your bedroom -- there is nobody to tell you anything, there is nobody to praise you; you are alone -- at that time, you assess yourself. 'What is the value that I have in the eye of God?' Imagine that the Almighty is looking at you with millions of eyes all around, He is seeing you; your conscience can tell you what God would be thinking about you. You should not say 'God may think anything, I do not know; -- How do I know?'. We can know it, because God has planted Himself in our heart. The Inner Voice will tell us what God is thinking about us. We may be fear-struck; we will not like to see the face of God -- we will not like; we will not wish that He sees us; 'Oh! Let Him be a little far away', because we know that we have such stupid things inside that we do not want to expose them even before God.

Cleansing is necessary. What can we say? People struggled hard with Gurus for years and years to know the secret of meditation on God; They rid themselves of entanglements, loves and hatreds, associations of every kind, desires, passions, greed and hatred -- everything; they kept quiet and lived contented with whatever they received for the maintenance of the body; they didn't ask for anything else; they would prefer to live alone. If God is an 'Aloneness', we have to learn to be alone in ourselves.

'The alone will go to the Alone', as it is well said. A society cannot reach God; a political organisation cannot reach God; a corporate body cannot reach God. The alone goes to the Alone. What is your 'aloneness'? 'I am alone' -- feel, -- 'Five hundred miles around me, there is no human being' -- nobody to tell you what you are. You cannot behave in any particular manner because behaviour is in respect of somebody else; that somebody does not exist -- imagine with the strength of your mind 'for five hundred miles around there is no human being; so what kind of behaviour can I manifest?'; The social conditioning goes away immediately, because behaviour is a social factor. People say 'you must behave well' -- if you are alone, then, what kind of behaviour is it? Behave with yourself only.

It is necessary to live alone. It is not good to live with a multitude of people, -- else man-made artificial ethics will catches hold of you; 'What do people think about me and what should I think about them? What are they saying about me?'! These questions will not arise when you are alone. This is why, in principle, as a preliminary exercise, teachers enjoin seclusion of Sadhakas for sometime. Go to a distant place and live alone. Do not write letters to anybody. Don't have communication with any person; stay for three months alone somewhere.

Even if by the effort of the will, you live alone for three months, then the mind will revolt and make it uncomfortable for you to exist; You will have unknown fears, the fears created by the ego -- the ego which feels that it is going to lose itself. Immediately it will kick up a row. Then people who live alone for a long time in far-off places disentangling themselves from connection with anybody will have the fear of death! They will shiver suddenly, 'Something is wrong with me'.

In order to avoid that kind of extreme step of isolating oneself totally in some distant place risking one's life, it is better to go slowly, and do this exercise every day. Everyone has a place to stay; they have a room, they can sit anywhere. For one hour you keep quiet and put this question to yourself 'What am I in the eye of the Almighty whom I want to attain?' Your conscience will answer this question. You may answer this question to yourself and you may feel at that time God's opinion about you will be that you are a fool, you have no worth -- this your conscience may tell you sometimes, 'In the eye of God, am I a fool?' Is that so? In spite of the world praising you as a Nobel laureate, let it be anything, but you may be a fool basically. What is the use of a certificate given by people? Let the certificate come from God. However, if the heart is pure and honest, and the aspiration clear, there would be no such fear and there will arise a confidence.

Why is it that people cannot sit alone for sometime? How is it that they are so fidgety? -- that they must go away here, there, see some people, talk something and chat something! What is the difficulty? Is it not necessary that we should save ourselves

from this perdition of rebirth? Why is it not possible for a person to be alone to oneself without any kind of mental contact and then practise self-investigation? Due to poverty of one's soul and the finitude of one's existence, such a helpless state may befall very often.

Wanting the Ultimate Being, God Almighty, is not a fearsome exercise. It is a way of flooding oneself with joy. Contemplation on God in the true sense of the Universality of His existence, -- in one minute if it could be done, will make one feel that a world of forces are entering into oneself. The Power of God does not take time to enter us. The subtle devil will speak again, 'God? How long will it take, I do not know. I am not meant for that.' 'When will He come? We do not know; I am suffering.'. The thought of God is not a fear-striking exercise. If you feel that you are a nobody, a non-entity before God, you may have fear before Him, because of the worthlessness of your existence in the light of God's Being. But why should you feel so? Why should you feel you are worthless?

