

॥ ऐतरेयोपनिषत् ॥

AITAREYA UPANISHAD

*By a Peasant
for the Peasant*

“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”

TEXT

34

Reflections by
SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA



Sandeepany's Vedanta Course

List of All the Course Texts in Chronological Sequence:

Text No.	TITLE OF TEXT	Text No.	TITLE OF TEXT
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>
5	<i>Manisha Panchakam</i>	28	<i>Bhagavad Geeta (Discourse --)</i>
6	<i>Forgive Me</i>	29	<i>Mundaka Upanishad</i>
7	<i>Upadesha Sara</i>	30	<i>Amritabindu Upanishad</i>
8	<i>Prashna Upanishad</i>	31	<i>Mukunda Mala (Bhakti Text)</i>
9	<i>Dhanyashtakam</i>	32	<i>Tapovan Shatkam</i>
10	<i>Bodha Sara</i>	33	<i>The Mahavakyas, Panchadasi 5</i>
11	<i>Viveka Choodamani</i>	34	<i>Aitareya Upanishad</i>
12	<i>Jnana Sara</i>	35	<i>Narada Bhakti Sutras</i>
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14	<i>"Tat Twam Asi" – Chand Up 6</i>	37	<i>Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living)</i>
15	<i>Dhyana Swaroopam</i>	38	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
16	<i>"Bhoomaiva Sukham" Chand Up 7</i>	39	<i>Aparoksha Anubhuti (Meditation)</i>
17	<i>Manah Shodhanam</i>	40	<i>108 Names of Pujya Gurudev</i>
18	<i>"Nataka Deepa" – Panchadasi 10</i>	41	<i>Mandukya Upanishad</i>
19	<i>Isavasya Upanishad</i>	42	<i>Dakshinamurty Ashtakam</i>
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21	<i>"Sara Sangrah" – Yoga Vasishtha</i>	44	<i>Brahma Sootras</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, 8th September, 2019, Sacred Birthday of Sri Swami Sivananda

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text

34



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AITAREYA UPANISHAD

"By a Peasant for the Peasant"

Composed by

Rishi Maheedasa Aitareya

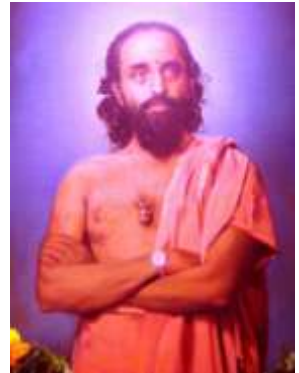
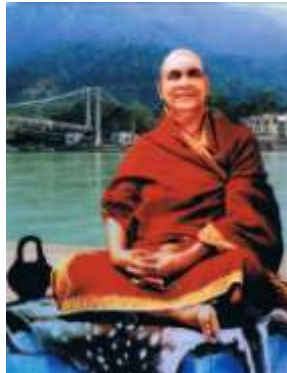
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Author:

Swami Gurubhaktananda (ex Krishna Chaitanya, born Bipin R. Kapitan in Durban, South Africa)

Email: gurubhakta.dls@gmail.com

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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.

AITAREYA UPANISHAD

“By a Peasant for the Peasant”

AITAREYA UPANISHAD

"The Scripture of the Peasant"

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– ऋषि महिदास ऐतरेय –

AITAREYA UPANISHAD
3 Parts, 6 Chapters, 33 No. Verses
“By a Peasant for the Peasant”

by Rishi Maheedasa Aitareya

Note: The Peace Invocation which is usually chanted at the start of a text has been placed at the end as Chapter Six, in accordance with the manner in which Sri Shankaracharyaji has placed it; it is thus considered to be part of the *Upanishad* itself.

INTRODUCTION

The Source of Aitareya Upanishad

THIS UPANISHAD IS FROM one of the Rig Vedic Brahmanas. It is an Aranyaka (an introductory Upanishad) composed within the Aitareya Brahmana. The first three chapters of this Brahmana deal with the Karma Kanda. The next three chapters (4, 5 and 6), dealing with knowledge of the Self or the Jnana Kanda, form this Upanishad.

These three chapters are referred to here as Parts 1, 2 and 3. Part 1 is sub-divided into three chapters, namely, Chapters 1 to 3. Parts 2 and 3 have just one chapter each, namely, Chapters 4 and 5. Sri Shankaracharyaji considers the Shanti Mantra sufficiently important to warrant being called another chapter, i.e. Chapter 6. Putting these six chapters together, he calls this text “*Atma Shatka*” (*Shat* = six).

The Author of Aitareya Upanishad

This is one of the few *Upanishads* whose author is known to us. The Rishi’s name is Rishi Maheedasa Aitareya. The Rishi’s mother was Itara, which means “the other one”, presumably because she was the ‘other’ wife of the Brahmana, Vishaala. There is an anecdote concerning this circumstance in the life of the young Maheedasa.

The 5-year old boy was not allowed to sit on his father’s lap during a Havan ceremony, presumably because his mother was the ‘other’ wife. This disturbed the mother, a potter-woman, who then prayed to Goddess Earth for a solution. The Goddess appeared, placed the boy in a celestial seat, probably intending to show that it was superior to the father’s lap. Not only did the Goddess elevate the boy’s physical status in this manner, but She also elevated his mind by teaching him Divine Wisdom. The boy grew up to become a great Rishi, and acquired the name ‘Maheedasa’ meaning “*servant of Mother Earth*”.

The Rishi (Seer) Maheedasa did not forget his humble origin. He had a great love for the common people. He served the cause of his downtrodden community within which he

had grown up. This Upanishad is recognized for its special appeal to the common man. Thus the Rishi promoted Vedic culture 'from his hut in the slum' to the peasants in his poor, side-lined community.

The Style of Aitareya Upanishad

A word has to be said about the unique style of this Upanishad when compared to the others. Due to the background of its author, it is described as the "scripture for the common man".

The scripture is intimately related to life, bringing life to a philosophy that may have appeared as 'dead' to many who could not grasp the intricacies of Upanishadic wisdom as expressed by more scholarly writers of the time. There is a note of dynamism in it, there is tenderness and love in its lines, and it is woven around a theme common to all people.

The essence of the style is to allow the reader freedom to interpret the text in his own manner. There is no rigidity in the statements. As it appeals to one's emotions to a large extent, it lends itself to a wide range of interpretations. There is a tinge of humour in the narration of some parts. There is also an appeal to our sense of wonder and amazement when portions on how creation proceeded are narrated.

The style is entertaining, indeed, and the student may wonder at times whether he has drifted away somehow from its serious purpose or not. But soon and suddenly he gets jolted back into the spiritual realm in the midst of the most divergent of thought chains.

We need to have an open mind, a flare for imagination, a good sense of humour and be able to think "out of the box". Depending on these we can make the intellectual leap with the Rishi, as well as enjoy the ride with him!

The Theories on Creation:

There are many "Theories of Creation". As far as the Upanishads are concerned, all of them are encouraged, the more the merrier. None of them are claimed to be the "*only true*" theory. The Upanishadic view, after all, is that it is an *unreal* world. How can there be a true theory for a false world? The purpose of all creation theories in the Upanishads is to point to the Ultimate Reality beyond the unreality of this world. That is where the Upanishads are trying to take us. They are not interested in teaching us more about the world.

In the light of this, the theory presented here is 'yet another one' – perhaps a rather unusual one. The whole approach is very subtle and probing all the time. It makes the reader think and imagine at every moment. It may be correct to say that the theory put forward in this Upanishad is the most flexible of all, totally different from others we have come across so far, and very entertaining indeed.

The *Tattwa Bodha* and *Vedanta Sara* theories, based as they are on Tanmatras, elements and complex Panchikarana reactions, create a picture in our mind of a Cosmic Chemical Plant in which the atoms and molecules for this world are manufactured. In contrast to these 'Industrial' theories, the one given here has a more homely atmosphere. It gives the picture of creation emerging out of a Cosmic Maternity Ward, with objects being born out of sheer imagination, intention and passion.

The theory presented here will greatly appeal to mothers in society, who must be feeling very left out in the rather 'masculine' theories given elsewhere. In Aitareya Upanishad *parents* are at the heart of the creation process; not 'hard hat' industrial

workers! Here we have something more familiar to us, something we can relate to. We feel much more comfortable at home than in a chemical factory.

So much only in the Introduction; the taste has to be experienced in the text itself!

A Note on the Lengthy Introduction in the Shankara Bhashya

The Shankara Bhashya for this smallest of Upanishads is the lengthiest. Acharyaji helped us by giving us the gist of it:

The Karma and Upasana portions that precede this Upanishad (in the Aitareya Brahmana mentioned above), hold out certain goals for those who practice them. In order to correct the error that those goals are the ultimate goal of life and that the Jnana Path can thus be avoided, the Bhashya presents a number of arguments from the standpoint of a **Poorvapakshi** (an objector or opponent), refuting each one with clearcut logic.

For instance, the first objector asks how is it known that the Jnana Vidya holds out a goal that is superior to the Karma Kanda. Sri Shankaracharyaji deals with this by saying that the phenomenal world is subject to hunger and thirst, the appeasement of which is one of the fruits of the earlier Karma Kanda. The supreme Brahman transcends these needs of hunger and thirst, so it is a higher goal.

That is just the start. The objectors go on to argue that the two portions should be *kept together*. Not only that, they even argue that to pre-qualify for the knowledge of the Self, one has to go via the Karma and Upasana Kanda, making it compulsory to practice the rituals prescribed by them. This would be very good ‘business’ for the pundits.

Sri Shankaracharyaji is very strong on the need to separate them. The key factor that separates the two paths is renunciation, and Sri Shankara adheres to the Shruti which says, “The day you have true Vairagya, that very day you should renounce.” He is explicit in saying that one need not go through Karma Kanda in order to pre-qualify for knowledge.

The objectors’ main argument is: “Why can Sannyasa (renunciation) not be practised from home?” To this Sri Shankara makes a counter suggestion: “If it makes no difference to you then why not go to the forest to practice it?”

Realising that at the root of the objectors’ mind is the fear of losing their hold on worldly pleasures and worldly ‘customers’, Sri Shankara argues directly with them: “It is totally useless for a Vairagi to remain at home. It serves no purpose. The man has gone beyond the needs of the flesh. Why should he stay on at home? You are merely afraid that you will lose all the comforts to which you are attached.”

Sri Shankara’s stand comes from his own life’s experience. He was exceptionally fearless. He abandoned home at the age of seven, and plunged into the Unknown. His mother had reluctantly allowed it. By the age of twelve he had begun writing his commentaries. He knew exactly what was going through the objector’s mind. They could not fool him.



PART 1: Chapter 1, 4 Verses

The Theory of CREATION

॥ अथ ऐतरेयोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये प्रथमः खण्डः ॥

Here begins the Chapter 1 of Part 1.

Verse 1.1: *Before Creation Began...*

१. ॐ आत्मा वा इदमेक एवाग्र आसीन् – २. नान्यत्किञ्चन मिषत् । ३. स ईक्षत लोकान्नु सृजा इति	१. ॐ ātmā vā idamēka ēvāgra āsīn- २. nānyatkiñcana miṣat ३. sa īkṣata lōkānnu sṛjā iti
--	--

1	<i>Om aatmaa vaa idam eka eva agra aaseet;</i>	<i>Om. Verily, this one Atman alone was existing in the beginning.</i>
2	<i>na anyat kinchina mishat.</i>	<i>Nothing else whatsoever was there that winked.</i>
3	<i>Sa eekshata, lokaan nu srijaa iti.</i>	<i>He envisioned: "I shall create the worlds."</i>

HERE BEGINS THE Aitareya Upanishad's amazing theory of Creation.

1 Aatmaa: A period is visualized when there was just nothing at all, except the Atman. The Roodhi or accepted meaning of Atman is "inner", the "essence", the "heart of". The Atman stood alone as the **Adhishtana** or support for everything that followed.

Agra: "before". To say "before Creation" is itself a misnomer – it immediately accepts Time, but there was no time before creation, for Time is also a creation. We cannot plot Absolute Existence on an axis of Time.

Thus, one after another, we encounter logical conundrums such as these. Perhaps this is inevitable. This is the case with all theories of creation. They can never be true, as creation is 'unreal', a mere superimposition upon the Real. Every theory is only a teaching aid, and has to be discarded when its purpose is served.

Eka Eva: "It alone is". Pure Existence just "IS", and nothing else is with it. It is called Pratyag Atman, the inner Self of Being. Pure Existence is very hard for us to imagine. But Acharyaji helped us along:

"Before creation, there was just Existence alone, without any names and forms. There was stillness everywhere without even the word 'stillness' being there. Existence was there, without the word "existence" being there! Nothing in name and form was there.

"Before all the pots were made, there was just mud. Before all the ornaments were made, there was just gold. Before any wave came into being, there was just the water of the ocean . . . In the same way, before all this variety was created, there was just pure Atman! Atman is the *material* from which creation was produced."

2 Mishat: “winked”. This is a stroke of poetical beauty, to express the fact that although nothing at all, no living being, was present at the time, this Existence was not ‘dead’. It was the only thing present and was capable of “winking”! So it was actually *ALIVE*. It was full of promise.

The word ‘winking’ suggests a curiosity to be something, it suggests a playfulness of wanting to create something just “for the fun of it”. It perfectly represents the philosophical idea that this world is the Lord’s Leela or Play or sport.

Who was the Lord so mischievously “winking” at? All eyes turn towards Maya, the cosmic Shakti of the Supreme Brahman, playing the role of a charming temptress. This was the first “Love Affair” in the Universe!

Acharyaji described this line as a “self-cancelling statement”. The implication is that every word, in trying to describe that indescribable state, cancels itself. It is as if the word is trying to whisper something into our ears about this Moment of Wonder, but fades off the moment it tries to do so – it just cannot express the inexpressible, and cancels itself!

For this reason this verse is called the Vastu Sangraha, the subject of this text.

Adhyaropa – A Theoretical Superimposition

3 No sooner does the Supreme Being have this thought, than creation begins, virtually instantaneously. The speed has no significance of its own. It is not to be imagined that this was like a magic performance, although it sounds like that. The Power of the Will of the Supreme Atman is being illustrated by using ‘speed’.

Adhyaropa is the technical term for superimposition of the unreal on the Real. This is a theoretical superimposition for the purposes of illustrating the essence of creation. It does not refer to the Ignorance by which we cannot distinguish the real from the unreal in actual life. Adhyaropa is thus a theoretical exercise to assist us in our understanding of the Truth.

What is the first thing of the superimposition that is created?

