

A Catechism of Enlightenment

A Commentary on Shankara's "A Method Of
Enlightening A Disciple" from the
Upadeshasahasri—A Thousand Teachings

by Abbot George Burke
(Swami Nirmalananda Giri)

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The opening verse of Shankara's *Upadeshasahasri*—A Thousand Teachings—is: “We shall now explain a method of teaching the means to liberation for the benefit of those aspirants after liberation who are desirous and are possessed of faith.” Shankara then outlines in a section titled “A Method Of Enlightening A Disciple” how the aspirants should receive the first instructions in the inquiry as to the nature of the Self. The texts cited certainly need comment—as Shankara assumed those who used his text would do.

There are very many citations, most being from the upanishads though some are from the Bhagavad Gita and some minor sources. We will look at each one in turn from first till last.1) **“In the beginning this universe was Being [Sat] alone, one only without a second.” (Chandogya Upanishad 6:2:1)**

Brahman is Pure Being, absolute unity, *ekam, evam, adwitiyam*—one, only, without a second. This is perhaps the purest statement that can be made about Brahman, and also the most accurate—always keeping in mind that nothing can be said about Brahman in the highest sense.2) **“Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else—that is the Infinite. Where one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else—that is the finite. The Infinite is immortal, the finite mortal.”**

“In what does the Infinite find Its support?”

“In Its own greatness—or not even in greatness.” (Chandogya Upanishad 7:24:1)

When the Infinite is perceived, it alone IS. There is absolutely nothing else. This takes two forms. The highest is the perception of nothing but Pure Being. The other is the perceiving of “others” but at the same time directly seeing that the “others” are mere appearances and that Brahman is manifesting as everything.

But when we believe in “others” as really being “other” in their essential

nature, then we are in finite consciousness and subject to all that entails, experiencing ourselves falsely as finite and ever-changing.

The short dialogue about the support of the Infinite is intended to show us that Brahman is Its own support—Its own greatness (mahima.) Besides Its very Being, Brahman neither has nor needs any support at all. For this reason the upanishads usually declare Brahman as supportless, as we will see later.³) The third verse presented by Shankara is preceded by one that I think you will find informative, though its wording is similar to the first part of Shankara's quotation. It brings out some things that Shankara considered anybody would know who was inquiring after the Self, but in the West that is not the case. So here it is:

“That infinite, indeed, is below. It is above. It is behind. It is before. It is to the south. It is to the north. The Infinite, indeed, is all this.

“Next follows the instruction about the Infinite with reference to ‘I’:

“I, indeed, am below. I am above. I am behind. I am before. I am to the south. I am to the north. I am, indeed, all this.” (Chandogya Upanishad 7:25:1)

The idea here is that the Infinite—Bhuma, the unconditioned, infinite Brahman—is all-pervading, that there is nowhere that the infinite is not, indeed there is nowhere or no thing that is not the Infinite Itself.

Next, the same thing is said about the “I” principle, or *aham*. This is not the delusive ego, *ahankara*, that is being spoken about, but the positive *asmita*: I-ness; the sense of “I am;” “I exist.” It is the awareness of our very existence as a real entity. This “I” sense is all-pervading on the individual level, just as the Bhuma pervades all levels, cosmic and macrocosmic. For the real “I” is all that we are in truth. That real “I” is the Atman-Self, so the upanishad continues (with Shankara):

“Next follows the instruction about the Infinite with reference to the

Self: The Self indeed, is below. It is above. It is behind. It is before. It is to the south. It is to the north. The Self, indeed, is all this.

“Verily, he who sees this, reflects on this and understands this delights in the Self, sports with the Self, rejoices in the Self, revels in the Self. Even while living in the body he becomes a self-ruler. He wields unlimited freedom in all the worlds.

