

मुण्डकोपनिषत्

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

*For the
“Shaven-Headed”*

“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”

TEXT

29

Reflections by
SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA



Sandeepany's Vedanta Course

List of All the Course Texts in Chronological Sequence:

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1	<i>Sadhana Panchakam</i>	24	<i>Hanuman Chalisa</i>
2	<i>Tattwa Bodha</i>	25	<i>Vakya Vritti</i>
3	<i>Atma Bodha</i>	26	<i>Advaita Makaranda</i>
4	<i>Bhaja Govindam</i>	27	<i>Kaivalya Upanishad</i>
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15	<i>Dhyana Swaroopam</i>	38	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
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A NOTE ABOUT SANDEEPANY

Sandeepany Sadhanalaya is an institution run by the Chinmaya Mission in Powai, Mumbai, teaching a 2-year Vedanta Course. It has a very balanced daily programme of basic Samskrit, Vedic chanting, Vedanta study, Bhagavatam, Ramacharitmanas, Bhajans, meditation, sports and fitness exercises, team-building outings, games and drama, celebration of all Hindu festivals, weekly Gayatri Havan and Guru Paduka Pooja, and Karma Yoga activities.

This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

– The Author, 16th July, 2019, Sacred Guru Purnima Day

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text
29



॥ मुण्डकोपनिषत् ॥

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

"For the Shaven-Headed"

Reflections

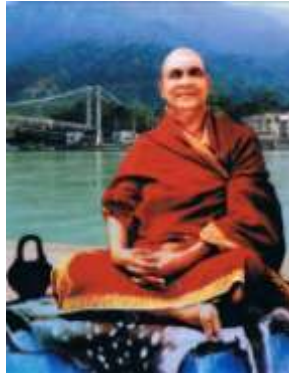
by Swami Gurubhaktananda

on the Series of 54 Lectures by **Swami Advayanandaji**
Acharyaji of the 15th Batch Sandeepany Vedanta Course
held at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai, Mumbai.

From 16th December, 2012 – 13th February, 2013



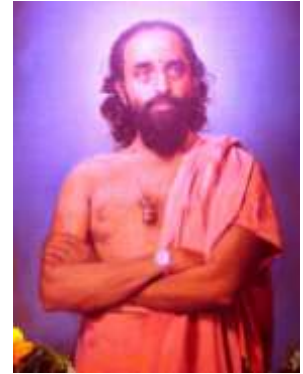
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About This Edition:

Web Edition:	16 th July, 2019, Sacred Guru Purnima Day Day
Website:	Chinmaya International Foundation: www.chinfo.org
Series Title :	The Sandeepany Experience
Series Subject:	Vedanta & Supportive Subsidiary Texts

Declaration by the Author: *The material in this series is under inspiration of the Sandeepany Vedanta Course, but largely consists of the Author's reflections on the Course. He is deeply indebted to the Chinmaya Mission for its excellent presentation of the Course by their renowned and dedicated Acharyas.*

Personal Dedication

1. To my Late Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan

who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;

2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj (1932-2019)

the Late President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;

3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)

for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;

4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji

my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

“For the Shaven-Headed”

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD
“The Upanishad of the Shaven-Headed”

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MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

6 Chapters (64 Verses)

For the “SHAVEN-HEADED”

INVOCATION

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवा
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवाग्ँसस्तनूभिः

भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ।

स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः
स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः

स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।
स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु।

॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

ॐ bhadraṁ karṇēbhiḥ śruṇuyāma dēvā
sthirairāṅgaistuṣṭuvāgṁsastanūbhiḥ

bhadraṁ paśyēmākṣabhiryajatrāḥ |
vyaśēma dēvahitaṁ yadāyuh |

svasti na indrō vṛddhaśravāḥ
svasti nastārksyō ariṣṭanēmih

svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavēdāḥ |
svasti nō bṛhaspatirdadhātu|

॥ ॐ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥

1	<i>om bhadram karnebhiih shrunuyaaama devaah;</i>	<i>Om. What is always auspicious, with our ears may we <u>hear</u>, O ye Gods.</i>
2	<i>bhadram pashyema akshabhih yajatraah;</i>	<i>What is always auspicious, may we <u>see</u> with our eyes, O Worshipful Ones.</i>
3	<i>sthiraiah angaiih tushtu- vaagam sah;</i>	<i>With our limbs hale and hearty, may we <u>live</u> offering our praises unto Thee.</i>
4	<i>tanoobhih vyashema devahitam yad aayuh.</i>	<i>With our body, may we have our <u>full lifespan</u> (to live) for the benefit of the Gods.</i>
5	<i>swasti nah indrah vriddha-shravaah;</i>	<i>May Indra, the ancient and famous, bless us!</i>
6	<i>swasti nah pooshaa vishwa-vedaah;</i>	<i>May the Sun (Pooshan), the all-knowing, bless us!</i>
7	<i>swasti nah taarkshyah arishtanemih;</i>	<i>May the Lord of Wind save us from all harm!</i>
8	<i>swasti nah brihaspatih dadhaatu.</i>	<i>May Brihaspati protect our spiritual wealth!</i>
9	<i>om shantih! shantih! shantih!</i>	<i>Om Peace, Peace, Peace!</i>

1. THE ORIGINS OF KNOWLEDGE

(Verses 1-9, 9 no.)

॥ ॐ ब्रह्मणे नमः ॥

॥ प्रथममुण्डके प्रथमः खण्डः ॥

*Om brahmane namah
prathama mundake, prathamah khandah*

*Salutations unto Brahman!
Here begins the first Section of the First Canto.*

INTRODUCTION

THREE OUT OF THE 10 Major Upanishads are from the *Atharvana Veda*. They are *Prashna*, *Mundaka* and *Maandukya*. *Mundaka* is usually studied before *Prashna* because the former gives the Mantras and the latter explains their usage. On this Course this was not possible.

Shaunaka is the student and Angiraa is the Teacher in this text. This is one Upanishad that is named after the disciple, not teacher. **Munda** means “head”; it literally means “shaving of the head”. This sometimes is taken to suggest that it is for Sannyasins only. The shaven head certainly signifies a sincere, well-qualified seeker to be the Adhikari (qualified student) for this text. It also has a spiritual significance: even as a razor removes the hair on the head, this Upanishad “removes the superimposed veil of Ignorance” obscuring the Atman through a direct and penetrating exposition of the Higher Knowledge!

Sri Adi Shankaracharya has written a detailed Bhashya on this Upanishad, which makes it a ‘Major’ Upanishad. The commentary contains the points covered in the Bhashya.

The Parampara or lineage has a special significance – it glorifies the knowledge. It carries a sense in it that it is something that is obtained and maintained with great effort. A responsibility, like that felt by each member of a relay team, is felt in the student to perpetuate this knowledge which is coming directly from God Himself. The student also learns to appreciate what is being taught when it is known to him that the source is so authentic and hallowed.

1 Verse 1.1: *Guru Parampara: Lineage of Teachers*

ॐ ब्रह्मा देवानां प्रथमः संबभूव
विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता ।

स ब्रह्मविद्यां सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठाम्
अथर्वय ज्येष्ठपुत्राय प्राह

॥ १.१॥

1	<i>Om, brahmaa devaanaam prathamah sambabhoova,</i>	<i>Om. Of the Gods, Brahmaji (Ishwara) was the First; he was <u>Self-born</u> (i.e. born directly of Brahman).</i>
2	<i>vishvasya kartaa bhuvanasya goptaa;</i>	<i>He is the Creator of this Universe; He is the <u>Protector</u> of the worlds.</i>
3	<i>sa brahma-vidyaam sarva-vidyaa pratishtaa,</i>	<i>He is the Knowledge of Reality (Brahma Vidya), the foundation for all <u>sciences</u>,</i>
4	<i>atharvaaya jyeshtha-putraaya praaha.</i>	<i>He gave it out to His own eldest son, Atharva. (i.e. to Hiranyagarbha, the First-Born)</i>

The Benefits & Wisdom of the Parampara System

1-2 The student does not think that he is 'big' when he learns. By remembering the **Parampara**, credit is given to all those who have learnt this before him. A humble spirit is engendered in the heart of the student. They became great who studied this knowledge, and, yes, indeed we too can become great by doing the same. But that greatness belongs to the Lord who gave this knowledge to us. That is the spirit of the first two verses.

3 There is also the suggestion in this "lineage of knowledge", that one has to devote one's life towards the cause of promoting the wealth of wisdom treasured in the scriptures. We should not be the cause of breaking the chain of knowledge that has been set up.

4 Brahmaji's son, Atharva, wanted this knowledge and was willing to pay the full price for it. "I want God and God alone" is strongly fostered by this lineage. "I want world" is incompatible with this divine wisdom. Thus one is urged to reduce his anchorage to the world and fasten himself to God, to Brahma Vidya, to this supremely divine knowledge. That is the price to be paid by the student of this Vidya.

There is no set time for the study of this knowledge. Time and place considerations apply only to Karma Vidya or secular knowledge. In Jnana Vidya such conditions do not apply. The student decides from his own experience when his mind is most fit and receptive to this knowledge. Of course, youth or the stage of Brahmacharya would be the ideal time to start. Householders also study this Brahma Vidya when they experience the need for it.

2 Verse 1.2: *Lineage of Teachers (contd.)*

अथर्वणे यां प्रवदेत ब्रह्माऽथर्वा
तं पुरोवाचाङ्गिरे ब्रह्मविद्याम् ।
स भारद्वाजाय सत्यवाहाय प्राह
भारद्वाजोऽङ्गिरसे परावरां

॥ १.२॥

1	<i>atharvane yaam pravadeta brahmaa atharvaa,</i>	<i>After this knowledge was taught to Atharva by Brahmaji, Atharva in turn</i>
2	<i>taam purovaacha angire brahma-vidyaam;</i>	<i>in that same ancient period, taught to Angee this knowledge of the Reality.</i>
3	<i>sa bhaaradvajaaya satyavahaaya praaha,</i>	<i>Then to one of the Bharadvaja clan, namely, Rishi Satyavaha, did Angee pass it on.</i>
4	<i>bhaaradvajo angirase paraavaraam.</i>	<i>Satyavaha passed it on to Angiraa – thus it went from the greater to the lesser (from teacher to student).</i>

1-4 The verse continues describing the details of how this knowledge was transmitted from Brahmaji down to the student from whom we are going to receive it. The lineage it followed is: Brahmaji to Atharva; Atharva to Angee; Angee to Rishi Satyavaha; the Rishi to Angiraa. Angiraa is the one who conveys this knowledge to us through this text.

4 Paraavaraam: “from the greater to the lesser”. This is an important route in the context of the entire Vedic knowledge. It describes the manner in which knowledge was perpetuated through a Parampara. The importance of maintaining an unbroken link in the knowledge is of prime importance for it is not to be lost. A civilization is built on values which are treasured by the people. That is the foundation for the entire Vedic civilisation which has survived for thousands of years using this system.

This is how Acharyaji conveyed the essence of the spiritual seeker’s responsibility:

“A light cannot avoid shedding its light. A flower cannot avoid giving off its fragrance. So too, a spiritual person, once he gains mastery of Brahma Vidya by actually experiencing the unity of the Self and Brahman, cannot avoid radiating the divine glow that emanates from him. If we as aspirants do our part to develop ourselves spiritually, God will see to the rest.”

The higher knowledge takes us to Brahman; and Brahman is also immanent in all creation. So the lower knowledge, which teaches us how to live in this world, is also very important. Together these two types of knowledge constitute the whole Vedas. Both are seen as important. The lower is subservient to the higher. The lower serves us in the lower realm, and the higher in the higher realm.

Householders desirous of seeing some results, are asked to do Upasanas which are not part and parcel of this knowledge. Brahma Vidya is an independent field of knowledge, a spiritual science and practice. More will be said about this difference later in this text.

3 Verse 1.3: *Shaunaka’s Question to Angiraa*

शौनको ह वै महाशालोऽङ्गिरसं
विधिवदुपसन्नः पप्रच्छ ।
कस्मिन् भगवो विज्ञाते
सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवतीति ॥ १.३॥

1	<i>shaunakah ha vai mahaashaalah angirasam,</i>	<i>Once, Shaunaka, the great and highly accomplished householder, went to Angiraa.</i>
2	<i>vidhivad-upasannah papraccha;</i>	<i>He approached him in the prescribed manner, and asked him:</i>
3	<i>kasmin nu bhagavo vijaate,</i>	<i>“What is That, my Lord, by knowing which</i>
4	<i>sarvam-idam vijnaatam bhavati iti.</i>	<i>all other things become known?”</i>

Shaunaka’s Eligibility for Spiritual Knowledge

1 Mahaashaala: This word indicates something about the student in this text. Shaunaka was an influential and accomplished person, with some importance and standing in society. An excellent description of him is given in Pujya Gurudev’s commentary, and was read out in class:

“The great disciple of this inimitable Upanishad is not one of those impotent cowards and runaways from life. Here is a healthy mind-intellect equipment, soaked to satisfaction in all possible experiences of life. Having intelligently lived an intense and active life, he feels an inward dissatisfaction even in the midst of the best that life can offer.

“Shaunaka was not suffering from mental psychosis. He was not an embittered revolutionary. There was no suppression of desire in him. He was not one of those products of ‘mental hysteria’ or ‘intellectual dysentery’ that we see today howling in madness from platforms and parapet walls, the trained species called ‘political leaders’. Nor was Shaunaka a tragic specimen of a bundle of superstitions that was hawked along in a handcart of leprous fanaticism and intolerance!

“In Shaunaka we have a full-grown true son of the Aryans, who alone is fit to enter the portals of the Upanishads, successfully live the life advocated therein, and with a joyous certainty reach the goal pointed out therein. All the above-mentioned qualities in Shaunaka have been indicated by this one little phrase of inspiration – ***Mahashaalah*** – the great householder or a pious and a charitable rich man of devotion and faith who erected and maintained many a great Yajñashala or hall for Vedic sacrifices.”

2 Vidhivat Upasannah: This is another deep-meaning word. In approaching one’s Guru, the proper protocol of the day was to take some gift for the Guru, to go at the right time, to make an appointment with him, and do some personal service to him and, when he is pleased by such acts of humility, to approach him with one’s doubts or request for spiritual knowledge.

This was followed by Shaunaka to perfection. The Bhashya even suggests that the word ‘duly’ implies that such a tradition was not known earlier, and so this demarcates the period after which it began, i.e. it was started by Shaunaka himself.

With this humble approach, Shaunaka deserved to have the privilege of asking a question to his Guru. This is dealt with in detail in the Bhashya, as follows:

Shaunaka’s Question:

3-4 “What is that by knowing which everything else is known?”

This is not a knowledge that is given in schools. It is something special. One only gets it when one asks for it. The question indicates that Shaunaka was already thinking about the endlessness of ordinary secular knowledge. No matter how many books are studied, there will never be an end to how much to learn. There comes a time when all this bulk only clutters the mind and one finds no satisfaction in it. The enquiry therefore shows the spiritual maturity of the questioner. There is a spirit of enquiry developing in him.

He seems to have an inkling that there is an answer. The Bhashya compliments his use of the word “which” for the sake of brevity, otherwise the question could have been quite verbose. There is no harm in using this pronoun in his question. It also tells us that he knows what he is asking, and it is not just an idle curiosity to know, “Is there such a thing?”

The disciple asks for that ‘minimum’ by which the ‘maximum’ is known – quite an intelligent bargainer!

Guru Upasadana: “approaching a Realised Guru”. We have dealt with this in previous texts, but a new aspect of the approach to the Guru may be added here. One’s knowledge is always appreciated more if it comes authenticated by someone of standing in

the community, such as a well-respected Guru. A “Guru-made” man is eulogized more in the Indian tradition than a “self-made” man.

The spiritual path itself is so hazardous due to the vagaries of the ego, that one should enter it only after being initiated into it by a Guru of standing. It is too perilous to attempt this path on one’s own. This is another significance of the Guru as upheld in the Vedic tradition.

Shaunaka also desires to make his life worthwhile. We see in him a striving to be a man of honour, to be noble, to make a significant contribution to society, not to be kept in the dark – these are valid intentions in the pursuit of knowledge. Then again he seeks to know something big, he wants to know everything! In such a thirsty student alone can the will to succeed in life be generated.

4 Verse 1.4: *Angiraa’s Answer to Shaunaka*

तस्मै स होवाच ।
 द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये इति ह स्म
 यद्ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति परा चैवापरा च ॥ १.४॥

	<i>tasmai sa hovaacha –</i>	<i>To him (Shaunaka), he (Angiraa) said:</i>
1	<i>dve vidye veditavye,</i>	<i>There are two kinds of knowledge to be acquired:</i>
2	<i>iti ha sma yad;</i>	<i>About That (knowledge), it is usually</i>
3	<i>brahmavidah vadanti,</i>	<i>said by the great seers who know Brahman, there is</i>
4	<i>paraa cha eva aparaa cha.</i>	<i>the <u>Higher</u> and the <u>Lower</u> (Paraa and Aparaa).</i>

1 Both kinds of knowledge will always exist in this world for the very good reason that both Spirit and matter exist, and each has its own specialized knowledge to know it.

What the Bhashya clarifies is that **Brahma Vidya**, the Higher knowledge, is eventually necessary for everyone who desires to be liberated from Samsara or the realm of Maya. There is no alternate route to liberation. Those who are engaged in Karmas and Upasanas gain the necessary purity of heart by those experiences and practices and become qualified to obtain Brahma Vidya which will take them further.

How the Sages View Knowledge

2-3 The Vedas, whose ultimate aim is to lead people towards the path of liberation, has to contain both aspects of knowledge in order to cater for every need among human beings. There are objectors who say that if Brahma Vidya is so specialized it should have been kept apart from the Vedas and placed in a separate book. This objection is refuted in the Bhashya on the grounds that Brahma Vidya is the true aim and end of the entire knowledge contained in the Vedas. The Lower has to lead to the Higher. If it does not, it would rather leave out the Lower than the Higher. This clarifies why there are voluminous parts in the Vedas devoted to the Lower knowledge also.

4 The Higher knowledge is about the spiritual path; the Lower about the secular matters. Both are essential. Someone who wants to meditate a lot (Para Vidya) will also at some time need to know how to make himself a cup of tea (Apara Vidya)!

Acharyaji cleared the doubt or perception that “lower” could be taken to mean inferior or distasteful or perhaps even useless. This is not the case.

Even where only the spiritual path is concerned, there are aspects that require the Lower knowledge (capital used deliberately to show that it is not ‘inferior’) and aspects that require the Higher knowledge. For instance, the performance of all the rituals and Upasanas require predominantly the Lower knowledge and some Higher knowledge also. The pure spiritual path, being independent of rituals or any “actions” to be done, is predominantly Higher knowledge and a small amount of the Lower is also necessary.

Thus there is intended to project a happy marriage between the two forms of knowledge, not a spirit of antagonism. This aspect is explained clearly in the next verse.

5 Verse 1.5: *Definitions of Lower & Higher Knowledge*

तत्रापरा । ऋग्वेदो यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथर्ववेदः
शिक्षा कल्पो व्याकरणं निरुक्तं छन्दो ज्योतिषमिति ।
अथ परा । यया तदक्षरमधिगम्यते ॥ १.५॥

1	<i>tatra aparaa:</i>	<i>The Lower knowledge is constituted of:</i>
2	<i>rig-vedah, yajur-vedah, saama-vedah atharva-vedah;</i>	<i>The 4 Vedas: the Rig, the Yajur, the Sama and the Atharva; (and)</i>
3	<i>shikshaa, kalpo, vyaakaranam, niruktam, chhandas, jyotisham iti;</i>	<i>The 6 Vedangas: phonetics, rituals, grammar, etymology, metrics and astrology.</i>
4	<i>atha paraa:</i>	<i>Now the Higher knowledge is:</i>
5	<i>yayaa tad aksharam adhigamyate.</i>	<i>that which leads to <u>immortality</u>, (or that which goes beyond the literal or word meaning)</i>

Explanation of the Partnership

Even to understand the Higher knowledge, the Lower sciences such as Vyakarana, etc, are needed. Clearly, the two are intended to go hand in hand, or as Acharyaji put it, “the two have to move together.” This is why the sciences are termed as Vedangas, meaning “limbs of the Vedas”. The Lower serves the Higher, or one might say the Lower recruits for the Higher. It has to be clearly understood that the Higher has a distinct aim that is very different from the Lower.

Acharyaji took great pains to make us understand the difference:

Shaunaka’s very question shows the need for Brahma Vidya for one who has already perfected the Lower knowledge. The Lower on its own does not satisfy one permanently and has no limit in its volume. Once it has been perfected, it brings one to a *cul-de-sac*. One is then bound to ask Shaunaka’s question to go further in spiritual life.

It has already been mentioned that Apra has no limits, as there is no limit to the projections in this world. The very word means “that which has no end.” It is an ocean of water – we should just take enough of it to make our salt, and leave the rest alone, or it will make us too salty!

Acharyaji put it very succinctly: *“Dreams have no end; they only end on waking up. Similarly, Apra Vidya has no end; it only ends with Para Vidya.”*

The Definitions:

To clear all confusion, here are two defining statements:

1-3 Apra Vidya: the Lower; this concerns the **Vyavaharic level** of Reality, the transactional world or the phenomenal world; secular and transactional; Bhu Vidya (knowledge of the earth). This knowledge is additive; some facts have to be added to the intellect in order to grasp concepts. The methodology in Apra Vidya is to first know, then do, then wait, and finally get the fruits.

4-5 Para Vidya: the Higher; this is concerning the **Paramarthic level** of Reality, the noumenal world; spiritual, transcendental knowledge is meant; Brahma Vidya. More on this Vidya is said in the next verse. This knowledge is subtractive; ignorance has just got to be removed in order for the knowledge to reveal itself. The objective of this Vidya is simply to Know. Knowing is itself the fruit. Nothing else is needed.

The movement from the Lower to Higher is symbolized as a movement from “I am body-mind-intellect” to just “I Am”. The difference is like the difference between mere words and the meaning of those words, i.e. between Akshara the word, and Akshara the Imperishable! There is a big difference between by-hearting the Vedas and extracting the subtle essence of knowledge from those same words. A child may be taught to repeat “Aham Brahmasmi” but it will take a mature Yogi to realize it in practice.

6 Verse 1.6: *Nature of Higher Knowledge*

यत्तदद्रेश्यमग्राह्यमगोत्रमवर्णम्—

अचक्षुःश्रोत्रं तदपाणिपादम् ।

नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मं तदव्ययं

यद्भूतयोनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीराः

॥ १.६॥

1	<i>yat tad adreshyam, agrahyam, agotram, avarnam,</i>	<i>That which is invisible, ungraspable, un-originated, and attributeless;</i>
2	<i>achakshuh shrotram, tad apaani paadam;</i>	<i>having neither eyes nor ears, neither hands nor legs;</i>
3	<i>nityam, vibhum, sarvagatam, susookshmam, tad avyayam,</i>	<i>eternal, full of manifestations, all-pervading, subtlest of the subtle – the Imperishable;</i>
4	<i>yad bhootayonim paripashyanti dheeraah.</i>	<i>As the source of all creation is it perceived by the wise.</i>

This verse gives one of the most comprehensive definitions of Para Vidya that one is likely to find. It is very systematic and methodical as we shall see:

1-2a Beyond the Jnanendriyas: The Jnanendriyas (i.e. Jnana Indriyas) are only of use with reference to the world of objects. They are not needed for Self-knowledge because this knowing is of a different kind from intellectual knowing. Five adjectives describe how the Higher knowledge is beyond the organs of knowledge. They are:

- i) **Adreshyam:** not visible;
- ii) **Agrahyam:** not graspable;

- iii) **Agotram**: without lineage or birth;
- iv) **Avarnam**: without qualities or attributes;
- v) **Achakshuh-Shrotram**: without eyes or ears. The other three organs are implied.

2b Beyond the Karmendriyas: The five Karmendriyas (Karma Indriyas) are also of no use in acquiring Self-knowledge.

vi) **Apaani-Paadam**: “without hands and feet”. The five organs of action are not needed because there is nothing to be done for this knowledge.

3 Then What is It? The third Pada explains in a positive way what Para Vidya is:

- i) **Nityam**: eternal;
- ii) **Vibhum**: full of manifestations;
- iii) **Sarvagatam**: all-pervading;
- iv) **Su-Sukshmam**: extremely subtle; subtlest of the subtle;
- v) **Avyayam**: that which cannot be split further into parts; partless; Indestructible;

4 What is its relationship to the world? There is a Cause and effect relationship.

vi) **Bhoota Yonim**: Brahman is the source of all creation, but this can only be seen by the “wise”. From the worldly standpoint, Brahman cannot be perceived and hence it does not even enter into consideration.

The focus in **Para Vidya** is not on the words as on the knowledge which it represents. The words do have their own power, which is not to be denied. The memorizing of the verses of the *Upanishads* has its own unique value. It gives one the power to remember the lofty thoughts anywhere and at any time. The vibrations created by the chanting of Vedic verses are soothing and uplifting.

In the Higher knowledge, when realization comes, that is it. Illumination is there. No actions need to be done. The knowledge is self-sufficient. The very knowing is the getting.

7 Verse 1.7: **Three Similes Explaining “Bhoota Yonim”**

यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च
यथा पृथिव्यामोषधयः संभवन्ति ।
यथा सतः पुरुषात् केशलोमानि
तथाऽक्षरात् संभवतीह विश्वम् ॥ ७॥

1	<i>yatha urnanaabhih srijate grihnate cha,</i>	i) As the spider projects and withdraws (unto itself) the <u>web</u> ;
2	<i>yathaa prithivyaam oshadhayah sambhavanti;</i>	ii) as from the bowels of the earth the <u>herbs and plants</u> sprout out;
3	<i>yathaa satah purushaat kesha-lomaani,</i>	iii) as from a living man <u>hairs</u> grow on the head and body;
4	<i>tathaa aksharaat sambhavati iha vishvam.</i>	so from the Imperishable Being comes out the <u>universe</u> .