Verse 1.2: *The Creation of the Worlds*

४. स इमाँ ल्लोकानसृजत । अम्भो मरीचीर्मरमापो –	4. sa imāṃ llōkānaṣṛjata ambhō marīcīrmaramāpō-
५. ऽदोऽम्भः परेण दिवं द्यौः प्रतिष्ठा – ।	5. :dō:'mbhaḥ parēṇa divaṃ dyauḥ pratiṣṭhā-
६. ऽन्तरिक्षं मरीचयः । पृथिवी मरो ।	6. :ntarikṣaṃ marīcayaḥ pṛthivī marō
७. या अधस्तात् आपः ॥	7. yā adhastāta āpaḥ

4	sa imaan lokaan asrijata: ambhah mareecheeh, maram, aapah.	He created all these Worlds (14 in no.): <u>Ambhah</u> , <u>Mareecheeh</u> , <u>Marah</u> and <u>Aapah</u> .
5	adah <u>ambhah</u> , parena divam, dyauh pratishthaa;	1. Far beyond is Ambha , just above the heaven (Svah), with Svah acting as its support;
6	antariksham <u>mareechayah</u> : prithivi <u>marah</u> ;	2. The ‘sky’ is Mareecheeh (between heaven and earth); 3. The Earth is Marah (Bhuh, or the plane of death);
7	yaa adhastaat taah <u>aapah</u> .	4. What lies below Earth is Aapah (water, representing the nether worlds).

4 The four divisions listed here are equivalent to all the 14 worlds – we have learnt about these in *Vedanta Sara*. The comparison is shown as follows:

- i) **5 Ambhah** – all the 5 heavenly worlds from Svah upwards; namely *Svah, Mahah, Janah, Tapah*, and *Satya*; *Satya* is Brahmaloka, the highest heaven.
- ii) **6 Mareecheeh** – the interspatial world, *Bhuvah*, between heaven and earth;
- iii) **6 Marah** – the Earth, *Bhuh*; Earth is also called the world of ‘Death’;
- iv) **7 Aapah** – all the 7 underworlds; namely, *Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasatala, Talatala, Mahatala*, and *Patala*. *Patala* is the lowest hell.

Verse 1.3: *Hiranyagarbha, the Chief Devata*

८. स ईक्षतेमे नु लोका ९. लोकपालान्नु सृजा इति । सोऽद्भ्य १०. एव पुरुषं समुद्धृत्यामूर्छयत् ॥	8. sa īkṣatēmē nu lōkā 9. lōkapālānnu sṛjā iti sō:'dbhya 10. ēva puruṣaṁ samuddhṛtyāmūrchayat
--	---

8	<i>Sa eekshata ime nu lokaah;</i>	<i>He (Brahman) reflected: “Here now are the worlds, (just created).”</i>
9	<i>lokapaalaan nu srijai iti;</i>	<i>Let Me now create Protectors for these worlds.”</i>
10	<i>Sah adbhya sam-uddritya eva purusham amurchhayat.</i>	<i>Then He took up a lump of the <u>Waters</u> and gave it a <u>human form</u> (Hiranyagarbha).</i>

8-9 Lokapaalaan: “protectors of the worlds”. When the worlds were created, nothing was in them. There were no living beings. So the next intention that crossed the Supreme Being was to place the Devatas or deities who would protect these worlds. These would become the Guardian Angels of the universe.

10 Adbhyah: “Water” is symbolically used to represent the *liquidity* which held all the potential material together; it was the causal substance from which the rest of creation was made. This liquid material is a vast mass of consciousness resembling an ocean. It is full of the potential for sentiency, vitality, power, creativity, etc. Brahman took out (**Sam-Uddritya**) a ‘handful’ of this Water of Life. A handful indicates that it is from only a small part of Him that creation was made. The bulk of Him remained unmanifest. This is to lead us to the knowledge that He, the Lord, is Infinite and has no ‘parts’.

Amurchhayat: Then He “gave it a shape” that resembled a **Purusha**, human form. Note that the Deities do not have a gross form. Their bodies are made of Consciousness or Light. To depict this, Deities are painted in a blue colour, representing Consciousness.

The first Deity Form conceived represents **Hiranyagarbha**, which is Consciousness in association with the subtle creation. What is being described here is the creation of Hiranyagarbha Himself, the Chief Deity of the whole subtle manifestation.

Other Deities fall under Hiranyagarbha, and their creation follows in the next verse. The Deities are subtle beings, and it is interesting that they all have been given *human* forms. The gross creation has not yet begun.

Verse 1.4: The Eight Chief Devatas are Created

११.	तमभ्यतपत् तस्याभितप्तस्य ।
१२.	मुखं निरभिद्यत यथाऽण्डं मुखाद्वाग्वाचोऽग्निः ।
१३.	नासिके निरभिद्येतं नासिकाभ्यां प्राणःप्राणाद्वायुः ।
१४.	अक्षिणी निरभिद्येतमक्षीभ्यां चक्षुश्चक्षुष आदित्यः ।
१५.	कर्णौ निरभिद्येतां कर्णाभ्यां श्रोत्रं श्रोत्रादिशः ।
१६.	त्वडिनिरभिद्यत त्वचो लोमानि लोमभ्य ओषधिवनस्पतयो ।
१७.	हृदयं निरभिद्यत हृदयान्मनो मनसश्चन्द्रमा ।
१८.	नाभिर्निरभिद्यत नाभ्या अपानोऽपानान्मृत्युः ।
१९.	शिश्नं निरभिद्यत शिश्नाद्रेतो रेतस आपः ॥

11.	tamabhyatapat tasyābhitaptasya
12.	mukhaṁ nirabhidyata yathā:'ṇḍaṁ mukhādvāgvācō:'gniḥ
13.	nāsikē nirabhidyētaṁ nāsikābhyāṁ prāṇaḥprāṇādvāyuḥ
14.	akṣiṇī nirabhidyētamakṣībhyāṁ cakṣuścakṣuṣa ādityaḥ
15.	karnau nirabhidyētāṁ karṇābhyāṁ śrōtraṁ śrōtrāddiśaḥ
16.	tvaṁnirabhidyata tvacō lōmāni lōmabhya oṣadhivanaspatayō
17.	hṛdayaṁ nirabhidyata hṛdayānmanō manasaścandramā
18.	nābhirnirabhidyata nābhyā apānō:'pānānmṛtyuḥ
19.	śiśnaṁ nirabhidyata śiśnādrētō rētaśa āpaḥ

11	<i>Tam abhyatapat tasya abhitaptasya</i>	He (Brahman) brooded upon this “ lump ” (Hiranyagarbha); as He was thus brooding upon it,
i) The Agni Devata		
12	<i>Mukham nir-abhi-dyata, yathaa andam; mukhaat-vaak, vaachah agniḥ;</i>	i) A <u>Mouth</u> burst forth from it as a cleft, just as an egg cracks; from the Mouth proceeded <u>Speech</u> , from Speech emerged Agni , the <u>Fire Deity</u> .
ii) The Vayu Devata		
13	<i>Naasike nirabhidyetaam, naasikaabhyaam praanah, praanaad vaayuh;</i>	ii) Then His (Hiranyagarbha's) <u>Nostrils</u> burst forth; from the nostrils, emerged the sense of <u>smell</u> ; and from smell emerged Vayu , the <u>Air Deity</u> .
iii) The Aditya Devata		
14	<i>Akshinee nirabhidyetaam; akshibhyaam chakshuh; chakshushah aadityah;</i>	iii) Then the <u>Eyes</u> burst open on the lump; from the Eyes, <u>sight</u> emerged; and from sight, Aditya , the <u>Sun Deity</u> .
iv) The Disha Devata		
15	<i>Karnau nirbhidyetaam; karnaabhyaam shrotam; shrotraat dishah;</i>	iv) Then the <u>Ears</u> burst forth; from the Ears proceeded <u>hearing</u> ; from hearing, Dishah , the <u>Deity of Directions/Space</u> .

v) **The Vanaspataya Devata**

16	<i>Tvak nirabhidyata; tvachah lomaani; lomabhyah oshadhih vanaspatayah;</i>	v) Then the <u>Skin</u> suddenly appeared; from the Skin came out <u>hair</u> ; and from hair, Vanaspatayah , the Deity of 'Herbs and Trees';
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vi) **The Chandramaa Devata**

17	<i>Hridayam nirabhidyata; hridayaat manah; manasah chandramaah;</i>	vi) Then the <u>Heart</u> sprung up; from the Heart proceeded the <u>mind</u> ; from the mind, Chandramaah , the <u>Moon Deity</u> .
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vii) **The Mrityuh Devata**

18	<i>Naabhih nirabhidyata; naabhyaa apaanah; apaanaat mrityuh;</i>	vii) Then a <u>Navel</u> burst forth; from the Navel, the <u>Apana</u> or power of excretion; from Apana came Mrityuh , the <u>Lord of Death</u> .
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viii) **The Aapah Devata**

19	<i>Shishnam nirbhidyata; shishnaad retah; retasah aapah;</i>	viii) Then the <u>Generative Organ</u> burst out; from this Organ, the <u>semen</u> or seed; from semen came Aapah , the <u>Water Deity</u> .
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There are many more Deities for all the little functions of the body. However, the point is made that for each function there is a Deity to govern and oversee its operation.

All the above information is placed in the Table below:

THE EIGHT DEITIES Their Seats & their Objects

LINE	DEVATA OF ORGAN	APPEARANCE OF ORGAN	OBJECT OF ORGAN
<u>12</u>	Fire (Agni Devata)	Cleft, Mouth (Mukha)	Speech (Vaak)
<u>13</u>	Air (Vayu Devata)	Nostrils (Naasika)	Smell (Prana)
<u>14</u>	Sun (Aditya Devata)	Eyes (Akshinee)	Sight (Chakshu)
<u>15</u>	Space (Disha Devata)	Ears (Karna)	Hearing (Shrotram)
<u>16</u>	Earth (Vanaspatayah)	Skin (Tvak)	Hair (Lomaani)
<u>17</u>	Moon (Chandramaah)	Heart (Hridayam)	Mind (Manas)
<u>18</u>	Death (Mrityuh)	Navel (Naabhi)	Excretion (Apana)
<u>19</u>	Water (Aapah)	Genitals (Shishnam)	Semen or Seed (Retas)

If we bring to mind a developing foetus, we may well be tempted to link the appearance of the above eight organs to the development of a human foetus. After all, as far as the physical observation is concerned, the organs in a foetus do indeed simply "burst

out” through the lump of human flesh which is the foetus in its early stages. The idea is to relate the process of creating the Deities of this universe to the process of childbirth so that the common man can understand it better.

We are familiar with the 5-element model of Creation. This theory also has the same 5 elements, each of which has its own Deity. The three additional Deities mentioned are the Sun, Moon and Death. All eight Deities play a major role in governing the Universe.

In some theories of Creation, a 3-element model is used, as in the Chhandogya Upanishad. Variations of this sort are not to be taken too seriously. They are illustrative of a common principle at work. Hence, it should not alarm us to find such variations in the scriptures.

॥ इत्यैतरेयोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये प्रथमः खण्डः ॥

Here ends Chapter 1 of Part 1



THE HUMAN BIRTH
– *Destined for Divinity* –

PART 1: Chapter 2, 5 Verses

ABODES for the Devatas

॥ अथ ऐतरेयोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये द्वितीयः खण्डः ॥

Here begins the Chapter 2 of Part 1.

THE CREATION OF THE organs, their objects and their Devatas in the previous verse is at the unlimited, subtle, macrocosmic (Samashti) level. In this chapter, we move to the limited, gross, microcosmic (Vyashti) level. The one, subtle, macrocosmic entity, named **Hiranyagarbha**, when it becomes gross, is called **Virat**, and has multiple forms which need suitably sized, individualised abodes to function as microcosmic entities in the gross world.

The idea of having an “abode” introduces how the individual being is conceived in creation. It is a logical necessity. There is no other way for Virat to function in the gross Cosmos; He has to divide Himself into smaller individual units, each one having a fraction of the total power that Virat represents.

Verse 2.1: The Need for a Smaller Abode – the Individual

१. ता एता देवताः सृष्टा अस्मिन्महत्यर्णवे प्रापतन् । २. तमशनापिपासाभ्यामन्ववार्जत् । ३. ता एनमब्रुवन् । आयतनं नः प्रजानीहि यस्मिन्प्रतिष्ठिता अन्नमदामेति ॥	1. tā ētā dēvatāḥ sṛṣṭā asminmahatyarnavē prāpatan 2. tamaśanāpipāsābhyāmanvavārjat 3. tā ēnamabruvan āyatanam naḥ prajānīhi yasminpratiṣṭhitā annamadāmēti
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1	taah etaah devataah srishtaah, asmin mahati arnave praapatan;	These Devatas (divinities) so created, fell headlong into the great restless sea.
2	tam ashanaayaa pipaasaabhyaam anvavaarjat;	Then to hunger and thirst He subjected them.
3	taah enam abruvan, aayatanam nah prajaaneehi; yasmin pratishthitaah, annam adaama iti.	They said to Him: “Please find for us an <u>abode</u> wherein we may be established, and may obtain our <u>food</u> .”

1 Diving or falling headlong into the vast ‘Soup’ of which the Organs were made gives some idea of the difficulties that these Devatas must have experienced without having a form to move into. They seemed to be at a loss without having a proper place to live in.

2 Unless one is faced with problems, no solutions are possible. The Supreme Being, in order to test-drive his creation of living beings, subjected them to the trials of hunger and thirst. How will they survive in their new environment? How were they going to find their

food in this wilderness? If they were thirsty, finding water would be like looking for it in a desert. If they were hungry, how were they expected to get their food?

3 All the beings tried their best first to survive, but it was just impossible unless they had their own personal abodes. What they needed was a **Body** of manageable size through which they could function within reasonable range for all their needs to be met. This was not asking for too much. They arrived with their petition to the Supreme Brahman.

The Devatas desperately needed suitable abodes. As was the protocol, the request was made, in some desperation, to Brahmaji. Now it became Brahmaji's problem. Like a loving father, Brahmaji smiled – He knew His children would come running to Him with their problem. He pondered over it for some time. And then . . .

Verse 2.2: *Cows and Horses – The Trial Abodes*

४. ताभ्यो गामानयत्ता अब्रुवन्न वै नोऽयमलमिति ।

५. ताभ्योऽश्वमानयत्ता अब्रुवन्न वै नोऽयमलमिति ॥

4. tābhyō gāmānayattā abruvanna vai nō:'yamalamiti |

5. tābhyō:'śvamānayattā abruvanna vai nō:'yamalamiti ||

4	<i>taabhyah gaam aanayat; taah abruvan na vai nah ayam alam iti;</i>	<i>He brought a cow for them. They said: "Indeed, this is <u>not sufficient</u> for us."</i>
5	<i>taabhyah ashwam aanayat; taah abruvan na vai nah ayam alam iti.</i>	<i>He brought a horse to them. They said: "Indeed, this too is <u>not sufficient</u> for us."</i>

Democracy At Work

Brahmaji believed in democracy, so He gave the Devatas a good hearing, and then pondered over the problem placed before him. The creation process has to be a two-way democratic set-up. It is no use Brahmaji taking all the decisions without the approval of the people who have to live with the system.

In a way, Brahmaji is only a 'Contractor', carrying out the orders of his subjects according to their needs and wishes. A contractor is given a plan by his client. He builds the project according to that plan, hands it over to his client, gets paid for it, and moves on to his next project.