“But those who think differently from this have others for their rulers; they live in perishable worlds. They have no freedom in all the worlds.” (Chandogya Upanishad 7:25:2)

“Self” in this verse means both the individual and the universal Selves, the jiva and Brahman. So whatever is said applies to both equally, though on the finite and infinite levels. The yogi, knowing this, sports, rejoices, and revels in the Selves. He is a true master—a master of himself, and one who shows others the way to become masters themselves. Absolute freedom is his. That is this possible is shown by the lives of the great masters of all traditions. All the major religions of the world have had masters manifested in them. Sometimes it has seemed they were masters in spite of their religion. Many were persecuted—and some were killed—by their religious leaders. Nevertheless, they were masters and we should honor them all.

However...those who do not have Self-consciousness, but believe in the illusions of difference and separation are the servants (even slaves) of just about everything—their minds, bodies, associates, society, and so on. All their “worlds” are changeable, rushing toward dissolution. Bondage alone is their past, present, and future until they change their consciousness.⁴) **“In the beginning all this verily was Atman only, one and without a second. There was nothing else that winked. He bethought Himself: ‘Let Me now create the worlds.’” (Aitareya Upanishad 1:1:1)**

The Self alone is ever-existent. Creation goes in cycles. Before creation there is absolutely nothing but the Brahman-Self. The statement that

“there was nothing else that winked” means that there was no movement or action whatsoever, that there was neither sentient nor non-sentient being—only the Paramatman.

The impulse to project the creation comes from Brahman Itself. In the same way the impulse to enter into relative experience comes from each individual being, and from no other. Brahman does not come into this. The Gita (9:6-8) says: “My wandering creatures, are always within me. These, when the round of ages is accomplished, I gather back to the seed of their becoming: these I send forth again at the hour of creation. Helpless all, for Maya is their master, and I, their Lord, the master of this Maya: ever and again, I send these multitudes forth from my Being.” But it is speaking only of those who have decided to enter the dream to develop their scope of consciousness (see *Ladder of Light*). The initial entry into creation comes from each spirit alone.

Like God, we have been creating many “worlds” through reincarnation, being born in a vast chain of embodiments, living out a different drama in each life. It is all under the aegis of the Self.⁵ **“All this is Brahman. From It the universe comes forth, in It the universe merges and in It the universe breathes. Therefore a man should meditate on Brahman with a calm mind.**

“Now, verily, a man consists of will. As he wills in this world, so does he become when he has departed hence. Let him with this knowledge in mind form his will.” (Chandogya Upanishad 3:14:1)

The doctrine of Maya is fundamental to upanishadic thought, because at all times the student must keep the perspective that everything is an appearance only, that things are only images in our consciousness. They are dream images within the mind of the dreamer. The fact that they have no objective reality will not disturb those of us who love plays and movies. The creation is not for entertainment but for training in consciousness—which is real. After all, words are only symbols, not realities, but nobody objects to language being insubstantial. As things are, so they are.

So when the upanishad tells us that “all this is Brahman,” it is telling us that the dream and the Dreamer are the same, only momentarily divided by the illusion of Maya. Both the real and the unreal are Brahman. Reality and fantasy have the same substance: Brahman. The cosmos rises from Brahman, evolves in Brahman, and melts back into Brahman, just as ice forms from water, floats in the water, and after a while melts back into water. Such an insight should give us unshakable peace, peace in which we should meditate on Brahman in order to unite with It.

The second part of this verse does not seem to fit, but it does, being a reflection on the injunction to meditate on Brahman. Meditation, being a matter of inner and outer stillness, is yet an action of will. To meditate is to exercise our will in the most creative manner. Therefore the subject of will is introduced. The Gita (6:5, 6) says this: “What is man’s will and how shall he use it? Let him put forth its power to uncover the Atman, not hide the Atman: man’s will is the only friend of the Atman: his will is also the Atman’s enemy. For when a man is self-controlled, his will is the Atman’s friend. But the will of an uncontrolled man is hostile to the Atman, like an enemy.”