This verse is an explanation of the term **Bhoota Yonim** used in the last verse. Three examples are given of how the expansion of this universe takes place. Each of them has the common quality of subtlety and regulated, effortless growth from within itself. The expansion of the Samashti Prapancha is not haphazard. It obeys the laws of creation.

The examples are purely illustrative. They are not quoted to *prove* the creation process. Yet, the Upanishads considers them worthwhile as they illustrate the slow and steady growth of the universe. Effortlessness is an important feature of this growth.

Why is it necessary to give three examples? Is one not sufficient?

Each example gives a different shade of meaning to the creation process as well as the intention behind the process.

1 The **spider's web** illustrates the spontaneous growth from within itself, but it has the defect of implying that creation has a selfish intention of personal satisfaction.

2 This defect is avoided in the next analogy of the **herbs**, where no personal, selfish intention is possible. However, it has the defect that earth, from which the herbs sprout, is inert and could make creation appear as a 'dead' process.

3 So the third example of hair growing from a living being is given. This indicates that the creation process is a process with vitality as well. In this way, all three examples have something of their own to contribute towards the overall understanding of **Bhoota Yonim**, the Cosmic process of Creation.

4 The Universe is neither selfish nor inert, but impelled by Cosmic Will or collective Karmic forces.

8 Verse 1.8: **Tapas – the Forerunner of Creation**

तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म ततोऽन्नमभिजायते ।

अन्नात् प्राणो मनः सत्यं लोकाः कर्मसु चामृतम्

॥ १.८॥

1	<i>tapasaa cheeyate brahma,</i>	<i>In brooding meditation (Tapas), the joyful creative urge of Brahmaji <u>swells</u>.</i>
2	<i>tatah annam abhijaayate;</i>	<i>Then, from Him <u>food</u> is produced;</i>
3	<i>annaat praano manah satyam,</i>	<i>from food the Prana, the mind, the elements;</i>
4	<i>lokaah karmasu cha amritam.</i>	<i>the <u>worlds</u> of action and of immortality.</i>

The link passage explains that creation is not chaotic but an orderly growth. There is ORDER in the cosmos; it is not random. That is the main point brought out here. The order comes through clearly in this verse: from the causal, to the subtle, and finally to the gross level. These three stages may be compared to the three signals athletes receive just before a race begins: "On your mark (causal)...Get set (subtle)...GO (gross)!"

Creation at the Causal Level:

1 Tapasaa Cheeyate: These words are suggestive firstly of the joy felt by Brahmaji as He prepares Himself to create something. Secondly, there is a 'swelling' that Brahmaji experiences as He conceives His creation. This creative urge accompanied by a 'joyful swelling' is what is captured in the word '*Cheeyate*'.

There is an enthusiasm and joy that are an integral part of the urge to create; an inspiration, an expectancy, a looking forward to the new creation. Samskrit is able to capture this feeling beautifully in the very structure of its words.

Tapas is usually translated as “austerity”. Here it is intended to mean a focus of one’s energy with concentration on the purpose of creating something. Tapas is the intensity of the intention to create, and includes obtaining the know-how to do so. Brahman gathers to Himself the knowledge of creation, He then focuses intensely upon it, and creates what He desires. This initial step provides the “Causal Food” to produce the creation.

Once the intention of Brahma is made known, then the world of Samsara becomes ready to receive the manifestation. This begins in the subtle world. The cosmic mind gets ready to receive the creative urge. It is still not at the gross level, but is ‘grosser’ than the causal level.

Creation at the Subtle Level:

2-3 There are various stages at the subtle level of creation that occur before anything finally manifests at the gross level. These steps are given in the Bhashya as follows:

- i) Differentiation – undistinguished urge becomes distinguished (intellect operates);
- ii) Determination – produced by Sankalpa (sets the will into operation);
- iii) Deliberation – brought about by Vikalpa (sets up the plan of action);
- iv) Fertilization – known as Nirnaya (putting the plan into action).

Differentiation or specificity begins to occur at the intellect level. From the overall intention, the various specific sub-units that go to make up the big picture become active.

Creation at the Gross Level:

4 The impulse of creation reaches the manifested gross plane where it is called Satya (existence). The gross creation is the first time that the unmanifested steps become manifested in physical form. Creation now becomes observable and knowable through the senses. It has a well-defined, definite form attached to a name. These two are the essential features at the gross level. Form and name are identifying characteristics of gross creation.

The five gross elements are first created, from which the worlds or Lokas are built. Thus we see a well-ordered structure or plan that is followed in the process of creation. Every stage in the process takes its own time, it cannot be rushed, and requires its own resources for execution.

Whatever has been set in motion with the first impulse of intention, has to bear fruit (Karmaphala) at some time in the future. In this sense the Karmaphala is a certainty and is said to be **Amritam** or ‘indestructible’. An arrow shot has to hit its target.

In living beings the same series of orderly steps are followed at the microcosmic level. An example of how it works is seen in the sequence of events that lead up to the birth of a child.

Vedantic View of Creation – Linked to Its View of Reality

The Vedantic view of creation is to see it as a bridge from the known to the Unknown; every unit of creation has as its ultimate purpose to serve as a pointer to the Reality underlying it. In this sense, creation serves as a means by which we can ‘recognise the Lord’. Recognition of the Lord is followed by praise of the Lord.

Vedanta has no intention to present the logic of creation, for it sees creation as an unreal superimposition not to be taken too seriously but to be transcended. The danger of taking a theory of creation too seriously is that it makes creation appear as 'true' when in fact it is 'unreal'.

The less a student of Vedanta is concerned with these explanations, the more he can focus on Vedantic principles. A restless intellect requires more data on creation. As a general rule, we find that texts that focus a lot on such details are texts which are meant for beginners on the spiritual path. In this text, the job is done in the briefest manner, so that more important aspects of spirituality concerning the Reality get due prominence.

This verse may well be the shortest, most concise verse on the creation process. A wealth of meaning is contained in it, together with the feeling and enthusiasm that creation is accompanied by.

For the information of readers, Acharyaji spent about 4 lectures on this single verse!

9 Verse 1.9: *Thorough Knowledge – in Totality & in Detail*

यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद्यस्य ज्ञानमयं तापः ।
तस्मादेतद्ब्रह्म नाम रूपमन्नं च जायते ॥ १.९॥

1	<i>yah sarvajnah, sarvavid,</i>	<i>That (Pure Consciousness), is aware of the Totality, and is the Knower of all the minutest details;</i>
2	<i>yasya jnaanamayam tapah;</i>	<i>The nature of knowledge gets revealed through the <u>intensity</u> of one's thought (austerity);</i>
3	<i>tasmaad etad brahma naama,</i>	<i>From the <u>Tapas of Brahmaji (Ishwara)</u>, all name,</i>
4	<i>roopam annam cha jaayate.</i>	<i>form and food are produced.</i>

1 The Creator has a thorough knowledge not only of the overall aspect of creation, but also every detail of its execution. This is the striking feature to be noted in creation.

Sarvajna: indicates knowing from a *bird's eye view*.

Sarvavit: indicates knowing all the *specifics of every part* of a project.

Project Management Skill

2 If we take any project of any worth even in the human sphere, such as construction of a highway, we see that first the entire concept has to be visualized, then it is put on paper to see what it is going to look like. Then every detail is designed using all the latest available knowledge in all disciplines. Then the design is put out to tender. A construction company then executes all the details as per the plan. In due course of time, the highway is completed and opened to traffic.

This procedure is what has been covered in these last two verses, in the briefest manner possible, as it is not the intention of the Upanishad to go into too much detail over the 'unreal creation'. It is just to introduce us to our greater purpose within creation.

This knowledge has to be thorough in all aspects, such as getting the right materials, the proper equipment, the manpower needed, the financial resources, the duration over which the project will be created, details of exactly when and how each item will be created.

3-4 Indeed it would be hard to excel the Creator, Ishwara or Brahmaji, in project management skills; Brahmaji has to be the best C.E.O. in the universe! He does not draw a fat salary, but only expects us to follow the laws which He has laid down to use everything properly and take good care of them.

॥ इति मुण्डकोपनिषदि प्रथममुण्डके प्रथमः खण्डः ॥

iti mundakopanishadi, prathama mundake, prathamah khandah.

Thus in the Mundaka Upanishad, ends the first Section of the first Canto.



2. A CLOSE LOOK AT RITUALS

(Verses 10-22, 13 no.)

॥ प्रथममुण्डके द्वितीयः खण्डः ॥

*prathama mundake, dviteeyah khandah –
Here begins the second Section of the first Canto.*

THE VEDAS CLEARLY SPEAK of two distinct fields of knowledge, the Lower and the Higher. The broad classification of these has been given in the first Chapter. Now we take a closer look at some details of these two types knowledge. The Lower knowledge is detailed in this Chapter, and the Higher in the next.

Specific means and specific fruits pertain to each of these types of knowledge. The field for both knowledges is this world of transmigration. However, the Lower knowledge seeks to get more involved in the world; the Higher tries to find the best way out of it. The difference is as wide as that. Their goals being so diverse, naturally the means of knowledge pertaining to each, as well as the knowledge itself, are equally diverse. As one may expect, they are diametrically opposite.

The purpose of detailing the Karma Kanda means and results in the first 10 verses of this Chapter is to provide the motivation for the seeker to see the truth about the futility and uncertainty of results in the Karma Kanda path. It is hoped that the necessary Vairagya will be generated by this study, to help seekers to seek the Higher knowledge instead, and thus fulfil the great purpose of taking this human body.

10 Verse 2.1: A Close Look at the Karma Kanda

तदेतत् सत्यं । मन्त्रेषु कर्माणि कवयो यान्यपश्यन्-
तानि त्रेतायां बहुधा संततानि ।

तान्याचरथ नियतं सत्यकामा

एष वः पन्थाः सुकृतस्य लोके ॥ २.१॥

0	<i>tad etat satyam,</i>	Know That to be this Truth (from the lower standpoint):
1	<i>mantreshu karmaani kavayah yaani apashyan,</i>	Various Karmas are enjoined in the <u>Mantras</u> which were “seen” (written) by the wise Rishis;
2	<i>taani tretaayaam, bahudhaa santataani;</i>	In the <u>Treta age</u> , these (the Karmas), were much in vogue (popularly practised).
3	<i>taani aacharatha niyatam satya-kaamaa,</i>	Even now, should these Karmas be practised, men can <u>with certainly</u> acquire the object desired.
4	<i>esha vah panthaah sukritasya loke.</i>	This is your <u>legitimate way</u> for attaining any heavenly world of one’s desire.

This is a statement that announces the path of Karma and what may be attained through it. Any heavenly pleasure can easily be gained if the prescribed ritual is performed.

0 What is promised in the Vedas about the results of these ritualistic practices (Karmas) is certainly true. There is no doubt about it. If the practice is carried out exactly as described in the Mantras concerning them, then the results obtained are certain.

1 The *Yukti* or authority behind the certainty promised is cited here. The seers of the Karma Kanda texts were wise men who knew how to obtain the results desired through Karmas. They did not compose the Mantras in their minds, but “saw” them in the depths of their meditations. This is what may be described as **Revelations**.

2 Then the *Anubhuti* or experience is cited. The Karmas have given uniform success throughout a long period in history – i.e. throughout the Treta Yuga. The means have been time-tested and proven to give the correct results as desired. This is the second motivation.

3 Based on the above two, the confident statement is made that the same procedures may be used even today to obtain the desired results. One may see in this a scientific approach. The test of a scientific law lies in reproducing the predicted result any number of times provided the basic conditions are fulfilled.

What are these results being sought by Karmas? Generally, it is a selfish desire for wealth, progeny, pleasures, comfort, some specific reward in one’s life such as a visit to a heavenly world where such desires can be fulfilled to one’s heart’s content, and so on. There are Karmas for bringing down rain, or even destructive hailstorms if so desired.

Acharyaji quoted a case within the Mission of a Yajna that was conducted meeting all the requirements perfectly. It was for rain in a drought-stricken area. As soon as the first Mantra was chanted, the rains came. That is the precision inherent in these rituals.

However, when fulfillment of desire is the goal, there is no spiritual progress.

4 The Vedas contain the knowledge for legitimately fulfilling any of man’s desires. They give the know-how for fulfilling any specific desire. Kaama and Artha (desire and wealth) are two of the Purusharthas or attainments that man strives for. When Dharma, the third Purushartha, is combined with these two, the results becomes legitimate, i.e. there is no violation of cosmic Law in the process.

The fourth and final Purushartha is Moksha. That is not a consideration in the Karma Kanda stage. Moksha enters the equation only in the Jnana Kanda when it becomes the prime goal desired by the man who is tired of the senseless repetition of sense pleasures.

11 Verse 2.2: *Description of Agnihotra*

यदा लेलायते ह्यर्चिः समिद्धे हव्यवाहने ।

तदाऽऽज्यभागावन्तरेणाऽऽहुतीः प्रतिपादयेत् (श्रद्धया हुतम्)

॥ २.२॥

1	<i>yadaa lelaayate hi archih,</i>	<i>When the fire is kindled,</i>
2	<i>samiddhe havyavaahane;</i>	<i>and the flames begin to move in the sacred fire,</i>
3	<i>tadaa aajyabhaagau antarena,</i>	<i>then in the space between two tongues of fire,</i>
4a	<i>aahuteeh pratipaadayet.</i>	<i>the oblations of ghee should be poured.</i>
4b	<i>(shraddhayaa hutam)</i>	<i>(i.e. offered with faith)</i>

An example is now given to illustrate the truth of the promise made in the previous verse. The ritual taken in the example is Agnihotra, a very commonly performed ritual performed daily in many households. Firstly, the general procedure is described.

1 Archih: The Agni or “fire”. The kindling of the fire is itself quite an art. Before the advent of the matchstick, friction of wooden blocks or stones was used to create the spark to start the flames. The first implication here is that the person who is doing the Havan has to be very patient and exercise a lot of care from the very outset of the ritual.

2 The offerings are to be made when the flames are well established, i.e. when they “shoot up”. A generous supply of ghee and other combustible materials is needed to obtain such a fire. This is the second implication; there is a cost factor that is built in. The person has to be prepared to spend money to obtain a good quantity of ghee.

3 Ajyabhaagau: The offering is to be made at “a point in between two tongues of flames”, known as the Aavaapa Sthaana. This is the third implication. The performer of the havan has to be alert at all times to note this. He has to watch the fire very attentively and make the offering carefully at the right time and at the right spot.

4a First the oblations are offered to the Pitrus with the Mantra “Om Prajapataye Swaha”. Next, two oblations are offered to Lord Indra, the Lord of Heaven (Indraloka). Thirdly, two oblations are offered for Agnidevata, two for Soma, separately on the north side and the south side respectively.

The oblations are called **Aahuteeh**. The oblations are referred to in the plural form, because this ritual has to continue for many days, as prescribed.

4b This is the procedure at a glance. The whole procedure has to be done with great faith. If all these conditions are fulfilled, the result is guaranteed!

However, as they say in modern business, “terms and conditions” apply . . .

12 Verse 2.3: *The “Terms & Conditions”*

यस्याग्निहोत्रमदर्शमपौर्णमासम्—
 अचातुर्मास्यमनाग्रयणमतिथिवर्जितं च ।
 अहुतमवैश्वदेवमविधिना हुतम्—
 आसप्तमांस्तस्य लोकान् हिनस्ति ॥ २.३॥

1	<i>yasya agnihotram: adarsham, apaurnamaasam,</i>	<i>The “Terms & Conditions” for an Agnihotra are: i) without the Darsha, observances on the <u>new moon day</u>; ii) or without those to be done on <u>full moon day</u>;</i>
2	<i>achaaturmaasyam, anaagra-yanam, atithi varjitam cha;</i>	<i>iii) or without those to be done during the <u>rainy season</u>; iv) or without offerings of the “<u>first harvest</u>”; v) or without attendance of <u>guests</u>;</i>
3	<i>ahutam, avaishva-devam, avidhinaa hutam,</i>	<i>vi) or simply without any <u>offerings</u> at all; vii) without feeding of <u>birds and animals</u> (Vishwadevas); viii) or performed without following <u>scriptural rules</u>;</i>
4	<i>aasaptamaan tasya lokaan hinasti.</i>	<i>then, up to the seventh (generation of one’s family), all the worlds (they aimed to attain) are snatched away!</i>

1-3 Now are explained eight rigorous “terms and conditions” that apply to the Agnihotra ritual to make it a success. The sacrifice requires some discipline, care, attention, regularity, strictness, restraint of one’s own tendencies, and so on. It is here that most people fall short, fail in their observances, and thus do not get the expected results.

THE “TERMS & CONDITIONS”

To summarise the verse, the Agnihotra is considered to be null and void if even one of the following eight conditions is not fulfilled:

- i) **Adarsham**: not accompanied by Darsha, the rites to be done on new moon day;
- ii) **Apaurṇimaasam**: as above for the full moon day;
- iii) **Achaaturmaasyam**: not accompanied by the rites done during the rainy season;
- iv) **Anaagrayanam**: not accompanied by the first-fruit offerings at harvest time;
- v) **Atithi Varjitam**: unattended by guests;
- vi) **Ahutam**: without proper offerings;
- vii) **Avaishwa Devam**: without the worship of the Vishwadevatas;
- viii) **Avidhinaa**: not according to scriptural injunctions.

The performance of Agnihotra done without the above rules and regulations is considered to be annulled, i.e. the fruits of the sacrifice are not obtained.

Pujya Gurudev says in his commentary:

“In short, the Upanishad is severely emphasizing the drudgery of rules in ritualism, and is trying to wean the disciple away from all desire-prompted Karmas. Only when the mind and intellect have thus totally renounced their desires and their pre-occupation with desire-prompted action, can the seeker hope to meditate upon and rise above into the subtler worlds of constructive meditation.”

4 In addition, the merits gained by seven generations in the family lineage are also destroyed by such inadvertence. The seven generations are, firstly, one’s own generation; then the three prior to it; and the three posterior to it.

One gets the hunch that these “terms and conditions” have been put in order to dissuade people from taking to these practices. It may appear so, but that would be unfair. The truth is that to fulfill our desires it does require one to execute an action to perfection. Many details need attention to get good results. That is the principle being put forward in this and the next verse.

13 Verse 2.4: *The Seven Tongues of Fire*

काली कराली च मनोजवा च
सुलोहिता या च सुधूम्रवर्णा ।
स्फुलिङ्गिनी विश्वरुची च देवी
लेलायमाना इति सप्त जिह्वाः ॥ २.४॥

1	¹ kaalee, ² karaalee cha, ³ manojavaa cha,	i) Kaali, the <u>black</u> one; ii) Karaali, the <u>terrific</u> one; iii) Manojavaa, the <u>swift-as-mind</u> one;
2	⁴ sulohitaa yaa cha, ⁵ sudhoomra varnaa;	iv) Sulohitaa, the <u>deep red</u> one; v) Sudhumra Varna, the <u>smoke-coloured</u> one;
3	⁶ sphulinginee, ⁷ vishvaruchee cha devee,	vi) Sphulingini, the <u>sparkling</u> one; and vii) Vishwaruchi, the bright, <u>variegated</u> one –
4	lelaayamaanaa iti sapta jihvah.	these are the flickering seven tongues of flames (that rise in the Agnihotra fire).

1-4 The Rishis took their study into fire very thoroughly, as seen from the details of just the different types of flames that make up a fire. It shows great desire to know and understand, as well as a proper scientific methodology. Western science has done some research on the different parts of a candle flame, but not as thoroughly as seen in this verse.

Fire and Meditation – Are They Linked?

It has to be remembered that in the Vedic period, Agni or fire was taken as a symbol for meditation purposes. Idols of Deities came much later. If Agni represented the process of meditation, then the flames would perhaps have represented the state of the thoughts that arise during meditation. In this context, each of the seven flames would refer to different types of thoughts. To identify the flames would need a very observant mind.

It is interesting to watch a fire burn. On a cold night, sitting beside a wood-fire and simply watching the flames arising in it can be quite an absorbing pastime. One can get so absorbed in the observation that it may be considered a kind of meditation. Perhaps that is how all these types of flames became identified.

Someone once jokingly called a microwave oven, a “microwave *Havan*”! Fire and any science connected with it were very significant to people of the Vedic period. Today, when electric plates and microwave ovens have replaced fire, we may not appreciate how much fire means to people who have no electricity.

14 Verse 2.5: *The Flames Lead One to Heaven*

एतेषु यश्चरते भ्राजमानेषु
यथाकालं चाहृतयो ह्याददायन् ।
तं नयन्त्येताः सूर्यस्य रश्मयो
यत्र देवानां पतिरेकोऽधिवासः ॥ २.५॥

1	<i>eteshu yah charate bhraaja-maanesu,</i>	<i>He who, into these (seven) moving tongues of shining flames,</i>
2	<i>yathaa kaalam cha ahutayo hi aadadaayan;</i>	<i>at the proper <u>time</u>, makes his offerings of oblations,</i>
3	<i>tam nayanti etaah sooryasya rashmayah,</i>	<i>him do the flames lead, even as the rays of the sun (lead its light),</i>
4	<i>yatra devaanaam patih ekah adhivaasah.</i>	<i>to the region of the Gods, where the One Lord of Heaven (Indra) resides.</i>

The idea given above connecting fire to meditation is given more credibility in these lines.

1-2 The very act of making an offering into fire generates a feeling of sanctity in one's mind. If this act is repeated many times, as for instance in the Gayatri Havan when the Mantra is repeated 108 times with an offering after each Mantra, then it could well be considered to be a meditation.

3-4 If this is so, then speaking of the flames as "leading one to heaven" isn't really far-fetched. The comparison with the rays of light from the sun carrying the warmth and energy down to us on earth is a beautiful example of how this could be possible. The flames similarly carry our minds "to heavenly regions", to states purer than we normally are in.

The suggestion is very strong, indeed, that when we sit before the sacred fire during a Havan, we should do so with faith that this is actually happening to us. Even as the fire burns the wood, we should feel that our sins are being burned away with each oblation offered. How much more meaningful would our fire ritual become by doing so!

15 Verse 2.6: *Enticements to Reach Heaven*

एह्येहीति तमाहुतयः सुवर्चसः
 सूर्यस्य रश्मिभिर्यजमानं वहन्ति ।
 प्रियां वाचमभिवदन्त्योऽर्चयन्त्य
 एष वः पुण्यः सुकृतो ब्रह्मलोकः ॥ २.६॥

1	<i>"ehi ehi" iti tam aahutayah suvarchasah,</i>	<i>"Come hither, come hither," thus say the brilliant oblations unto him,</i>
2	<i>sooryasya rashmibhih yajamaanam vahanti;</i>	<i>And like the rays of the sun, they <u>carry</u> the sacrificer.</i>
3	<i>priyaam vaacham abhivadantyah archayantyah</i>	<i><u>Pleasant</u> words of praise do they address him with:</i>
4	<i>"eshah vah punyah sukritah brahmalokah."</i>	<i>"As a result of all your <u>good deeds</u>, this is the holy world of Brahma (you deserve)."</i>

1-2 If the idea conveyed by the previous verse is accepted, then with a little further extension of it, we would get this verse, wherein we actually see the fire coming "alive" and talking to us! This is no idle imagination, but very powerful auto-suggestion.

Seen this way, verses 14 and 15 give us great insight into the intentions of the Rishis when they conceived the fire-sacrifice as a ritual to be regularly performed by a whole civilization of mankind. It tells us more about the knowledge the Rishis possessed of the utility of fire as a medium to carry messages. Fire was known to convey messages instantly. The messages given to it through the offerings are, as it were, delivered by 'Speed Post' to the very desk of the appropriate Deity.

In these two verses, it is described how the performer of the sacrifice is connected to the Deity he is worshipping by the flame of the fire, just as one "rides on a ray of the Sun"! And this is not after one departs from the body; there is no mention of death. It is a living experience that is felt in the core of the worshipper's being.

3-4 This part of the verse is a vivid insight into how the flames lead the soul after death. This is how the soul is led to its appropriate destination, the world of its desire, by the brilliant flames of the cremation fire. The soul receives a royal welcome at the gates of heaven. This is reminiscent of how great leaders are treated on earth during special occasions or even during conferences. The flames lay out the “Red Carpet” for the person who has deserved to go to heaven due to his good deeds.

Indeed, in the light of the next chapter on liberation from all desire, some students may see in these 4 lines a touch of sarcastic humour in the Rishis.

16 Verse 2.7: A. Rituals – Their Inherent Undependability

प्लवा ह्येते अदृढा यज्ञरूपा
 अष्टादशोक्तमवरं येषु कर्म ।
 एतच्छ्रेयो येऽभिनन्दन्ति मूढा
 जराभृत्युं ते पुनरेवापि यन्ति ॥ २.७॥

1	<i>plavaa hi ete adridhaa yajna-roopaa,</i>	<i>Verily, undependable is this boat in the form of the <u>Yajna</u>,</i>
2	<i>ashtaadasha uktam avaram yah eshu karma;</i>	<i>said to be manned by eighteen ‘<u>oars-men</u>’. This form of sacrifice leads to the Lower region.</i>
3	<i>etat shreyah ye abhinandanti moodhaah,</i>	<i>Those who acclaim it as desirable are indeed <u>ignorant</u>;</i>
4	<i>jaraa mrityum te punah eva api yanti.</i>	<i>for, to a life of <u>old age</u> and <u>death</u>, they are subject again and again.</i>

1 The plain truth is being said here. Owing to the large number of “terms and conditions”, for the ordinary individual it is difficult to do these rituals to perfection. Either he will not be able to afford it, or he will not have the mental capacity to observe every detail with thoroughness. Hence, this “boat” is not to be depended on.