It is the same in creation. The client is the individual being. According to his Karma resources, he orders what he can afford, and is given only what he deserves – nothing more.

The Options Are Weighed

The earlier trials were of creatures which operated only with one or two senses. So some Devatas did not get catered for and complained.

4 Brahman proposes a **cow** to start with. The Devatas are given sufficient time to inspect this proposal. They make their observations: They liked the digestive system, especially the spare stomach which they can use to store surplus food, and draw from it later according to their requirement. But they do not like the clumsy, slow-moving body. It restricts their *range* for finding food.

The cow-body looked very nice, but some Devatas found certain functions to be cumbersome. The mouth did not have sufficient teeth – among the front incisors, there was no upper set, so they could not cut their food!

5 So, as is the system Brahmaji has created, the next phase of negotiation began. A **horse** is offered to them. It is fast and slim! What a pleasure to be in the body of a horse! Now the Devatas could race to their food – their range had increased. But there were disadvantages, too. How can a horse protect itself from the ferocious lion and tiger? It will need to submit to domestication and be a slave for the rest of its life. Some Devatas were happy in it, but not the Devatas of the mind and intellect. The latter found no scope to grow in the body of a horse.

It may be safely presumed that a number of bodies ranging from the ant to the elephant must have been offered as residences for the Gods. They tried them all, but always found something deficient.

Brahmaji took all these complaints as well as any suggestions into account.

And then – He came up with an absolutely brilliant solution . . .

Verse 2.3: *MAN – The Perfect Abode!*

६. ताभ्यः पुरुषमानयत्ता अब्रुवन् सुकृतं बतेति
७. पुरुषो वाव सुकृतम् । ता अब्रवीद्यथायतनं प्रविशतेति ॥

6. tābhyaḥ puruṣamānayattā abruvan sukr̥taṁ batēti
7. puruṣō vāva sukr̥tam | tā abravīdyathāyatanaṁ praviśatēti ||

6	<i>taabhyah purusham aanayat; taah abruvan sukritam bat iti;</i>	<i>When He brought MAN to them; They cried: "Oh! Well done, what a masterpiece!"</i>
7	<i>purushah vaava sukritam; taah abruveet yathaa aayatanam pravishat iti.</i>	<i>Verily, man is a thing well made!" He said to them: "Enter into your <u>respective abodes!</u>"</i>

6 Brahmaji sharpened His pencil and created a piece of art of the highest order. Nothing like this had ever been created. The Devas jumped in delight with what they got, and congratulated Brahmaji from the bottom of their heart.

All the Devatas examined the masterpiece that stood in front of them. After checking out the wonderful new abode, they found that it was also intelligent enough to create instruments of its own to extend its functions beyond those endowed to it by Nature. Thus, Man is crowned "King of Creation" by the Gods themselves!

Everything about Man's body was just perfect.

7 Even Brahmaji had to blush at the amount of praise He received! He announced his decision to adopt the body of Man as the best, for all the Devatas were satisfied with it.

There was a great house-warming party that first night of creation, and all the Devatas were invited to it. Brahmaji's hands were full with all the presents which were heaped upon Him for His exquisite new creation – *Man!*

Verse 2.4: The Gods Take Up Their Super-Abode

८. अग्निर्वाग्भूत्वा	मुखं प्राविशद्
९. वायुः प्राणो भूत्वा	नासिके प्राविशद्
१०. आदित्यश्चक्षुर्भूत्वा	ऽक्षिणी प्राविशद्
११. दिशः श्रोत्रं भूत्वा	कर्णौ प्राविशन्
१२. ओषधिवनस्पतयो लोमानि भूत्वा	त्वचं प्राविशन्
१३. चन्द्रमा मनो भूत्वा	हृदयं प्राविशन्
१४. मृत्युरपानो भूत्वा	नाभिं प्राविशद्
१५. आपो रेतो भूत्वा	शिशनं प्राविशन् ॥

8. agnirvāgbhūtvā	mukhaṁ prāviśad
9. vāyuḥ prāṇo bhūtvā	nāsikē prāviśad
10. ādityaścakṣurbhūtvā	:kṣiṇī prāviśad
11. diśaḥ śrōtram bhūtvā	karnau prāviśan
12. ōṣadhivanaspatayō lōmāni bhūtvā	tvacaṁ prāviśan
13. candramā manō bhūtvā	hṛdayaṁ prāviśan
14. mṛtyurapānō bhūtvā	nābhiṁ prāviśad
15. āpō rētō bhūtvā	śiśnaṁ prāviśan ॥

8	<i>Agnih vaak bhootvaa, mukham praavishat;</i>	i) The God of Fire , having turned into speech, entered the <u>mouth</u> ;
9	<i>Vaayuh praanah bhootvaa, naasike praavishat;</i>	ii) The God of Air , having become scent, entered the <u>nostrils</u> ;
10	<i>Aadityah chakshuh bhootvaa, akshinee praavishat;</i>	iii) The Sun-God , having become sight, entered the <u>eyes</u> ;
11	<i>Dishah shrotram bhootvaa, karnau praavishan;</i>	iv) The God of the Quarters (Space), having become hearing, entered the <u>ears</u> ;
12	<i>Oshadhi vanaspatayah lomaani bhootvaa, tvacham praavishan;</i>	v) The herbs and trees , having become hair, entered the <u>skin</u> ;
13	<i>Chandramaah manah bhootvaa, hridayam praavishat;</i>	vi) The Moon-God , having become the mind, entered the <u>heart</u> ;
14	<i>Mrityuh apaanah bhootvaa, naabhim praavishat;</i>	vii) The God of Death , having become the out-breath, entered the <u>navel</u> ;
15	<i>Aapah retah bhootvaa, shishnam praavishan.</i>	viii) The God of the Waters , having become the semen, entered the <u>generative organ</u> .

This verse is the counterpart of verse 1.4. The 8 elements when created came in an order reverse to the above – i.e. the physical organ came first then the object associated with it, and then the Deity who was to govern it.

8-15 Now when they are all settling into their abodes, the unpacking is done in reverse order. The Deities enter first and, appearing as the sense objects, enter into their respective sense organs.

One gets the distinct feeling from this verse of how various departmental heads operate in a large corporation. The CEO issues the instruction from his office on the top floor, and then all the heads go to their various departments with their orders. They in turn go about their respective duties very obediently, issuing the same orders to the workers. The Cosmos is seen to operate in very much the same way.

For this verse, Sri Shankaracharya in his Bhashya provides the example of a King giving orders to the various commanders of an army as they enter into a city that they are about to conquer. Each commander simply goes to his territory and takes over the functioning! This simile is more appropriate in its impact to get the message across.

Verse 2.5: *What About Hunger and Thirst?*

१६. तमशनायापिपासे अब्रूतामावाभ्यामभिप्रजानीहीति
१७. ते अब्रवीदेतास्वेव वां देवतास्वाभजाम्येतासु भागिन्यौ करोमीति ।
१८. तस्माद्यस्यै कस्यै च देवतायै हविर्गृह्यते भागिन्यावेवास्यामशनायापिपासे भवतः ॥
16. tamaśanāyāpipāsē abrūtāmāvābhyāmabhiprajānīhīti
17. tē abravīdētāsvēva vāṁ dēvatāsvābhajāmyētāsu bhāginnyau karōmīti
18. tasmādyasyai kasyai ca dēvatāyai havirgrhyatē bhāginyāvēvāsyāmaśanāyāpipāsē bhavataḥ

16	<i>tam ashanaayaa-pipaase abrutaam: aavaabhyam abhiprajaaneehi, iti;</i>	Hunger and Thirst said to Him: “For both of us also find out an <u>abode</u> .”
17	<i>te abraveet, etaasu eva vaam devataasu aabhajaami; etaasu bhaaginyau karomi, iti.</i>	He told them: “To both of you along with these Gods, do I assign a place, and make you both <u>SHARERS</u> with them.”
18	<i>tasmaat yasyai kasyai cha devataayai havih; grihyate bhaaginyau eva asyaam ashanaayaa-pipaase bhavatah.</i>	Therefore, to whatever Devatas oblations are made, <u>partakers</u> of it also do Hunger and Thirst become.

Acharyaji added a creative touch to what must have transpired before line **17**. Hunger and Thirst must have made their normal plea to Brahmaji. Brahmaji seemed not too concerned about their problem and said to them, “But you are *feelings*; why do you need abodes? Abodes are for the Devatas only.” This was like saying, “Only the Executives need their own offices; why should the tea-boy and the maid need an office?”

16 But Hunger and Thirst begged once again to be given proper abodes. In fact, several other Devatas also added their names to the petition, as there really was a problem.

Brahmaji pondered over this new problem for a pretty long time. He thought, “Being feelings, how are they going to get their food and drink? If I give them an independent home in the body, I cannot rely on the other Devatas to bring the food and drink to them. They may forget to do so, and then Hunger and Thirst may never be satisfied.”

The Perfect Co-operative Society

17 As He pondered over the problem thus, a brainwave hit Him . . . “Oh yes, I’ve got it! I shall make these two share the abodes of all the other Devatas. Then when it is time for nourishment, all of them will feel the hunger and thirst together and so they will all have to work together to bring the food and drink.”

This was quite a brilliant idea from Brahmaji. That is how it was arranged, and it worked magnificently. When Hunger and Thirst felt hungry and thirsty, all the other Devatas also felt the hunger and the thirst in them. So they co-operated fully to do their share of work to obtain food and drink. Hunger and Thirst then distributed the nourishment to all the Devatas in a measure proportional to each one’s need. It worked like a charm!

The hunger of the intellect goaded it to obtain more knowledge; that of the eyes wished to see more pleasant sights. And so each organ had a hunger to fulfil its own function. When food was needed, all of them contributed jointly to ensure that food was brought on the table on time. It was a happy body, indeed, wherein all the Devatas worked in harmony with each other for the joint success of the whole body.

No Place for Selfishness in Nature

Selfishness is detested in Nature. There is no provision for selfishness in the economy of Nature. It is something alien to Nature. God did not take our selfishness into account when He designed the whole of creation. Was this perhaps a mistake made by God?

He may have been too idealistic, too optimistic. But imagine the complication added to Brahmaji’s task if He were to make this allowance in his design of creation. He would need to build a kitchen in every organ to supply it with its own nourishment. And what if one organ decided it was going to raid its neighbour’s kitchen at night? The human body would have become a very hostile place to live in!

Anyway, the good side of selfishness is that it created some work for two additional Devatas – **Worry** and **Anxiety**! These two additional posts were created in His government. The entire Police Force, Army and the Justice Department are run by these Devatas.

If everything was perfect for man, no one would think of God. The lesson is quite clear: *We can be as selfish as we want to, but at our own peril.*

When we act selfishly, we act against Nature. And by acting against Nature, we head for serious trouble within ourselves. Excessive selfishness is bound to get us into trouble with Nature at some stage in our life; our Karma soon ‘catches up’ with us.

Feeling the Success of Others as One’s Own

18 There is a uniqueness and subtlety in this *Upanishad*. Here we see an example of it. It compels us to think with it. We feel a part and parcel of the whole creation process. We learn to work in co-operation and harmony with others. If the executives and workers in a firm feel that the whole business belongs to them, then with what energy and zeal will they work towards the success of the whole venture!

We also see how each Devata enjoys the success of every other Devata. When the eyes see something pleasant, the whole body reacts with pleasure. When the ears hear beautiful music, the whole body is soothed by it and enjoys it. When food and drink are taken, all the Devatas of the body feel contented or satiated.

॥ इत्यैतरेयोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये द्वितीयः खण्डः ॥
Here ends Chapter 2 of Part 1



***Monkey-Faced Flower,
with tail and all!***

PART 1: Chapter 3A, 10 Verses

The Creation of FOOD

॥ अथ ऐतरेयोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये तृतीयः खण्डः ॥

Here begins the Chapter 3A of Part 1.

Verse 3.1: *“They Will Be Hungry Soon!”*

१. स ईक्षतेमे नु लोकाश्च लोकपालाश्चान्नमेभ्यः सृजा इति ॥

1. sa īkṣatēmē nu lōkāśca lōkapālāścānnamēbhyaḥ sṛjā iti ॥

1	<i>sah eekshata ime nu lokaah cha loka-paalaah cha; annam ebhyaḥ srijai iti.</i>	<i>The Lord said: “Here now are the worlds and their guardians. O, I need to create FOOD for them!”</i>
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THE LORD SURVEYS what has been achieved thus far:

1 He has produced all the fourteen worlds; He has created the hierarchy of Deities in His Cabinet to govern the worlds; and he has also managed to find suitable abodes for His Ministerial representatives. He probably gave a sigh of relief that there were no dissenting voices so far, no strikes, no demands for more pay, etc. Everything had gone exactly as per the drawing board. It was a good point in time to take a small nap!

The thought of a vacation barely crossed His Mind, when suddenly it occurred to Him, “All My children – the Guardians as well as the living creatures – are going to start their duties soon. And, of course, they are going to be hungry and thirsty in a matter of hours. I haven’t even thought of their first plate of food. How very thoughtless of Me!”

This was a matter of urgency. The Lord had to find a way in which His children could fend for themselves – somehow grow or find their own food supply. That caused Him to jump out of His nap, cancel all vacation plans, and hurriedly get into action for the sake of His first batch of creatures. As usual, He began by ‘brooding’ in His Drawing Office . . .

Verse 3.2: *The Cosmic ‘Soup’-Kitchen*

२. सोऽपोऽभ्यतपत्ताभ्योऽभितप्ताभ्यो मूर्तिरजायत ।

३. या वै सा मूर्तिरजायतान्नं वै तत् ।

४. तदेनत्सृष्टं पराङ्मत्यजिघांसत् ॥

2. sō:'pō:'bhyatapattābhyō:'bhitaptābhyō mūrtirajāyata |
3. yā vai sā mūrtirajāyatānnaṁ vai tat |
4. tadēnatsṛṣṭaṁ parāṇtyajighāṁsat ||

2	<i>sah apah abhyatapāt; taabhyah abhitaptaabhyah moortih ajaayata;</i>	<i>He brooded over the waters. From the waters thus brooded over, sprang up a <u>material form</u>.</i>
3	<i>ya vai moortih ajaayata annam vai tat.</i>	<i>As may be expected, that form which so sprung up, was indeed Food.</i>
4	<i>tat enat srishtam parang ati-ajighaamsat;</i>	<i>Then, as was <u>not</u> expected, the food so created turned and sought to flee away!</i>

2 The Cosmic drawing office was nick-named the “Brooding Office” by the Deities. That is all the Lord sat and did all day – just brood over problems, and solutions popped out.

He gave a good stare at the Waters of Creation as before. This was His normal way of getting things done from “up there”. It was from the Waters that He made the worlds and the Devatas and their abodes. So why should the trick not work when it came to Food?