You put a question to yourself -- 'what is wrong with me? I am a good person' -- you tell yourself -- 'I am really a good person; I do not harm anyone and I do not speak anything that is vicious. Close your eyes -- 'Am I a good person? Have I done any harm or have I an intention to do any harm?; You feel 'No! I am really a good person'; You tell God 'I am a good person; I am honest; I have no desires; I am not vicious; I am not greedy; I am not passionate; I am not irritable; I want nothing -- God will open His eyes and shower His Grace upon you. Since God is above time, He does not take time to shower His Grace. Do not doubt, do not lose faith. I assure you, -- one day you will change, even in a single day, anyone of you; do not feel miserable; do not feel that you are worthless or 'this is not meant for you'; 'It is too big a thing, it is not meant for us' -- do not say like that. You are not small, or foolish people; tell yourself 'I am not a foolish person; I am honest; I am not greedy, I am a good person' -- go on telling yourself -- 'I am a good person'; You will then be a good person only. It is a kind of Mantra, and you will become that very thing. 'I am really a good person; Yes! I know, I am sure; I am a good person, and God is kind to me; I will get anything from Him; I want Him; I do not want anything else' -- Tell this to yourself a hundred times. This is potent Sadhana.

All these general personal details are not in the Brahma Sutra, but these instructions are implied. Honesty with God is the Sadhana. To be honest with God, you have to think like God. How does God think? In a Total fashion; Imagine; how does God think? The whole Universe has engulfed itself into a single centre of experience. Immediately you will feel a sensation in your skin; you will feel your skin vibrating; like ants crawling on your body, you will feel something happening to you. O Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Sky! You are my friends -- Bhartrihari in his 'Vairagya Satakam', says, O Mother Earth! You have sustained me for such a long time; O Brother Water! You have sustained me for such a long time; O Dear friend Agni, Fire! You have sustained me for such a long time; O Vayu! I have breathed you for such a long time and you have been very kind to me; O Akasa! O Space! You have given me permission to stay here. Now I bid good-bye to you all! Free me from these obligations. Take all this that you have given to me like a loan, I return the loan to you -- Leeye Para Brahmani -- 'Now I enter the All-Being'. This is the concluding prayer of Bhartrihari.

There are verses of this kind in the Manu Smriti, also -- very touching and noble sentiments. What I am finally saying is that everyone should be able to sit alone for one hour at least. It is not that it should be in the midst of a crowd of people; you may sit alone -- alone with God -- feel that you are alone with God and feel 'God is very kind to me and He is pleased with me'. If you feel thus, He will be really pleased with you. 'I am feeling that God is pleased with me; He is coming near me; He is entering me; He has entered me; I am shuddering because of the vastness that is entering into my finite self'.

This is Vaishvanara Vidya meditation, which is emphasised in the Upanishad and reiterated in the Brahma Sutra. This is also equal to Bhuma Vidya, which is interpreted in the Brahma Sutra. This teaching appears in the Chhandogya Upanishad: 'In this entry of All-Being into myself, I have nothing to think in the mind.' It is Being engulfing Being, Light entering Light, the 'I' entering the 'I', bubble entering the Ocean.

Everyday sit and think deeply. This is briefly Bhuma Vidya or Vaishvanara Vidya, the highest kind of meditation one can think of. The great trouble with us is that we feel it is not possible. 'It is not possible for me. I am not fit for this.' 'I have many problems; I have difficulties of many kinds.' All the difficulties will melt away. Mountains of sins can be destroyed by the Flame of Knowledge, says the Bhagavad Gita:
Jnanagnih sarvakarmani Bhasmasat 'kurute tatha'
(B.G. IV.37)
As heaps of straw can be reduced to ashes by one matchstick, mountains of errors which you might have committed in the past in many lives will be wiped out by the entry of this Knowledge of the All-Being.

There was a great saint called Raikva -- we have this mentioned in the Chhandogya Upanishad. He developed another type of meditation, a modified form of Vaishvanara Vidya. A disciple went to this master and told him, 'Please teach me what you know'. He taught a Vidya called Samvarga Vidya. Samvarga Vidya means 'the Art of absorbing everything into oneself'.

In the usual concept of the Vaishvanara Vidya, the exercise is in identifying oneself with everything. Here we have a slight modification; You absorb the sun into yourself; 'I am blazing like the sun; I am resplendent like the sun'; Absorb the moon into yourself; Absorb all space into yourself; Absorb the whole world into yourself; Absorb all the people in the world into yourself; Absorb all the divinities in heaven into yourself; Absorb all the fourteen worlds into yourself, -- and stand like a Mighty Emperor of the Universe. This is the Samvarga Vidya, the art of absorbing everything into oneself, so that one becomes everything, and, as the Upanishad says, the good deeds of everyone converge into this person, and anyone's virtue is his virtue.