The 18 Constituents or Supporters:

2 There are 18 people upon whose performance the Yajna has to depend. If any single one of them shirks his duty and does not come up to the mark in his function, the Yajna does not bear its fruit. This is the main reason that renders the Yajna for selfish desire undependable (**Addridha**). The “boat of Yajna” is being drawn by 18 tough oarsmen, but towards an uncertain, unpredictable destination – a beautiful imagery in its own right.

- a. **16 Priests:** These are 4 priests from each of the 3 Vedas; and 4 Brahma Gana priests who manage or co-ordinate the whole Yajna. Their names are:
 - Rig Veda:** Hota, Maitravarunah, Achchavakah, and Gravastup;
 - Yajur Veda:** Adhvaryu, Prati Prasthta, Neshtha, and Unneta;
 - Sama Veda:** Udgata, Prastotha, Pratiharta, and Subramanya;
 - Brahma Ganas:** Brahma, Brahmana Shamsee, Agneedrah, and Pota.
- b. **Patni:** one’s wife;
- c. **Yajmaan:** oneself.

3-4 What begins here and continues in the next 4 verses should not be seen as criticism of the Karma Kanda. It is a part of the Vedas, the body of knowledge of which the Upanishads form the Jnana Kanda. The Rishi will not criticize another part of the same text.

Through these verses the seeker is actually guided to the “path of desirelessness”. Due to the numerous defects listed under the path of Karma Kanda or desire-prompted activities, the seeker develops disgust for this path and considers the Jnana Path..

The main defect in Karma Kanda is that the fruit attained is so limited and paltry that it is just not worth all the trouble; the limited fruit means that the actions have to be repeated again and again to get more pleasures; addiction sets in; and at the end it brings one back to ‘square one’. It does not take one an inch further in his evolution.

As a mother guides her children, the Upanishads guide the seeker who comes to her shores to quench his thirst. The mother has many kinds of drinks, but always wants her children to drink the most health-giving one.

17 Verse 2.8: B. Rituals – Gloating over Ignorance

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः

स्वयं धीराः पण्डितं मन्यमानाः ।

जङ्घन्यमानाः परियन्ति मूढा

अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः

॥ २.८॥

1	<i>avidyaayaam antare vartamaanaah,</i>	<i>In the midst of ignorance, those who <u>gloat over</u> such an existence,</i>
2	<i>swayam dheeraah panditam manyamaanaah;</i>	<i>who fancy themselves to be <u>very wise</u> or consider themselves to be <u>very learned</u>,</i>
3	<i>janghanyamaanaah pariyanti moodhaa,</i>	<i>who are <u>oppressed</u> and miserable, going round and round – such ignorant beings,</i>
4	<i>andhena eva neeyamaanaah yathaa andhaah.</i>	<i>who are blind themselves, lead others who are also <u>blind</u>!</i>

1 Being in ignorance may be excusable as it is the result of many births, but to be proud of it or to gloat over one’s ignorant state is foolhardy, and draws the ridicule of others. Such are the people being described here.

2 Dheera: “wise men”; here the word is used with sarcasm, for men who think they are wise out of pride and arrogance. They feel that what they are doing is the only thing worthwhile. They have no desire to know any further. They perform these rituals merely to ‘show off’ in front of other people. This is the sad state of rituals done without any sound knowledge. The pride in such people due to their wealth makes them do rituals for the wrong reason.

3 Such people are tossed up and down by the waves of emotion, by success and failure, by joys and sorrows – and ultimately by birth and death for countless cycles.

Janghanyamaanaah: This is an apt description of the state of mind of these restless people. Their lot ultimately is one of misery and oppression. Their misery comes from their

utter failure to find fulfillment in wealth and power, and oppression comes from subjection to the captivity of their own mind.

4 The world is such that men with wealth soon rise to positions of power. They are looked upon as leaders, although they themselves are totally ignorant of the Truth. What they say goes as the standard which others follow. The result is the blind leading the blind! Having no vision beyond the urges of the senses, they feel quite ‘smug’ in their own little castles. This smugness is too comfortable to consider exchanging it for real wisdom!

18 Verse 2.9: C. Rituals – Delusion of Reaching the Goal

अविद्यायं बहुधा वर्तमाना
 वयं कृतार्था इत्यभिमन्यन्ति बालाः ।
 यत् कर्मिणो न प्रवेदयन्ति रागात्
 तेनातुराः क्षीणलोकाश्च्यवन्ते ॥ २.९॥

1	<i>avidyaayaam bahudhaa vartamaanaah,</i>	<i>Many are the ways of the <u>ignorant</u>, and they are so engrossed in them that</i>
2	<i>‘vayam kritaarthaah’ iti abhimanyanti baalaah;</i>	<i>they declare, “We have <u>reached the goal</u>”, as only children vainly imagine (when engrossed in toys).</i>
3	<i>yat karminah na pravedayanti raagaat,</i>	<i>These men who depend on such sacrifices – never do they attain wisdom, due to their <u>desires</u>.</i>
4	<i>tena aaturaah ksheena lokaah chyavante.</i>	<i>By this approach, these wretched men <u>exhaust their merits</u> (in heaven) and come <u>hurtling down</u> (to earth).</i>

The eye-opening comments on the path of Kevala Karma (i.e. complete dependence on actions) continues. The path itself is undependable (2.7) due to the many rules and restrictions that are mostly overlooked. Over and above this hurdle, the practitioners add their own ego (2.8) to it, which makes it even less fruitful. When the rituals are done with all the usual flaws of human nature, they become fruitless, and actually work against them.

In this verse the defect pointed out is the delusion of having reached the goal. Another defect is that of exhausting one’s merits, caused by sense enjoyments, either on earth or in heaven. Both are on par as far a spiritual progress goes.

1 Acharyaji described their efforts as those of one who, wishing to cook, gets all the foodstuffs necessary for the dish, and then thinks the job is done! They do everything except the main thing. They lose all sense of the goal which they set out to achieve.

2 A child is an excellent example of the mentality of such people. A child can spend hours playing with his toys, achieving nothing except some amusement. That is all most people achieve when they set out to do a Yajna.

3-4 Instead of obtaining wisdom, these men spend all the merit they earn on pleasures. All the hard-earned merit is wasted away in revelry after the Yajna is done. We see this frequently in practice. A Katha is arranged. The whole family of relatives and friends are invited to attend. During the prayer, chit-chatting goes on. After prayer, revelry and feasting take place, as determined by their desires. Wisdom passes them by without even receiving a nod for its trouble!

19 Verse 2.10: *D. Rituals – When Merits Get Exhausted*

इष्टापूर्तं मन्यमाना वरिष्ठं
 नान्यच्छ्रेयो वेदयन्ते प्रमूढाः ।
 नाकस्य पृष्ठे ते सुकृतेऽनुभूत्वे-
 मंलोकं हीनतरं वा विशन्ति ॥ २.१०॥

1	<i>ishtaapoortam manya- maanaah varishtham,</i>	<i>Regarding such desire-motivated actions as being the most important,</i>
2	<i>na anyat shreyah vedayante pramoodhaah;</i>	<i>these extremely ignorant ones do not know any other way to attain happiness.</i>
3	<i>naakasya prishthe te sukrite anubhootvaa-</i>	<i>From the highest of sensual pleasures to which their merits take them,</i>
4	<i>imam lokam heenataram vaa vishanti.</i>	<i>they enter again this earthly world of men or even to a state inferior to it.</i>

The Ultimate Assessment of Karma Kanda Rituals

Verses 2.7 to 2.9 showed us the reasons why rituals generally prove to be fruitless due to human weaknesses as well as the “terms & conditions”. Here we are given a final assessment of their worth. Even on the rare occasion when they succeed in bringing the desired result, that result is of no help whatsoever in bringing them closer to God.

1-4 The sad practical truth is that these Karmas take people further and further away from the Truth. The rich and ignorant ones lose much of their merit by showing off through these rituals. Even if they do manage to go to heavenly worlds, they have to return soon back to earth when their merits get exhausted. Usually these people are such that their merits in heaven get exhausted very rapidly.

The feeling of smugness, which makes them feel “All is fine!” is very harmful to their further progress. It stunts them totally. It smothers down all aspiration for God.

These are people who may be very highly-placed in society. They have done well in the material sphere, but not well enough to earn spiritual merits. They are spending all their hard-earned merits on paltry things that are perishable. Instead of conserving their merits to use them for more worthy endeavours, they waste them on pleasures.

The above assessment of the Kevala Karma path is like that of a mother for her child. The mother always wants the best for her child. Sometimes she uses the scolding method. The assessment is actually a statement on the limitation of the Kevala Karma path.

20 Verse 2.11: *What is the Alternative?*

तपःश्रद्धे ये ह्युपवसन्त्यरण्ये
 शान्ता विद्वांसो भैक्ष्यचर्या चरन्तः ।
 सूर्यद्वारेण ते विरजाः प्रयान्ति
 यन्नामृतः स पुरुषो ह्यव्ययात्मा ॥ २.११॥

1	<i>tapah shraddhe ye hi upavasanti aranye,</i>	<i>But they who perform <u>penance with faith</u>, while living in the forest (solitude),</i>
2	<i>shaantaah vidvaamsah bhaikshya-charyaam charantah;</i>	<i>having control over their <u>senses</u>, such <u>learned</u> ones, living the <u>simple</u> life of mendicants,</i>
3	<i>soorya-dvaarena te virajaah prayaanti,</i>	<i>to the solar world of Light they go, their <u>merits and demerits</u> being consumed,</i>
4	<i>yatra amritah sah purushah hi avyayaatmaa.</i>	<i>where dwells the <u>Immortal</u> and <u>Undecaying Supreme Purusha</u>.</i>

Now we come to the category of people who have grown wiser after experiencing the bitter disappointments of the Kevala Karma path. They go a step higher now. They add devotion to their rituals and do them without any selfish desire in mind. This is the middle category of devotees. This is called the Path of Karma and Upasana.

1 The Upasana Kanda is for such people. It is a step higher than the Karma Kanda and a preparation for the Jnana Kanda. They may be given the name of Upasakas. When one comes to the realization of the worthlessness of actions as the sole means to happiness, then begins the path of renunciation, characterised by penance and seclusion.

The Upasaka is prepared to undergo some physical hardships. He is now willing to live a simpler lifestyle. This is symbolized in “living in the forest”. In today’s circumstances, it may not be literally going to a forest, but adopting a greatly simplified way of life, free from needless comforts. Solitude is the key. The Upasaka begins giving up many of his old social contacts so that he can take up a more contemplative lifestyle.

2 Upasakas are in the stage where their life is characterized by the practice of austerities, particularly fasting, and study of scriptures. They shift away from the arenas of activity. This is the stage of Vanaprastha or retirement from active life. Simplicity is the keynote in this stage of life.

3 Virajaah: “those whose good and bad deeds are consumed.” Due to the simple life adopted and the voluntarily accepted self-denial, **Purification** of one’s Karma follows. The Karmas (both good and bad) get burnt up or consumed. This is the essence of purification.

The “Solar worlds” refer to the heavenly regions to which Upasakas desire to go. This is their main motivation to practice austerities and self-denial. In other words, desire has not been completely given up, but it has been raised from being at the sensual level.

4 Such a life is, no doubt, far superior to the previous life lived in the midst of activity and luxury. So much so, that one may even be tempted to think that that is the final aim of life. In the Bhashya the question is posed: “Is this not the same life as that which leads one to liberation?”

The answer is “No”. Liberation is not yet on the agenda of the Upasaka. He is still dealing with the lower knowledge, albeit at a higher level from the Kevala Karma stage. The change is in the attitude with which the devotee does the Karmas and the Upasanas. There is a considerable reduction in desire-prompted activities. However, the desire for the higher worlds is still there, which binds them to Samsara. Only with more purification can the Upasakas begin to see beyond Samsara.

When that happens they become ready for the third and final stage of Jnana Kanda. Then a natural desire wells up in their hearts for knowledge of Brahma Vidya . . .

21 Verse 2.12: *Guru Upasadana – Approaching the Guru*

परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणो
 निर्वेदमायान्नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन ।
 तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्
 समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥ २.१२॥

1	<i>pareekshya lokaan karma-chitaan braahmanah,</i>	<i>After thoroughly examining the worlds gained by Karma, let a Brahmana (a seeker)</i>
2	<i>nirvedam aayaan na asti akritah kritena;</i>	<i>free himself from all desires by reflecting that things Eternal cannot be had by (temporal) actions,</i>
3	<i>tad vijnaanaartham sah gurum eva abhigacchhet,</i>	<i>In order to obtain the knowledge of the Eternal, let him approach that spiritual preceptor,</i>
4	<i>samitpaanih shrotriyam brahma-nishtham.</i>	<i>in the prescribed manner with fuel in hand, who is well-versed in the <u>scriptures</u>, and who is firmly established in the <u>Truth</u>.</i>

Now we come to the third group of seekers who are ready for the Para Vidya.

Examination of the Hollowness of Karma and Upasana:

1 These people come to a point in life where they start examining the worlds (*Parikshya Lokaan*) acquired through the path of Karma alone or through Karma and Upasana combined. They come to realize that the highest achieved through those methods is still in the world of unreality and temporary. No matter how perfectly they perform their activities or sacrifices, the final result is still in the realm of birth and death, of decay and old age, of change and destruction. There can never be permanent happiness through these methods.

A deep dispassion overcomes them. It is time to move higher up.

The Dawn of Dispassion and Discrimination:

2 The fruits of all such Karmas and Upasanas are temporary. They do not give one liberation from the cycle of Samsara, from births and deaths. These people come to realize: "There is nothing here that is really worthwhile. Any number of actions cannot give immortality. I have to get knowledge of the Self." They come to the turning point in their lives, they become more discerning, and their intellect becomes pure enough for them to realize the hollowness of the lower knowledge.

Thus begins the first glimmer of yearning towards the higher knowledge. These people learn to discriminate between what is permanent and what is temporary. They also develop some dispassion towards the material pleasures offered by the world. They begin to understand the limitations of these pleasures and how utterly dependent it makes them on outer objects. In short, these seekers want something that is more lasting and gives deeper satisfaction that is not dependent on external things.

Guru Upasadana:

3 At the feet of one's Guru, the knowledge of the Self is obtained. This is studied, pondered over and practised through deep contemplation. The Final goal of this knowledge

is for one to experience the identity of oneself with the Supreme Brahman Himself as being the all-pervading Reality. The eligible seeker is here advised to seek the guidance of a Guru who can lead him further along this very difficult path of spiritual perfection.

4 The proper protocol to approach such a Guru is given. **Samitpaanih** refers to a customary gift taken for the Guru, something which he can utilize in his hermitage. Some firewood is the most common item used in the hermitage. It is also an item which any student can afford to bring, whether rich or poor.

The disciple is symbolically saying, “O Guruji! Just as this firewood will be burnt to ashes, I come to you to have all my impurities and Vasanas or latent tendencies burnt away so that I am liberated from this endless, meaningless round of birth and death.”

The Qualifications of a Guru

We are given here the twofold qualifications of a true Guru:

- i) He has to be a **Shrotriya**, one who is learned in the scriptures;
- ii) He also has to be a **Brahma-Nishtha**, one who is established in Brahman.

The disciple goes to such a Guru and serves him with devotion. In due course, when the Guru is satisfied with the disciple’s readiness, this is what happens.....

22 Verse 2.13: *The Role of the Guru*

तस्मै स विद्वानुपसन्नाय सम्यक्
प्रशान्तचित्ताय शमान्विताय ।
येनाक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं
प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम् ॥ २.१३॥

1	<i>tasmai sa vidvaan upasannaaya samyak,</i>	<i>He, the wise sage, should teach a pupil i) who approaches him in a <u>befitting</u> manner,</i>
2	<i>prashaanta-chittaaya shamaanvitaaya;</i>	<i>ii) whose mind is at <u>rest</u>, and iii) whose senses are <u>subdued</u>;</i>
3	<i>yena aksharam purusham veda satyam,</i>	<i>To such a pupil is taught the Immortal Purusha, the Truth as expounded in the <u>Vedas</u>;</i>
4	<i>provaacha taam tattvatah brahma-vidyaam.</i>	<i>To him are taught the principles of Brahma Vidya, the science of Self-knowledge.</i>

With this verse, the Doors of the Divine University are opened. Brahma Vidya can now be imparted to the student who has been granted admission, having passed all the preliminary examinations. The Course itself begins in the next chapter.

It must not be overlooked that this marks a milestone in the life of a disciple.

1-2 Once the disciple has placed himself of his own choice at the feet of the Guru for further instruction on this path, the Guru’s responsibility begins.

Acharyaji said, “The Guru who always praises the disciple is a terrible Guru.” And he cited an example from the life of Tapovanji and the young Swami Chinmayanandaji to illustrate this point:

THE EXAMPLE OF TAPOVANJI

The disciple, Chinmaya (as he was called by Sri Tapovaniji), once went out of his way to stitch a tear in his Guru's *dhoti*. He then ironed it neatly, folded it and gave it to the Guru. The response was surprising to him. "You have torn my dhoti". Chinmaya explained what happened. Tapovanji continued, "So, you are a liar, too!" Thereafter, several times in the class, Tapovanji would call him a liar. It became too much to bear for the young Chinmaya, and one day he packed his things and decided to leave.

When he had left, Tapovanji was very sad, "O my Chinmaya has gone, my Chinmaya has gone!" Fortunately, on his way out of Uttarkashi, the young Chinmaya met a wise man. Chinmaya answered the wise man's kind query. The latter then told him, "You are going away because of that! Your Guru is a great Mahatma – he does not even wear shoes, what is a tear in his dhoti to him! He was only working on your Ego, that is all. Come now, go back to him, or you will regret this rashness for life."

It is very hard to travel this path on one's own. The disciple needs the help of the Guru to weed out the ego. The ego is protected by layers upon layers of age-old "fat" in the form of mental fortresses; it is virtually impossible to break up their ramparts on one's own – the ego will never allow itself to be destroyed by itself.

Acharyaji threw more light on the great responsibility placed on the Guru. His work is the most difficult. Everyone else tries to pamper the ego, but the Guru has the job of breaking it down. To do that he may need to reprimand the disciple at times. This is not liked by anyone, yet the true disciple voluntarily submits to it. He has faith that the Guru only means well for his evolution.

Thus Chinmaya returned to his Guru, a little wiser perhaps for that experience, and, in retrospect, the world also has become wiser for that experience!

3 The teaching henceforth is all about the **Aksharam**, **Purusham** and **Satyam** – all three words referring to the same Paramarthic Supreme Brahman, all in 2nd case Samskrit.

In '**Akshara**' we have a good example of the richness of Samskrit words. The root 'kshar' means three things: "*to move or change*"; "*to destroy*"; and "*to decay*". Hence Akshara, the opposite of 'Kshara' is a perfect word for the Supreme who is Unchangeable, Indestructible and Undecaying.

4 This Pada is very significant here. **Brahma Vidya** is to be given to the disciple who approaches in this manner. This comes as an instruction to the Guru. But this is really only from a Vyavaharika perspective. The scriptures would never instruct a Brahmaavid Guru. Such an instruction would be superfluous. It is like there being a rule – "Mothers should feed their children." There is no need for such a rule. Mothers would do that whether there is a rule or not. In the same way, the Guru would teach the disciple out of spontaneous love from his heart. He does not need to do it in obedience to a rule.

This appropriately closes the second chapter of the First Mundaka.

SUMMARY SO FAR

Chapter One dealt with the introduction of the existence of two distinct branches of knowledge, the lower and the higher. The essential differences between them were explained.

Chapter Two has built on the same theme. It has given us enormous amount of detail about the **Apara Vidya**. It has cleared in our minds any doubts we may have of the Apara Vidya, which is given so much space in the Vedas. The reason for this is explained.

The discussion on Apara Vidya begins with the Karma Kanda. Those who follow the Karma Kanda are desirous of obtaining pleasures through actions. We came to the conclusion that this was not a worthwhile goal.

Then the Karma Upasaka entered the scene. He follows the Upasana Kanda. He is an improvement on the Karma Kandi in that he is willing to undergo penance and be selfless in his actions. But the motive is still to enjoy pleasures in heaven. He is seen to be more religiously inclined than the desire-mongering Karma Kandi. Yet, even his is a temporary stage. When he realises that even heavenly pleasures come to an end, he begins to prepare himself for Brahma Vidya or the Para Vidya. This is when he approaches the Guru.

Up to this point we have completed the discussion. From the next Chapter the actual Jnana Kanda comes onto the scene. The spiritual teaching will be taken up in greater depth.

॥ इति मुण्डकोपनिषदि प्रथममुण्डके द्वितीयः खण्डः ॥

iti mundakopanishadi, prathamah mundake, dviteeyah khandah.

Thus in the Mundaka Upanishad, ends the second Section of the first Canto.



3. THE SUPREME PURUSHA

(Verses 23-32, 10 no.)

॥ द्वितीय मुण्डके प्रथमः खण्डः ॥

athah dviteeyaa mundake, prathamah khandah.

Thus begins the first Section of the Second Canto.

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER gave an elaborate breakdown of the first of two types of knowledge, namely, the voluminous **Apara Vidya**. From this Chapter onwards begins the shift towards the **Para Vidya**. However, the student is advised to be very patient. It is the Upanishadic style to nibble at the periphery of the main topic in order to create interest in it. This is done through glorification of the topic. In this Chapter the glorification is done by showing how every detail of the creation that we are familiar with has its origin in the Supreme Purusha, the Highest Being who is present in everything at every level in Creation.

This entire Chapter explains at length how the Great Supreme Purusha is at the heart of every process in the manifestation of the Universe. That story has the effect of inspiring a sense of awe and wonderment in us, which we should not fail to catch – for it is the very purpose of this whole chapter.

Steeped in details of what we may be prone to consider as the “Unreal” world, and therefore seemingly irrelevant to our desire to know the Supreme, the knowledge that is spread out hereunder inspires in us a great aspiration to know more about the Supreme from whom so much “Unreal” has emanated.

Acharyaji quoted an example of successful teaching methods: “If parents want their unwilling children to study, they entice them with ‘sweets’. When the children begin to taste the joys of study for its own sake, the sweets are not necessary any longer as an incentive.”

The same method is used by most mothers, in trying to get their children to take a bitter medicine. They administer it with a spoonful of honey. Dispassion for the world is a “bitter pill” for worldly people; they have to be coaxed into it by some means or other.

In the same way the Vedas, when dealing with people who have no interest in God, invite them to come to it by teaching them ways to become successful in the world, and get some taste of worldly pleasures through its Karma Kanda. As the person’s faith increases, he is asked to do these actions for selfless reasons, purely to attain purification. The fruit of better births in higher worlds becomes the new incentive. When even that stage is passed and the seeker becomes tired of the repetitive “World Circus”, then he becomes ripe for the higher knowledge which the Vedas were trying from the very beginning to bring him to.

Acharyaji put it very clearly: “The Karma Kanda and Upasana Kanda are the publicity wings in the Vedas for the Para Vidya!”

23 Verse 3.1: Sparks From the Flaming Fire

तदेतत् सत्यं

यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकाद्विस्फुलिङ्गाः सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः ।

तथाऽक्षराद्विविधाः सोम्य भावाः प्रजायन्ते तत्र चैवापि यन्ति ॥ ३.१॥

0	<i>tad etat satyam,</i>	<i>Know That to be this Truth (from the higher standpoint):</i>
1	<i>yathaa sudeeptaat paavakaad visphulingaah sahasrashah, prabhavante saroopaah;</i>	<i>As issue forth the flaming <u>sparks</u> of fire by the thousands, similar in nature to the fire;</i>
2	<i>tathaa aksharaad vividhaah somya bhaavaah, prajaayante tatra cha eva api yanti.</i>	<i>so also, from the Indestructible Brahman, various <u>diverse beings</u>, O beloved youth, originate there and verily once again find their way back into It.</i>

0 The last Chapter also began with the same claim: “*This is the Truth*”. There is no contradiction that this Chapter, too, starts in the same way. The context earlier was **Apara Vidya**, or knowledge of the relative world. From the world’s point of view, everything described in the Karma Kanda and the Upasanas is certainly true. The results claimed are not mere exaggerations. If the ritual is done as prescribed, the results are certain.

However, Apara Vidya is only about the realm of Samsara. It cannot take us higher than that. It is very attractive, but is really pitiless, like the stem of a banana tree. The Link in the Bhashya aims to take the reader to the next level of knowledge.

Therefore the same statement “*This is the Truth*” is repeated here in the context of **Para Vidya**, from the absolute standpoint. In this case the Truth of the Highest Reality is being asserted. The statement now claims that Absolute Truth does exist and is attainable by man. This is the promise held out to the reader. The knowledge that is to follow in subsequent chapters, if practised, will certainly lead one to spiritual perfection.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. We have to eat that for ourselves!

The Vedantic Theory of Creation:

The various created beings are compared to sparks from a fire, arising in fire and going back into the fire – a most appropriate simile for the creation and dissolution process.

1-2 Simile: The separate existence of these sparks is only an appearance. In reality they are not different from fire they originate from. That is the key idea that is conveyed.

Fire alone remains forever. The sparks that appear flying from the fire have a temporary existence and are therefore false in relation to the fire..

3-4 Application: Fire stands for Existence. It alone remains forever. All the names and forms in which it appears are like the sparks flying from the fire – they are all temporary and therefore false in relation to Absolute Existence.

This ties up with the original question of Shaunaka to Angiras about that knowledge, knowing which everything else is known. There can be an answer to this question only if everything in creation has one common ingredient, namely Brahman. Thus knowledge of that Supreme ‘Fire’ is needed to understand everything else as sparks from that Fire.