3 Well, it did work yet again. Out sprang up a “lump” from the Cosmic “Soup”. The Cosmic soup-kitchen had been opened at the right moment. Feeding the hungry and the thirsty Devatas present in every living creature became the first act of Seva for the Lord.

Ever since then, the devout Hindus have upheld the sanctity of this act of service, giving it prime place among all their religious responsibilities. From that memorable day, the giving of food in Indian culture is held in the highest regard. No one has ever forgotten it!

Varieties of Food

The Cosmic Waters are not just water, they are the matrix of all the five elements from which all food is manufactured by Nature. The Lord gives one stare at the Cosmic Waters or ‘Soup’ and out comes the food which is unique for every creature created.

Each creature is catered for its own specific needs. For some it is vegetarian, for others it is non-vegetarian. Both have to be provided. The cat’s eyes brighten on seeing a rat. So does a lion’s eye on seeing a buck. The cow’s eyes light up on seeing the green grass. Thus each creature knows what its own food is and where to find it. A “Food-chain” is formed. The primary food is vegetarian, consisting of delicious shrubs, grass, cereals, vegetables and fruits. Then the carnivorous animals feed on the herbivorous ones.

Man, of course, as usual has his own ideas about what he chooses. Some choose to be vegetarian as designed by God; others, according to their nature, choose to be non-vegetarian. Those who eat Sattvic food make great strides spiritually. Those that eat Tamasic foods become thick-headed, heedless, indolent, lethargic and dull-witted. Very active people have to eat more of Rajasic foods like chillies and very spicy foods.

We see the sheer simplicity and elegance of the Aitareya Upanishad’s theory of creation particularly at this point. All it needs is for Brahmaji to make a wish and it materializes at once. Chemical factories are done away with; the whole manufacturing process is short-circuited by just having one powerful *process* – that of Imagination!

HOW IS THE FOOD TO BE CAUGHT?

(Verses 3.3 to 3.10)

Now starts an interesting form of presentation, absolutely unique to this Upanishad. The food has got to be consumed by some means to supply the body with nutrition. This was assumed to be a simple matter at first, but Brahmaji Himself must have perspired when He realized what a difficult problem it was! Why, He came jolly close to abandoning the whole project!

Even as there are ten principal Upanishads out of over a hundred, so also, there are about ten principal Devatas out of an innumerable number within the body. How does the Lord arrange for them all to be fed? It never occurred to Him that this would become such a huge problem. This is one occasion when the “Drawing Board” failed the Lord completely.

The “Hunger and Thirst” problem was resolved by giving them a shared place to dwell with all the Devatas. That worked very well. That was the last serious problem that arose which needed an ingenious solution from the Lord.

Now the problem is the very opposite. Only one Devata has to do the eating on behalf of all the others. Who would it be? The drawing board had to be discarded – only an experiment in the Laboratory would be of use at a time like this.

For these verses comments are, indeed, superfluous. The poetry in the verses is superb. The best we can do to bring out their beauty is to present the verses in as neat a manner as possible. The Rishi has used symmetry of expression together with repetition to bring out the message forcefully. Here are the amazing Laboratory results . . .

Verse 3.3: *Speech Tries to Catch the Food*

५. तद्वाचाऽजिघृक्षत् तन्नाशक्नोद्वाचा ग्रहीतुम् ।
६. स यद्धैनद्वाचाऽग्रहैष्यदभिव्याहृत्य हैवान्नमन्नप्स्यत् ॥
5. <i>tadvācā:'jighṛkṣat tannāśaknōdvācā grahītum </i>
6. <i>sa yaddhainadvācā:'grahaiṣyadabhivyāhṛtya haivānnamatrapsyat </i>

5	<i>tat <u>vaachaa</u> ajighrikshat; tat na ashaknot vaachaa graheetum;</i>	<i>He tried to catch it by <u>SPEECH</u>. But it was not possible to catch it by speech.</i>
6	<i>sah yat ha enat vaachaa agrahaishyat; abhi-vyaahritya ha eva annam atrapsyat.</i>	<i>For indeed, were he able to seize it by speech, then merely by <u>talking</u> about food, we would have been satisfied!</i>

Verse 3.4: *The Breath Tries to Catch It*

७. तत्प्राणेनाजिघृक्षत् तन्नाशक्नोत्प्राणेन ग्रहीतुं
८. स यद्धैनत्प्राणेनाग्रहैष्यदभिप्राण्य हैवान्नमन्नप्स्यत् ॥

7. tatprāṇēnājighṛkṣat tannāśaknōtprāṇēna grahītum
8. sa yaddhainatprāṇēnāgrahaiṣyadabhiprāṇya haivānnamatrapṣyat ||

7	<i>tat praanena ajighrikshat; tat na ashaknot praanena graheetum;</i>	Then he sought to catch it by BREATH . But it was not possible to seize it by breath.
8	<i>sah yat ha enat praanena agrahaishyat; abhi-praanya ha eva annam atrapsyat.</i>	For indeed, were he able to seize it by breath, then merely by <u>smelling</u> food, we would have been satisfied!

Verse 3.5: The Eyes Try to Catch It

९. तच्चक्षुषाजिघृक्षत् तन्नाशक्नोच्चक्षुषा ग्रहीतुम्
१०. स यद्धैनच्चक्षुषाग्रहैष्यदृष्ट्वा हैवानमत्रप्स्यत् ॥
9. taccakṣuṣā:'jighṛkṣat tannāśaknōccakṣuṣā grahītun
10. sa yaddhainaccakṣuṣā:'grahaiṣyaddṛṣṭvā haivānnamatrapṣyat ||

9	<i>tat chakshushaa ajighrikshat; tat na ashaknot chakshushaa graheetum;</i>	Then he wished to consume it with the EYES . But it was not possible to seize it with the eyes.
10	<i>sah yat ha enat chakshushaa agrahaishyat; drishtvaa ha eva annam atrapsyat.</i>	For indeed, were he able to seize it with eyes, then merely by <u>seeing</u> food, we would have been satisfied!

Verse 3.6: The Ears Try, but Fail

११. तच्छ्रोत्रेणाजिघृक्षत् तन्नाशक्नोच्छ्रोत्रेण ग्रहीतुम्
१२. स यद्धैनच्छ्रोत्रेणाग्रहैष्यच्छ्रुत्वा हैवानमत्रप्स्यत् ॥
11. tacchrōtrēnājighṛkṣat tannāśaknōcchrōtrēṇa grahītum
12. sa yaddhainacchrōtēnāgrahaiṣyacchrutvā haivānnamatrapṣyat ||

11	<i>tat shrotrena ajighrikshat; tat na ashaknot shrotrena graheetum;</i>	Then he wished to catch it with the EARS . But it was not possible to catch it with the ears.
12	<i>sah yat ha enat shrotrena agrahaiṣyat; shrutvaa ha eva annam atrapsyat.</i>	For, indeed, were he able to catch it with the ears, then merely by <u>hearing</u> about food, we would have been satisfied!

Verse 3.7: The Skin Also Fails

१३. तत्त्वचाजिघृक्षत् तन्नाशक्नोत्वचा ग्रहीतुम्
१४. स यद्धैनत्त्वचाग्रहैष्यत् स्पृष्ट्वा हैवानमत्रप्स्यत् ॥

13. tattvacā:'jighṛkṣat tannāśaknōttvacā grahītum
14. sa yaddhainattvacā:'grahaiṣyat spr̥ṣtvā haivānnamatrapṣyat ||

13	<i>tat tvachaa ajighrikshat; tat na ashaknot tvachaa graheetum;</i>	Then he wished to seize it with the SKIN . But it was not possible to seize it by the touch.
14	<i>sah yat ha enat tvachaa agrahaisyat; sprishtvaa ha eva annam atrapsyat.</i>	For indeed, were he able to seize it with the skin, then merely by <u>touching</u> food, we would have been satisfied!

Verse 3.8: The Mind Fails to Catch It

१५. तन्मनसाऽजिघृक्षत् तन्नाशक्नोन्मनसा ग्रहीतुं
१६. स यद्धैनन्मनसाऽग्रहैष्यद्ध्यात्वा हैवान्नमत्रप्स्यत् ॥
15. tanmanasā:'jighṛkṣat tannāśaknōnmanasā grahītum
16. sa yaddhainanmanasā:'grahaiṣyaddhyātvā haivānnamatrapṣyat ||

15	<i>Tat MANASAA ajighrikshat; Tat na ashaknot manasaa graheetum;</i>	Then he wished to catch it with the MIND . But it was not possible to catch it with the mind.
16	<i>Sah yat ha enat manasaa agrahaisyat; Dhyaatvaa ha eva annam atrapsyat.</i>	For indeed, were he able to catch it with the mind, then merely by <u>thinking</u> about food, we would have been satisfied!

Verse 3.9: The Genitals Try – A Dismal Failure!

१७. तच्छिश्नेनाजिघृक्षत् तन्नाशक्नोच्छिश्नेन ग्रहीतुं
१८. स यद्धैनच्छिश्नेनाग्रहैष्यद्वित्सृज्य हैवान्नमत्रप्स्यत् ॥
17. tacchiśnēnājighṛkṣat tannāśaknōcchiśnēna grahītum
18. sa yaddhainacchiśnēnāgrahaiṣyadvitsṛjya haivānnamatrapṣyat ||

51	<i>tat shishnena ajighrikshat; tat na ashaknot shishnena graheetum;</i>	Then he wished to catch it with the GENITALS . But it was not possible to catch it with the genitals.
55	<i>sah yat ha enat shishnena agrahaisyat; visrija ha eva annam atrapsyat.</i>	For, indeed, were he able to catch it with the generative organ, then merely by <u>sexual union</u> , our desire for food would have been satisfied!

Verse 3.10: The Apana Tries – Success at Last!

१९. तदपानेनाजिघृक्षत् तदावयत्
२०. सैषोऽन्नस्य ग्रहो यद्वायुरनायुर्वा एष यद्वायुः ॥

19. tadapānēnājighṛkṣat tadāvayat
 20. saiṣō:'nnasya grahō yadvāyuranāyurvā ēṣa yadvāyuh ||

19	<i>Tat APAANENA ajighrikshat; Tat aavayat!</i>	<i>Then with the downgoing BREATH, Apana, he sought to grasp it. And lo! it <u>consumed</u> it!</i>
20	<i>Sah eshah (apana) annasya grahah; Yad vaayuh annaayuh vai eshah yat vaayuh.</i>	<i>Therefore, Apana alone is that which <u>catches food</u>. And, indeed, in supporting life by food, Vaayu, the Life-breath, plays the chief role.</i>

All 5 Pranas have a role to play in food intake:

19 The success of the downgoing **Apana** is to the credit of the upcoming **Prana** as well. Both need to work together in tandem to perform this function. The downward Apana is able to 'catch' the food, balanced by the upgoing Prana. When we swallow food it is not possible to breathe either in or out, at the same time. This is because the Apana is engaged in swallowing, so breathing has to wait a second or two for the swallowing to finish.

Apana then passes the food to the stomach, where **Samana** begins to digest it. After digestion, the nutrients are distributed in an equitable manner to all the organs by **Vyana**, the circulatory system. The Apana, being the downward force, again sees to the elimination of the waste products, while **Udana** would eject any imbalances in the system, by processes such as burping and vomiting.

20 It is but fitting that the Life-giving forces should take full responsibility for the intake of life-supporting food. No one else can be entrusted with this heavy responsibility. All the sub-Pranas take a share in this responsibility.



PART 1: Chapter 3B, 4 Verses

The Lord's Regal ENTRY

Verse 3.11: The Lord Almost Forgot Himself

१. स ईक्षत कथं न्विदं मदृते स्यादिति ।
२. स ईक्षत कतरेण प्रपद्या इति ॥

१. sa īkṣata katham nvidaṁ madṛtē syāditi |
२. sa īkṣata katarēṇa prapadyā iti ||

1	<i>Sah eekshata katham nu idam mad-rite syaat? iti</i>	He, the Creator, thought: "How can all these remain without Me ?"
2	<i>Sah eekshate katarena prapadyai? iti</i>	So He pondered: "By which way shall I ENTER the organs?"

३. स ईक्षत १) यदि वाचाऽभिव्याहृतं २) यदि प्राणेनाभिप्राणितं ३) यदि चक्षुषा दृष्टं ४) यदि श्रोत्रेण श्रुतं ५) यदि त्वचा स्पृष्टं ६) यदि मनसा ध्यातं ७) यद्यपानेनाभ्यपानितं ८) यदि शिश्नेन विसृष्टम् ४. अथ कोऽहमिति ? ॥	३. sa īkṣata 1) yadi vācā:'bhivyāhṛtaṁ 2) yadi prāṇēnābhiprāṇitaṁ 3) yadi cakṣuṣā dṛṣṭaṁ 4) yadi śrōtrēṇa śrutaṁ 5) yadi tvacā sprṣṭaṁ 6) yadi manasā dhyātaṁ 7) yadyapānēnābhyapānitaṁ 8) yadi śiśnēna visṛṣṭaṁ ४. atha kō:'hamiti ?
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3	<i>Sah eekshata, i) Yadi vaachaa abhivyaaritam; ii) Yadi praanena abhipraanitam; iii) Yadi chakshushaa drishtam; iv) Yadi shrotrena shrutam; v) Yadi tvachaa sprishtam; vi) Yadi manasaa dhyaatam; vii) Yadi apaanena abhyapaanitam; viii) Yadi shishnena visrishtam;</i>	He again thought: i) "If <u>speaking</u> be done by speech, ii) <u>smelling</u> by the nose, iii) <u>seeing</u> by the eyes, iv) <u>hearing</u> by the ears, v) <u>touching</u> by the skin, vi) <u>thinking</u> by the mind, vii) <u>eating</u> by peristaltic movements, and viii) <u>continuity</u> by the generative organ,
4	<i>Atha kah aham? iti</i>	then, What is there for Me to do?"

[Note: Due to the requirement of logical flow of thought the sequence of discussing the lines of this verse is not the same as presented in the verse.]

Where is the Need for God?

3-4 The arrangement for this world so far has been that, as far as the running of it is concerned, the Deities themselves are quite capable of handling everything that is necessary. A self-running system has been created. If all the functions are being handled by the shop managers, then what is the need for the Boss to be around? He can afford to relax in his office or go on a holiday. The job does not require him.

This is what God may have been pondering over now – but, again, only for a fraction of a second. Why would He, too, want to be present in the body? We know He is the one who has created everything, and He is the one who has solved all the technical hitches along the way. Does He want to be present only to claim a bit of credit? – “Look, I did all this!” Surely He is not going to think in such a small-minded way? That would be too mundane and ordinary for the Supreme Being! There must be another reason why He wants to be Present.

We see the subtle approach coming through again – a *signature* of the Aitareya Upanishad style. Rishi Maheedasa just waits for opportunities like this to spring a surprise on us. Here comes the real reason – why the Lord also wanted to be present with us:

YES, God Needs to be Present, Too

1-2 We have to keep in mind the whole objective here. Creation is just a Game that Lord has set up. A game cannot go on forever. As the players get tired of playing, there needs to be an end to it. What is the game in cricket? – bowling over after over, and batting ball after ball. In football – it is scoring goal after goal! It is the same in the “game of life” – repeated births and deaths for the created beings. How long are they going to continue in the play of Samsara? Would they not get fed up of it after some time?