Chapter XII

BRAHMAN AND ITS REALISATION

The point that I am touching upon here is the fate of the soul in the state of liberation. This has been a controversial subject, -- what happens to the soul when it attains liberation. Learned people, professors of philosophy I have had the occasion to meet. Head of the Department of Philosophy in Cornell University, New York, came here long long ago, during Gurudev's time. He stayed here for about twenty or twenty-one days; everyday he would come and sit with me with his Mrs., who was a doctor. All kinds of subjects he would discuss and he used to conduct daily lectures on Western thought in the Satsanga in the presence of Sri Gurudev.

In our discussion, the Professor asked me, 'What are you aiming at, Swamiji, finally?!' I said, 'We are aiming at the liberation of the spirit in God'. 'What does it mean?'. I said, 'Identity with God'. 'What happens when we attain identity with God?'. 'You lose your individuality and become the All.' He said, 'Oh! I lose myself? If I am not there, as you say, who will be experiencing God? The experiencer himself is not there as you are saying; then who is going to experience the state of liberation?' I said, 'God will experience the state of liberation'. 'Oh! Then what about me?' 'You will be so attuned to God's existence that there will be no question about it again -- what will happen?' If the river Ganga enters the Ocean, then will the Ganga ask the question 'What will happen to me in the Ocean? What answer will you give? Does Ganga persist to exist in the Ocean as Ganga? And if you say Ganga will not be persisting as Ganga in the Ocean, will it be any kind of loss to Ganga?

Ganga will become the Ocean. All right, but there will be no Ganga there. Can you say Ganga is not there? Similar is the case with everyone. We will not be there but it is not that we will not be there. Ganga will be there in the Ocean, yet Ganga will not be there in the Ocean. Can you catch this subtle point? He said, 'Very terrible!' Westerners cannot understand this. 'Merging,' -- that word is terrifying.

You can attain God, ruling in the Kingdom of Heaven -- all these things are very interesting to hear but 'merging' is a disturbing word. The Brahma Sutra takes up this subject. There has been a lot of controversy; If you are honest enough to read the Sutras, you will find that right from the beginning till the end there is controversy discussed and argued about.

One of the things that comes out on a close analysis of the real meaning of the Sutras themselves is that it seems to be favouring Acharya Ramanuja's interpretation of God and the world; it does not seem to be favouring Sankaracharya fully, but Sankara is bent upon seeing that his thought is there.

According to Ramanuja, the soul does not merge in God. It enjoys the Glory of God. Our body is made up of so many cells; can you say the cells themselves are you? Or you are different from the cells? If the cells are not there, your body will not be there; but are you yourself the cells? When you say 'I have come from my room and am sitting here', now, who is this 'I'? Is it the bundle of cells that is speaking? The body consisting of cells is to be distinguished from that which embodies the cells. And Ramanuja concludes that all the world, all individuals are like cells or adjectives in the body of God. You cannot distinguish between yourself and the cells out of which your body is made; yet you are not the cells. So is the case with the individuals attaining God; they are inseparable from Narayana, Vishnu, God Almighty, but they are not themselves Narayana. The cells out of which your body is made are inseparable from the body, but the body is something unique by itself -- cannot be called a hotchpotch bundle of the cells. There is a distinction. Ramanuja's doctrine is that the relation between God and the world is soul-body relation.

But Acharya Sankara does not agree with this decision. We should not bring here the word 'relation' at all -- this is his point. 'Relation' means accepting the existence of two different things. If there are two different things, they cannot become one; If the two cannot become one, duality will persist; If duality persists, there will be no universal experience. Therefore, Ramanuja is not right and Sankara contends that the Brahma Sutra says that the soul merges in God in an Identity of Universality.

The difficulty arises due to the definition of God, Brahman, given in the Brahma Sutra, at the very beginning. Who is God? It

does not say that God is the Supreme Absolute, indistinguishable, indivisible Eternal Being. The definition given is peculiar: -- God is He who creates, sustains and dissolves the world. This definition is called 'tentative definition'. There is a distinction between 'essential definition' and 'tentative definition'; Where is the house of Mr. John? If you say 'The house on which a crow is perched, there, -- that is the house'; May be at that time the crow was perched but it does not mean that the crow will perch always on the house; The definition of the house is not complete when you say that that is the house where crow is perched.