24 Verse 3.2: *Absolute Nature of Brahman*

दिव्यो ह्यमूर्तः पुरुषः स बाह्याभ्यन्तरो ह्यजः ।

अप्राणो ह्यमनाः शुभ्रो ह्यक्षरात् परतः परः ॥ ३.२॥

1	<i>divyah hi amoortah purushah,</i>	<i>The Divine Being is <u>formless</u>, indeed;</i>
2	<i>sa-baahya abhyantarah hi ajah;</i>	<i>both within and without; <u>unborn</u>;</i>
3	<i>apraanah hi amanaah shubhrah,</i>	<i>anterior to both life and mind; <u>pure</u>;</i>
4	<i>hi aksharaat paratah parah.</i>	<i>verily, even from the Indestructible (Causal), high though it is, It is still Higher!</i>

This is a very oft-quoted verse to describe the glory of the Supreme Purusha, which stands at the pinnacle of the hierarchy in the process of creation.

One can take two routes to the Origin – either via **‘Tat-Pada’** (the macrocosmic aspect) or via **‘Twam-Pada’** (the microcosmic aspect). This Upanishad, like the *Isavasya Upanishad* chooses the former route; the *Katha* and *Chandogya Upanishads* are examples of the latter route.

1-2 The Divine Being is being described in a series of ways, each one capturing an aspect of its Divine nature:

i) **Amurtah**: “*formless*”; this differentiates it from any object, for all objects have a form. This means it is not something gross, to start with. It cannot be perceived by the senses.

ii) **Bahi-Antara**: “*within and without*”; It is all-pervading, indicating that it is something not made of matter but of Spirit.

iii) **Ajah**: “*not born*”; It does not originate, implying that It is beyond Time, that It has no beginning and no end.

Could it then be something subtle like the life force, or even the mind?

3 No, it is not the life force, nor is it the mind. By a process of elimination, the Rishi points to what this Divine Being could be.

iv) **Apraano, Amanah**: “*not life-force, not mind*”; these are subtle creations; It is not even these. It is beyond all gross and subtle creations.

The subtle plane is not visible to the eye, and hence it often gets described as superior to the gross. This does not make it the highest in rank. The subtle creation is made up of the subtle elements, just as the gross creation is made of gross elements.

v) **Shubhrah**: “*absolutely pure*”; as It is not made up of even the subtle elements, it is called Pure. Elements are considered as being in the realm of Matter, and matter can always get tainted. This Divine Being is beyond the reach of taint. It is ever-Pure.

Not being gross or subtle, is It the causal state of creation?

4 No, It is also beyond the Causal state of creation. In Vedanta, the Causal state is called Ishwara, which may be translated as “God” as used in Western religions. The causal state is an unmanifest state of creation, but the seed of creation exists in this state. No, says the Rishi, It is even beyond this causal state.

Ishwara (God) is undoubtedly at a very high level in the cosmic hierarchy, for from Him the entire manifestation – subtle and gross - arises. Yet, the Supreme is higher still.

Paratah Para: This is the key phrase in this verse, meaning “Highest of the High”, “transcending even the transcendent Ishwara”. This places it above every level of creation – namely, gross, subtle as well as causal. He is the Supreme Purusha or Brahman, the ultimate entity in Vedanta philosophy. This is the Goal or Ultimate Reality of Para Vidya.

THE HIERARCHY IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Beyond Ishwara is Prakriti, the creative Power behind creation. Beyond this power of creation is the Supreme Being. The word **Akshara** is used in some texts to refer to either Ishwara or even Prakriti. These are not the Highest. Brahman is even higher than these levels.

In the *Geeta*, 15th Chapter, we have the words Kshara, Akshara and Uttama Akshara. The *Geeta*’s Kshara would coincide with the apex of the subtle creation, Hiranyagarbha. Its Akshara would coincide with Ishwara or God. This is the same as **Akshara** as used in this verse. The last term, Uttama Akshara of the *Geeta* is the Supreme Purusha referred to in this Upanishad as the “Highest of the high”.

The term ‘Kootastha’ is also used in some scriptures for the Supreme Purusha. Derived from the word *koota* meaning “an anvil”, it refers to that which remains unchanged even though everything else beaten upon it changes in shape. This Unchanging Reality is another term for the Supreme Brahman used in this text.

For clarity on Prakriti, other terms used for it are Maya, Avidya, Pradhana, Prakrita, Avyakta, Akasha and Akshara, as noted earlier.

The terms used depend on the context. Consider this example of numbers. Consider the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4. If the highest among them needs to be indicated, it would be 1. If the lowest is to be indicated, it would be 4. If the relative positions are being considered, then 1 would be Akshara compared to 2; 2 would be Akshara compared to 3; and 3 would be Akshara compared to 4. This is why the same term is seen applied to different items.

25 Verse 3.3: *Brahman as Hiranyagarbha – the Subtle Macrocosm*

एतस्माज्जायते प्रणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च ।
खं वायुर्ज्योतिरापः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी ॥ ३.३॥

1	<i>etasmaaj-jaayate praanah,</i>	<i>From Him (Brahman) are born the <u>Prana</u>,</i>
2	<i>manah sarvendriyaani cha;</i>	<i>the <u>mind</u>, and all the <u>sense organs</u>;</i>
3	<i>kham vaayu jyotir-aapah,</i>	<i>(and also the <u>elements</u>) sky, wind, fire, water,</i>
4	<i>prithivee vishwasya dhaarinee.</i>	<i>and earth which support all creation.</i>

At first thought, this verse seems to repeat the previous one. However, the Link passage of the Bhashya states the purpose of this verse as follows:

It is possible that the following doubt may exist in some people. Do the senses, Pranas, mind and intellect have an independent existence, different from the Supreme

Brahman? If so, then Brahman will also possess these entities. But these do not exist in Brahman; in fact, they arise from Brahman. This is what is shown through this verse.

1-4 The creation of the Subtle Body at Samashti or macrocosmic level is described here. The aim is to show that they cannot co-exist with Brahman. From Brahman in association with Maya arises Ishwara, the Creator. From Ishwara arises the five subtle elements or Tanmatras as listed in this verse. From those Tanmatras, arise the mind and the Pranas, from their Sattwic and Rajasic portions respectively.

Thus the subtle creation is shown to arise from Brahman. The subtle creation is certainly not on equal terms with the Brahman. Brahman is at the top of the hierarchy.

Subtle Body is Unreal

The Bhashya takes the above to its logical conclusion. It says that because the Subtle Body is not there before Creation, therefore it is not there even *after* Creation. In other words, its existence is in the realm of Unreality. The unreal cannot be said to exist. This is the hard line of reasoning that Sri Shankaracharyaji is well-known for. He is uncompromising when it comes to the definition of the Truth.

Thus these components of the Subtle Body do not exist in Brahman; they do not have their own reality; they are not really there; they are in the realm of names and forms only; and the reality behind them is Brahman.

The *Chandogya Upanishad* is quoted by Sri Shankaracharyaji to support this view. It is said there, “All is supported by speech only. They are all word-created.”

The logic was explained by Acharyaji as: “If a Brahmachari becomes a householder in dream, and has a son also in dream, can we give any reality to his marriage or to his son? In the same way, this subtle creation (needless to say, the gross creation as well) are unrealities that belong to the ‘dream’ of Brahman!”

The Bhashya considers the subtle body to be unreal for the simple reason that it is ‘born’ from Brahman.

26 Verse 3.4: *Brahman as Virat – the Gross Macrocosmic Person*

अग्नीर्मूर्धा चक्षुषी चन्द्रसूर्यौ
दिशः श्रोत्रे वाग् विवृताश्च वेदाः ।
वायुः प्रणो हृदयं विश्वमस्य
पद्भ्यां पृथिवी ह्येष सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ॥ ३.४॥

1	<i>agnih moordhaa, chakshushee chandra-sooryau,</i>	<i>Fire (Agni) is his head; the two eyes are the sun and the moon;</i>
2	<i>dishah shrotre, vaag vivritaah cha vedaah;</i>	<i>the four quarters or directions are His ears; the Vedas when uttered are His speech;</i>
3	<i>vaayuh praanah, hridayam vishvam asya,</i>	<i>air is His breath; the Universe is His heart (mind);</i>
4	<i>padbhyaam prithivee, hi esha sarva bhoota antar-aatmaa.</i>	<i>from His feet originated the Earth; He is indeed the inner Self of all beings.</i>

Here we have a verse which Pujya Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, describes as, “In this verse, Poetry, Philosophy and Art have combined. It is as if Plato has picked up the pen of Shelly to paint Cleopatra in order to represent the mighty beauty of the universe!” The one part-less Supreme is depicted as having different Parts, each one a Deity governing a set function.

1a i) Agni Devata: In Vedic culture, pride of place is given to the deity of Fire who conveys the messages of the worshippers to the respective Deity to whom it is addressed. Agni, therefore, which represents all the heavenly worlds as well as the lower worlds – fourteen worlds in all – is represented as the Head of the Self.

The various major parts of this huge Universe are then represented by the different organs of knowledge which are located in this ‘Head’. These are:

1b ii) Surya and Chandra: these deities are represented by the eyes of the Self;

2a iii) Dishah: Space; the four Directions are represented by His ears;

2b iv) Vedah: Fire; the declared Vedas are represented by His speech;

3a v) Vayuh: Air; the Air is represented by His breath;

3b vi) Vishvam: Water; the entire manifested Universe is represented by the mind;

4 vii) Prithvi: Earth; among all the various parts of the Cosmos, the Earth is only a small pebble represented by His feet – it is so tiny and insignificant.

This is the macrocosmic picture of **Virat** or the Total Gross Universe, Sri Gurudev’s “Cleopatra”! Virat is personified. The entire Samashti Cosmos is depicted as the Supreme Being or Person. It makes for a very beautiful, easily remembered Person. Virat is a technical term which stands for Consciousness in association with the Upadhi (Body) of the Total Universe at the gross level. Hierarchically, Virat stands next in line to Hiranyagarbha. We are reminded specifically that its origin lies in the Supreme Purusha, or Being or Akshara.

The Bhashya’s link to this verse explains the necessity of giving the *summary* (verse 3.1) as well as the *detail* description (this verse 3.4) of Creation. By doing so, the subject becomes thoroughly comprehended.

All the major parts of creation are pictured as the ‘sense organs of Knowledge’ by which the Supreme gathers to Himself information about Himself in His own creation! Each part is a Deity given different Names and presiding over the functions of those parts.

Indeed, the Rishis were not short of imagination, and how lavishly and splendidly did they splash it out! Perhaps this was not imagination to them, but how they actually saw themselves to be when they broke through the false limitations of their Upadhis and identified themselves with the whole of creation. What appears to us as a flair of exquisite imagination, is just daily fare to the realized sages!

27 Verse 3.5: *The “Panchagni” – The Five Fires in the Cosmos*

तस्मादग्निः समिधो यस्य सूर्यः

सोमात् पर्जन्य ओषधयः पृथिव्याम् ।

पुमान् रेतः सिञ्चति योषितायां

वह्नीः प्रजाः पुरुषात् सम्प्रसूताः ॥ ३.५॥

1	<i>tasmaat agnih samidhah yasya sooryah,</i>	<i>From Him are produced the (the 1st) fire whose fuel is the <u>Sun</u>;</i>
2	<i>somaat parjanya oshadhayah prithivyaam;</i>	<i>from the <u>Moon</u>, comes the rain clouds (the 2nd fire); (from <u>clouds</u>), the herbs (the 3rd fire) on earth;</i>
3	<i>pumaan retah, sinchati yoshitaayaam,</i>	<i>(from <u>herbs</u> comes) the man (the 4th fire); his <u>semen</u> is shed into the woman (the 5th fire);</i>
4	<i>(evam kramena), vahveeh prajaah purushaat samprasootaah.</i>	<i>(In this sequential process), Many living beings from the <u>Purusha</u>, are produced.</i>

The macrocosmic Universe of the previous verse is not a 'dead' Being; indeed, the depiction as a Purusha or Person is to show how *alive* is the Supreme Purusha. All forms of life, all living beings, are part of the dynamism of Nature.

This dynamism is seen in five identifiable stages. Every stage requires energy or "fire". The Panchagni or "Five Fires" are the five principle stages in the dynamism of Nature, which makes the Universe a dynamic, active field.

The Panchagni – Five Cosmic "Fires"

The five fires are:

1 i) Fire: the 1st fire; the great source of this fire is the Sun. It is the centre of the solar galaxy. Without the Sun, there would be no possibility of life on earth.

2a ii) Rain Clouds: the 2nd fire; the heat of the sun builds up in the sky during the day. The coolness of the Moon at night produces the rain clouds in the atmosphere.

2b iii) Herbs: the 3rd fire; the Rains discharged from the clouds seep into the earth and bring about the germination of seeds in it to produce the herbs eaten as food.

3a iv) Man: the 4th fire; from the nutrients of the Herbs, semen is produced in the male principle among living creatures. The finest part of the food is converted into the creative force of semen.

3b v) Woman: the 5th fire; the female principle that receives the Semen is the fifth fire. This is the "Cycle of Five Fires" by which all living beings are propagated in the world.

4 All these originate from the Supreme Purusha represented here by the Sun. Thus both the macrocosm and the microcosm have been explained in detail in the last two verses.

The Panchagni Ritual

The stages of this creation process of individual living beings are combined beautifully in the ritual called "**Panchagni**" that is prescribed for householders in general. The 'householder' here stands for householders from all the castes, belonging to all the three stages of development (Karma, Upasana and Jnana). All householders are enjoined to perform this ritual. Every householder is required to perform the Panchagni ritual daily to sanctify the performance of his duty to procreate the species.

Offerings are made to each "Fire", which is regarded as a deity.

28 Verse 3.6: *Origin of Karma Kanda Rituals*

तस्माद्दृचः साम यजूंषि दीक्षा
यज्ञाश्च सर्वे क्रतवो दक्षिणाश्च ।
संवत्सरश्च यजमानश्च लोकाः
सोमो यत्र पवते यत्र सूर्यः ॥ ३.६॥

1	<i>tasmaad richah, saama, yajoomshi,</i>	<i>From Him come the hymns of the Rig & Sama Vedas, and the sacrificial formulae of the Yajur Veda,</i>
2	<i>deekshaa yajnaah cha sarve kratavah, dakshinaash-cha;</i>	<i>used in the preliminary <u>rites</u>. Then come the sacrifice: the sacrificial post, the sacrificial gifts, etc,</i>
3	<i>samvatsarah cha yajamaana cha lokaah,</i>	<i>the time of sacrifice, the sponsor of the sacrifice; and the worlds (to be gained by the sacrifice);</i>
4	<i>somah yatra pavate yatra sooryah.</i>	<i>purified by the lunar and solar paths.</i>

The origin of what is called the Karma Kanda of the Vedas is being explained in this verse. The Karma Kanda contains descriptions of various sacrifices or rituals that have to be conducted in order that the performer obtains their respective desired fruits.

There is great precision and order in how the cosmos is governed. Nothing just happens by chance. For a thing to be executed in the Cosmos, it has to be taken in detail through every “Departmental office” of the Governing agency. From planning to execution is a long string of events each of which has to be done at the proper time, and each one to be performed in a particular manner. Then the final result is guaranteed.

The Detailed Ordering Procedure

Some idea of the procedure, protocol, time factors, and ‘payment’ methods is given in this verse, and this sort of Requisition Format is to be followed precisely, not lackadaisically:

1a i) Richah, Saama, Yajumshi: The Vedic Mantras have to be chanted with precision with regard to their meter, intonation, letters, feet, regulated length etc, such as Gayatri and other meters. There is the Sama Veda, in which the meters are divided into five or seven parts, and embellished with various tunes. In the Yajur Veda are Mantras which do not have any fixed patterns. They are prose sentences.

1b ii) Deekshaa: this concerns the initial ceremonies like wearing a girdle of *munja* grass on the finger, as well as the preparatory observances like sipping water, applying sandal paste, etc, which the sacrificer does prior to the actual ritual.

2a iii) Yajnaah: Then come all the detailed sacrifices. There could be a string of them, one following the other.

2b iv) Kratavah: This determines whether the ritual is to be done with or without an animal sacrifice. A stake driven in the ground near the site of the ritual would indicate that an animal sacrifice is included.

2c v) Dakshinaa: The proper procedure for making the offerings has to be followed.

3a vi) Samvatsarah: The time of the ritual. Many rituals are governed by the time of the year, the position of the moon and sun, and so on.

3b vii) Yajamana: The sacrificer, the performer or recipient of the results.

3c viii) Lokaah: The particular world, which could be this earth or any of numerous heavenly worlds that the Yajamana desires to attain, is specified.

4 ix) Yatra Soma, Yatra Soorya: These worlds are attainable through two paths, the southern and northern; also known as the lunar or the solar respectively. The lunar is for desire-prompted actions; the solar is for desireless actions.

Some Related Points

1. The Bhashyakara emphatically states that rituals of this sort which are the subject of the *Karma Kanda*, are for people who are not concerned with the ultimate purpose of life, and who are happy just to live according to their sensory needs and desires.

2. This entire procedure is very similar to how internet shopping is done. The order is placed on-line, all the payment details are given, the items requested are ticked and sent. After a short waiting time, the delivery van arrives at your door with all the goods!

3. The *Supreme Purusha* is the owner of this bountiful “Cosmic Superstore”!

4. With the desire for higher values, the list of “Requests” or the shopping list changes accordingly, as we note in the next verse . . .

29 Verse 3.7: *Origin of Upasana Kanda Rituals*

तस्माच्च देवा बहुधा सम्प्रसूताः

साध्या मनुष्याः पशवो वयांसि ।

प्राणापानौ ब्रीहियवौ तपश्च

श्रद्धा सत्यं ब्रह्मचर्यं विधिश्च

॥ ३.७॥

1	<i>tasmaat cha devaa bahudhaa samprasootaah,</i>	<i>From Him also the Gods of various hierarchies are born:</i>
2	<i>saadhyaa, manushyaah, pashavah, vayaamsi;</i>	<i>There are the <u>celestials</u>, the <u>men</u>, the <u>animals</u> and the <u>birds</u>;</i>
3	<i>praana-apaanau, vreehi-yavau tapah cha,</i>	<i>There are the <u>in-breath</u> and <u>out-breath</u>, the <u>corn</u> and <u>barley</u>, and power of <u>thought</u>;</i>
4	<i>shraddhaa, satyam, brahmacharyam, vidhi cha.</i>	<i>there are <u>faith</u> (devotion), <u>truthfulness</u>, <u>sexual abstinence</u>, and all the <u>values</u> of life.</i>

Here we see the level aimed for is raised in the person who begins thinking of selectively determining what is worth striving for and what he should avoid. Desires are still present, but they are filtered through the sieve of **Dharma** or Cosmic Law. Only what is legitimate and acceptable to God is considered worth striving for.

As soon as he develops his intellect sufficiently to be able to grasp the good from the bad, the desirable from the undesirable, he needs to visit a more “Specialist Store” which caters for his requirements. That is what this verse introduces – the *Upasana Kanda*.

However, those that engage in this kind of relationship with the Cosmos, should know that they also are still within the realm of transmigration or Samsara. In other words, this stage is not for those who seek to be liberated. That comes only in the *Jnana Kanda*.

1 Devah Bahudha: These are the various Deities being worshipped. They are divided into a number of groups or pantheons.

2a Saadhyaah: The highest class fall under the category of Deities or celestials.

2b Manushyah: Then come the human beings, who undertake these rituals.

2c Pashava and Vayaamsi: These are animals and birds.

3a Prana – Apana: The breathing in and out done as part of the rituals. This signifies the various orders of life, all of which require Prana to live.

3b Vreehi and Yavau: Rice and barley offerings. These represent one's food needs.

3c Tapas: This could mean either the part of a ritual where personal purification is done, or it could be the austerity that is prescribed for the performer after which he gets the desired result. In either case, some form of self-restraint is being prescribed.

4 Shraddha, Satya, Brahmacharya and Vidhi: These are further personal observances of the same nature as Tapas, and are prescribed in varying degrees of intensity to acquire various merits and mental capacities.

The procedure is more or less the same as above, but a higher order of things are needed. The ideas contained in verses 3.6-7 may be compared in the following way:

i) Karma Kandis: This is like buying at a Supermarket – money is the only criterion to get whatever one wants;

ii) Karma – Upasang: This is like applying for a job – one needs, in addition to money, some skill or some very unique talent to get his desire granted.

However, all these things originate in the Supreme Purusha. This is the undercurrent that runs throughout this Chapter.

30 Verse 3.8: *The Secret of "Groups of Seven"*

सप्त प्राणाः प्रभवन्ति तस्मात्
 सप्तार्चिषः समिधः सप्त होमाः ।
 सप्त इमे लोका येषु चरन्ति प्राणा
 गुहाशया निहिताः सप्त सप्त ॥ ३.८॥

1	<i>sapta praanaah prabhavanti tasmaat,</i>	<i>The seven <u>Pranas</u> are born from Him alone; (and so are....)</i>
2	<i>sapta archishah, samidhah, sapta homaah;</i>	<i>the seven <u>flames</u>, the sevenfold <u>fuel</u>, the sevenfold <u>oblations</u>;</i>
3	<i>sapta ime lokaa yesu charanti praanaa,</i>	<i>as also the seven "nodal points" or <u>Chakras</u> where the Pranas are seated (for distribution in the body);</i>
4	<i>guhaashayaa nihitaah, 'sapta sapta'.</i>	<i>in the "cave of the heart" (of all beings) lie all these in groups of seven's.</i>

Pujya Gurudev sums up the style of this verse as: "On a rough reading, this would naturally confuse anyone, for, in its literal meaning, it has no sense at all. But it is the style of the scriptures to use such code language." Like the class notes of a college student that are meaningless to another person, the scriptures are rough lecture notes taken down by

the Rishis when they sat at the Feet of God in meditation, listening to His silent Divine Lectures!

1 Sapta Prana: The seven Pranas – are taken to be the seven sense organs located in the head: two ears, two eyes, two nostrils and one tongue. The descriptions here are for those who wish to desire good, vibrant health; special talents as in sports; or specific knowledge.

All these desires require very sharp senses, trained to be extra observant and sensitive and to work with great co-ordination and dexterity, as for example, a musician or an artist, or a gymnast or a scientist.

2a Sapta Archishah: the seven flames – we have already learnt these in 2.4;

2b Sapta Samidha: the seven kinds of fuel – the seven sense objects;

2c Sapta Homa: the seven oblations – the perception of those sense objects;

3 Sapta Lokah: the seven seats – these are the Chakras in the body where the Pranas are more concentrated; they are the distribution points for Prana to flow for different functions in the body from Muladhara at the root of the spine to Sahasra at the crown of the head.

4 Sapta Sapta: in groups of seven – in everything one will see that they occur in groups of sevens. All these are to be seen as an integral part of our whole being. They are centred in the “cave of our heart” where resides the Atman or inner Self.

The main point in all these verses is: Worshippers should remember that the bestower of all these is none other than the Supreme Purusha.

31 Verse 3.9: *Our Physical Environment*

अतः समुद्रा गिरयश्च सर्वे
 अस्मात् स्यन्दन्ते सिन्धवः सर्वरूपाः ।
 अतश्च सर्वा ओषधयो रसश्च
 येनैष भूतैस्तिष्ठते ह्यन्तरात्मा ॥ ३.९॥

1	<i>atah samudraah girayah cha sarve</i>	<i>From Him, all oceans and mountains arise;</i>
2	<i>asmaat syandante sindhavah sarva-roopaah;</i>	<i>from Him, flow rivers of every description;</i>
3	<i>atah cha sarvaa oshadhayah rasah cha,</i>	<i>from Him, too, arise herbs and medicinal saps;</i>
4	<i>yena eshah bhootaih tishthate hi antaraatmaa.</i>	<i>by these gross elements of matter is indeed the subtle body surrounded.</i>

The idea of the “groups of seven” may be carried over into this verse as well, adding richness and uniformity to its meaning. Thus, it would be the seven oceans, the seven mountain ranges, the seven great rivers, the seven great medicinal systems of the world, and so on. The proclamation is generalized to all beings. Everything that supports their life on earth is an emanation of the Supreme Purusha.

1a Samudraah: “the seven oceans”. These are the Atlantic, Pacific, Antarctic, Indian, Arabian, Bay of Bengal (keeping the focus on India), and the Arctic.

1b Girayah: “the seven mountain ranges”. These are the Himalayas, Vindhyas, Ghats in India); the Alps, the Andes, the Rockies, etc.

2 Sindhavah: “the seven great rivers”. These are (in India) Ganga, Yamuna, Godaveri, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Cauveri.

3 Oshadhayah: “the seven great medicinal systems”. These are Ayurveda (Indian), Unani (Arabian), Homoeopathy (European), Allopathy (Western), etc.

4 Bhootaih: “by the seven elements”. These are the five elements as we already know them, together with the sun and the moon which are considered as elements.

In this world, all beings are surrounded or encircled by all of the above groups (3.8 and 3.9). This is our physical environment, and it is an integral part of us. They all arise from the Supreme Purusha. This theme runs throughout this chapter.

32 Verse 3.10: **Brahman & Universe Are One**

पुरुष एवेदं विश्वं कर्म
तपो ब्रह्म परामृतम् ।
एतद्यो वेद निहितं गुहायां
सोऽविद्याग्रन्थिं विकिरतीह सोम्य ॥ ३.१०॥

1	<i>purusha evedam vishvam, karma, tapo;</i>	<i>The Purusha alone is this entire Universe – the sacrificial works and austerities;</i>
2	<i>brahma para amritam;</i>	<i>This highest and immortal Brahman</i>
3	<i>etad yo veda nihitam guhaayaam,</i>	<i>He who knows It as seated in the cavity of the heart,</i>
4	<i>sah avidyaa granthim vikirati iha, somya.</i>	<i>unties the knot of ignorance even here in this very life, O good-looking son.</i>

1-2 This concludes the chapter which now brings us to an understanding that the Supreme Purusha is most certainly That which not just sits at the “top of the pile”, but is verily the whole pile itself. It was indeed a grand whirlwind tour of the Cosmos and all its major sectors and divisions – all in groups of sevens.