Thus, the main reason for the Lord to decide to be present in His creation is so that He can take us back to where we belong – to Himself, into the lap of His vast, limitless Being.

The Lord cares little if He remains unthought of, unacclaimed, unrecognized. His only care is to be there as the “Lighthouse” to guide us back to Him. As we get tossed about in Samsara by waves of temptations and painful experiences, we can always look in His direction and find the route back. For those who wish “to retire” from the game, and return Home, i.e. for those who wish to have **Liberation**, the Lord is there at any time to guide them back out of the treacherous seas of Life.

There is a second reason also: It would be a rather meaningless life if the Lord was not part and parcel of the life of man. A God-less world may run well, with every department functioning efficiently and harmoniously, but it would not have any worthy values. Selfishness would soon reign in such a world, and we remember that the handling of selfishness is not provided for. It will certainly cause massive problems in creation. We need the Presence of God to make our lives purposeful.

So, after long deliberation, the Lord decided that He also had to enter the fray and be a part of this whole Drama. He just had to be there in person in every one of us.

Once this decision was made to enter, His only concern was “How do I **Enter?**”

Verse 3.12: The Lord Enters Majestically!

५. स एतमेव सीमानं विदार्यै- तया द्वारा प्रापद्यत । ६. सैषा विदृतिर्नाम द्वास्तद् एतन्नानन्दनम् । ७. तस्य त्रय आवसथाः त्रयः स्वप्ना १) अयमावसथः २) अयमावसथः ३) अयमावसथः इति ॥	5. sa ētamēva sīmānaṁ vidāryai- tayā dvārā prāpadyata 6. saiṣā vidṛtirnāma dvāstad ētan-nāndanam 7. tasya traya āvasathāḥ trayaḥ swapnā 1) ayamāvasathah 2) ayamāvasathah 3) ayamāvasathah iti
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5	<i>sah etam eva seemaanam vidaarya, etayaa dvaaraa praapadyata;</i>	<i>Then He split open the <u>suture on the skull</u>, and entered by that Door.</i>
6	<i>saa eshaa vidritih naama dvaah tat, etat naandanam;</i>	<i>This is the door named “Vidriti”; this is Naandana, the “<u>place of bliss</u>”.</i>
7	<i>tasya traya aavasathaah, traya swapnaah; i) ayam aavasathah, ii) ayam aavasathah, iii) ayam aavasathah.</i>	<i>He has three dwelling places, and three conditions of sleep. i) This is the <u>first</u> dwelling place; ii) this is the <u>second</u> dwelling place; iii) this is the <u>third</u> dwelling place.</i>

How Does the Lord Enter?

As one may expect, in typical Aitareya style, the problem the Lord pondered over now was how to make His appearance. He cannot come through the side doors as servants usually do. That will make everyone think that he was just one of them – it would be too ordinary. Even in ordinary marriage ceremonies, the bridegroom and bride make a special entry into the Wedding Hall. Look at the pomp with which a temporal king gets welcomed wherever he goes. Would not the Lord’s entry have to be even more impressive?

He had already known that the Pranas used the feet to enter. [It is well known in the science of Reflexology that all the organs of the body can be reached through nerve centres located at specific points for them on the sole of the feet.] So surely He was not going to choose the feet to enter.

5 The entrance He eventually chose stunned everyone. No one could have made a more impressive entry than the Lord into the Body. It was just inconceivable that He should choose such an entry point. The Lord decided that He would cut open His own special doorway through which He would make a glorious, kingly entry. This Main Entrance was to be the **crown** of the head, by making a ‘hole’ in the skull!

[This point is known by physiologists as the “*sagittal suture*”.]

6 That entrance is given a name of its own. It is called the **Vidriti**. The accompanying fanfare goes without saying!

Having entered the body, the Lord made His abode in the very core of the heart. His abode is given a special name – of course, it has to have a special name – it is called **Naandana**, “the Abode of Bliss”!

The Three Aavasathas and Swapnas

7 The three **Aavasathas** and **Swapnas** are explained again in the next chapter in relation to the Three Births, but here their general meaning is given:

The three Aavasathas are the three dwelling places occupied by the Supreme Being after He enters the body. The three Swapnas are the three states shown below.

i) **The Right Eye**: This is where He dwells during the waking state.

ii) **The Mind**: This is where He dwells during the dream state.

iii) **The Heart**: This is where He dwells during the deep sleep state.

All the states, even the waking, are considered as ‘Swapna’ because ignorance is common to them all.

Verse 3.13: “Oh! I Have Seen This Before!”

८. स जातो भूतान्यभिव्यैख्यत् ९. किमिहान्यं वावदिषदिति । १०. स एतमेव पुरुषं ब्रह्म ततममपश्यत् । ११. इदमदर्शनमिती ३ ॥	8. sa jātō bhūtānyabhivyaikhyat 9. kimihānyaṁ vāvadiṣaditi 10. sa ētamēva puruṣaṁ brahma tatamamapaśyat 11. idamadarśanamitī 3
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8	<i>sah jaatah bhootaani abhivyaikhyat;</i>	<i>Having been born (i.e. entering the body), He gazed around upon the “creatures”.</i>
9	<i>“kim iha anyam vaavadishat?” iti</i>	<i>“What is there other than Me that needs to be named?”</i>
10	<i>sah etam eva purusham brahma; tatamam (tata-tamam) apashyat,</i>	<i>He saw this Purusha, the Supreme Brahman; He saw this over-spreading wonder;</i>
11	<i>“idam adarsham” iti 3. *</i>	<i>(He said to Himself): “Oh, I have seen this before!”</i>
	<i>*[‘iti’ is elongated to three Matras, following the Vedic rule concerning words that refer to Brahman or suggest Liberation.]</i>	

Pujya Gurudev writes in his commentary: “When emotion overpowers thought and when ideas get fired up to its white-heat of intensity, language does not conform to the conventional rules of grammar and syntax but, as it were, evaporates here and there into explosive amazement and wonderment!”

This is what we are seeing in this verse. We owe it to ourselves to spend due time on this verse. It inspires us from many angles – poetic, dramatic, Vedantic, meditational and educational. From any of these angles, we pick up gems.

Brahman’s Experience: “Prajnaanam Brahma”

8 Firstly, we are very fortunate indeed to be listening to the Lord Himself at the moment when He has just entered His own creation and taken up residence in the first living being. The Lord’s **Birth**, as such, need not be taken literally. Using his poetic licence, the Rishi Maheedasa conveys something very deep in his heart, and does so very effectively.

Bhootaani: “creatures”. In this line this word refers to the *Deities* who are controlling each individual sense organ. Each Deity is like a creature within the Body! And how does the Lord meet all the Deities upon entering the Body?

The very moment He enters, He gazes out through the eyes, thinks through the mind, hears the first sound coming in through the ears, etc – He gets the first taste of being an embodied creature, exactly as we all are experiencing every moment of our lives.

9 But there is one huge difference between the Lord’s experience and ours: He recognizes everything around Him as Himself! This is quite special, indeed. He is not seeing creation as separate from Himself. Being utterly Pure, unlike the sullied or tainted Jeeva, He is not seeing different forms as the Jeeva does. He says, ***Kim Iha Anyam?***, “*What else is there besides Me, the Atman?*” I cannot name anything for they are all just Me!” He only sees Himself everywhere, not objects outside Him that have their own identity and which therefore require a name to be identified. *This is the experience of Pure Consciousness.*

The Experience of “Prajnaanam Brahma”

10 This is, indeed, the experience of God-realization itself. The Lord is unblemished Consciousness; His experience is to see Consciousness alone everywhere. This is the most direct experience of the Mahavakya ***Prajnanam Brahma***, “*Consciousness is Brahman*,” which a group of students will ponder over in the Fifth Chapter. When Pure Consciousness enters a body, the experience is of *Prajnanam Brahma*!

Tatamam: [which Sri Shankaracharya corrects to ‘***Tata-Tamam***’] – He sees Himself as “*all-pervading, over-spreading*” everywhere around Him. That is the grand Vision of God. The Lord, glancing around and seeing nothing but Himself, is amazed at the uniqueness of this embodied experience, of which He Himself is the Architect!

This is surely Rishi Maheedasa’s signature – he is at his creative best in this verse.

11 Then the Lord exclaims in joy and wonder combined, “*Oh! I have seen all this before!*” That is as far as the verse goes. The rest is for us to sit and ponder over.

The elongation of the last word into 3 Matras is to express the joy of having attained union with Brahman. This is the Vedic tradition. 3 Matras means that the syllable is chanted for three times longer than the normal duration.

A “Vedantic Wonder”

In Vedanta, Adhyaropa or ‘theoretical superimposition’ is done only so that the reverse process, called the Apavada, can be shown in order to trace the route back to the Source of creation. Here, in just a single verse of exquisite poetic beauty, the entire Apavada or de-superimposition is accomplished. What power there lies in these, the fewest of words, to convey the deepest spiritual goal of man – that is why it is a “Vedantic Wonder”!

The verse is describing nothing short of a taste of Self-realisation. We are getting a first-hand account of the “moment of realization” which a sage experiences only after long and arduous practice of meditation, austerity and self-control. Here we are tasting the experience of the Lord Himself! Recognising this, our appreciation of this verse multiplies. The more alert we are the more can we grasp what this Upanishad really has to teach us.

REFLECTIONS – OUR SEPARATION FROM GOD

Figuratively, the Supreme Lord had this experience no sooner he stepped into the embodied state; That is our true Self. Each one of us has this experience – but, alas, we forget it as we enter yet another womb. Our cry at birth is because we want to get back to that blissful state of freedom. But destiny thrusts upon us a painful experience of separation the moment we are born.

Our tears at childbirth soon dry up. We come with an alien soul-culture pre-programmed in us over many previous births. Hence, our experience of embodiment is different from the Lord's. Ours is painful. And after birth, as we encounter more of the alien programming, we wallow in filth and dirty ourselves day after day, year after year, and perhaps birth after birth. Our origin becomes unrecognizable to us. Alas, we drift further and further away from that original blissful state of being.

Only a 'miracle' can bring us back to our original state. How can we realize our great folly? Rishi Maheedasa, like a professional therapist, compassionately tries to retrace our mind to that glorious moment described in this verse – when we, too, can become aware of who we really are, a moment which we have totally forgotten.

The joy of realization expressed in this verse, is denied to us due to the cloud of delusion surrounding our soul. It is covered by layers of "impurities" due to ignorant living birth after birth. We have got used to living with that impurity, and indeed we actually revel in it (see next verse)! When the full thrust of this verse penetrates our hearts, we are able to see our error. Then we shall make every effort to regain our experience of supreme Bliss once again. That is the hope of Rishi Maheedasa.

Verse 3.14: *From Idandra to Indra – Knowledge to Ignorance!*

<p>१२. तस्मादिदन्द्रो नामे- दन्द्रो ह वै नाम । १३. तमिदन्द्रं सन्तमिन्द्रं इत्याचक्षते परोक्षेण । १४. परोक्षप्रिया इव हि देवाः परोक्षप्रिया इव हि देवाः ॥</p>	<p>12. tasmādidandrō nāmē- dandrō ha vai nāma 13. tamidandram santamimdra ityācakṣatē parōkṣēṇa 14. parōkṣapriyā iva hi dēvāḥ parōkṣapriyā iva hi dēvāḥ </p>
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12	<i>Tasmaad idandrah naama; Idandrah ha vai naama;</i>	<i>Therefore He is called Idandra ("seeing It"); Idandra, verily, is His <u>name</u>.</i>
13	<i>Tam idandram santam indrah iti aachakshate parokshena;</i>	<i>This Idandra has since been called as Indra; this is His indirect or "<u>nick-name</u>".</i>
14	<i>Parokshapriyaa iva hi devaah; Parokshapriyaa iva hi devaah.</i>	<i>The Devas are fond of <u>indirect names</u>; Indeed, they are fond of their indirect names.</i>

A deep sadness lies in these words. Having just witnessed the Pure Soul's expression of wonder and joy as He enters the body, we are now given the experience of our "Impure

Soul” or Jeeva (the conditioned consciousness) of the very same process of embodiment. In the eyes of the deluded Jeeva, the same experience is a sad tale of allowing creation to get the better of us and allowing it to make us forget our glorious Origin.

The chapter closes on this note of forgetfulness of God that now separates us from Him. Revival of the remembrance of God becomes the theme of the next chapter.

Our Sinking Into Ignorance

12 From being the Supreme Self that “sees It” (**Idandra**), we have become the Jeeva that has “forgotten It”.

13 We have even given recognition or status to our forgetfulness, by giving it another name. We were once **Idandra** of auspicious associations, but now we revel in our new self-styled name, **Indra**, which is the name of our pseudo-Self, the Ego.

14 The sad truth is that we – the Devas, who stand for all the senses, mind, intellect, etc – delight in this new name. We love to be called by it and to serve it. We actually do not even wish to be known by our original true name of Idandra. Perhaps we have even forgotten that it is our true name. Cryptic names can be cruel – they have the power to make us forget the Truth, and actually enjoy forgetting It!

Thus end the three chapters of PART 1 of this Upanishad. As is traditional in the Upanishads, the last line is repeated to indicate that we have concluded the part. Interestingly, the line chosen to be the last is one that spells out our separation from Him. By repeating it twice, a painful irony is rubbed into us like salt into a wound!

The irony is: “*We are enjoying our captivity; yes, we are enjoying our captivity!*” Such is the iron-like grip over us of our false identity – the Ego.

With compassionate delicacy and charming poetry, Rishi Maheedasa has brought us to this understanding of ourselves. How we proceed from here is our choice: back to God, or further into entanglement.

॥ इत्यैतरेयोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये तृतीयः खण्डः ॥

Here ends Chapter 3B of Part 1



PART 2: Chapter 4, 6 Verses

The “THREE BIRTHS”

॥ अथ ऐतरोपनिषदि द्वितीयोऽध्यायः ॥

Here begins the first and only Chapter (No.4) of Part 2.

WE HAVE EXPERIENCED a sudden turn in our emotion at the end of the last chapter. With **Creation** as our theme, we rose to the heights of the Joy of realization, only to be suddenly plunged into the sad awareness of our bondage due to forgetfulness of God. Our plight is symbolised by our acceptance of the nick-name ‘Indra’ instead of ‘Idandra’.

In this chapter a similar transition from joy to sorrow is attempted by the imaginative Rishi, but with a significant difference: This time we are raised to the heights of the joys of family life, only to be suddenly plunged down into an awareness of the senselessness and endlessness of the monotony of worldly existence.

BIRTH becomes the theme that carries us to the climax of emotion in family life, What does this climax end in? – the futility of going through the cycle of “births” again and again. With great delicacy, the Rishi takes us on a journey of recounting three births, not just one. By doing so, he graphically multiplies threefold our agony of going through birth after birth after birth!