Likewise, the definition of God as the creator is not a satisfactory definition, because God is not bound to be creating the world always; He can cease from creation. When he ceases from creation, what is His nature? The definition given in the Brahma Sutra is what is known as 'Tatastha Lakshana', -- an accidental attribute, which is not the essential nature of God. What is the purpose of defining God that way which is not his true nature? But in India, the respect for the Sutra is so much among the Pandits and the learned people that they cannot argue against the Sutra's meaning; whatever the Sutra says, must be accepted; otherwise you risk being a heretic, and you are contradicting the true meaning of the Sutra. All the commentators repeat what the Sutra says. And, this is the beginning of the Sutras; what is the end? Anavrittih shabdat, Anavrittih shabdat' -- according to this scriptural statement, one will not return from the state of liberation after attaining God, Brahman, Creator, Preserver, Destroyer.

The soul will not return if it attains identity with the Absolute Being, Brahman. But Acharya Sankara is at pains to tell us that the God who is described in the Brahma Sutra is a God with many attributes, Saguna Brahman, because it is mentioned that God is He who creates, preserves, and destroys. But it does not say who God is by Himself independent of the activity of creation, preservation, destruction; The essential God is missed, but nobody can dare to say that the Brahma Sutra is not giving the correct information.

There is a difficulty felt by the orthodox commentator. He cannot agree with what the Sutra obviously is saying, nor can he say 'I don't agree'; If they do not agree it is heresy, if they agree it is self-contradictory. Acharya Shankara knows this well. So he holds that 'Anavrittih Shabdat' -- 'you will not return' -- means you will not return until the time of the dissolution of Brahma-Loka, foundation of the universe. This would be conditional liberation, but not absolute liberation. What is absolute liberation, then?

According to Sankara, the God described in the Brahma Sutra is the Creator God, not the Absolute, -- a position that he maintains which is opposed to every other Acharya's interpretation -- the Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka, Vallabha, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Sakta and Saiva philosophers. All these have almost a uniform view; against all which Sankara stands.

The difficulty is in the definition of Brahman. Brahma Sutra could have said 'God is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, Satchitananda'. What is the harm in giving that definition? 'Pure Being, Pure Consciousness, Pure Freedom' -- instead of that why did the Brahma Sutra say God is He who creates, preserves, destroys? According to this view, by liberation, we have to mean going to Brahma-Loka, having Cosmic Consciousness but not becoming Brahma Himself. There is a specific Sutra, 'Jagat Vyaparavarjyam' -- the liberated soul in Brahma-Loka will have all the freedom except the power of creating the world; It is like someone living in the White House -- with all the facilities, all the enjoyments which the President has, but he is not the President. If you are in Brahma-Loka, you will not be Brahma Himself: Attainment of Brahma-Loka is subject to return according to the Bhagavadgita. Then why does the Sutra say that one will not return?

Sankara is caught in a difficulty. Like a shrewd lawyer, he argues, 'you will not return' means 'as long as the creator continues creating, and Brahma-Loka persists, you will be there and you will not return -- Anavrittih. But what about the state of this liberated soul when the universe is dissolved?

The presence of a second beside you limits your freedom. In a democracy, every person is free but not absolutely free; the citizen of a country is free to the extent that the same freedom is granted to other people also; it is not Absolute Freedom to the extent of denying freedom to other people. The existence of other people and the necessity to give equal freedom to other people makes one's freedom limited. Everybody's freedom is limited freedom due to the existence of other people, who also have the same freedom; -- but that cannot be called Absolute Freedom.

'Absolute' means no condition attached to it. As long as you give freedom to other people, you are free relatively. But 'I want Unconditional Freedom'. That is possible only in a Timeless Existence. Timelessness does not mean long, long, long duration; even if you live continuously for millions of years, you are within time only. But if Freedom is Timelessness, it is Eternity. Inconceivable this State is; no human being can conceive what Eternity is, because our mind-body complex is involved in space and time. Anything that we think is in space; anything that we think is in time. Even if you stretch your imagination to the extent of affirming that there is no space and no time, that thought also will be in space and time only. So it is a futile attempt to reject the consciousness of space and time; Thus, no one can imagine what Eternity is -- that is to say,

no one can imagine who God is; -- then it means also that no one can know what Liberation is, due to the persistence of egoism.