There are two major groups of people, seeking two different sets of desires.

i) The Karma Kandis seek pleasure through **Karma** or actions on earth.

ii) The Karma-Upasakas seek a similar but more refined form of pleasure in heaven, with a strong basis of Dharma through striving for knowledge, excellence and talent.

3-4 However, the higher knowledge is not available through any of these means. That requires a very special sacrifice – the sacrifice of one’s Ego and discovering one’s true Self in the “cavity of his own heart”. To do that requires one to disentangle himself from the “knots” he has got into in attachments in the world.

That is the knowledge we are now ready to move on to.

॥ इति मुण्डकोपनिषदि द्वितीयमुण्डके प्रथमः खण्डः ॥
iti mundakopanishadi dviteeya mundake prathamah khandah.
Thus in the Mundaka Upanishad, ends the first Section of the Second Canto.



4. PENETRATING BRAHMAN

(Verses 33-43, 11 no.)

॥ द्वितीय मुण्डके द्वितीयः खण्डः ॥

dviteeya mundake dviteeyah khandah –

Here begins the second Section of the second Canto.

HERE WE HAVE SOME of the most sublime verses of the Upanishads that direct our mind towards union with the Supreme Brahman. The stage has been set in the last three Chapters for us to now move onto the runway of Para Vidya. Aparā Vidya was extensively covered in the earlier Chapters with a view to showing us how inadequate it is in furthering our spiritual evolution. The dispassion gained by a study of that Vidya gives us an entry point into the Para Vidya which we are about to begin.

33 Verse 4.1: *Brahman's "Business Card"*

आविः संनिहितं गुहाचरं नाम
महत्पदमत्रैतत् समर्पितम् ।
एजत्प्राणन्निमिषच्च यदेतज्-
जानथ सदसद्वरेण्यं परं
विज्ञानाद्यद्वरिष्ठं प्रजानाम्

॥ ४.१॥

1	<i>aaviḥ san-nihitam guhaacharam;</i>	<i>Bright and effulgent, existing very close, moving in the cavity of the heart;</i>
2	<i>naama mahat, padam, atra etat samarpitam;</i>	<i>Known as Mahat, "The Great", the support of all, in and around Him is all this (Universe) centred;</i>
3	<i>ejat praanat nimishat cha yad etat;</i>	<i>Whatever moves, breathes and winks, (all sentient beings) all these are He (Brahman);</i>
4	<i>jaanatha sad-asad, varenyam param;</i>	<i>Know Him to be with form (gross) or without form (subtle), most adorable, the highest of beings;</i>
5	<i>vijaanaad yad, varishtham prajaanaam.</i>	<i>He is beyond the understanding of the intellect; He is the adorable Lord of all living beings.</i>

This verse is the Lord's "Business Card"! It briefly gives us His address and some directions of where to locate Him. Yes, if we look carefully, it contains His mobile, email and website as well, all in neat Vedantic code format. He is, after all, the very Subject of our discussion for this whole chapter, so we'd better get to know Him personally.

His details are as follows:

1 Avih – He is bright and effulgent; *handsome* would be an under-statement for Him!

Sannihitam – He lives very close to us, is always at hand, and always on call.

Guhacharam – How far away? In the very “cavity of our heart”, at the core of our being; to some that means the chest, where we all point to show who ‘me’ is. To others He is between the eye-brows where they focus during meditation; to yet others He is in their intellect, the seat of all their thinking and enquiring.

2 Naama – His name is Mahat, “the Great One”, the greatest of all. As lumps of clay on a potter’s wheel, we are placed on His wheel, being shaped by Him at every moment. He is the centre of the wheel of our life.

3 What is fixed on Brahman? All that moves. All living beings are mounted on Him, so to speak. This refers to the fact that the whole creation is superimposed upon the Lord. He is the canvas upon which we are all paintings! His website is the whole universe.

4 Brahman has two mobile numbers and can be contacted on either one at any time. They are: i) everything with form, and ii) everything without form. It all depends on which one is more convenient to us. Not all of us may be able to reach Him on His Formless line, but everyone can easily reach Him in one or more of the many forms used to depict Him.

Varenyam – He is the most worthy, adorable, desirable and covetable item to be known, because He is Eternal and He is seated in our own heart. His email address is: brahman@heartsofall.com as He resides in all beings and things ever known to us. And we don’t need a computer to send Him a mail; we just need lots of love for our fellowmen and we are instantly online!

5 Such a great, wonderful and divine Person, our closest Friend and Guide, is He who dwells in our heart! Let Him be throughout this Universe, what does it matter; to the devotee He is always in his own heart, ever accessible and on call 24/7!

Such is the introduction the Rishi gives us to Brahman, our own true Self, the Lord of our being. Would we not be most anxious to know more of Him, the centre of our life?

Acharyaji told us that as a young schoolboy he used to ask his teacher what was beyond space. He was always very curious and investigative from an early age. This verse is the Business Card he was looking for to answer his childhood questions.

34 Verse 4.2: “On Your Marks” – Eyeing the Target

यदर्चिमद्यदणुभ्योऽणु च

यस्मिँल्लोका निहिता लोकिनश्च ।

तदेतदक्षरं ब्रह्म स प्राणस्तदु वाङ्मनः

तदेतत्सत्यं तदमृतं तद्वेद्धव्यं सोम्य विद्धि ॥ ४.२॥

1	<i>yad archimat yad anubhyo anu cha,</i>	<i>That which is <u>luminous</u>, <u>subtler</u> than the subtlest;</i>
2	<i>yasmin lokaa nihitaa lokinah cha;</i>	<i>in which the <u>worlds</u> & all <u>inhabitants</u> are seated;</i>
3	<i>tad etad aksharam brahma,</i>	<i>Know That as the <u>Indestructible</u> Reality:</i>
4	<i>sa praanah tad u vaang manah,</i>	<i>He is the <u>life-force</u>, as well as <u>speech</u> and <u>mind</u>;</i>
5	<i>tad etat satyam, tad amritam,</i>	<i>That is this <u>Reality</u>, That is <u>Immortality</u>.</i>
6	<i>tat veddhavyam somya viddhi.</i>	<i>That is the <u>target</u>. O dear youth, <u>penetrate</u> That!</i>

In lines reminiscent of the first few verses of Chapter 3, we have again a description of the Supreme Purusha. This time it is for the student to set Him as his Target or Goal, and shoot it with the arrow of meditation! We are now in the practical part of the text. The thoughts may be familiar, but their purpose is now to drive us to our meditation seat, not remain in our armchairs.

1 Yat Archimat – As in the last verse, we keep our mind focused on the self-luminous nature of the Self. By Its Light, all else shines. This takes us forward to the subtlety of Brahman.

2 Lokaah, Lokinah – Where are we being told to see these two qualities? We remind ourselves that this text has adopted the Macrocosm as the path to the Supreme, not the individual microcosm. Hence, we are to keep our attention focussed on the vast cosmos. We are being directed not to lose sight of the fact that we should feel our Presence as being all the worlds and all the dwellers of these worlds. Naturally, it is a huge task, but we have to start getting out of our narrow ego-self. We cannot carry our ego with us on this journey.

3 Aksharam – The support of the whole universe is the Supreme Indestructible Brahman; that is where we are to concentrate our consciousness on. Anything that is perishable has to be put aside, since Brahman does not lie there.

4 Sah Pranah – He is our very Life principle; He is in our very speech and mind. It needs total silence and 100% attention to attempt this exercise to sift out the Real from that which appears to be real. We are to go deep and find the Real substratum.

That is the exercise. Do we need anything more to begin? No, only an assurance that we are on the right road. Hence, a repetition of the assurance is made at this point...

5 Tadetat Satyam – We have for the third time in the book so far the words **Tadetat Satyam**, which emphatically declare that this is the Truth without doubt. The Rishi, having already walked the Path, knows how important it is for us to reassure ourselves on this difficult journey to the Unknown.

Tad Amritam – as though that assurance is not enough, the fruit that awaits us is mentioned for greater encouragement. It is nothing short of Immortality. Is it not worth it? How can we now abandon this journey before reaching that Goal! It would be unthinkable to stop and retrace our steps.

6 Tad Veddhavyam – It is also that which we are going to soon penetrate, or shoot at, with our mind and intellect in meditation. Here is the instruction for the moment, the most important moment – NOW. With superhuman effort, we are called to give our best attention NOW, to bring all our energies to one point – on the Target, the Supreme Being.

“Hence, O dear disciple! Be in readiness. Get your mind focused on that Imperishable – for soon you are going to ‘shoot’ at it with full concentration!”

Acharyaji gave us a beautiful example quoted by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He used to ask his disciples to imagine a fly approaching a large lake of nectar. What would it do first? The disciples gave various answers, most common being that the fly would go to the edge of the lake and pull to its heart’s content the nectar from it.

Sri Ramakrishna laughed at them all. He said, “Being nectar the fly would have the faith that it cannot die. So it would just blindly go and dart straight into the centre of the lake. And why not have the whole body bathed in the sacred nectar!” That is the spirit that is encouraged in the disciple at this key juncture in his life.

35 Verse 4.3: “Get Set” – Preparing to Shoot

धनुर् गृहीत्वौपनिषदं महास्त्रं
 शरं ह्युपासा निश्चितं सन्धीत ।
 आयम्य तद्भावागतेन चेतसा
 लक्ष्यं तदेवाक्षरं सोम्य विद्धि ॥ ४.३॥

1	<i>ghanur griheetvaa upani-shadam mahaa astraam,</i>	Having taken up the bow furnished by the <u>Upanishads</u> , the “Great Weapon” of knowledge,
2	<i>sharam hi upaasaanishitam sandhayeeta;</i>	with the arrow sharpened by constant <u>meditation</u> fixed firmly upon it;
3	<i>aayamya tad bhaava gatena chetasaa,</i>	and drawing it having That object alone fixed wholly in the mind;
4	<i>lakshyam tad eva aksharam, somya viddhi.</i>	having That Immortal alone as the target , O dear young man, penetrate (shoot) That!

This verse gives the instructions on focusing ourselves in meditation and preparing to shoot at the target. The simile of the bow and arrow is used to heighten the effect.

1 Dhanuh Griheetva – the bow that is taken up in the hand is the great weapon of knowledge in the Upanishads. The identity of the “bow” is yet a secret to be unfolded in the next verse.

2 Sharam – the arrow; again, what the arrow represents is to be found in the next verse. We only know that it has to be well-sharpened, sharp enough to pierce the target and become one with it. We are also told that meditation will do this sharpening. The arrow is to be well mounted on the bow.

3 Aayamya – drawing the string, that is, withdrawing the inner mental instrument from the senses and its objects, and concentrating it just on the target. The mind is brought to a single-minded focus, on the thought of Brahman alone. It is totally fixed on Brahman.

4 Lakshyam Tadeva Aksharam – the Lakshya or target here is intended to remain a secret at this point, but the Bhashya leaks it out. Focussed fully on that target, “Shoot!” says the Guru to his dear disciple. Strike the target with certainty.

The concern of the Guru for the success of the disciple is seen in the endearing term used to address him. One can pick up the spirit of the spiritual quest very clearly from this verse. The whole attention is required. It is as though it were a matter of life and death.

36 Verse 4.4: “Go!” – Hitting the Target

प्रणवो धनुः शारो ह्यात्मा ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते ।
 अप्रमत्तेन वेद्धव्यं शरवत् तन्मयो भवेत् ॥ ४.४॥

1	<i>pranavo dhanuh sharah hi aatmaa,</i>	With Pranava as bow, and Atman as arrow,
2	<i>brahma tat lakshyam uchyate;</i>	Brahman is said to be its mark or goal.
3	<i>apramattena veddhavyam,</i>	By being steady and undeflected, hit the Goal!
4	<i>sharavat tat-mayah bhavet.</i>	Like an arrow, unite yourself to the target.

Here we have the full application of the metaphor as described in suspense in the previous verse. Each part of the metaphor is given its counterpart in the meditation process.

Each part of the metaphor is now explained one by one:

1a i) The Bow = the Pranava, Om. Omkara is used as a Jnaana Alambana (symbol). We saw earlier that this knowledge is found in the Upanishads. The Brahma Sootras tell us that the Upanishads are the sole (reliable) authority on this matter.

When Om is chanted without the knowledge, the result produced is not Liberation, but simply the purification of the mind, about which we shall see in a moment.

1b ii) The Arrow = the Jeeva-Atman or the individual soul; earlier we noted that its sharpening was essential. Now we know what the sharpening meant. It is the purification of the soul from all taint of past Karma, all hidden tendencies and desires. This purification is the most essential spiritual Sadhana to be done by a seeker. The purified Jeeva is no different from the Atman or Self.

2 iii) The Target = Brahman, the Supreme Imperishable, Indestructible Being, referred to earlier as *Akshara*. This target is not an external target, but is to be found seated at the very core of our being in the heart centre.

3 iv) The Focussing = the 100% concentration that is needed during meditation. Because unerring precision is required here, concentration is not good enough as a translation. The correct expression used is ***Apramattena***, “to become one with the target mentally”; then there is no question of missing the target.

4 v) The Arrow Merging With Target = the Jeeva discovering its Oneness or identity with Brahman, the Supreme Purusha.

Inadvertence is the most serious error at this crucial stage of meditation. The slightest trace of inadvertence would mean missing the goal. The Sadhaka should fully realize the seriousness of the quest at this stage. There is no room whatsoever for error. It is like a spacecraft which needs to be controlled with 100% precision.

37 Verse 4.5: ***To Attain Totality, Abandon Individuality***

यस्मिन् द्यौः पृथिवी चान्तरिक्षम्—

ओतं मनः सह प्राणैश्च सर्वैः ।

तमेवैकं जानथ आत्मानम्

अन्या वाचो विमुञ्चथामृतस्यैष सेतुः

॥ ४.५॥

1	<i>yasmin dyauh prithivee cha antariksham,</i>	<i>He, in whom the <u>heaven</u>, the <u>earth</u>, and the <u>interspatial regions</u></i>
2	<i>otam manah saha praanaih cha sarvaih;</i>	<i>are centred; together with the <u>mind</u> and all the <u>life-breaths</u> (Pranas);</i>
3	<i>tam eva ekam jaanatha aatmaanam,</i>	<i>That One alone – know That to be the Self of all (Brahman).</i>
4	<i>anyaa vaacho vimunchatha amritasya eshah setuh.</i>	<i>Desist from all other talk; for This is the Bridge to the shore of <u>Immortality</u>!</i>

The Link in the Bhashya stresses the need for repetition in a topic as important as the union with the Supreme Brahman. Since one in a million people may strive towards this goal, it shows how hard it is to grasp this idea fully. Even intellectual comprehension is so hard, let alone actually realizing the Self. The need for sticking tenaciously to the original Goal is highlighted here. We recall that the Path adopted in this Upanishad is to approach the Supreme via the Tat Pada, i.e. the Samashti or Macrocosm.

Therefore, at no stage should we permit ourselves to be deflected from that Goal by egoistic notions. We have to forget our individuality at the very outset. The Goal chosen is to unite with the Supreme by meditating on our oneness with the whole cosmos.

1 Yasmin – “In Him”, i.e. in the Supreme Purusha; heaven, earth and the interspace merge into the Supreme. This implies that all Space is to be transcended. If Space is transcended, then Time also is automatically transcended, as the two function together.

2 The destruction or the dissolution of the mind is meant here, which is the same as giving up all desires and selfish interests. The mind is nothing without its bundle of desires.

3-4 “Desist from all other talk.” At this point the Rishi insists on the seeker keeping faith with his original Goal. At no cost must he be tempted to change the technique he is shown here. There is no point in changing boats in midstream, as it were. One has to stay in the same boat till the other shore is reached.

The other shore is Immortality. Until that is reached, no time should be wasted on discussions on the merits or demerits of the path chosen.

In the method chosen here, the seeker has at the very outset given up all clinging to his individual personality. Personal considerations are therefore not dealt with in this Upanishad. It is important to remember this, as otherwise one could go away with the feeling that this Upanishad is lop-sided in its approach to Truth.

One can hear the anguished concern of the Teacher: “Him alone who is one without a second, O disciples, know Him alone to be the Self, He is your innermost Reality as also the Self of all beings. The principle of Ego is to be negated to achieve this.”

38 Verse 4.6: *Meditation: From Centre to Circumference*

अरा इव रथनाभौ संहता यत्र नाद्यः ।
 स एषोऽन्तश्चरते बहुधा जायमानः ।
 ओमित्येवं ध्यायथ आत्मानं
 स्वस्ति वः पाराय तमसः परस्तात् ॥ ४.६॥

1	<i>araa iva rathanaabhau, samhataa yatra naadyah;</i>	<i>As in the hub of a chariot wheel, all the spokes meet there; so too, like a “Nerve” that</i>
2	<i>sah eshah antah charate bahudhaa jaayamaanah.</i>	<i>moves out from the heart, He the Supreme Being, Himself multiplies and becomes the manifold.</i>
3	<i>om iti, evam dhyayatha aatmaanam,</i>	<i>As “Om”, meditate on that Self.</i>
4	<i>svasti vah paaraaya tamasah parastaat.</i>	<i>Godspeed to you in crossing to the farther shores beyond darkness!</i>

Now is described the details of the meditation procedure to be adopted. The Yogi goes deep within himself, and as he does so, he is asked to keep his attention on:

The Simile of the Hub and the Spokes

1 The spokes radiate outward from the hub of a wheel. The hub itself does not move. It is the spokes that are seen rotating around the hub.

2 In the same way, the heart centre of the person meditating is thought to be like the hub of a wheel. The Supreme Purusha is seated there, very calm and still to all appearances. The meditator is given the following exercise: From the heart, he has to imagine that the Supreme Being Himself is emerging as a main “Nerve” channel, and as He emerges, He starts dividing Himself and becoming many, like the branches of blood vessels coming out of the heart.

The aorta comes out directly from the heart and soon it divides into branches until it has become millions of tiny capillaries. The Supreme is like that aorta – as He moves out of the heart he sub-divides Himself into many smaller capillaries. These represent the multi-facetted universe we see around us. It is all He alone. Creation is no different from Him. This is the technique of meditation presented in the first part of this verse.

Then the attention shifts to the repetition of Om which is taking place simultaneously with the above technique, to aid its proper execution. As our attention shifts, so does the meter of the verse change. This change of meter to indicate a change in the thought is a common literary device used by composers of the Upanishads.

3 At this stage, the seeker takes the help of an age-old method proven in the Upanishads of bringing the mind to a focus on the Self. This is the repetition of Om done in silence, and with full awareness of the knowledge gathered about the Self. With a complete intellectual grasp of the requirement ahead of him, the seeker repeats the sacred Mantra Om. This has the designed effect of eliminating all stray thoughts from the seeker’s mind.

4 The Guru wishes him well with his practice. The kindness and joy of the Guru is clearly seen in the words used, “Godspeed to you!” Instruction and love combine to produce zeal and vigour in the student.

The disciple has to now practice and perfect himself in this technique. The meditator needs to be left to himself to do this. The ball is in the disciple’s court. Ultimately he comes to the realization that his deeper Self is no different from the whole creation. The Lord in his heart is the same Lord out there in every speck of the universe!

39 Verse 4.7: *Meditation: From Circumference to Centre*

यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद् यस्यैष महिमा भुवि ।
दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे ह्येष व्योमन्यात्मा प्रतिष्ठितः ॥ ४.७.१॥
मनोमयः प्राणशरीरनेता
प्रतिष्ठितोऽन्ने हृदयं सन्निधाय ।
तद् विज्ञानेन परिपश्यन्ति धीरा
आनन्दरूपममृतं यद् विभाति ॥ ४.७.२॥

1	<i>yah sarvajnah sarvavid,</i>	<i>He is all-knowing, both in totality and in detail;</i>
2	<i>yasya esha mahimaa bhuvi;</i>	<i>His is verily this glory manifest in the world.</i>
3	<i>divye brahmapure hi eshah,</i>	<i>He is indeed in the luminous “City of Brahman”,</i>
4	<i>vyomni aatmaa pratishtitah.</i>	<i>He is established in the inner “Sky of Atman”.</i>

5	<i>manomayah, praana-shareera-netaa,</i>	<i>He, being one with the mind and intelligence, guides the life-forces within the body;</i>
6	<i>pratishtitah anne hridayam sannidhaaya;</i>	<i>He is seated in the food (i.e. the gross body of man), and is to be found “clothed” in one’s heart;</i>
7	<i>tad vijnaanena paripashyanti dheeraa,</i>	<i>By having perfect knowledge of Him, the wise one realizes Him –</i>
8	<i>aananda-roopam amritam yad vibhaati.</i>	<i>as the form (or nature) of Bliss Absolute, which manifests Itself as Immortality!</i>

The previous verse has taken us from the Unity of the Hub to the circumference of Plurality. Now we are going in the reverse direction in the first part of the verse, i.e. in **1-4**. We are converging to the Supreme Purusha, beginning with the detail of the totality and ending at the Hub, our heart centre, the “Sky of Atman”.

It has to be understood at all stages, however, that it is Para Vidya that is being spoken about here. Para Vidya is not only about the Hub, but the whole wheel. The point is to see the Supreme in everything. The goal, regardless of the starting point from which the seeker begins, is always the same – complete union with the Imperishable, Akshara Brahman.

1 Sarvajnah, Sarvavid: In verse 1.9, we have already come across these two terms which represent different shades of omniscience. The first term is omniscience from an overview perspective; the second term is omniscience from the perspective of every detail. Both shades of knowledge are needed for the successful completion of any undertaking.

2 We now come closer to the hub a little by taking into view only those parts of creation in which the Lord stands out in all glory. We pick out the Everest among mountains, the Ganges among rivers, the Sun among all the stars, and so on. It is a smaller circle, but it is more glorious, more spectacular, more dazzling. It is the Supreme as an undiluted concentrate! In the Bhagavad Geeta a whole Chapter (Discourse 10) is devoted to these glories of the Lord.

In the Bhashya his glory is detailed as: a) the *heavens* and *earth* are held in position by Him; b) the *sun* and *moon* rotate interminably by His command; c) the *rivers* and *seas* do not overflow their boundaries; d) the *living* and *non-living* beings are directed by Him; e) the *seasons* and the *years* follow each other in order; f) *Karmas* and their *fruits* do not violate their appointed times – such is His glory in this world.

3 Brahmapure: Among these glories, which would be the most outstanding? A vote among sages comes up with the answer – Man; Man is the glory of Creation, owing to his superior intellect and ability to realize the Supreme. The “City of Brahman” refers to this astonishing creation of the Lord called Man.

We have converged a further step towards the Hub by coming to Man.

Man is the only living being in creation who can acquire the merit to transcend Samsara and launch himself into the Absolute, going even past Ishwara the Creator. What a

magnificent instrument is this Man! Yet, sages say, that if he does not strive for this, he is worse than an animal!

4 in this luminous “City of Brahman”, where is the centre in which our Self is felt? Where is “Me”? This brings us to the heart centre, the core of our being (**Vyomni**), where the **Atman** is seated. This is described as the ‘throne’ of the Self in the body.

It is precisely at this centre where we draw together our whole attention during meditation. It is here that we can realize our true nature of Divinity. It is here where we can experience “Infinity in a grain of sand”!

Recognising the Supreme Within

As in the previous verse, we have a change of meter midway through this verse. The change is that from the “external” we have entered within the body. Now within the body itself we go through a process of distinguishing where exactly is the Supreme lodged.

5 We note that He is not the Manomaya Kosha and Vijnanamaya Kosha (mind and intellect) but is associated and conditioned by them; through them, He controls the flow of the life-forces or Pranas within the body. In this way, we are taught that He is not the Pranic sheath or Pranamaya Kosha also, but is beyond them and in control of them.

6a The most gross of all sheaths is the gross body which is made of food. It is called the Annamaya Kosha. The Supreme is also not the Food sheath. Thus four out of the five sheaths have been negated.

6b These four sheaths are like garments or clothes worn over the Self. Being clothes, they take the same “form” as the Self but are not the Self. It is as though they are pretending to be the Self. However, they help us by giving us clues as to where the Self is. The “clothed” or sheathed Supreme Purusha is in the *Heart-Centre*. We can only realize Him when we have “unclothed” Him of all these outer sheaths.

7 *Tad Vijnanena* – Now we tackle the fifth and final sheath, that is closest to the Self. It is the sheath of Ignorance, but it deludes us into thinking that it is the source of our happiness or joy. Hence it is called the Bliss sheath or Anandamaya Kosha. This sheath cannot simply be negated like the others. As this sheath is Pure Ignorance itself, it can only be destroyed by *Para Vidya* or the special knowledge of the Self, as obtained from the scriptures (*Shrutih*) and the realized teachers (*Dheeraah*).

8 When the Anandamaya Kosha is destroyed, true Bliss Absolute is experienced within. The Rishi gives us the assurance that the experience of Bliss is equivalent to being in a state of Immortality. In other words, the true Self does not partake of the birth and death of the five sheaths; It transcends them all. Immortality is equivalent to Infinity.

From **5-8**, the second part of the verse, it is the first time in this text where the individual Upadhis are brought into the picture of the Sadhana. It is the first mention of the inner process of negating one’s own Upadhis to reach the Supreme Purusha in the heart-centre.

Summary of the Text to this Point

The Upanishd has convincingly led us through the negation of the entire external world, and taken us deep within ourselves in order to directly experience the Self, which is identical to the ultimate Reality. It has been a painstaking journey of going deeper and deeper within, into the subtlest of the subtle. No shortcuts are taken to arrive at the

destination. The entire outer and the entire inner Upadhis have to be negated in order to penetrate Brahman.

Thus, this verse may be said to be the climax of the spiritual quest. It bears this huge significance: From a practical point of view it can be said to be the most important verse of this text.