The Rishi, with a sense of being dutybound to take us forward, does not permit us to stagnate in comfort. He works our emotions in such a way as to awaken in us a desire to be liberated from Samsara once and for all. That is, after all, why we call him a Rishi.

The chapter begins on the theme of love and union as encountered within the family unit, the domestic framework of life. There is a build-up of tenderness and love emerging through the theme. It touches on the most intimate aspects of human life. To most people, this is what their life centres on.

For now we enter the raptures of the Grihastha world, the cradle of humanity, with its joys of having a child and rearing it in love . . .

An Announcement

१. ॥ अपक्रामन्तु गर्भिण्यः ॥

^{1.} *Pregnant women may please vacate.*

1 This announcement at the start of the teacher’s lecture for the day on this very sensitive subject indicates two important facts about the tradition of the Vedic period.

i) **Women Also Learnt Vedanta:** Contrary to common beliefs, here is evidence from the very depths of the Upanishads themselves of the fact that women were permitted to learn Vedanta as well. They were part of the class. Some of them were young mothers-to-

be, indicating that a certain maturity was needed before joining such classes. Qualifications to study were certainly not based on the gender of a student.

[At Sandeepany in these modern times, the same principle is upheld. Young men and women, most of them unmarried, study together with an accepted code of conduct based on trust and respect for the opposite gender.]

ii) **Pre-Natal Education was Known:** The reason for the announcement is that the Acharya did not wish to expose young mothers-to-be to certain thoughts which his lecture for that day would be focusing on. When matters of sex were being discussed, the young mother bearing a child should not be present as it would affect the unborn child.

From this, we can assume that Knowledge of pre-natal education was known and brought to bear in practice in Vedic times. In the West this fact has only recently come to light, and the methodology governing its application is still being developed through experimentation.

Verse 4.1: *The “First Birth” – The Pregnant Father*

२. ॐ पुरुषे ह वा अयम्- आदितो गर्भो भवति ।	2. ॐ puruṣē ha vā ayam- āditō garbhō bhavati
३. यदेतद्रेतः तदेतत्सर्वेभ्योऽङ्गेभ्यः तेजः संभूतम् ।	3. yadētadrētaḥ tadētatsarvēbhyō:'ṅgēbhyāḥ tējaḥ sambhūtam
४. आत्मन्येवऽत्मानं बिभर्ति ।	4. ātmanyēva:'tmānaṁ bibharti
५. तद्यदा स्त्रियां सिञ्चत्यथैनज्जनयति	5. tadyadā striyāṁ siñcatyathainajjanayati
६. तदस्य प्रथमं जन्म ॥	6. tadasya prathamam janma

2	<i>Om. purushe ha vai ayam aaditah garbhah bhavati;</i>	<i>Om. In a man, verily, is first produced that which (later) develops as the embryo.</i>
3	<i>yat etat retah tat etat sarvebhyah angebhyah, tejah sambhootam;</i>	<i>That which is the semen (or seed), is drawn from all his limbs, and is the essence of his strength and vigour.</i>
4	<i>aatmani eva aatmaanam bibharti;</i>	<i>In his own very being, he holds that self (as semen).</i>
5	<i>tat yadaa striyaam sinchati, atha enat janayati;</i>	<i>When he pours this into a womb, he causes it (the Self, a child) to be born.</i>
6	<i>tat asya prathamam janma.</i>	<i>This is its FIRST BIRTH.</i>

The Role of the Father

2 Purushe: The conception process begins *in man*, and develops later in the woman as the embryo and thereafter as the foetus.

3 This beginning is to be analysed carefully. The production of semen, the vital fluid in man, comes from the best part of food. It is formed from the condensation of the finest particles of strength and vitality within the human body. The whole body contributes to the

life-giving particles in semen. Thus it is to be regarded as a very precious fluid not only because of its productivity, but also because of its essential ingredients of vitality. It should not be wasted purely for the pleasure of it. This is the understanding we are to take.

4 Aatmani: The semen is, in one sense, a replication of the man's own Self, as it has the potential to produce another human being. The two beings, father and child, are thus very closely related to each other. We shall see that the Upanishad promotes the idea of seeing "one's self in one's child".

5 Sinchati: The "pouring" of semen into the mother's womb is said to be the first phase of initiating the birth process. Since the husband plays the primary role, it is he who is considered to be "pregnant" with the seed, ready to play his part in the creation process.

6 This moment of conception is called the "**FIRST BIRTH**".

Verse 4.2: *The Development of the Foetus*

७. तस्त्रिया आत्मभूयं गच्छति यथा स्वमङ्गं तथा ।
८. तस्मादेनां न हिनस्ति । साऽस्यैतमात्मानमत्र गतं भावयति ॥
7. tatstriyā ātmabhūyaṁ gacchati yathā svamaṅgaṁ tathā
8. tasmādēnāṁ na hinasti sā:'syaitamātmānamatra gataṁ bhāvayati

7	<i>tat striyaa aatmabhootam gacchhati, yathaa swam-angam tathaa;</i>	<i>That <u>seed</u> goes into the very "being" (womb) of the woman, as though it were her own limb.</i>
8	<i>tasmaat enaam na hinasti; saa asya etam aatmaanam atragatam bhaavayati</i>	<i>Hence, the (foetus) does <u>not injure</u> her. She <u>nourishes</u> his self (her husband's), that has thus come into her.</i>

The Role of the Mother

The mother, whose role in receiving the semen was secondary, now takes over the primary role by nurturing the seed in her womb. The father, who has now to provide for her, plays the secondary role from this point forward.

7 The seed is accepted into the mother's body as an integral part of her body.

It is like having an additional organ in the body, which becomes part of the body. It does not need separate care. Thank God for that, as the mother could well forget to do everything that is needed. Nature does the necessary.

8 By this arrangement, there is no pain felt by the mother owing to the developing foetus. Everything is handled by Nature, down to the finest detail.

The mother nurtures the seed received, and does so with great care. She makes great sacrifices in order to see that the child she is going to bear grows up within her with all its requirements. At this time, the mother may have unusual likes towards certain foods, and similar dislikes for other foods. All this has to be allowed during this period.

Imperceptible to his listeners, Rishi Maheedasa builds up a picture of family security. Everything of the family warmth and caring is contained here.

Verse 4.3: The “Second Birth” – The Pregnant Mother

९. सा भावयित्री भावयितव्या भवति । तं स्त्री गर्भं बिभर्ति ।
१०. सोऽग्र एव कुमारं जन्मनोऽग्रेऽधिभावयति ।
११. स यत्कुमारं जन्मनोऽग्रेऽधिभावयति आत्मानमेव तद्भावयत्येषं लोकानां सन्तत्या ।
१२. एवं सन्तता हीमे लोकास्तदस्य द्वितीयं जन्म ॥
9. sā bhāvayitrī bhāvayitavyā bhavati taṁ strī garbha bibharti
10. sō:'gra ēva kumāraṁ janmanō:'grē:'dhibhāvayati
11. sa yatkumāraṁ janmanō:'grē:'dhibhāvayati ātmānamēva tadbhāvayatyēṣaṁ lōkānāṁ santatyā
12. ēvaṁ santatā hīme lōkāstadasya dvitīyaṁ janma

9	<i>saa bhaavayitree bhaavayitavyaa bhavati; tam stree garbham bibharti;</i>	<i>With the role of the mother as <u>nourisher</u>, comes also her need to be well-nourished. She bears him as an embryo in her womb.</i>
10	<i>sah agre eva kumaaram janmanah agre adhi -bhaavayati;</i>	<i>He, the father, even before the child's birth, and naturally thereafter, too, <u>nourishes</u> it.</i>
11	<i>sah yat kumaaram janmanah agre adhibhaavayati, aatmaanam eva tat bhaavayati, eshaam lokaanaam santatyaa;</i>	<i>The couple jointly, in <u>nourishing</u> the child from its birth onwards, feel it is their <u>own self</u> being nourished for the <u>continuation</u> of these worlds.</i>
12	<i>evam santataa hi ime lokaah; tat asya dviteeyam janma.</i>	<i>Thus are these worlds continued. This is the SECOND BIRTH.</i>

The theme of family warmth continues. The turning point is yet to come, when the Rishi suddenly delivers his message of dispassion and detachment, and brings to light with great skill the independence of spiritual life from family life. This is where the Rishi excels.

The Role of the Couple

9 The point made by this verse is to show what tender care goes into the nurturing of a child while it is in the womb of the mother. This is a period during which saints advise the would-be mother to take extra care over her thoughts. Whatever she does or thinks will have an influence on the coming child. The mother is encouraged to read good religious literature. She is also urged not to appear in the public eye unnecessarily.

10 The Rishi here draws attention to the special need of the mother-to-be. She may be in a helpless state to take care of all her needs by herself, and therefore will certainly need assistance from her husband. This is a very special period of her life.

The husband's role is to provide the best support to her during the pre-natal period. The husband has to provide the specific foods for the mother-to-be, and give the emotional support she needs. He also has to give post-natal care to both his wife and the child. We note the father's role does not simply end with conception.

11 Bringing up a child is a joint venture. Both mother and father have significant roles to play. The nine-month period when the foetus is being nourished in the body of the mother is a period when it needs great attention from both parents.

The family culture of Vedic times was very advanced. Child-rearing is certainly considered a great family responsibility, and both parents are required to make a long-term commitment to making it a success. This will be considered as their gift to society – a healthy, well-nourished child who will be an asset to the society, not a burden upon it.

The inspiration for the parents to perform this responsibility comes from the fact that both parents feel that the child is his own self. There is a close natural bond between child and parents. The mother's role is visibly seen; the father's may be shirked by many except the most devoted husbands. A reason to inspire devotion in both is given.

The Second Birth

12 Why is child-rearing so crucial in the householder's life? The Rishi is clear on this point: the future of humanity depends on how the children are reared. Good citizens are not just born, but *made*. And parents are the ones who mould the child's character.

Evam: “*thus*”. The word includes all the rules and principles of good upbringing in the home. It includes following the codes laid down for educating the child in accordance with the Vedic principles laid down by great sages. Only when all the right conditions are fulfilled, can we have an exemplary trained young leader of society.

Eventually, after nine months of patient rearing, the mother is finally “pregnant” with her child ready to be born. The child's entry into the world is called the “**SECOND BIRTH**”. A special kind of heightened joy fills the home at the time when a child is born into the family. It is the fruit of months of loving and devoted labour from the parents.

Rishi Maheedasa's delicate handling of these finer moments of civilian life, where the home is the centre of attention, makes his Upanishad very appealing to the common man. It touches them at the point where their life is centred.

The father continues his key role as the supporter after the birth. He sees the child as his own self, reborn, for the continuation of the family progeny. Through this process, a continuity is established with the past, present and future. This continuity takes up a new meaning in the next verse, where we suddenly grasp what birth the Rishi is really referring to – is it just of one human being? Or is it a whole **Human Civilisation**? . . .

Verse 4.4: *The “Third Birth” – The Pregnant Son*

१३. सोऽस्यायमात्मा पुण्येभ्यः कर्मभ्यः प्रतिधीयते ।

१४. अथास्यायामितर आत्मा कृतकृत्यो वयोगतः प्रैति ।

१५. स इतः प्रयन्नेव पुनर्जायते तदस्य तृतीयं जन्म ॥

13. sō:'syāyamātmā puṇyēbhyaḥ karmabhyaḥ pratidhīyatē |

14. athāsyāyāmitara atmā kṛtakṛtyō vayōgataḥ praiti |

15. sa itaḥ prayannēva punarjāyatē tadasya tṛtīyaṁ janma ||

13	<i>sah asya ayam aatmaa; punyebhyah karmabhyah pratidheeyate;</i>	<i>That Son who is the father's own self, Is <u>initiated</u> to perform the <u>pious deeds</u>.</i>
14	<i>atha asya ayam itara aatmaa; kritakrityah vayogatah, praiti;</i>	<i>Then the father who is the son's other self, Having had his sense of <u>inward satisfaction</u> and reaching a ripe old age, <u>dies</u>.</i>
15	<i>sah itah prayan eva, punah jaayate; tat asya triteeyam janma.</i>	<i>Though he has departed, "he" is <u>born again</u> (in his son). This is his THIRD BIRTH.</i>

These are crucial lines. They indicate the strong link or identity between father and son. The two words are used interchangeably. What is the spiritual message that the Rishi is trying to pass on to us? How are we to understand this "third birth"?

THE INDIAN FAMILY TRADITION

The "Third Birth" is the fulfillment of a huge social responsibility. The father hands over the reins to his son, and the son accepts the reins. He takes over the role of the father, bearing the burden of the whole chain of responsibility which the father once bore. The father "dies" to his responsibilities, and they are "born" into the son. One may say that the father actually becomes the 'son'; and the son becomes the 'father'.

This may just sound like a play of words, but it isn't. There is a genuine feeling of identity between the father and the son. When the father's role is transferred to the son, the son becomes the 'father' of the household, and the aging father who needs to be cared for becomes the 'son'. This in fact is true in every practical respect, as seen below.

Just as the father nourished the son during the latter's growing phase, so too, the son (who is now the 'father') nourishes the father (who is now the 'son') in his dying phase! This is the age-old wisdom in which the Vedic civilisation survived generation after generation. There is great wisdom, love and shared responsibility in this set up.

In the ancient Indian family tradition, there were no "Old-age Homes". The family support was tremendous. It has to be seen to be believed by the modern sceptic. In today's society this may seem Utopian, but it has actually worked very well in Indian society for thousands of years. That is proof of its value, based on the sound principles of living with communal sense rather than ego-sense. And we are not talking religion here; we are simply talking of a viable family system based on sound principles of love and dutifulness.

The Third Birth

13-14 The son, after spending his early years up to puberty in a Gurukula where he gets educated in the skills needed for a cultured life, returns home to his parents. The father is happy to see him back. He can now teach him the family trade and see to the son's marriage and settle him into family life.

The son quickly learns the father's trade in a few years. When he has been well trained, he is ready to take the responsibility from his father and acquit himself honourably on the stage of life. He relieves his father of his burdensome duties, and the father, too, is ready to retire. It's the son that becomes "pregnant" to receive the seed of Civil Responsibility. The transfer of responsibility to the son is the "**THIRD BIRTH**".

15 We suddenly realise that the Rishi is really speaking not just of the birth of the body but the survival of Human Civilisation. The Third Birth is distinctly about the march of civilisation from one generation to the next. The birth of an individual is a step in the ongoing march of mankind, be it progressive or retrogressive. Human civilisation marches on relentlessly from generation to generation!

The Three Swapnas, the Three Births

1. **The Three Swapnas**: Earlier, in verse 3.12, we stated that our three states of experience – i.e. waking, dream and deep sleep – were all Swapna states as far as the Soul is concerned. Until man awakens to his spiritual destiny, he is considered to be in a state of slumber. All three states of consciousness are just different forms of slumber or Swapna!