You should not be frightened that you will be abolished in your attunement with God, in the same way Ganga, Yamuna, Mississippi, Missouri, Volga rivers need not be afraid that they are going to lose themselves in the Ocean. They are not going to lose themselves in the Ocean; they are becoming the Ocean. Why are you afraid of the word 'losing'? Ganga has not lost herself in the bigness of the Ocean; she has become a larger being than herself. So the abolition of individuality is not a loss of existence; it is enhancement of existence in a Freedom which is incomparable. This is Moksha. Human beings are all confused, because all conception is in space and time; bound by space-time-causation.

The arguments, questions, controversies in this regard arise because of the impossibility of the human mind to think Eternity and Infinity. As thought cannot go beyond time and space, nobody can understand what Moksha is.

Meditation is the way to Liberation. Controversies are unnecessary, scholarship, disputation, pedantry are not necessary for a spiritual seeker. Meditate according to the Upanishadic dictum known as the Vaishvanara Vidya, or Bhuma Vidya.

Chapter XIII

CONSIDERATION ON SOME ISSUES ARISING IN THE BRAHMA SUTRA

The Brahma Sutra has some special things to tell us in the course of its varied discussions on almost every topic forming part of the Vedanta system of philosophy. Some of these are as follows:

The realisation of Brahman is itself the liberation of the soul. Here, knowing Brahman is the same as being Brahman. This is a kind of knowing where there is no process involved as in the usual knowledge process of the knower, knowledge and the known. The known itself is the knower, and the knower is the known. It is a self-identical experience without the intervention of the apparatus of knowing. From this observation one can easily appreciate that knowledge of Brahman itself is the being of Brahman, and hence knowledge is not an action. Knowledge is not 'doing' something, but 'being' something. In this context the Brahma Sutra defines Brahman as that from which proceed the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. It is also said, towards the end of the Brahma Sutra, that the knower of Brahman will not return to mortal existence. When we read the initial statement as the definition and the concluding statement as the result thereof, we can gather what the Sutra is actually intending to say. It is evident that the state of Brahman is eternal and unchanging, not involved in the space-time-cause complex. Thus, the authorship of the universe, its sustenance and destruction do not fit well with the non-spatial and eternal nature of Brahman. The promise that the knowledge of Brahman puts an end to the transmigratory nature of the soul would easily demonstrate that the soul that attains freedom in Brahman is not going to be entangled in the process of creation, preservation and destruction, etc. Moksha or liberation has necessarily to be the realisation of the ultimate Absolute which is non-relative in nature. Creation, preservation and destruction etc. are relative processes involved in space and time and hence it could not be that the soul finds its liberation in the God who creates or the Brahman that is busy in the world process. Considering this difficulty in understanding the very intention of the Brahma Sutra, commentators like Acharya Sankara were driven to accept that the non-return from Brahman mentioned in the Sutra, and the immortality attained therein concerns the creative Brahman and not the absolute Brahman. Sankara had to adopt this procedure of interpretation in order to synthesise the characteristics of liberation with the definition given in the beginning of the Brahma Sutra. Students of the Brahma Sutra will realise that there is something very unsatisfactory in understanding the relationship between the soul and Brahman, which is the crucial question arising at all times. The Brahma Sutra, in its large coverage, touches upon almost every school of Vedanta, accommodating the purely non-dualistic, the qualified non-dualistic, and even the dualistic aspects of Vedantic interpretation. The dualism arises when the Sutra pointedly says that the Creator Brahman is superior to the individual soul, which implies that the soul is somewhat subservient to Brahman and it cannot take for granted its relationship with Brahman so easily.

There is another difficulty which suddenly erupts in the Sutra when it speaks of the liberation of the soul. The Sutra makes out that the liberated soul is free only in so far as it can enjoy the bliss of perfection equally as Brahman, but it cannot have the power of creation, preservation, destruction etc. of the universe. This categorical statement would mean that even in the state of liberation the soul is not fully liberated. Here the Sutra seems to be landing itself on the qualified monism of Acharya Ramanuja, according to whom the soul is an organic part of Brahman but not identical with Brahman. If we persuade ourselves to believe that the Sutra is sympathetic with the Vaishnava theology of Ramanuja, we can easily understand why the soul in liberation cannot have the power of God Himself. Acharya Sankara here has practically nothing to tell us except to interate that if the soul is given the power of creation, etc., there would be a clash of purposes among the liberated souls. Here again arises the question: are there many liberated souls in the state of Brahman? Acharya Ramanuja would not disagree with this proposition, but Acharya Sankara would find here a hard nut to crack.