Chapter 4 has taken us to the Self first via the macrocosm and at the very end via the microcosm, too. In this route, the Upanishad has ensured that it kept our attention at every stage on the Supreme Purusha. At no stage could we afford to lose sight of this Truth. Only in this most rigorous manner, is it possible to arrive safely and punctually at the Destination.

40 Verse 4.8: *The Criteria of Realisation*

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥ ४.८॥

1	<i>bhidyate hridaya granthih,</i>	<i>The knots of his heart become <u>untied</u>;</i>
2	<i>chhidyante sarva samshayaah;</i>	<i>all doubts are <u>dispelled</u>;</i>
3	<i>ksheeyante cha asya karmaani,</i>	<i>and all his Karmas are <u>consumed</u>;</i>
4	<i>tasmin drishte para-avare.</i>	<i>when He is seen as both Cause and effect.</i>

We now get into the summarization mode of the entire journey. The four verses from here till the end of the Chapter are extremely important, and are considered as among the finest in all Upanishadic literature. Having arrived at the Destination with the Rishi's guidance, we are now given a lightning glimpse of the entire journey we have been through.

We begin the overview with a summary of the phases our Sadhana goes through. The general order of Vedantic Sadhana is Sadhana Chatushtaya, Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana. The special objectives of each Sadhanas are described in the first three Padas.

[For some reason which we did not touch upon in class, the order in which they are presented is reversed.]

3 i) Sadhana Chatushtaya & Sravana: In this preliminary phase, the bulk of our Karma is cleaned out. Purification is needed first and then we listen to the teachings from the Guru. This stage of Sadhana rids us of all Abhaavana, or wrong notions about our purpose of life and about the Self.

2 ii) Manana: In this second phase of Sadhana we are rid of Asambhaavana, or the doubts of the intellect regarding whether such a thing as realisation is at all possible. Deep and intense Self-enquiry clears away such doubts.

1 iii) Nididhyasana: In this third phase of Sadhana, the knots of the heart are shattered. All the Vasanas or inborn, latent tendencies that we accumulate over many births get removed from the psyche through the practice of intense meditation. In this phase, Viparita Bhaavana or the bundle of all past tendencies and lurking desires is dispelled.

4 All these significant processes are achieved in this text by always keeping in view the Supreme Purusha, seeing Him alone in the higher and the lower, i.e. seeing Him as the

cause (higher) and the effects (the lower). “Seeing” here means directly experienced or cognized by the Self.

The uniqueness of this Upanishad’s methodology is this: ***Never lose sight of the Lord; He is in everything.***

41 Verse 4.9: *The Knower of Brahman*

हिरण्मये परे कोशे विरजं ब्रह्म निष्कलम् ।
तच्छुभ्रं ज्योतिषं ज्योतिस्तद् यदात्मविदो विदुः ॥ ४.९॥

1	<i>hiranmaye pare koshe,</i>	<i>In the innermost sheath of golden hue,</i>
2	<i>virajam brahma nishkalam;</i>	<i>dwells Brahman, the stainless and indivisible;</i>
3	<i>tat shubhram jyotishaam jyotih,</i>	<i>He is purity, He is the Light of all lights;</i>
4	<i>tad yad aatmavidah viduh.</i>	<i>That is what the knowers of the Atman testify.</i>

With the culmination of Sadhana comes the awesome experience of the state of unity or Oneness with Brahman. This verse brings us the gist of this experience in beautiful poetry. The awe-inspiring descriptions of Brahman have no end. The Rishis have never tired of glorifying the Divine with every breath, with every thought, word and deed.

Glowing tributes such as this verse are the treasures of our ancient civilization. The Lord’s immaculate purity and stainlessness, his luminosity, his integral all-inclusive nature – all these are glorified in this verse as we bring to mind the great Goal behind the spiritual quest. Our mind gets another huge lift from reading the glory of the Lord.

1 In the supreme, bright sheath; it is called a sheath because even this bright glow is not actually the Self, but an indicator of It. We see how thorough the Rishis were! They never allowed the slightest duality to taint their vision of the Unity.

2-3 Taintlessness in a tainted world; purity in the midst of impurity – these rare qualities draw reverent attention from the pure-hearted. Taintlessness is equivalent to freedom from all Tamas and Rajas; defects such as restlessness and laziness are absent in the taintless Supreme. In a civilization that thrives on Tamas and Rajas, Sattwa is rare and therefore very precious.

4 What has been said here of the Self is the voice of many saints and sages. It is not a claim made by a single individual. These descriptions bear the authoritative support of numerous saints over a long period of human history. They are trustworthy.

42 Verse 4.10: *Self-Luminous Nature of Brahman*

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं
नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं
तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥ ४.१०॥

1	<i>na tatra sooryo bhaati, na chandra, taarakam,</i>	<i>There the <u>sun</u> does not shine, nor the <u>moon</u>, nor the <u>stars</u>;</i>
2	<i>na imaah vidyuto bhaanti, kutah ayam agnih;</i>	<i>these <u>lightnings</u> also do not shine – how then can this <u>earthly fire</u>? (i.e. the Arati lamp)</i>
3	<i>tam eva bhaantam anubhaati sarvam,</i>	<i>Merely reflecting His Brightness (i.e. glory), everything (in this world) appears to <u>shine</u> as well;</i>
4	<i>tasya bhaasaa, sarvam idam vibhaati.</i>	<i>With His Light, this whole world is <u>illuminated</u>.</i>

There is no better way to close this superb Chapter, containing the practical method to realize the Divine, than this piece of exquisite poetry. This is the verse chanted commonly throughout India during Arati performed in any temple. Puya Gurudev says, “No ritual of a Hindu is concluded without chanting at least once this glorious stanza of our scriptures.” It is generally chanted soon after the camphor is offered in the Arati. It pays the highest tribute to the Self which illuminates all that we see and know.

Among all the luminaries of this world, from a candle flame to the Sun, this verse places the Self above all of them.

The devotee, while waving the small clay lamp before the idol of the Lord, is suddenly reminded of the vast gap between the light he is offering and the true Luminous Self by whose all-powerful Light the whole universe is lit up!

1 In the very core of the Sun, who is shining? Without Brahman, the sun itself has no existence. The existence of the sun enables it to perform its function of illuminating our galaxy. The same applies to the lesser lights of the moon and the stars.

2 Lightnings is in the plural. It refers to all such lights in the world, natural as well as artificial. All these examples of luminous objects known to us are given in order of reducing light, so that the last mentioned light, the small clay lamp which we wave before the Lord daily comes out in striking contrast to the enormous brilliance of the Self. Yet, due to the power of *devotion*, the devotee sees the great Lord in his little lamp!

3 The presence of Consciousness is Existence. They cannot be separated. The shine of the Self enables us to know all else in the universe. It is the light of the Self that shines through the sun. The same shine is there even in Darkness also! That is how we ‘know’ darkness. The Self is not any less present in darkness as It is in light! It exists uniformly everywhere. Agarbatti gets its fire from contact with another flame. The Self’s luminosity is not like that. It is self-luminous, not depending on anything else for its ‘Flame’.

4 What we are seeing in the world around us with our eyes is only borrowed shine, from the Self. The Upanishads are not speaking of a physical shine or light when they speak of the luminous Self. The shine from Brahman is the shine of Consciousness.

Thoughts shine just as luminously as the sun. Acharyaji said, “There is a Vedantic shine even in our shoes!” Since everything that comes to be known can be so only because of the Self’s shine upon it, the all-pervading nature of Consciousness can be inferred from this fact alone. This fact throws new light on all that we see and know.

When we shut our eyes during Arati, we are focused on the great Light within us. The Arati lamp, small and insignificant as it may appear, represents the all-powerful Light of the Supreme Consciousness!

43 Verse 4.11: *World is Indeed Brahman*

ब्रह्मैवेदममृतं पुरस्ताद् ब्रह्म
पश्चाद् ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण ।
अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं ब्रह्म-
ऐवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम्

॥ ४.११॥

1	<i>brahma eva idam amritam,</i>	<i>Verily, all this is the Immortal Brahman.</i>
2	<i>purastad brahma, paschaad brahma, dakshinatah cha uttarena;</i>	<i>In <u>front</u> is Brahman, at the <u>back</u> is Brahman, to the <u>right</u> is Brahman, and to the <u>left</u> is Brahman;</i>
3	<i>adhah cha, urdhvam cha, prasritam,</i>	<i><u>below</u> is Brahman, and <u>above</u> is Brahman, too – <u>everywhere</u> is Brahman;</i>
4	<i>brahma eva idam vishvam, idam varishtham.</i>	<i>Brahman alone is this <u>whole world</u>, (He alone) is the Supreme worthy of <u>reverence</u>!</i>

The Link gives the purpose of this final verse of the Chapter to be purely a summing up of the main theme so far in the book – that He is everywhere and everything that we see. With this, the teaching of the Mundaka Upanishad has concluded. The two Chapters to follow deal with several accessories to Self-realisation, and do not add any further to the basic Yoga teaching of the Upanishad.

The first line and last line start with the same words. With great emphasis is it repeated that “Brahman alone is” this whole world; that He is Immortality. And He, therefore, is the most worthy to be worshipped (**Varishtham**).

The great message of the Mundaka Upanishad is that there is no such thing as non-Brahman. All ideas of anything other than Brahman are ignorance-based, like the idea of the snake superimposed on the rope. There never was a snake on the rope! Pujya Gurudev says, “The pot comes from mud, stays in mud, and goes back to mud when broken.”

Brahman alone is the supreme Truth. This is the final declaration not only of this Upanishad, but of the entire Vedas.

॥ इति मुण्डकोपनिषदि द्वितीयमुण्डके द्वितीयः खण्डः ॥

iti mundakopanishadi dviteeya mundake dviteeya khandah.

Thus in the Mundaka Upanishad, ends the second Section of the Second Canto.



5. THE “TWO BIRDS” METAPHOR

(Verses 44-53, 10 no.)

॥ तृतीय मुण्डके प्रथमः खण्डः ॥

triteeya mundake, prathamah khandah –

Here begins the first Section of the Third Canto.

THE HIGHER KNOWLEDGE or Para Vidya has been presented in its essential form in the last Chapter. It is complete in itself. By this, the Imperishable Truth may be attained. The imagery of the bow and arrow enhanced the presentation of this Vidya, so as to make it easily grasped by the intellect. However, there is much more that can be said about Para Vidya which will assist the reader to grasp the knowledge more clearly.

This ancillary information is now given in Chapters 5 and 6, which comprise Part III of the Upanishad. Covered in this section are various auxilliary hints, practices and spiritual advice to seekers of Para Vidya which are, as it were, useful extensions or adornments to the main body that has already been constructed in Part II.

We begin this Part with the well-known metaphor of the “Two Birds”, from which we draw very interesting and valuable help for our Sadhana. This analogy is reminiscent of the analogy of the “Two Drinkers” we encountered in the *Katha Upanishad* (Text 20). Both examples are almost identical as far as the knowledge it advances is concerned. Both relate to the Jeeva-Brahman relationship.

THE METAPHOR IN SCRIPTURES

The *Upanishads* provide us with some amazing imagery that has a value all its own in conveying subtle ideas. What a good metaphor does can hardly be evaluated in terms of words. It is true that a metaphor cannot replace the Truth, but it brings us to the very door of Truth with an ease that is unmatched.

Metaphors transcend the intellect. Truth, too, transcends intellect. The difference is that the former is conceived by the mind of man, while the latter is independent of any assessments of man. Metaphors can cross the barriers posed by the intellect. A freedom to think helps us to grasp the truth. In this way, metaphors help us to comprehend by giving us space to visualize. Indeed, they do not give the logic, yet they can indicate it in fewer words than an elaborate thesis would. They do take us to lofty heights of thought by the power of the space they create in our minds. Any metaphor, however, has its limitations, and one must be careful not to “kill” a metaphor by dissecting it too much.

44 Verse 5.1: *The “Two Birds” Analogy*

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते ।

तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्त्यनश्नन्नन्यो अभिचाकशीति ॥ ५.१॥

1	<i>dvau suparnaa, sayujaa sakhaayaa,</i>	There are two birds , bound to each other in close <u>friendship</u> .
2	<i>samaanam vriksham parishasvajaate;</i>	On the very <u>same tree</u> , are they perched.
3	<i>tayor-anyah pippalam svaadu atti</i>	Among the two, one of them <u>eats</u> the fruits (of the tree) with great relish;
4	<i>anashnan anyah abhichaakasheeti.</i>	The other, without eating anything, simply <u>looks on</u> , (as a spectator).

1 Firstly, Sri Shankaracharyaji performs a grammar surgery on the words of this line – he converts all of them into their *dual* form according to the generally accepted Panini grammar format. Vedic Sanskrit is not obliged to follow Panini’s grammar rules. The *Vedic* Rishis are permitted to have their own grammar rules which Panini himself does not challenge. Panini, the backbone of Sanskrit grammar, has done an exceptional job of streamlining Sanskrit grammar in the post-Vedic period. His format for this line would be:

Dvau Suparnau Sayujau Sakhaayau – all the underlined portions indicate the dual form of the nouns.

Some translate the last word as “having the same name”, rather than “having friendship”. Friendship is already included by their close association. The two birds are not alien to each other, they are of the same kind, they have a very close bond. One rarely finds birds of different flocks on the same branch. But how do we know they are birds?

Suparna means “leaf”, not “bird”; Parna has a synonym named Patra; Patra comes from a root which means “to glide, to alight”; in this indirect manner comes the translation of the original word as “a bird, gliding onto a leaf”. Sri Shankaracharyaji shows great intellectual honesty and delicacy in revealing this derivation, and we cannot but help admire his dexterity, a characteristic trait of this divinely inspired commentator.

Who are these birds? Whom do they represent? We have yet to see –

2 They are perched on the same tree, on the same branch. The word ‘same’, **Samaanam**, is deeply analysed by the Bhashyakara. He reads into it the sense of a definite identity between them. The relationship suggested is so close that he even suggests that they ‘hug or cling to each other’ as birds do. The Pippalam is the banyan tree which we come across in the Geeta in Chapter 13. Its roots are “upward” and branches “downward”. By now the reader would see that a mystic interpretation is already in the pipeline. Why are the birds clinging onto this tree so tightly?

3 Of these two, one of them; eats the fruit of the tree with great relish.

4 The other bird, without eating, **Abhichaakasheeti** – just looks on. The mystery gets deeper. A very deep relationship is suggested here. Why is the second bird so austere and so observant, nay, so caring over the first? We spare the reader the complex derivation of the verb mentioned here, lest he thinks this is going to be a Sanskrit lesson!

Are they perhaps in love with each other? From their behavior, it appears that one of them does not know the other; but the other knows fully well that its companion is more than just a friend – it is a dear relative. Are they perhaps related to each other as an individual soul is related to the Supreme Soul? Or would that be too far-fetched?

Indeed, a rather mystic puzzle has been placed before us. We are made to wait anxiously for the next verse to unravel the mystery behind these two birds.

45 Verse 5.2: *The Metaphor Expanded & Explained*

समाने वृक्षे पुरुषो निमग्नो-

अनिशया शोचति मुह्यमानः ।

जुष्टं यदा पश्यत्यन्यमीशम्

अस्य महिमानमिति वीतशोकः ॥ ५.२॥

1	<i>samaane vrikshe purushah nimagnah,</i>	<i>Seated as they are on the self-same tree, one of them is the Jeeva (Ego), sunk in <u>ignorance</u>;</i>
2	<i>aneeshayaa shochati muhyamaanah;</i>	<i>He grieves over his <u>powerlessness</u>, which is due to his being in a <u>deluded</u> condition;</i>
3	<i>jushtam yadaa pashyati anyam eesham,</i>	<i>But seeing the <u>worshipfulness</u> in the other bird, he takes Him to be the Lord Himself,</i>
4	<i>asya mahimaanam iti veetashokah.</i>	<i>possessing all <u>glory</u> and <u>majesty</u>, and is thus relieved of all his <u>dejection</u>.</i>

This verse throws a flood of light on the metaphor. As the identity of the birds unfolds – as the entrapped **Jeeva** and the liberated **Sage** – the relationship between the birds reveals the deepest descent of man while at the same time throwing up the possibility of his greatest ascent back to his original state of Supremacy.

What a thrilling metaphor this poses to be!

Purushah: here the word simply means an ordinary “man”, the Jeeva. But the meaning as “the Supreme Being” lurks around the corner, since it indicates the potential in man to attain that great state, which is projected in the same verse.

1-2 The Jeeva is depicted in his lowest state of sadness, sunk in ignorance. He is a picture of degradation, helplessness and powerlessness. Something in the lines indicates one who has fallen from a great height into the gutter of delusion. The Jeeva cannot remember his grand origin. He does not know that he is heir to a grand kingdom; he has no memory of his inheritance.

The Jeeva grieves because somehow he senses he has lost a power that he once had, and has come to a state of impotence, a shadow of his original glory. What has caused this loss? A delusion has overcome him, due to which some dark veil beyond its power of understanding sits like a cloud over his whole being.

3 But the ego-bird sees something in the other Bird, something divine, which inspires a reverence in him towards it. The other bird is radiant and peaceful, it is like a Deity in comparison to itself. This other Bird looks worthy of worship, it is so lordly and majestic, so calm and supremely content.

4 Uplifted in spirit by the sight of the other Bird, the ego-bird feels greatly comforted. Its dejection disappears, and it feels as if the divine-Bird is endowing it with Its own superior strength and majesty.

RECOVERY OF A LOST SOUL

Thus the two birds are connected to each other. The first is the individual soul, the Jeeva, which is drowning in its own delusions of worldly existence. The second is the illumined Sage who comes to remind the Jeeva of its original state of grandeur.

The Jeeva is like a bottle that is tossed about on the surface of the sea, bashed by the waves of ignorance, desire, attachment, the fruits of Karma, and complete identification with the body. The ideas of “I am this and that” have gone deep into his intellect and he cannot recall anything of his glorious origin.

Then, repeatedly smitten by grief, after constantly undergoing various births in different forms, the soul has come perchance to the path of Yoga due to some good Karma and meets a compassionate teacher. After developing some virtuous qualities, it takes to the practice of meditating on the worshipful One through a chosen path of Yoga. He comes to realize that he is not the illusory self or ego. He also recognizes in the sage the greatness and glory of the Self whom he really is. This gives him great joy and he is relieved or liberated from his past miserable condition.

In this way, the Bhashya explains the giant leap made by the first bird in recognizing the second as its very own greater Self.

Now that the metaphor has been established in our intellect, we keep it in front of us as we turn our attention to the spiritual journey. It is a journey which promises to transform our delusion to illumination; our false identity to our true identity; our forlorn state of ignorance into one filled with the bright prospect of divine Knowledge.

46 Verse 5.3: *The Benefits of Holy Company (Satsang)*

यदा पश्यः पश्यते रुक्मवर्णं
कर्तारमीशं पुरुषं ब्रह्मयोनिम् ।
तदा विद्वान् पुण्यपापे विधूय
निरञ्जनः परमं साम्यमुपैति ॥ ५.३॥

1	<i>yadaa pashyah pashyate rukmavarnam,</i>	When the seeking bird (the one that is troubled) beholds the “golden-hued” Bird (the enlightened one),
2	<i>kartaaram eesham puru- sham brahma-yonim;</i>	as the <u>doer</u> , the <u>ruler</u> and the <u>Supreme Being</u> , the very Source of the birth of the universe,
3	<i>tadaa vidvaan, punya-paape vidhooya,</i>	then, becoming wise, it shakes off all deeds of <u>merit and demerit</u> ,
4	<i>niranjanaah paramam saamyam upaiti.</i>	becomes <u>stainless</u> (pure), and attains the supreme state of Equanimity!

The metaphor is now seen through the eyes of a soul thirsting for spiritual direction. It illustrates the benefits of having good company in life, the value of Satsang. We become the kind of person that we move around with. With worldly persons we imbibe their worldliness; with spiritual company, we imbibe their virtues.

1 In this instance, the ego-bird is very fortunate that it has the divine-Bird as its companion constantly. The first two lines refer to the Sadhana stage of the seeker. The ego-bird without its ego is no different from the divine-Bird. To become that, it needs to go through the transformation process, called Sadhana.

The transformation is a painful process. The “golden-hued” Bird is an indirect simile referring us to the smelting of gold ore in a furnace. After going through such a process the seeker comes out pure as molten gold, free of all impurities. The gold colour that symbolizes Indestructibility, equally symbolises the austerity that one needs to undergo to attain it.

2 Effacement of the Ego is like smelting of ore because the Ego will hang on to its supports tenaciously. It always thinks it is the doer, the ruler and that everything is centred around it. This notion is very hard to relinquish. When it is transformed to the conviction that everything is done by the Lord, then ego simply melts away out of existence.

Brahma Yonim stands here in contrast to Hiranyagarbha, which is the “Womb of Creation” through which the material world comes forth. Brahma Yonim represents the Womb (**Yonim**) which is the origin of even Hiranyagarbha. Brahman is the very Source of all creation. It is every seeker’s goal to attain the state of Brahman-hood.

3 Punya and Paapa are the seeds of future actions. They spring forth into action at the ripe moment and under the right conditions like a seed. They are stored as Karma, which is effectively what binds man to this world. The sage (**Vidvaan**) shakes off or burns away his connection with these bonds of Karma. The means by which he does so is shown in the previous Pada. He learns from the senior bird to feel that the Supreme Being is the Doer, the Ruler, and the Enjoyer. In this way he loosens the hold that his Ego has over his actions.

4 Realization comes only with purity (**Niranjana**) of the soul. Only a taintless, pure soul can achieve union with the Supreme. When all taints are removed, the merging of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul is only a matter of course. Because this equality is at the highest level and is actually equivalent to the term Non-Duality used for this union, it is described as **Paramam** or the Highest.

The Vedantic student is greatly indebted to Sri Shankaracharyaji for the clarity of explanation he has given to these verses. He has not twisted any facts, but simply presented them for the Truth they represent.

THE SPIRITUAL ACCESSORIES

47 Verse 5.4: Accessories on the Path – 1 to 2

प्रणो ह्येष यः सर्वभूतैर्विभाति

विजानन् विद्वान् भवते नातिवादी ।

आत्मक्रीड आत्मरतिः क्रियावान्—

एष ब्रह्मविदां वरिष्ठः

॥ ५.४॥

1	<i>praanah hi eshah yah sarvabhootaih vibhaati,</i>	<i>That verily which is this One Life (Brahman) that shines in all beings –</i>
2	<i>vijaanan vidvaan bhavate na ¹ativaadee;</i>	<i>knowing Him well, the wise one has no desire ¹<u>“to be the Best”</u> (a vain blabberer!);</i>
3	<i>²aatma-kreeda aatma-ratih kriyaavaan,</i>	<i>He then ²<u>sports in the Self</u>, and engages in acts that bring him inner delight;</i>
4	<i>esha brahma-vidaam varishthah.</i>	<i>He who knows Brahman as being This (as above), he is the best among all men.</i>

This verse begins the list of **Accessories** needed to be cultivated in order to attain union with the Supreme Brahman. The saint – the senior bird in the metaphor – stands out as a living example and inspiration to all spiritual seekers. People are very inspired by the saint of God, as the saint is God in flesh and blood, or God made visible to us.

1 The Self is described as *Prana*. Prana has many levels of meanings. Any manifestation of the life principle is loosely termed Prana. Here the word’s meaning is taken to the highest level – Brahman, the source of all life. The Supreme Being shines through all beings (**Sarvabhootaih**).

2 Accessory No. 1 – Na Ativaadi: “one who never wishes to appear as the best”. The wise man who has known his true Self has no desire to be great. The Ativadi is the ‘tall talker’, the vain blabberer, the one who wants to be ‘ahead of the pack’, one who always wishes to stand out from the crowd. This is a trait desired only by the ego.

When a person gains some knowledge beyond the ordinary, his ego snatches the glory and admiration that surrounds such a person. The ego uses the source of the fame to enhance itself. It will even try to destroy any opposition in order to raise itself. This is not the case in the truly realized sage who has become one with Brahman. The Non-Duality he lives in does not see any opposition, and so he has no need to “blabber” about himself.

3 Accessory No. 2 – Atma-Kreedah: “one who sports in his own Atman”. This is a very special spiritual quality of the sage. He simply enjoys being in the company of himself – his true Self! That is satisfying enough for him; he does not hanker after any other joy. The sage is a **Kriyaavaan** who is utterly devoted to practices (Kriyas) such as meditation, study of scriptures, detachment and so on.

Some people see in the word Kriyavan reference to the Karma Kanda rituals such as Agnihotra. They quote this verse to say that it permits sages to perform such rituals. Shankaracharyaji has clear logic to refute this. Karma Kanda rituals are specifically done to get enjoyments and pleasures from the world. The sage is the very opposite – he is fully satisfied with the enjoyment derived from the Self. He has no interest in these rituals. Acharyaji took great pains in explaining to us this important differentiation.

4 Esha: “in this manner”. The emphasis here on knowing Brahman in the manner shown above, implies that there are others who think they know Brahman, but adopt other ways. It is unfortunate that ‘Brahman’, like Prana, is one of those words that is used at different levels under different contexts. **Brahma Vidaam** can also refer to other types of knowing, such as one who knows the Vedas, or one who does Upasanas or worship. It is to differentiate the realized sage from others who are given the same ‘Degree’ but for a lesser attainment. Unfortunately, there were no copyright rules placed on awarding degrees!