In the context of the Three Births, we are in a position to give an explanation for this from the standpoint of the Soul.

2. **The Three Births**: These are all aspects of one single impulse in Nature. Nature has the one purpose of evolving Her creation until it reaches perfection. Man may be considered to be the glory of all living beings produced by Nature, but there is still a long way ahead to bring man to perfection. The chain of civilisation has the intention of improving upon man.

The first birth is when the potential human being is conceived in man and manifests as semen. This contains the hopes and aspirations of what man wants to achieve. The second birth produces the physical instrument that would accomplish this hope. That instrument makes every effort to bring to fruition these hopes and aspirations of man. Then comes the third birth when he passes that hope and aspiration on to the next generation to continue the progress of mankind.

Verse 4.5: *Breaking Through Iron Fetters*

१६. तदुक्तमृषिणा	
१७. गर्भे नु सन्नन्वेषामवेदमहं देवानां जनिमानि विश्वा ।	
१८. शतं मा पुर आयसीरक्षन्नधः श्येनो जवसा निरदीयमिति ।	
१९. गर्भ एवैतच्छयानो वामदेव एवमुवाच ॥	
16. taduktamṛṣiṇā	
17. garbhē nu sannanvēṣāmvēdamahaṁ dēvānāṁ janimāni viśvā	
18. śataṁ mā pura āyasīrarakṣannadhaḥ śyēnō javasā niradīyamiti	
19. garbha ēvaitacchayānō vāmadēva ēvamuvāca	

16	<i>tad uktam rishinaa –</i>	<i>As to this it has been said by a Rishi:</i>
17	<i>garbhe nu san anuvedam aham, eshaam devaanaam janimaani vishvaa;</i>	<i>“While yet in the embryo, I knew well all the births of these Deities!</i>
18	<i>shatam maa purah aayaseeh arakshan adhah, shyenah javasaa niradeeyam, iti.</i>	<i>A hundred iron citadels confined me down; yet, like a hawk in full flight, forth I flew.”</i>
19	<i>garbha eva etat shayaanah, vaamadevah evam uvaacha.</i>	<i>Even while lying in the womb, the Rishi Vamadeva had spoken thus!</i>

Human Evolution

The evolution of man into a perfect being, a divine being, is the intention of Nature. Each cycle of the “three births” aims to make some progress towards fulfilling this intention. The ideal is that Human Evolution moves forward incrementally through every such cycle. As human evolution proceeds forward, the slumber approaches its terminal point, ending in the Awakening of Man into spiritual glory.

This verse represents the stage when the evolution of one man has reached its pinnacle. The name of the man being described is **Rishi Vamadev**.

The Realisation Experience of Rishi Vamadev

Rishi Maheedasa now springs a sudden surprise on us, with the best of intentions, of course. We see in this verse the unique power of the *Aitareya Upanishad* to jolt us out of our comfort zone, back into awareness of the rigorous path of spiritual illumination. The Rishi aims to awaken us out of our spiritual Slumber.

The warm, cosy atmosphere of the home together with the comfortable regular cycle of the flow of life in the household, is contrasted at the most poignant moment with the miserable situation of “imprisonment” in the womb of the mother. A more opportune moment to draw the contrast cannot be found. The poet has built up a warm nest around our thoughts, only to shatter it with this insight into life in a womb . . .

The Realisation of Rishi Vamdev

16 Tad: “*this*”. ‘This’ refers to the spiritual awakening gained by the human soul from the evolution produced through many cycles of the “three births” which we ended with in the last verse. In connection with that is quoted the following experience of Rishi Vamdev, whose story is told in the *Atma Purana*:

17 We see the theme of Birth being brought to a climax here. We are speaking of a birth here that has an amazing circumstance to it. The Rishi explains:

Rishi Vamdev was a Jeeva having the same experience as Brahman entering the first Human Body at the time of Creation (see 3.13). He is about to go through his final birth as a human being. He lies in the womb of his mother and is in a spiritually awakened state! That means that he has barely any Samskaras to be worked out; the few that he has come with are all worked out through the pains experienced in the womb. Once worked out, although he is poised and ready for birth at any moment, there is no real need for him to be born!

While in the womb, Vamdev recognizes all the Deities, exactly as Brahman had done in verse 3.13 when He said, “*O, I have seen all this before!*” The Deities mean all our subtle body equipments – the intellect, mind, senses, etc. He recognizes them for what they are – just Upadhis or obstructions to the true vision of God.

18 Then he further remembers all his numerous previous births - not just once but a “hundred times”, meaning many, many, many times, when he had undergone this imprisonment in a womb.

As we read this, our own comfort and security suddenly give way to uncertainty and fear. This is the master-stroke of Rishi Maheedasa. He brings out the truth about how illusory our ‘comfort zone’ in life really is. The verse surely has been designed to awaken us out of our false, homely pleasures wherein we feel “All is well”, and to compel us to see the whole experience of life from the spiritual perspective.

Aayaseeh Arakshan: “iron citadels”. The Rishi fearlessly gives us a jolt whilst we are revelling in the mundane pleasures of home life, that we are never going to be free from the iron chains that bind us to womb after womb indefinitely!

Vamadeva did the wisest thing. Having realized that he was bound in chains; that this life was not so full of joy but mixed intensely with the pains of separation from the Lord – no sooner he realized this, he escaped with “hawk-like” speed out of his cage, and liberated himself. This he did while in the womb itself!

When are we going to break out of this vicious circle of imprisonment? Nay, even before that, when are we going to realize that we are bound?

19 The Rishi Vamadeva was fortunate and blessed indeed. While still in the womb, by the Grace of the Lord, he realized what the Truth was. It dawned upon him that it was Brahman alone who is in all the organs of the body. He remembered that he had experienced all this many times before but never understood it then. Now, he beheld the same vision that Brahman had which He had expressed as, “Oh, I have seen this before!”

What a way the Rishi Maheedasa has found to generate in us **Vairagya** of the highest type! This is the amazing beauty of *Aitareya Upanishad*. It is truly unique among all *Upanishads*, written with rare insight and compassion for man – a stroke of the loftiest streak of inspiration for the benefit of all mankind.

Verse 4.6: *The Jivanmukti and Videhamukti of Vamadeva*

२०. स एवं विद्वानस्माच्छरीरभेदादूर्ध्व उत्क्राम्य
२१. अमुष्मिन् स्वर्गे लोके सर्वान् कामानाप्त्वा-
२२. ऽमृतः समभवत् समभवत् ॥
20. sa ēvaṁ vidvānasmāccharīrabhēdādūrdhva utkrāmya
21. amuṣmin svargē lōkē sarvān kāmānāptvā-
22. :mṛtaḥ samabhavat samabhavat

20	<i>sah evam vidvaan; asmaat shareera-bhedaat; oordhwah utkraamya;</i>	Having gained knowledge of the Atman, and separated himself from <u>body consciousness</u> , he (Vamadeva) betook on his <u>upward path</u> ;
21	<i>amushmin swarge loka sarvaan kaamaan aaptvaa;</i>	He attained the heavenly worlds of Bliss and all his <u>desires</u> .
22	<i>amritah samabhavat, samabhavat.</i>	He became immortal – yes, he became <u>immortal</u> !

20 The Sage Vamadeva’s awakening while in the womb itself is an extreme case of Vairagya. Why does Rishi Maheedasa choose such an extreme example? It heightens the contrast between the illusory joys of family life and the misery of being ‘enwombed’ birth after birth. Vamadev realized this and at once ‘flew’ his way out of bondage.

Note that ‘freedom from body’ can mean two things: i) to a mortal, it means death; ii) to a sage, it means freedom from body-consciousness, which marks the “upward path” or increasing abidance in the Self until the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi is firmly established.

The Fruits of Realisation

21 Once the highest state of spiritual realisation is reached, the attainment “of the heavenly worlds of Bliss” accompanies it without saying. While still in his body, the realized sage experiences all the heavenly regions of Supreme Bliss.

He enjoys all desires simultaneously. The sage has no desire for such attainments; their mention here is perhaps to interest those who still aim for them, so that they may also relate to the sage’s attainment.

22 Immortality covers all attainments in one sweep. It is the supreme fruit of realisation. Mortality is the realm of the finite; Immortality is the realm of the Infinite.

The repetition of the line is to say that we have come to the end of Part 2 of the Upanishad.

An Announcement

	॥ यथा स्थानं गर्भिण्यः ॥	॥ yathā sthānaṁ garbhinyāḥ ॥
23	<i>Yathaa sthaanam garbhinyah.</i>	<i>Pregnant women, please resume your seats.</i>

23 At the end of this section, the announcement is made to call back the women who had to leave the class earlier, due to the sensitive subject matter.

Conclusion of this Chapter:

This chapter, besides clarifying the three births, the three dwelling places and the three states that the Self is witness to, has also taken us deeper into Vedantic Sadhana. The importance of **Vairagya** is brought out in a graphical manner.

The Place of the Guru in this Text

Acharyaji clarified that although the Guru has not been mentioned in this text for the attainment of realization, the Guru principle is not being challenged. Vamdev’s is an exceptional case of a sage who realized in the womb itself. There is no question of a Guru as we understand it, in such a case of realisation.

The purpose of the Guru is really to enable us to make our own inner instrument into a Guru to guide us. In the higher stages of meditation, the Guru is within us. The Brahmakara Vritti (thought) used during meditation itself becomes the Guru within. There is no contradiction involved in this regard.

॥ इत्यैतरोपनिषदि द्वितीयोऽध्यायः ॥

Here ends the First and only Chapter (No.4) of Part 2



PART 3: Chapter 5, 4 Verses

“CONSCIOUSNESS IS BRAHMAN”

॥ अथ ऐतरोपनिषदि तृतीयोध्यायः ॥

Here begins the First Chapter (No.5) of Part 3.

IN THIS CHAPTER A discussion among some serious students of Vedanta is taking place. The students are trying to analyse Sage Vamadeva’s experience, following conventional Vedantic enquiry techniques. Nothing new is learnt here; the ground covered by this last chapter is simply to verify the experience of Sage Vamadeva by conventional methods, since earlier it was only stated in the abstract language of *Aitareya Upanishad*.

For this reason, it is quite probable that this chapter was not even written by Rishi Maheedasa, but appended to his Upanishad as a Vedantic verification.

Importance of this Chapter

Prajnaanam Brahma – “Consciousness is Brahman”. This is the great Mahavakya that emerges as the main lesson of this entire text. It is the technical message delivered by the Rishi Maheedasa. There is a Mahavakya in every Upanishad. A Mahavakya concisely expresses the fact of the unity of individual Consciousness with the Supreme Brahman.

Out of over a hundred Upanishads – and therefore over a hundred Mahavakyas – four have been chosen to be called the Great Mahavakyas, one from each of the four Vedas. “*Prajnaanam Brahma*” is one of those four Mahavakyas, and occurs, as seen in the introduction, in the Rig Veda. This is its overall importance among all the Upanishadic texts.

The Two Brahman: “Upahita Chaitanya” and “Visishta Chaitanya”

To understand the discussion of the students, we need to know the two “Selves” they are talking about, otherwise we are likely to get totally confused. Two technical terms are used to distinguish the two Selves:

i) “**Visishta Chaitanya**”: This Self is associated with the various Upadhis. It is also called ‘Visishta Brahman’ or ‘the inferior Brahman’ in this text. ‘Visishta’ means that which is “particular”. This Self has two main divisions and three sub-divisions:

a. **Samashti**: This is the Macrocosmic Level. The three sub-divisions are **Ishwara** or **Brahmaji** or ‘God’ at the causal level; **Hiranyagarbha** or **Prana** at the subtle level; and **Virat**, at the gross level.

b. **Vyashti**: This is the Microcosmic Level: The three sub-divisions are **Prajna** at the causal; **Taijasa** at the subtle level; and **Vishwa** at the gross level. These three are linked respectively to the deep sleep, dream and waking states of consciousness.

ii) “**Upahita Chaitanya**”: This is the Ultimate Pure Brahman unassociated with any Upadhis, attributeless and indestructible. It is also called ‘Shuddha Brahman’ or ‘the superior Brahman’ in this text. It is the common substratum of all the three states of consciousness.

The Plan of this Chapter is seen in the following table:

TABLE SHOWING PLAN OF CHAPTER FIVE

VERSE	LINE	MAJOR DIVISION	SUB-DIVISION	EXPLANATION
5.1	<u>1</u>	INTRODUCING THE DISCUSSION		<i>Which of these two is true?</i>
	<u>2</u>	Vyashti (Individual Level)	Sakshi (Witness)	Upahita ; Nimitta; unassoc.
5.2	<u>3-5</u>		Jeeva (Ego-sense)	Vishishta ; Upadana; assoc.
5.3A	<u>6</u>	Samashti (Totality Level)	Brahman, Deities	Upahita ; Nimitta; unassoc.
	<u>7</u>		The Elements	Vishishta ; Upadana; assoc.
	<u>8</u>		Moving Creatures	
	<u>9</u>		Plants & Trees	
5.3B	<u>10a</u>		Summary of Sentient Beings	Upahita ; Nimitta;
	<u>10b</u>			Vishishta ; Upadana;
	<u>11a</u>		Summary of Inert Worlds	Upahita ; Nimitta;
	<u>11b</u>			Vishishta ; Upadana;
	<u>12</u>	Conclusion: THE MAHAVAKYA		“Prajnaanam Brahma”

Upahita Chaitanya or Pure Consciousness is considered to be the highest level of Reality (the Supreme Brahman or Ultimate Reality) in Vedanta. It is encountered in Line 12. It is the Mahavakya of this Upanishad – **Prajnaanam Brahma**.

Verse 5.1: “Upahita” – Unassociated Consciousness at Individual Level

१. ॐ कोऽयमात्मेति वयमुपास्महे कतरः स आत्मा । २. येन वा पश्यति येन वा शृणोति येन वा गंधानाजिघ्रति येन वा वाचं व्याकरोति येन वा स्वादु चास्वादु च विजानाति ॥	1. ॐ kō:'yamātmēti vayamupāsmahē katarah sa ātmā 2. yēna vā paśyati yēna vā śṛṇōti yēna vā gaṁdhānājighrati yēna vā vācam vyākarōti yēna vā svādu cāsvādu ca vijānāti
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1	<i>Om. kah ayam aatmaa iti vayam upaasmahe? katarah? sah aatmaa?</i>	<i>Om. Who is this Self we are worshipping? Which of the two is it? Is it A, the ATMAN:</i>
2	<i>yena vaa pashyati? yena vaa shrinoti? yena vaa gandhaan aajighrati? yena vaa vaacham vyaakaroti? yena vaa swaadu vijaanaati, cha aswaadu (vijaanaati)?</i>	<i>Is it “<u>That</u>” (Atman) by which one sees? Or by which one hears? Or by which one smells fragrance? Or by which one utters speech? Or by which one knows what is tasty, and what is <u>not tasty</u>?</i>

The Sakshi or Witnessing Consciousness

1 In Samskrit, what is known is closer and is referred to by the word **Ayam**, “This”; and what is not known is **Yena**, “That”. The students have learnt about Atman in its two aspects: as **Upahita**, “un-associated Consciousness” or Sakshi or “That”; and as **Visishta**, “associated consciousness” or Jeeva or “This”. Which of these two has Rishi Vamdeva realized? That is being discussed in a group.