A very pertinent issue arising in the Brahma Sutra is when it defines Anandamaya Brahman, stating that Anandamaya is Brahman. The word Anandamaya occurs in the texts on Vedanta philosophy, indicating that it is one of the sheaths covering the soul, there being five sheaths, the other four being the physical, the vital, the mental and the intellectual. Inspite of the fact that the covering of the soul cannot be the soul, the Sutra seems to emphasise that Anandamaya is itself Brahman. Commentators generally bypass this issue and would not like to enter into any controversy for fear of contradicting the obvious intention of the text and the reasoned conclusions spontaneously coming out of the issue. It was Acharya Sankara alone who had the courage to disagree with the Sutra and declare that the Anandamaya cannot be Brahman. The reason is that the Anandamaya sheath is the one into which the individual enters in the state of deep sleep. But if Anandamaya which causes sleep is itself Brahman, the individual will merge in Brahman in the state of sleep itself, which however is not the case. It is seen that after sleep, the individual wakes up to ordinary waking experience and involves itself in world consciousness. Now, what doctrine is the Brahma Sutra preaching, since Ramanuja would certainly be happy to fully agree with the statement that Anandamaya is Brahman itself. Would a commentator stand against the obvious meaning of the Sutra and contradict it by insisting on a non-dualistic interpretation? Here again comes in the quandary that liberation cannot be complete unless the soul enters into the unqualified Brahman and not the one with relative characteristics of any kind.

The Sutra refutes the Buddhistic doctrine of the Vijnanavada or Yogachara which teaches that the external would is a mental creation. The question is, why does the world appear to be external to the thinking mind. What is it that projects the world as an outside element independent of the mind, notwithstanding the insistence of the Vijnanavada that the world is a projection of the mind. When the Sutra refutes the doctrine of the mind itself being the world, it would mean that it is corroborating the well-known feeling of everyone that the world is outside the mind. Is the Sutra here saying that the world is real in itself? Often it is said that the world is an illusion, that it is the body of God, that it is the reflection of God or that it is the appearance of God. All these considerations would lead us to believe that there in an objective reality called the world, and no human mind can conceive or produce such a world. Here comes in the great distinction made between Ishvara Srishti (creation by God) and Jiva Srishti (creation by the individual). The point here is that the world is a projection of God's Mind, and not a creation of the individual mind. World creation is Ishvara Srishti and interpretative experience of the world is Jiva Srishti or individualised viewpoint. There is a verse in the famous Panchdasi of Swami Vidyaranya:

Ikshanadi-praveshanta srishtir Ishana kalpita;
Jagradadi-vimokshantah samsaro Jiva-kalpitah;

which states the correct view of the relation of the individual to God and the world to God. The individuals do not create the world, rather they are involved in the world. After separation of the individual from the Universal Creation of Ishvara or God, the individual receives such a shock that it becomes stupefied and finds itself in a state of delirium whereby it sees itself as cut off from the world outside and totally helpless in interfering with the affairs of the world. The severance of the soul from universal inclusiveness drives the individual into a state of unconscious sleep (Anandamaya), from which it slowly wakes up through the apertures of the components of the Anandamaya to its conditioned perceptual instrument known as Buddhi or the intellect, and Manas or mind, Prana or the vital force, and finally the physical sheath, the body. It is through the waking consciousness conditioned by physical existence that one interprets the world as if its conclusions are final and the only things to be known. But the intellect is a puppet pulled by the strings of conditioning potentials hidden deep behind in the mental and the unconscious levels, particularly the Anandamaya. The individual thus has a blinkered vision of the world, to which is added a distortion of perception, so that the individual can never know what exactly the world is and what its own relation is to the world. By a reversal process of the perceptual procedure, drawing in the sensory knowledge into pure intellection and further down into the very source of individuality itself, one can have a glimpse of the borderland of Brahman, the Absolute, by crossing the Anandamaya and piercing through its veil.

When the Brahma Sutra refutes the Yogachara doctrine that the world is a mental creation, it does not seem to be intending to say that the world is real in itself, independently on its own. There are levels of existence, perceptual in their nature, which are usually known as Vyavaharika or empirical, pragmatic and workable, different from the world of dream where also one beholds a world through the impressions created by waking experiences. There is further a totally illusory experience as in the case of seeing a snake in a coiled rope in twilight due to insufficient cognition. The levels of empirical reality are (1) the totally illusory one as the rope snake, (2) the conditional world seen in dream, and the (3) practical world of waking experience. The highest level, however, is the absolute experience of Total Being (Paramartha-satya).

The Brahma Sutra