48 Verse 5.5: *Accessories to the Path – 3 to 6*

सत्येन लभ्यस्तपसा ह्येष आत्मा
 सम्यग्ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यम् ।
 अन्तःशरीरे ज्योतिर्मयो हि शुभ्रो
 यं पश्यन्ति यतयः क्षीणदोषाः ॥ ५.५॥

1	<i>satyena tapasaa labhyah hi eshah aatmaa,</i>	Through ³ <i>veracity</i> and ⁴ <i>austerity</i> is verily attained the Self ;
2	<i>samyak jnaanena brahma-charyena nityam;</i>	Through true ⁵ <i>knowledge</i> and constant practice of ⁶ <i>self-control</i> (continence);
3	<i>antah shareere jyotirmayah hi shubhrah,</i>	Within this <i>very body</i> , when full of resplendence and rendered stainless;
4	<i>yam pashyanti yatayah ksheena doshaah.</i>	The Self is beheld by the self-controlled ascetics who have purified themselves of all <i>taints</i> .

Another four **Accessories** are given in this verse. They are the cornerstones of the edifice of spiritual life, and are to be developed by a seeker of Truth. They have a very important place in the making of a saint, and may not be ignored by spiritual aspirants:

1a Accessory No. 3: Satya – “truthfulness”. Among all the qualities, Satya or truthfulness is always mentioned first by the Rishis. In the temple of Hinduism, the main pillar is Truth. All other qualities spring from it and are founded upon it. Only through these qualities is the Self attained. Truthfulness implies absence of crookedness, falsehood and pretence (as defined in the *Prashna Upanishad*).

1b Accessory No. 4: Tapas – “austerity”. Tapas is said to be concentration of the mind. The *Mahabharata* verse is quoted in the Bhashya:

“The highest Tapas consists in concentration of the mind and senses.”

Such Tapas is a favourable discipline to attain the vision of the Self. There are other kinds of Tapas for those at the preparatory level where vows are kept such as fasting, exposing oneself to much pain and bodily deprivation. The Bhashya warns us that Tapas, when divorced from concentration on the Self, becomes worthless to the spiritual pursuit.

2a Accessory No. 5: Jnana – “knowledge”. Thorough knowledge is considered to be a direct vision of the Self, nothing short of it. Anything else is only beneficial if it leads us towards this goal.

2b Accessory No. 6: Brahmacharya – “restraint of the senses; celibacy”. For this higher path of Self-realisation, strict avoidance of all sexual relationships is enjoined. For householders, this means entering into such relations only for the sake of progeny.

Acharyaji gave us a verse that identifies 8 steps of how one succumbs to sexual relationships. This is very important for Brahmacharis and Sannyasins:

- “Smaranam darshanam streenaam, guna karma anukirtanam;*
- Samishi natwadheeh taasu, prithivi sambhaashanam mitah;*
- Sahavaasascha samsargah, ashtadaa maithunaam viduh;*
- Etad vilakshanam brahma-, charyam chitta prasaadakam.”*

Meaning: “a i) By ruminating; ii) by seeing women; iii) admiring their good qualities; iv) praising them; b v) regarding them as the most wonderful; vi) conversing with them; c vii) keeping each other’s company; and finally viii) uniting together – these are the eight steps that lead one to have a sexual downfall. d These have to be carefully guarded against by Brahmacharis if they wish to be rewarded with a pure mind.”

The word **Nitya**, meaning “*always*”, has to be taken for all four of the above accessories, according to the Bhashya.

In the practice of the above virtues, the intellect should first think correctly and then undertake the development of these virtues. Without clear thinking, we will be prone to practice them in a lop-sided manner, with Rajas and Tamas predominating. They should be done in a Sattwic spirit.

The second half of the verse leaves one in no doubt as to who is to be attained, and what are the primary conditions needed for the attainment. We see that purity of mind is the foremost consideration.

3a Antah Shareere: “*within the body*”. This is to tell us that the realisation of the Self can be attained while one is living. It does not have to wait for death to occur.

Jyotirmayo: The Self seated within, in the “core of our heart”, is said to be full of Light, of a golden-hue and luminous.

3b Shubhrah: It is also sacred and holy. One has to approach It with great sanctity, reverence and respect.

4 Yatayah: “*the qualified Sadhaka*”. Preparing oneself in the above manner, those who have made a total commitment to this path, get to have the Divine Vision, for they are stainless and without any flaw. The strong implication in the Bhashya is that to achieve this practically, one needs to make a full-time commitment, as made by Sannyasins and Brahmacharis.

49 Verse 5.6: **The Path Ascending to Truth**

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतं
सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः ।
येनाऽऽक्रमन्त्यृषयो ह्याप्तकामा
यत्र तत् सत्यस्य परमं निधानम् ॥ ५.६॥

1	<i>satyam eva jayate, na anritam,</i>	“Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood.”
2	<i>satyena panthaa vitatah devayaanah;</i>	“The path to the Divine is paved in Truth.”
3	<i>yena aakramanti rishayah hi aapta kaamaah,</i>	Along it ascend the Seers, who are done with all their <u>desires</u> ,
4	<i>yatra tat satyasya paramam nidhaanam.</i>	to That supreme <u>Abode of Truth</u> .

This verse expands on Accessory No. 3 – **Satyam** or “*truthfulness*”.

This verse is very popularly quoted as giving the essence of the virtuous life. It contains the essentials of spiritual living and, when followed with sincerity and dexterity, will certainly enable us to “ascend to the supreme abode of Truth”.

ELABORATION ON THE VIRTUE OF TRUTH

1 This is the line that is often quoted and even used as script for the logo of many institutions. Satyam in its greater context is a universal Law or code of Dharma. The root of Dharma or a righteous life lies in the practice of Truth. Truth is a principle of life which always triumphs in the end.

This and all other qualities are really understood best when we see them in a person. The presence of such qualities lends enormous magnetism to the personality of a person, which attracts others to him. The aroma that wafts from a virtuous soul is unmistakable and very attractive. This is true even from an ordinary standpoint. A truthful person is always respected and honoured.

2 What do the Shastras say about Truth? The entire purpose of the scriptures is to lay out the great path towards the Divine. Truth is the fundamental virtue by which this is done. All scriptures are founded on Truth. Hindu Dharma is rooted in Truth. Every scriptural exhortation has Truth as its basis. Harmony in life is obtained only by following the path of Truth.

3 Following Truth one ascends towards the Divine from whichever stage one is. The holy sages may be well-travelled on this path, but even the sincerely struggling souls are included as they have firmly placed their feet on this path and are moving in the right direction, without having selfish desires. Desirelessness is the highway to the Divine, and Truth is the material with which it is paved.

4 At the final destination of this Divine Path or Pilgrimage is a treasure. There has to be, otherwise who will take the trouble to travel this path? That treasure is the Supreme Truth. The Truth about this world becomes known. The whole secret of who Brahman is, the great vision of Non-Duality, the Supreme Bliss enjoyed by attaining this destination – all this is the reward of the journey of Truth.

50 Verse 5.7: *A Beckoning Call to the Supreme Abode*

बृहच्च तद् दिव्यमचिन्त्यरूपं
सूक्ष्माच्च तत् सूक्ष्मतरं विभाति ।
दूरात् सुदूरे तदिहान्तिके च
पश्यन्त्विहैव निहितं गुहायाम् ॥ ५.७॥

1	<i>brihat cha tad divyam achintya roopam,</i>	<i>The Divine Truth is vast and beyond all <u>imagination</u>s;</i>
2	<i>sookshmaat cha tat sookshmataram vibhaati;</i>	<i>Though subtler than the <u>subtle</u>st, yet It <u>stands out</u> brilliantly;</i>
3	<i>dooraat sudoore tad iha antike cha,</i>	<i>Though farther than the <u>far</u>thest, yet It is <u>right here</u> while we still living;</i>
4	<i>pashyatsu iha eva nihitam guhaayaam.</i>	<i>It is seen by those who fix their mind (attentively) in the "Cave of the Heart".</i>

1 This sounds like the perfect advertisement for inviting people to tread this path. The Rishi seems to be in a campaigning mood! He is inviting us to support the Truth Party.

Brihat: “vast”. From the narrow, crowded lanes of the city, what a pleasure it is to get onto the open highway and cruise away freely without any traffic congestions! This is the feeling that we get when we read these words. There is a great feeling of love and compassion in the Rishi as he beckons us to join him.

2 “*Subtler than the subtlest*” – More charm to capture our minds! The campaign for Truth takes a poetic turn. The Self we are going to reach is described in these glowing, and incomprehensible words, which are so common throughout the Upanishads.

There is more poetry in the next line.

3 “*Further than the furthest*” – These are amazing road signs for the traveller on this highway, and make fine political slogans for the Rishi’s campaign. How is one expected to plan out his trip when faced with signs like these? Acharyaji said there was a place in Africa called Timbaktu deep in the Sahara desert in Mali. So remote is this place that it had become a saying in the West that when a person does not know where he is going he says, “I am going to Timbaktu.”

Is that really how far the Self is? No. The line at once says that God is to be found “right here”, while we are in the body. We do not have to wait to die to reach it, as in the case of attaining the heavenly worlds. This Divinity can be reached by us while we are still living, verily in this life, right here on earth!

The truth is that the journey is to go *within*. The traveller has to close his eyes and look within in deep contemplation. That is why the signs are so unique. They force the mind to turn within and search deep in our own being.

4 When that is done, the pure-hearted do find Him. He is sitting there in the heart centre. The Bhashya interprets this as the intellect, as the enlightened perceive Him to be there. But the ignorant do not see Him there as He is covered by their ignorance.

51 Verse 5.8: *Purification Done; Meditation Begun*

न चक्षुषा गृह्यते नापि वाचा
 नान्यैर्देवैस्तपसा कर्मण वा ।
 ज्ञानप्रसादेन विशुद्धसत्त्व-
 स्ततस्तु तं पश्यते निष्कलं ध्यायमानः ॥ ५.८ ॥

1	<i>na chakshushaa grihyate, na api vaachaa,</i>	Not perceivable by the <u>eyes</u> , nor even describable through <u>words</u> ;
2	<i>na anyaih devaih, tapasaa karmanaa vaa;</i>	Not grasped by the <u>senses</u> , nor (obtained) by <u>austerities</u> or <u>activities</u> ;
3	<i>jnaana prasaadena, vishuddha sattvah,</i>	Knowledge comes as a <u>gift</u> bestowed by a mind (intellect) that is calm, pure and refined;
4	<i>tatah tu, tam pashyate nishkalam dhyayamaanah.</i>	Then alone: is seen or realized Him who is without parts, by the one <u>seated in meditation</u> .

1-2 “*Less words, more poetry*” – this seems to be the Rishi’s technique to get through to us during his campaign, which continues in this verse. Here are two more slogans of the Truth Party. As road signs they would certainly confuse any driver. The traveller on the path of Truth has got to steer away from accepted concepts and mental notions. Truth is anchored to itself. It cannot have any prop to support it; indeed, Truth is the prop that supports everything in this world.

So the Self is well beyond the reach of the senses, and beyond anything that we can gain through actions such as rituals or rigorous austerities. By Karma is meant here Vedic rituals which are done for success in worldly undertakings, fulfillment of desires in the world as well as in heaven. The Self is beyond their reach as well.

3 Then how can it be attained? – By Jnana Prasaad, which the Bhashya translates as “the gift of the pure intellect to the mind.” The intellect is the overall governing principle of individual life. It rules all the functions of the human being by giving directions to the mind. If it is rendered pure, taintless, unclouded and clear, then it is capable of understanding, by which it gives the best instructions to the mind. This well-considered and mature understanding, is its **Gift** to us – it is such an amazing gift that, given just once, it can take a person to the highest spiritual height, and through him it can uplift thousands of other people, even whole countries and continents!

Jnana Prasaad is explained in the Bhashya using two examples:

i) Clean Mirror: A clean mirror surface reflects light perfectly. Even so a clean intellect reflects God’s glory perfectly through our being. This example is to illustrate the removal of Mal or dirt from the mind. Mal is a “stained” mirror.

ii) Tranquil Water: A tranquil, calm surface of water also reflects light perfectly. If the water is agitated, the reflection, too, is agitated. This example is to illustrate the removal of Vikshepa or the restlessness of the mind. Vikshepa is a “ruffled” water surface.

Tatah Tu: meaning “therefore”, is not part of the metrical formation of this line, hence the comma and the separation from the next Pada.

4 The Self is seen as being indivisible and devoid of all differentiation, **Nishkalam**. This represents the Non-Duality of the Self. This is experienced only when the seeker engages in deep meditation with a concentrated mind.

In verse 5.5 we came across four Sahakari Sadhanas or auxilliary practices. These are intended to bring the seeker to the **Pradhana Sadhana** or primary practice of meditation which is the last word of this verse. This alone is the purpose of all the assessorary Sadhanas. The detailed explanation of purification of the intellect is reserved for the next verse.

Acharyaji paid a glowing tribute to the Shrutis, based on the passage we are currently studying. His words can best be paraphrased as:

“In this way, the Upanishad always draws our mind to the ultimate purpose of the Vedas, which is to take man to spiritual liberation from bondage to ignorance. The Upanishads are relentless in this task. It does not allow us to settle for anything less than the Highest. We ought to be really grateful to Mother Shruti for that!”

52 Verse 5.9: *Purification – the Pre-Condition for Illumination*

एषोऽणुरात्मा चेतसा वेदितव्यो
यस्मिन् प्राणः पञ्चधा संविवेश ।
प्राणैश्चित्तं सर्वमोतं प्रजानां
यस्मिन् विशुद्धे विभवत्येष आत्मा ॥ ५.९॥

1	<i>eshah anuh aatmaa chetasaa veditavyah,</i>	<i>The subtle Truth of the Inner Self should be known by the <u>light of the intellect</u>.</i>
2	<i>yasmin praanah panchadhaa samvivesha;</i>	<i>In the body, the Pranas (life forces), fivefold in number, have entered and pervade</i>
3	<i>praanaih chittam sarvam otam prajaanaam,</i>	<i>throughout the (ten) <u>senses</u> and the <u>mind</u>. They are interwoven with the entire being of man.</i>
4	<i>yasmin vishuddhe vibhavati eshah aatmaa.</i>	<i>If only these <u>receptacles</u> can be made <u>pure</u>, then the inner Self of man would shine in all splendour!</i>

Here is a clear, unambiguous statement of the role played by purification of our internal instrument. **Vishuddha Sattwa** is being expanded upon. It is shown how man can give himself the “gift” of a vision of his own true Self by purifying his mind and intellect.

How is this purification brought about? Swami Chinmayananda explains: “The purification of the student’s mind-intellect equipment is gained by the renunciation of false values, wrong attachments, delusive vanities and low animal instincts. The more a mind is redeemed from its psychological aberrations, the more such a mind becomes subtle and pure, i.e. Vishuddha-Sattwa.”

The Bhashyakara explains it line by line as follows:

1 Chetasaa: “by the light of the intellect”, the instrumental case of the word *Chetas*. The ‘gift’ made available to us by our own pure intellect is laid out before us. It is the ‘gift’ that is worth striving for. How is it made possible?

2 The Prana, in all its five functional forms, enters the body through the life-breath. Having entered it, it pervades the entire body. Every department of the body is nourished by the energy-giving life-force. However, it can only do an amount of work as restricted by the state of the equipment within the body. If there is much impurity in the body’s essential components then the life-force is proportionately restricted in its flow, and consequently in its manifestation of power.

3 The Prana flows through the senses and mind, as well as the intellect of man. At each of these points it encounters some resistance due to impurity, just as a coil offers resistance to the flow of electricity through it.

Otam: “interwoven”. The subtle body is the main part of the body. If the subtle body is healthy, the gross body stays healthy. The two interact upon each other. This interaction is described by the term **Otam**. The internal functions are all interdependent. If one organ mal-functions, then another that depends on it also mal-functions. Equally, if one organ is in excellent condition, it provides assistance to other organs depending upon it to also function better than normal. In this way, the organs support each other, very much like how players in a football team support each other.

4 The ultimate support that an organ give to other organs is its own purity. Purity becomes the great contribution made by each organ to the others. The captain of all the organs is the intellect. A strong pure intellect is like a good captain in a team. He inspires all the other players to give off their best. When the intellect of our inner equipment becomes **Vishuddha** or totally pure then, of its own accord, by its own self-luminous nature, the Atman becomes known.

Our effort is only to ensure that the intellect is purified. The rest follows naturally; no other effort is needed to make us 'see' the Self; It reveals Itself under this pre-condition of good captaincy from the intellect.

53 Verse 5.10: Adorations to Such a Jnani!

यं यं लोकं मनसा संविभाति
 विशुद्धसत्त्वः कामयते यांश्च कामान् ।
 तं तं लोकं जयते तांश्च कामां-
 स्तस्मादात्मज्ञं ह्यर्चयेत् भूतिकामः ॥ ५.१०॥

1	<i>yam yam lokam manasaa samvibhaati,</i>	<i>Whatever <u>sphere</u> or world is held (as the goal) firmly by the mind through concentration,</i>
2	<i>vishuddha sattvah kaamayate yaan cha kaamaan;</i>	<i>by fixing his pure mind upon that <u>desire</u> whatever be the object of the desire,</i>
3	<i>tam tam lokam jayate taam cha kaamaan,</i>	<i>to that <u>sphere</u> or world he goes, and enjoys those <u>desires</u> or objects.</i>
4	<i>tasmaad aatmajnam hi archayet bhootikaamah.</i>	<i>Therefore, the man of realization, indeed, should be honoured by a <u>seeker of prosperity</u>.</i>

This verse may sound a bit strange if we forget the fact that a Realised Jnani has severed all connection with his egoistic self, and is identified with the Universal Self alone. For this reason his idea of 'being prosperous' is very different from that held by the ordinary man of the world. If the latter desires true prosperity, he is directed to observe the Jnani to learn how to be truly prosperous.

Two Contrasting Views on Prosperity

1 What could a pure, divine soul such as that of a Jnani wish for? What would he want to enjoy? The answer to this question from an ignorant person's mind may well be: an all-expenses paid holiday to a resort; or a position of power in the Government; or some unimaginable wealth like a large home, a flashy car, a private jet perhaps! But a Jnani does not think like us. Being one with the universal mind, what comes to him will only be for the welfare of the whole world.

Any heavenly world that the sage wishes for, is available to him instantly. He can "astral travel" to any part of the universe! It is not suggested here that this is some form of entertainment he might indulge in. What is being suggested is that the sage is unlimited by Space, having expanded his Consciousness beyond his individual ego to become one with the Infinite Being. The sage has Sat-Sankalpa, which is a Siddhi he gains enabling him to

achieve whatever he wishes. As Acharyaji beautifully put it: “Everything is there for his asking, but he is not ready to ask!”

2 The purity referred to in the previous verse as a condition for the Self to reveal Itself, is brought to our attention at the right moment – when it contrasts with a worldly-minded outlook on prosperity. The thing that a sage would want is the common good of all people, their true well-being. This is what the sage wishes in his Cosmic mind. There is nothing selfish that he desires.

3 These “covetable things” are attained by him, whatever they may be. This is the translation of this line, the fulfillment of line **1**. The sage’s will is pure and dynamic, irresistible, infallible and precise. It operates within cosmic laws, and thus he will not violate any governing cosmic principle, as the ego always tries to.

4 For this reason, the embodiment of such a great “expansion of Consciousness” which transcends mundane desires, is considered to be worthy of our worship, honour and adoration. For us to serve such a great Mahatma is our unique privilege. Our true prosperity lies in serving such a saint. This is the context as we come to conclude this Chapter.

Archayet: “*should be honoured*”. A purified soul becomes worthy of our adoration. One who worships the saint, notably by assisting him in his work, becomes himself worthy of having his own desires fulfilled, though they may be of a worldly nature. This can be taken in two ways:

- i) literally true, i.e. it bestows prosperity on the worldly man; or
- ii) that the worldly man, by his association with a saint, gradually learns to see that true prosperity lies in upholding the highest virtue, not in material gain. The influence of the saint alters his outlook on prosperity.

What Happens to a Saint’s Karma?

Even in the first case, the assurance is not unfounded. It is well said in other Upanishadic verses that a saint’s Karmas have far-reaching influences for mankind. Being Karmas, a Karmic reaction or result has to be there. Since the sage is indifferent to these results, the results go to those who support the saint in his work. All the merit of the saint’s deeds go to such kind-hearted supporters of his activities. It is needless to say that those who try to obstruct the saint in his work, incur the demerit of such obstruction on a scale beyond their own imagination! Such is the majesty of a saint’s benevolent activities.

It is needless to say that such benevolence extends to all the 14 worlds, mentioned in the verse as **Tam Tam Lokam**, meaning that a saint’s deeds are beneficial in the higher as well as lower worlds. Everyone benefits from a saint’s deeds.

Acharyaji’s final remark sums up the saint’s deeds: “**The Jnani is ‘God on the go’!**”

॥ इति मुण्डकोपनिषदि तृतीयमुण्डके प्रथमः खण्डः ॥

iti mundakopanishadi, triteeya mundake, prathamah khandah.

Thus in the Mundaka Upanishad, ends the first Section of the Third Canto.

AUXILLIARY SADHANAS ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH
TABLE for CHAPTER 5

VERSE NO.	No.	ACCESSORY	TRANSLATION
5.4	1	ATIVADI	Vain <i>blabbering ends</i> .
	2	ATMA-KREEDA	Sporting in the Self within.
5.5	3	SATYAM	<i>Truthfulness</i> , veracity;
	4	TAPAS (Level 1)	<i>Concentration</i> of mind.
	5	SAMYAG JNANA	<i>True knowledge</i> or wisdom of the Self.
	6	BRAHMACHARYA	Self-control, <i>continence</i> .
5.8 & 5.9	7	JNANA PRASADA	<i>Understanding</i> ; calm and refined intellect.
5.10	8	VISHUDDHA SATTWA (1)	A totally <i>purified nature</i> .
	9	SUSHRUSHAH ARCHAYET	<i>Honouring</i> the sage to earn merits.



6. QUALITIES SEEN IN A SAGE

(Verses 54-64, 11 no.)

॥ तृतीयमुण्डके द्वितीयः खण्डः ॥

triteeya mundake dviteeyah khandah -

Here begins the second Section of the Third Canto.

IN THIS FINAL Chapter, the theme of accessories to Realisation continues. In fact, the very first verse continues with the exact point made in the last verse of the previous Chapter, namely, the adoration of the Jnani. Other vital issues are also touched upon in this Chapter, which are very useful from the seeker's point of view. They throw much light for the Sadhaka who is actually treading the spiritual path.

AUXILLIARY SADHANAS ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH TABLE for CHAPTER 6

6.1	9	UPAASATE AKAAMAAH	Who <i>Honours</i> the sage without any desire.
6.2	10	PARYAAPTA-KAAMASYA	Free of all <i>desires</i> .
6.3	11	ESHA VRINUTE	<i>Yearning</i> for the Self.
6.4	12	BALAH	<i>Strength</i> generated by firm Self-abidance.
	13	APRAMADA	Free from <i>Inadvertence</i> ;
	14	TAPAS (Level 2)	<i>Knowledge</i> associated with monasticism.
6.5	15	JNANA-TRIPTAH	<i>Contentment</i> obtained from knowledge.
	16	VEETARAAGAAH	Free from <i>attachment</i> .
	17	PRASHAANTAAH	<i>Peaceful</i> , calm; with senses withdrawn.
	18	YUKTAATMAANAH	Ever merged in <i>deep contemplation</i> .
6.6	19	SUNISH-CHITARTHAH	<i>Total Clarity</i> in Self-knowledge.
	20	SANNYASA YOGA	The <i>Yoga of Monasticism</i> .
	21	SHUDDHA SATTWA (2)	<i>Supreme Purity</i> (Highest level, cf. item 7)
	22	PARA AMRITAH	<i>Immortality</i> due to merging in Brahman.
	23	PARIMUCHYANTI SARVE (Jivanmukti)	Total <i>cessation of the entire worldly state</i> ; (while still living);
6.7	24	GATAH KALAAH (Videhamukti)	Absorption of the <i>15 Kalas</i> into their Source (at the death of the body).
6.9	25	BRAHMA VEDA	<i>Knower of Brahman</i> becomes Brahman.

54 Verse 6.1: *Desireless Service Offered to the Jnani*

स वेदैतत् परमं ब्रह्म धाम
यत्र विश्वं निहितं भाति शुभ्रम् ।
उपासते पुरुषं ये ह्यकामास्ते
शुक्रमेतदतिवर्तन्ति धीराः ॥ ६.१॥

1	<i>sa veda etat paramam brahma dhaama,</i>	<i>He (the man of Self-realisation) knows that the Supreme Brahman is the basis</i>
2	<i>yatra vishvam nihitam bhaati shubhram;</i>	<i>on whom the <u>world</u> rests; He radiates the <u>sparkle of purity</u>.</i>
3	<i>upaasate purusham ye hi akaamaah,</i>	<i>They who serve such a realized being <u>without any desire</u>, verily,</i>
4	<i>te shukram etad ativartanti dheeraah.</i>	<i>they, the discriminating ones among men, go beyond this “seed state” of existence (i.e. they are not born again).</i>

This verse is very similar to the previous verse. The only difference lies in the type of devotee being addressed. The previous verse spoke of a devotee who served the needs of a saint so that he could attain the prosperity he desires. Whilst that was shown to be true, here we have the selfless devotee who does the same service of the saint, but without any personal desire. Such a person gets more than the previous type – he gets liberated from the wheel of births and deaths, i.e. the net of Samsara. This is considered to be of far greater value than material benefits, for the same service.

In short, this verse describes the benefits gained by serving a saint selflessly.

1-2 The man of realization has the firm conviction that Brahman is the basis or substratum of the entire world. In Brahman, is the whole universe placed; yet, Brahman remains stainlessly pure and holy, shining in its own luster. It does not become tainted by its contact with the world. This is because the world is not something other than Brahman, but Brahman in manifested form.

3-4 Those devotees who are free from desire, having no passion for material prosperity, serve the realised saint with an aspiration for liberation. Their motive is very different from the one who serves with a selfish motive.

These wise disciples – wise because they chose to be desireless in their service – transcend or go beyond the plane of rebirth. They are liberated. They are not born again on earth, that is, they do not take up the human seed ever again.