2 The enquiry begins by considering the **Upahita Chaitanya**. The Sakshi witnesses all the bodily and mental activities, but does not get involved in them. It is their aloof witness. It remains untouched and uncontaminated. It is “that by which one sees, hears, smells, etc.” It alone can be the true Self at the Vyashti level.

Verse 5.2: “Visishta” – Associated Consciousness at Individual Level

३. यदेतद्धृदयं मनश्चैतत् ।
४. संज्ञानमाज्ञानं विज्ञानं प्रज्ञानं मेधा दृष्टिर्धृतिमतिर्मनीषा जूतिः स्मृतिः संकल्पः क्रतुरसुः कामो वश इति ।
५. सर्वाण्येवैतानि प्रज्ञानस्य नामधेयानि भवन्ति ॥
3. yadētaddhṛdayaṁ manaścaitat
4. sañjñānamājñānam vijñānam prajñānam mēdhā dṛṣṭirdhṛtimatirmanīṣā jūtiḥ smṛtiḥ saṁkalpaḥ kraturasuḥ kāmō vaśa iti
5. sarvāṇyēvaitāni prajñānasya nāmadhēyāni bhavaṁti

3	<i>Yat etat hridayam manah cha etat;</i>	Or is it B , “This” or the JEEVA ? – known by the intellect and mind (in all varieties) as follows:
4	¹ saṁjñanam; ² aajñanam; ³ vijñanam; ⁴ prajñanam; ⁵ medhaa; ⁶ dṛishtiḥ; ⁷ dhṛitiḥ; ⁸ matih; ⁹ maneeshaa; ¹⁰ jootih; ¹¹ smṛtiḥ; ¹² samkalpah; ¹³ kratuh; ¹⁴ asuh; ¹⁵ kaamah; ¹⁶ vashah, iti;	as clarity of ¹ perception; lordship or ² injunction; discriminative ³ understanding; ⁴ Intelligence; ⁵ retentive power; ⁶ insight; ⁷ firmness; ⁸ thought; ⁹ independent thinking; ¹⁰ suffering; ¹¹ memory; ¹² imagination; ¹³ decisiveness; ¹⁴ vitality; ¹⁵ hankerings; ¹⁶ ambitions;
5	<i>sarvaani eva etaani, prajnaanasya naamadheyaani bhavanti.</i>	All these types (16 for B), indeed, can also be considered as being names of Prajnanam .

The Jeeva or Individual Soul

3 Hridayam: “heart”. Now is described the reflected consciousness or Consciousness in association with the body, mind, intellect, memory and ego-sense. This has a Visishta relationship that produces the **Jeeva**. The very nature of the Jeeva is to want to stand out from other Jeevas, by being as unique as possible.

4 Sixteen ways in which Jeevas differ from each other are now listed:

The first fourteen of these faculties belong to the Subtle body. They are faculties of the inner instruments, mainly the mind and the intellect. They cover an enormous range.

i) **Samjnaanam**: “clarity of perceptions”. This is the the team effort of senses, mind and intellect functioning together. Clarity is a major factor that differentiates Jivas.

ii) **Aajnaanam**: “lordship”. People have different capacities of being in charge.

iii) **Vijnaanam**: This is “discriminative understanding”, the role of the intellect.

iv) **Praajnaanam**: “comprehension, knowledge, intelligence”.

v) **Medha**: “retentive memory”; the capacity to remember the import of books.

vi) to xiv) These cover the *Pranas*. All the items mentioned thus far are part of the.

Now we have two faculties that belong to the Causal body:

xv) & xvi) **Kaamah, Vashah**: These two consist of the bundle of desires, attachments and tendencies which are the cause of this human birth.

5 All the above sixteen faculties of the Jeeva are considered to be different names and forms through which Prajnaanam operates as Visishta Chaitanya in the Jeeva.

Verse 5.3A: *Unassociated & Associated Consciousness at All Levels*

६. एष ब्रह्मैष इन्द्र एष प्रजापतिरेते सर्वे देवा ।
७. इमानि च पञ्चमहाभूतानि पृथिवी वायुराकाश अपो ज्योतींषीति ।
८. १) एतानीमानि च क्षुद्रमिश्राणीव । बीजानीतराणि चेताराणि च ।
२) अण्डजानि च जारुजानि च स्वेदजानि चोद्भिज्जानि च ।
३) अश्वा गावः पुरुषा हस्तिनो ।
४) यत्किञ्चेदं प्राणि जङ्गमं च पतत्रि च ।
९. यच्च स्थावरं ॥
6. ēṣa brahmaīṣa indra ēṣa prajāpatirētē sarvē dēvā
7. imāni ca pañcamahābhūtāni pṛthivī vāyurākāśa apō jyōtīmṣīti
8. 1) ētānīmāni ca kṣudramiśrāṇīva bījānītarāṇi cētarāṇi ca
2) aṇḍajāni ca jārujāni ca svēdajāni cōdbhijjāni ca
3) aśvā gāvaḥ puruṣā hastinō
4) yatkiñcēdaṁ prāṇi jaṅgamaṁ ca patatri ca
9. yacca sthāvaram

i) Brahman and the Deities

(Upahita Chaitanya):

6	<i>eshah brahmaa; eshah indrah; eshah prajaapatih; ete sarve devaah;</i>	<i>This is Brahmas; Indra, the Lord Heaven; the Progenitor; and all the Deities;</i>
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ii) The Elements

(Vishishta Chaitanya):

7	<i>imaani cha pancha mahaabhootaani: prithivee, vaayu, aakaashah, aapah, jyotimshee, iti;</i>	<i>These are the five great subtle elements (called the Tanmatras): Earth, Wind, Space, Water and Fire;</i>
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iii) The Moving Creatures (Vishishta Chaitanya):	
8.1	<i>etaani imaani cha kshudra mishraani, eva beejaani itaraani cha itaraani cha;</i> All these big and small creatures and various other seeds of creation;
8.2	<i>andajaani cha; jaarujaani cha; swedajaani cha; udbhijaani cha;</i> The egg-born; womb-born (mammals); sweat-born; earth born;
8.3	<i>ashwaah; gaavah; purushaah; hastinah;</i> Horses; cattle; human beings or men; elephants;
8.4	<i>yat-kincha idam praani; jangamam cha; patatri cha;</i> whatever living creatures are here; moving on feet, or flying in the sky;
iv) The Unmoving Creatures (Vishishta Chaitanya):	
9	<i>yat cha sthaavaram.</i> and also that which is motionless.

Firstly, from 6 the “Upahita Chaitanya” aspect is given at the Samashti or macrocosmic level. This is the transcendent aspect of Brahman.

Thereafter, from 7-9 the “Vishishta Chaitanya” aspect is given at the Vyashti or microcosmic level.. This is the imminent aspect of Brahman.

7 represents the elements of the macrocosm.

8-9 represent the living beings of the macrocosm, both moving and unmoving.

Verse 5.3B: “PRAJNANAM BRAHMA” – All Levels

१०. सर्वं तत्प्रज्ञानेत्रं प्रज्ञाने प्रतिष्ठितं ११. प्रज्ञानेत्रो लोकः प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठा १२. प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म ॥	10. sarvaṁ tatprajñānētram prajñānē pratiṣṭhitam 11. prajñānētrō lōkaḥ prajñā pratiṣṭhā 12. prajñānam brahma
10	<i>sarvam tat prajnaa netram; prajnaane pratishthitam;</i> All these are <u>impelled</u> by Consciousness (Nimitta); and are <u>supported</u> by Consciousness (Upadana);
11	<i>prajnaa netrah lokah; prajnaa pratishthaa;</i> The world has Consciousness as its <u>efficient cause</u> ; and Consciousness as its basis, the <u>material cause</u> ;
12	<i>prajnaanam brahma.</i> Verily, “ CONSCIOUSNESS IS PURE BRAHMAN ”.

SUMMARY

Finally, we have the overall summary statements, divided into efficient and material causes.

10-11 Netram: “impelled or guided by”, is meant to indicate the function of being the Nimitta Karana or efficient cause of all living creatures and also to indicate that Prajnanam is independent of all that is created. Independence is proof of the Reality status.

Pratishthitam: “established in or supported by”, is meant to indicate the function of Upadana Karana or material cause of the same items, and also to indicate the dependency of the manifested creation on Prajnanam. Dependency is proof of the Unreality status.

12 Prajnaanam Brahma: Finally, the **Mahavakya** concludes the discussion of the students. The Truth is “Consciousness is Brahman”, where Consciousness is Pure (in its aspect as Upahita Chaitanya), the detached, unassociated Consciousness, and is no different from Brahman. Creation is unreal in nature, a mere superimposition upon Consciousness.

CONCLUSION

This is the point we started with at the very beginning in verse 1.1 – “*Aatmaa vaa idam eka eva agra aaseet* – in the beginning this was the Absolute Self alone”. This is the unassociated Pure Brahman. We end now with the same Truth, after having done the Adhyaropa (superimposition) and the Apavada (de-superimposition).

With that ends the Vedantic verification of the Truths which were earlier alluded to through the use of symbolic imagery or graphical representation.

Verse 5.4: *Jivanmukti & Kramamukti*

१३. स एतेन प्राज्ञेनाऽऽत्मनाऽस्माल्लोकादुत्क्रम्य
१४. अमुष्मिन्स्वर्गे लोके सर्वान् कामानाप्त्वा
१५. अमृतः समभवत् समभवत् ॥
13. sa ētēna prājñēnā:.'tmanā:'smāllōkādutkramya
14. amuṣṣminsvargē lōkē sarvān kāmānāptvā
15. amṛtaḥ samabhavat samabhavat

13	<i>sah etena prajñena aatmanaa; asmaat lokaat utkramya;</i>	<i>On account of knowledge of Atman, He ascended aloft from this world,</i>
14	<i>amushmin svarge loke, sarvaan kaamaan aaptvaa;</i>	<i>In the <u>heavenly worlds</u> of Bliss, He obtained all that he <u>desired</u>.</i>
15	<i>amritah samabhavat; samabhavat, iti om.</i>	<i>He became Immortal! Yes, he became Immortal! Om.</i>

Almost the same lines as in verse 4.6 are re-confirmed here. Sage Vamadeva's experience of God-realisation has been verified by Vedantic students. This statement completes a thorough investigation of the realisation of Sage Vamadeva, which took place while he was yet in the womb of his mother.

There are two paths by which one attains the ultimate Goal held up by Vedanta. They are i) **Jivanmukti**, liberation while one is still living; and ii) **Kramamukti**, liberation after death which is attained 'in steps' (Krama means "steps").

These two paths are described in the verse:

Jivanmukti

13 We have seen that Brahman stands at the very top of the hierarchy. Brahmanhood means being one with Brahman, abiding completely in the Supreme Brahman. This is the ultimate Goal This is our divine Abode, our true Home, our ultimate destiny, in which one finds total fulfillment and happiness.

This Goal is reached by being firmly established in the Knowledge of the Self, both in theory and in practice. Ascension to Brahman automatically implies raising oneself beyond the reach of all worldliness. There is not a trace of selfishness and worldly ambition left in one who attains Brahmanhood.

Kramamukti

14 If the above supreme Goal is not reached during one's lifetime, then there is an alternative way to attain it after the dropping of one's physical body. The alternative is to reach the highest of the heavenly abodes, called Brahmaloka, spend some time there and receive instruction from Brahmaji Himself on the knowledge of the Self which will take one to the highest Goal mentioned above. One who has experienced the Brahmic Consciousness becomes one with everything. He alone is able to make this statement: "I have attained all I desire."

15 Immortality is the supreme status of such a living saint. He no longer has any transaction with the phenomenal mortal world. In that state there is no birth and no death.

The text ends in the traditional way: i) the last line of this verse is repeated twice; and ii) we close with the Shanti Mantra in the next and last Chapter. This peace invocation as a chapter on its own was the conception of Sri Shankaracharyaji himself.

॥ इत्यैतरोपनिषदि तृतीयोऽध्यायः ॥

Here ends Chapter 5, the First chapter of Part 3



PART 3: Chapter 6, 1 Verse

The “PEACE INVOCATION”

Verse 6.1: Invocation for All Upanishads from Rig Veda

<p>१. ॐ वाङ् मे मनसि प्रतिष्ठिता, मनो मे वाचि प्रतिष्ठितं, २. आविरावीर्म एधि, वेदस्य म आणीस्थः, श्रुतं मे मा प्रहासीः । ३. अनेनाधीतेनाहोरात्रान् संदधामि । ४. ऋतं वदिष्यामि, सत्यं वदिष्यामि ५. तन्मामवतु, तद्वक्तारमवतु ६. अवतु माम्, अवतु वक्तारम्, अवतु वक्तारम् ॥ ॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥</p>	<p>1. ॐ vāṅ mē manasi pratiṣṭhitā, manō mē vāci pratiṣṭhitam, 2. āvirāvirma ēdhi, vēdasya ma āṇīsthaḥ, śrutam mē mā prahāsīḥ 3. anēnādhītēnāhōrātrān saṁdadhāmi 4. ṛtam vadiṣyāmi, satyam vadiṣyāmi 5. tanmānavatu, tadvaktāramavatu 6. avatu mām, avatu vaktāram, avatu vaktāram ॐ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ </p>
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1	<i>om vaang me manasi pratishthitaa; mano me vaachi pratishthitam;</i>	<i>Om! May my speech be rooted in my <u>mind</u>; May my mind be rooted in my <u>speech</u>;</i>
2	<i>aavira-aaveer ma (me) edhi; vedasya ma (me) aaneesthah; shrutam me maa prahaaseeh;</i>	<i>Brahman, <u>reveal</u> Thyself to me; Enable me to <u>grasp</u> the Vedic Truths; Let not what I have heard <u>forsake</u> me;</i>
3	<i>anena-adheetena- ahoraatraan sandadhaami;</i>	<i>May I, in my studies, <u>join</u> day with night (i.e. spend all my life);</i>
4	<i>ritam vadishyaami; satyam vadishyaami;</i>	<i>May I <u>assimilate</u> the Truth (into my intellect); May I <u>express</u> the Truth (through my speech);</i>
5	<i>tat maam avatu; tat vaktaaram avatu;</i>	<i>May that Truth protect <u>me</u>; May that Truth protect my <u>teacher</u>;</i>
6	<i>avatu maam, avatu vaktaaram, avatu vaktaaram.</i>	<i>Protect <u>me</u>, protect my <u>teacher</u>, protect my <u>teacher</u>!</i>
	<i>om shantih, shantih, shantih!</i>	<i>Om Peace, Peace, Peace!</i>

॥ ॐ तत् सत् ॥

Om Tat Sat!