55 Verse 6.2: *Effects of Desire & Desirelessness*

कामान् यः कामयते मन्यमानः
स कामभिर्जायते तत्र तत्र ।
पर्याप्तकामस्य कृतात्मनस्तु
इहैव सर्वे प्रविलीयन्ति कामाः ॥ ६.२॥

1	<i>kaamaan yah kaamayate manyamaanah,</i>	<i>Whoever longs for objects of desire, and broods over them,</i>
2	<i>sah kaamabhih jaayate tatra tatra;</i>	<i>he, due to those desires, is born here and there;</i>
3	<i>paryaapta kaamasya kritaat-manah tu,</i>	<i>But he whose <u>longings</u> have finally found consummation in the Self,</i>
4	<i>iha eva sarve pravileeyanti kaamaah.</i>	<i>even here, in this life, all his desires vanish once and for all.</i>

The next accessory added to our list is **Paryaapta Kaamasya**, freedom from desires. This is the most important step in spiritual life on this path of Self-Knowledge. Brahma Jnana goes hand in hand with renunciation. Renunciation characterizes this path.

1 This line refers to the person who gives up the sense objects externally, but broods over them in his mind. The Bhagavad Geeta speaks of this as being hypocrisy.

2 Such persons are born here and there, i.e. on earth and in the heavenly worlds, in the sense of a vicious cycle that has no end. The rebirth could take any form, not necessarily human. The criterion would be that birth which would be most suited for the fulfillment of the deep-seated desires.

3 “Consummation in the Self” means that the sage has found all the happiness and Bliss he needs in the Self, and is not in need of resorting to objects to satisfy them. This is the supreme state or culmination of dispassion.

4 The point being made is to show the contrast between the desireless seeker and the one full of desire. They earn diametrically opposite fruits. The desireless person gets it now and here while in the body. He gets liberation while still living. This is in contrast to the fruits earned by one who has desires. He has to wait for death before his desires can be fulfilled, e.g. going to heaven.

56 Verse 6.3: **Aspiration Brings Revelation**

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो
न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।
यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्य-
स्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूं स्वाम् ॥ ६.३॥

1	<i>na ayam aatmaa pravachanena labhyah,</i>	<i>This Self cannot be attained through <u>hearing discourses</u>;</i>
2	<i>na medhayaa, na bahunaa shrutena;</i>	<i>nor through <u>memorizing</u> scriptural texts, nor through much <u>learning</u>.</i>
3	<i>yam eva eshah vrinute tena labhyah,</i>	<i>Only he who Aspires for it with his <u>whole heart</u>, by him is this Self attained.</i>
4	<i>tasya eshah aatmaa vivrinute tanum svam.</i>	<i>To such a one, this Self Reveals Its true nature of its <u>own accord</u>.</i>

The Bhashya suggests that perhaps some people may feel that Self-realisation, being the highest of all attainments, would require a great deal of study of scriptures. Is this so?

1 Study of the scriptures is, no doubt, essential for the right understanding to dawn in order to launch into deeper spiritual practices. However, what is not recommended here is the excessive study that is done for study's sake alone, unaccompanied by any Sadhana. By that the Atman cannot be realized.

2 The same statement and context apply to the power of comprehension and memorization of texts and the hearing of many lectures on the subject; when these also are overdone or done for the wrong reason, they do not help in our spiritual growth. Indeed, they may prove to be counter-helpful to the goal if prompted by the ego. Acharyaji advised us that we should not allow this statement to stop us from studying. Rather, it should make us more conscious of the need to balance study with Sadhana.

God is a Matter of Demand & Supply

3 Above all accessories to the spiritual journey, the foremost has to be **Vrinute** or yearning for God. All efforts have to be accompanied by a deep yearning for God. The yearning makes the Self attainable. This key point should never be overlooked.

4 If the demand for God is strong enough, then the supply comes automatically. That is the essence of this Pada. Vrinute may be thought of as the demand for God. If it is there, then the supply or **Vivrinute**, the self-revealing of the Self, has to follow. This Self of the aspirant reveals its supreme nature to the one who yearns for It.

Thus we learn that our constant prayer for the consummation of our spiritual Sadhana, to the exclusion of everything else, is what really takes us to the goal.

57 Verse 6.4: *More Qualities that Are Needed*

नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यो
 न च प्रमादात् तपसो वाप्यलिङ्गात् ।
 एतैरुपायैर्यतते यस्तु विद्वां-
 स्तस्यैष आत्मा विशते ब्रह्मधाम ॥ ६.४॥

1	<i>na ayam aatmaa bala-heenena labhyah,</i>	<i>This Self is not attained by those without <u>inner strength</u>;</i>
2	<i>na cha pramaadaat tapasah vaa api alingaata;</i>	<i>nor by those who are <u>inadvertent</u>, nor by those practicing <u>ill-advised austerities</u>;</i>
3	<i>etaih upaayaaih yatate yah tu vidvaan,</i>	<i>but the wise man who strives by the <u>proper means</u> as advised here (i.e. with vigour, attention and propriety),</i>
4	<i>tasya eshah aatmaa vishate brahma dhaama.</i>	<i>in his case, the Jeeva of its own accord attains <u>union</u> with Brahman, its very foundation.</i>

As one progresses on the path of spirituality, the difficulties to be surmounted also get intensified. To overcome these in this phase of one's Sadhana requires specialist equipment in the Sadhaka. This verse focuses on these supportive qualities which the aspirant has to cultivate.

1 Bala: Without strength the Atman cannot be attained. Strength in this context refers to the strength one draws simply by abiding in the Self as much as possible. That is the foothold or anchorage one needs to adhere to the path in spite of difficulties.

2a Na Pramaadaat: “not by the inadvertent”. We have already studied this in great detail in *Viveka Chudamani*. When we try to clean out the mind, a reactionary process takes place in which our mind fights back to hold its ground. It refuses to leave its ‘lawful abode’. It tries its utmost to dislodge us from the pursuit of spiritual life, by drawing on all our past weaknesses and bringing them to our memory. It requires great vigilance to stave off such reactions from the mind.

2b Tapasah: Tapas was earlier defined as concentration of mind. Now, when we have grown stronger and progressed further, it refers to the strong will by which one firmly adheres to the knowledge gained during Sravana, and converts it to conviction during Manana. The fire of knowledge is invoked to eliminate the old ignorance-ridden tendencies or Vasanas.

Linga in this context means the vow of monasticism. The knowledge should lead us to physical renunciation or Sannyasa, monasticism. This gives maximum time for the aspirant to do intense meditation. The austerity that is **Alinga**, is an ill-advised austerity. It does not lead one towards Sannyasa.

3 Etaih Upaayaih: “By the above-mentioned means”. The man of knowledge strives diligently by proper means. When he does so...

4 Brahma-Dhama: The soul of such a striving person enters the supreme abode of Brahman. This is the goal that he has been striving for – it is reached successfully.

The next five verses, from 5-9, tell us more about the Realised sage or Jnani who has transcended all sense of limitation with respect to his Upadhis of body, mind and intellect.

58 Verse 6.5: *Jivanmukti: At the “Moment of Realisation”*

सम्प्राप्यैनमृषयो ज्ञानतृप्ताः
 कृतात्मानो वीतरागाः प्रशान्ताः
 ते सर्वगं सर्वतः प्राप्य धीरा
 युक्तात्मानः सर्वमेवाविशन्ति

॥ ६.५॥

1	<i>sampraapya enam rishayah jnaana triptaah,</i>	<i>When the sages have attained the Atman: i) they become <u>satisfied</u> with their knowledge,</i>
2	<i>krit-aatmaanah veetaraagaah prashaantaah;</i>	<i>ii) their purpose is <u>fulfilled</u>, iii) they become <u>free from desire</u>, and iv) they gain <u>tranquility</u>.</i>
3	<i>te sarvagam sarvatah praapya dheeraa,</i>	<i>The all-pervading Atman everywhere, they, the wise sages, (thereafter) attain.</i>
4	<i>yukta aatmaanah sarvam eva aavishanti.</i>	<i>Devoted to the Self, they enter into That which is everything.</i>

What happens at the all-important “Moment of Realisation”? Four immediate benefits gained are listed in the first two Padas:

1 i) Jnana Triptaah: Upon realization, the sages feel totally “contented in the knowledge”, which has removed the veil of ignorance over their intellect.

2a ii) Krit-Aatmaanah: their life’s purpose is now “fulfilled”;

2b iii) Veetaraagaah: they become “free from all desires”;

2c iv) Prashaantaah: they are then “calm, composed and peaceful”.

3 Sarvagam Sarvatah: “the all-pervasive Brahman, who is everywhere”. This contrasts with our experience of beholding only our own bodies through the limiting Upadhis. The experience represents the dissolution of individuality and entering into universality. The individual self is the **Jeeva**. That has been transcended. The sages are now identified with their true Self, the **Atman**.

4 Yukta-Aatmaanah: “merged in deep contemplation”. Even if it be at the last moment of life, they merge with everything. This is described in the scriptures by the following simile: It is like the space within a pot. While the pot exists, the space is associated with the pot; when the pot is broken, the space merges with the universal space.

59 Verse 6.6: **Kramamukti: Attainment of Brahmalo**

वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः

संन्यासयोगाद् यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः ।

ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले

परामृताः परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे

॥ ६.६॥

1	<i>vedaanta vijnaana sunishchitaarthaah,</i>	<i>The exact import of the Upanishads becomes <u>well ascertained</u> beyond all doubts.</i>
2	<i>samnyaasa-yogaad yatayah shuddha-sattvaah;</i>	<i>Through practising the Yoga of Renunciation, the anchorites gain <u>total purity</u> of mind.</i>
3	<i>te brahma lokeshu para anta kaale,</i>	<i>Then, to the world of Brahma (Brahmaloka) do they go at the time of their <u>final death</u>.</i>
4	<i>para amritaah, pari-muchyanti sarve.</i>	<i>There (in Brahmaloka) they attain immortality, and become <u>finally liberated</u>.</i>

This is another very well-known verse. It is recited during the welcoming of a Sannyasin in an Ashram. Every time Pujya Gururji arrives back to the Ashram after his trips all over the world, he is welcomed with this Mantra.

The Procedure of Krama Mukti

Not everyone is successful in attaining liberation while living. Most seekers would reach a certain stage of growth. Those among them who still have desires to fulfil, attain “Krama Mukti”, i.e. they go to the heavenly regions, enjoy those desires, and then go to Brahmalo (“the world of Brahma”) where they are instructed by Brahmaji Himself, and become liberated.

The minimum requirement for going via this route is to have these two qualities:

1 i) The correct **Understanding** of the Upanishads is necessary. The seeker has to understand the final goal is Brahman, the Infinite. The not-Self has to be negated.

2 ii) The second requirement is to begin the practice of **Renunciation** seriously. The path to ultimate liberation has to be founded on renunciation. *Sannyasa*, the formal stage of renunciation, is characterized by giving up all selfish activities as well as being relieved of all obligatory duties. This does not stop a Sannyasin from taking up any activity which he may deem fit for the good of humanity. He is in the category of the *pure-minded*, and cannot have any selfish interests.

3 If these two are clearly grasped, then the person is qualified for **Krama Mukti**. He attains Brahman eventually but takes the step-by-step route. There are many aspirants who reach Brahman via this route; the many heavenly worlds are all part of Brahman; Brahman alone is being referred to by the word ‘worlds’.

The end of a life span has a special meaning in the case of the realized sage. To him, this is the “**Last Death**”; for he never returns to this mortal plane again, having been liberated from it by dissolving all his Karma. In the case of all others, death at the end of life cannot be called “*Paranta*” because it is going to be followed again and again by many more lives and therefore many more deaths.

4 The ultimate attainment is Immortality, which implies liberation from the wheel of births and deaths. This is the same as that of the Jivanmuktas. Brahman is Immortal.

Pari-Muchyanti refers to the cessation of the worldly state once and for all. It is like the blowing out of a lamp – worldliness never returns to the realized ones. The Bhashya quotes other similar passages, one being: “Just as birds do not leave behind footprints in space, or the movements of fish in water do not leave any trace, so also the lives of liberated sages do not leave any footprints or traces of Karma in this world.”

Another beautiful expression from another text is: “Those who want to go beyond the courses of the world do not tread on roads.” This is meant to indicate that Brahman is not a spatially determined goal, but is our very being. There is no “road” to Brahman.

The most important deduction from these experiences is that liberation consists only in the removal of ignorance through knowledge of the Self, nothing else.

60 Verse 6.7: **Videhamukti: Dissolution of the Body**

गताः कलाः पञ्चदश प्रतिष्ठा
 देवाश्च सर्वे प्रतिदेवतासु ।
 कर्माणि विज्ञानमयश्च आत्मा
 परेऽव्यये सर्वे एकीभवन्ति

॥ ६.७॥

1	<i>gataah kalaah pancha-dasha pratishthaah,</i>	The fifteen Kalas (parts) return into the <u>elements</u> from which they originated;
2	<i>devaah cha sarve prati-devataasu;</i>	All the <u>senses</u> return into their corresponding originating Deities;
3	<i>karmaani vijnaana-mayash-cha aatmaa,</i>	The <u>deeds</u> , the <u>intellect sheath</u> , and the <u>ego-centre</u> –
4	<i>pare-avyaye sarva ekee-bhavanti.</i>	into the highest “ imperishable Brahman ” do all these get united.

A description of the Shodasha Kalas (16 Rays) is given in the *Prashna Upanishad* in which they are described in full detail. The 16 Kalas (as in the *Prashna Upanishad*) are:

1. **Prana**: representing the Total Mind or Hiranyagarbha, one step after Ishwara. This represents the Life-force without which nothing can exist in the world.

2. **Shraddha**: this is the faith all beings have in the success of their creative efforts. Without this faith no one will attempt to achieve anything.

3 – 7. **The Five Elements**: Space, Air, Fire, Water and Earth.

8. **Senses**: The organs of knowledge and the organs of action.

9. **Mind**: the Antahkarana or thought processing system controlling every being. It covers all four aspects, namely, Ego, Intellect, Mind and Memory

10. **Food**: that which sustains the gross body or the “Food-sheath”.

11. **Veerya**: or strength, mental and physical, by which one acts effectively.

12. **Tapas**: or austerity, by which one is able to work in the face of all hardships to bring Thought to its fruition.

13. **Mantra**: the ‘password’ to gain entry into the higher realms, effectively this stands for perseverance in one’s effort, the ability to not quit.

14. **Karma**: the performance of actions, after careful intelligent planning.

15. **World**: the manifested world which provides the field and the means to fulfil the actions undertaken.

16. **Naming**: of all the different items in creation. That, too, is a Kala. In particular, each Jeeva is given a name. The name has a unique quality described below:

1 The first 15 Kalas merge into their respective causes. The exception is Kala 16 – the name or fame of the sage lives even after him. It is the memory that the sage leaves behind in the minds of his devotees and admirers. That lives on after the sage’s Videhamukti.

2 The functions of the senses are the essential senses, not their physical location in the body. Thus the senses are termed here as Devas or gods. These sense functions go back to the Devatas whom they represent.

3 The Bhashya explains that from the standpoint of the liberated sage, there are no more Karmas and there is no intellect either. Hence, these terms used in this Pada have to be taken as meaning the general case for all human beings. They do not exist in a sage.

4 All the 15 Kalas, which have a unique identity in the case of the ignorant person, become indistinguishable in the case of the sage. This is like the many reflections of the sun in water returning to the sun when the water dries up, or the space connected with the pot uniting with the total space outside the pot when the pot breaks.

The Brahman being referred to here is not the Absolute Non-dual Brahman, but Brahman in association with Maya, i.e. **Ishwara**, the Causal state of Consciousness. At the time of dissolution, everything dissolves into Ishwara, which is an unmanifest state of creation, and therefore also described as “imperishable”. But Ishwara which has the seeds of creation still intact to resume the next manifested cycle of creation.

However, only in the case of the liberated sage, can the word Brahman here also be taken to mean Supreme Brahman, as in him there are no remaining ‘seeds’ or Karmas to be worked out. The sage’s subtle body completely dissolves into the Supreme.

61 Verse 6.8: *Videhamukti: As “Rivers into the Ocean”*

यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रे
 ऽस्तं गच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय ।
 तथा विद्वान् नामरूपाद्विमुक्तः
 परात्परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ॥ ६.८॥

1	<i>yathaa nadyah syandamaanaah samudre-,</i>	<i>As Rivers flowing towards and into the <u>ocean</u>,</i>
2	<i>astam gacchhanti naama-roope vihaaya;</i>	<i><u>disappear</u> upon entering it, and lose their identity of <u>name and form</u>;</i>
3	<i>tathaa vidvaan naamaroopaat vimuktah,</i>	<i>so also, the wise man, frees himself of his name and form <u>identity</u>,</i>
4	<i>paraatparam purusham upaiti divyam.</i>	<i>upon attaining the divine nature of the Highest of the high, the <u>Supreme Purusha</u>.</i>

1-2 A clear simile is given to make us understand the merging of the Kalas into their causes. It is the simile of rivers merging into the ocean. All individual characteristics of a river are lost forever when it enters the ocean.

3-4 So also, all traces of the individuality of the sage are completely gone – except, as already mentioned, his *name*.

Destruction of individuality

This is something which frightens many people. In the state of delusion in which we are, all we have is our individual personality. That is everything to us. How is it possible to be without it? We are terrified to think what like would be like without individuality. Yet, the Truth is that individuality is part of the Unreality. There is no such a thing from the stand-point of Truth.

The fear of losing personality is itself seen to be a delusion of the mind.

In the Bhashya a humorous possibility is put forward by an objector: “We are told that there are many obstacles on this path to liberation? So is it possible that even after his death, the liberated sage, while on his way to Brahman, could get hi-jacked and be taken to another place? Is there such a possibility?”

The answer given is: Rivers may have obstacles preventing their flow to the ocean, but once they unite with the ocean, how can there be any obstacles? The implication is that obstacles occur in the realm of thought, which is in the realm of Duality. When one is beyond thought, i.e. beyond Duality, there can be no obstacles. This gives a clear answer to the above doubt.

The same objection is answered in Vedantic terms by Sri Shankaracharyaji by saying that on this path there is no hindrance other than ignorance. Once the light of knowledge has removed ignorance, where can obstacle arise from?

Emancipation unites one for ever to the Self, which is the term used for Brahman or the Reality when speaking in relation to an individual. This is made very clear in the next verse.

62 Verse 6.9: *Knower of Brahman Becomes Brahman*

स यो ह वै तत् परमं ब्रह्म वेद
 ब्रह्मैव भवति नास्याब्रह्मवित्कुले भवति ।
 तरति शोकं तरति पाप्मानं
 गुहाग्रन्थिभ्यो विमुक्तोऽमृतो भवति ॥ ६.९॥

1	<i>sa yo ha vai tat paramam brahma veda,</i>	<i>Indeed, he who verily knows that Supreme Brahman,</i>
2	<i>brahma iva bhavati;</i>	<i>he becomes Brahman alone;</i>
3	<i>na asya abrahmavit kule bhavati;</i>	<i>and someone who does not know Brahman there will not be in his <u>family</u>.</i>
4	<i>tarati shokam, tarati paapmaanam,</i>	<i>He goes beyond all <u>grief</u>, he crosses the tendency <u>to sin</u>;</i>
5	<i>guhā-granthibhyah vimuktah amritah bhavati.</i>	<i>being free from the <u>knots of the heart</u>, he becomes immortal.</i>

Earlier we had the bow and arrow simile in which we saw that the arrow becomes one with the target (4.3 & 4.4). This same idea is brought in again now at the conclusion to highlight this fact as the keynote of this Upanishad.

1-2 The sage of realization becomes the Goal itself. It is such a unique path – it is the journey to one’s own Self. The arrow becomes one with the Target!

3 In the family of the cultured only cultured souls are born; conversely, in an uncultured family, uncultured souls take birth. In the family of saints, all who are born will have an inclination towards striving for God. This is meant by this line.

4 Shokam, Paapmaanam: “Grief and sin”. These are the two things which torment people during the course of ordinary existence on earth. The quest of all human souls on earth is to avoid these two – grief and sin. The sage is the happy soul that has transcended them both successfully.

Human weaknesses come only when we want to supercede somebody, i.e. when we have a competitor to beat. The Jnani has no such worry over any competition, as he sees himself in his so-called competitor. All human obstacles that cause grief arise from the ego-sense. That ego itself has been disabled by Knowledge of the Self. Thus there is no danger of ever having to face any obstacles.

4 The ‘knots of the heart’ are born of ignorance. Knowledge destroys the very rope from which the knots are made. The ‘knots’ are a quick reference to a whole string of events that ultimately produce grief and sorrow in our lives. The soul that is thus freed from these knots attains immortality, as already explained (verse 4.8).

The teaching of the *Upanishad* ends with this verse. It now remains to formally state the Phala or fruits of studying this text. All scriptural texts as a rule end with the **Phala Stuti** – a declaration of the benefits of studying the text. The last two verses have this purpose.

A rule is also given for the propagation of this knowledge to succeeding generations, so that it can be perpetuated among mankind.

63 Verse 6.10: *Transfer of the Supreme Wisdom*

तदेतद्चाऽभ्युक्तम् ।

क्रियावन्तः श्रोत्रिया ब्रह्मनिष्ठाः

स्वयं जुह्वत एकर्षिं श्रद्धयन्तः ।

तेषामेवैतां ब्रह्मविद्यां वदेत

शिरोव्रतं विधिवद् यैस्तु चीर्णम् ॥ ६.१०॥

0	<i>tad etad richaa-abhyuktam</i>	<i>The Rig Veda explains the rules to teach this text:</i>
1	<i>kriyaavantah, shrotriya, brahma-nishthaah,</i>	<i>i) To those who perform <u>rituals</u>; ii) who read and study the <u>Vedas</u>; iii) who aim to establish themselves in <u>Brahman</u>;</i>
2	<i>swayam juhvata ekarshim shraddhayantah;</i>	<i>iv) who offer oblations themselves to the <u>Ekarshi fire</u>; v) who possess <u>faith</u>; and</i>
4	<i>shirovratam vidhivad yaih tu cheernam.</i>	<i>vi) the vow of Shirovrata – to those who have strictly observed it –</i>
3	<i>teshaam eva etaam brahmavidyaam vadeta,</i>	<i>To these people alone let this <u>knowledge of Brahman</u> be <u>taught</u>;</i>

[Note: Pada 4 has been placed before Pada 3 to keep the thought-flow.]

There is an entrance examination for all institutions of higher learning. We accept this in secular life, but some people question it in spiritual life. The Upanishad itself lays down the six standards in this verse as an entrance examination for study of the scriptures. The Adhikaris or qualified students to receive the knowledge of this Upanishad is being described here. The only way to protect this knowledge is to spread it to deserving students who qualify for it.

1-4 An important point to note about an “Entrance Exam” is that it checks out the minimum qualifications needed to enter this path of knowledge. It does not make too many demands of a person – that growth comes after starting the course. Hence, we notice that all the above six pre-requisites are simply to check if the person is basically interested in his religious development, and whether he has a worthy goal to strive towards.

Shiro-Vrata: This last item may be the only item that needs an explanation to Western readers. Shiro-Vrata means “*the vow of holding fire on the head*”. It is a Vedic vow that is familiar amongst the followers of the Atharva Veda.

A prescribed action such as this has always to be taken symbolically. The pot of fire on the head is to mean that our intellect and mind have to have a fiery spirit of yearning for God and His knowledge. Without this yearning he will not grasp the subtle truths.

“Fire on the head” and the title of this Upanishad “shaven-head” may match each other, but it does not mean that only Sannyasins are qualified to study this knowledge.

Vows such as the *Shiro-Vrata* were once well known, but very few in India now know of their existence. In today’s world, this could well be interpreted to mean that the person should be acutely aware of his duties and responsibilities to family and society. He must be prepared to sacrifice for the welfare of others. This is seen in the final verse . . .

64 Verse 6.11: **Conclusion**

तदेतत् सत्यम्—

ऋषिरङ्गिराः पुरोवाच नैतदचीर्णव्रतोऽधीते ।

नमः परमऋषिभ्यो नमः परमऋषिभ्यः ॥ ६.११॥

	<i>tad etat satyam –</i>	<i>That is the Truth (the conclusion).</i>
1	<i>rishih angiraah puraa uvaacha,</i>	<i>Thus did Rishi Angiraa in ancient times speak:</i>
2	<i>na etad acheerna vratah adheete;</i>	<i>“No one who has not observed any vow (renunciation), is fit to study this.</i>
3	<i>namah parama rishibhyah,</i>	<i>Our salutations to the great Rishis!</i>
4	<i>namah parama rishibhyah.</i>	<i>Our prostrations to the great Seers!</i>

Tad Etat Satyam: For the 4th time in this book we have these words in the text. The other references are in 2.1, 3.1 and 4.2. The emphasis is quite clear – that this Truth has been fully conveyed at the lower and the higher levels, as well as all the intermediate levels.

1-2 The Rishi compassionately tells us that unless we observe one or more of the six items listed in the previous verse, we will not have the spiritual fitness to study this text. There will not be the purity of mind needed to understand this scripture. If, after reading it, we still do not understand it, we should seek more purity, than find error in its author.

3-4 The repetition of the last line is to indicate the end of the Upanishad. The choice of the line indicates how much reverence is accorded to one who imparts this knowledge to others. He truly protects this knowledge from being destroyed.

॥ इति मुण्डकोपनिषदि तृतीयमुण्डके द्वितीयः खण्डः ॥

iti mundakopanishadi, triteeya mundake, dviteeyah khandah.

Thus the Mundaka Upanishad ends, with the second Section of the Third Canto.

॥ इत्यथर्ववेदीय मुण्डकोपनिषत्समाप्ता ॥

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवा भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।

स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवाग्ँसस्तनूभिर्व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ।

स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।

स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ।

॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Tat Sat!