The upanishad presents us with a fact we would rarely come to realize on our own: we “are” our will. This is not in the absolute sense, but from the fact that intelligent will is a prime characteristic—or at least a potential—of the human being. It is true, most people run on whimsy, desire, and delusion. But they are being instinctual like animals, and not functioning in their full humanity. The ideal in the upanishads is the fully conscious and therefore fully “wilful” person. But that is not enough; the will must be oriented toward the knowing of Brahman—not just a desire to know, but a willing to know which is manifest in the entire life. If the will is perfectly consonant or aligned with the truth of Brahman, then upon his departure from this world the yogi will attain to Brahman or at least ascend to those high worlds in which liberation is assured and attained.

Yet it is all up to us, so we are advised in conclusion to form and exercise

our will according to what we have learned.6) **“The Self which is free from sin, free from old age, free from death, free from grief, free from hunger, free from thirst, whose desires come true and whose thoughts come true—That it is which should be searched out, That it is which one should desire to understand. He who has known this Self from the scriptures and a teacher and understood It obtains all the worlds and all desires.”** (Chandogya Upanishad 8:7:1)

This is easily understood, yet some comment may be of use. First we see that the Self is absolutely and eternally free of all defects. Next we see that the Self is omnipotent in its sphere, that whatever it “wills” or “thinks” comes to be. Knowledge of the Self should be our uppermost intention in life, for when It is known then everything is gained.7) **“That which breathes through the prana is your Self that is within all. That which moves downward through the apana is your Self that is within all. That which pervades through the vyana is your Self that is within all. That which goes out with the udana is your Self that is within all. This is your Self that is within all.”** (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3:4:1)

This verse tells us that the Self is not some antiseptic, indifferent, utterly separate entity from our bodies, but that it is consciously active within us. Deism postulates that God made the world and then walked away to leave it spinning on its own, and it is easy to lapse into a kind of deism on the individual level when we learn that the Self is untouched by anything and its nature is beyond all things. But, as is usual, the truth is a combination of opposing ideas, somewhere in the middle of them.

Prana pervades and functions in all living things, including us. There are five forms of prana. They are: 1) Prana, the prana that moves upward; 2) Apana: the prana that moves downward, producing the excretory functions in general. 3) Vyana: the prana that holds prana and apana together and produces circulation in the body. 4) Samana: the prana that carries the grosser material of food to the apana and brings the subtler material to each limb; the general force of digestion. 5) Udana: the prana which brings up or carries down what has been drunk or eaten; the general force of assimilation.

The Self is not the prana, but the inner force which impels the prana in its five modes. Part of the idea is that the Self is involved in all the functions of living beings. The Self “lives” through and in our gross and subtle bodies. Without the Self there would be no life, nor anything at all.

Further, it is not the universal prana, the Vishwaprana, that lives in each one of us, but rather our own personal Self-directed life-force. God is running the great cosmos, but we are running our private cosmos all on our own. Total responsibility is ours, but this implies total capability, a very positive fact. We are weaving our own dreams within the Cosmic Dream. We are writing, producing, directing, and acting in our own dramas.⁸⁾ **“It [the Self] is that which transcends hunger and thirst, grief, delusion, old age and death. Having realized this Self, brahmins give up the desire for sons, the desire for wealth and the desire for the worlds and lead the life of religious mendicants. That which is the desire for sons is the desire for wealth and that which is the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds; for both these are but desires.**

“Therefore a brahmin, after he is done with scholarship, should try to live on that strength which comes of scholarship. After he is done with that strength and scholarship, he becomes meditative and after he is done with both meditateness and non-meditateness, he becomes a knower of Brahman.

“How does the knower of Brahman behave? Howsoever he may behave, he is such indeed.

“Everything else but this is perishable.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3:5:1)

It [the Self] is that which transcends hunger and thirst, grief, delusion, old age and death. The Self is not just devoid of hunger, etc., but it exists utterly beyond such things which are impossible to it. The nature of the Self precludes such things.

Having realized this Self, brahmins give up the desire for sons, the desire for wealth and the desire for the worlds and lead the life of religious mendicants. That which is the desire for sons is the desire for wealth and that which is the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds; for both these are but desires. When we realize that the Self is transcendent, beyond all the mirages we have been identifying with and either seeking or avoiding, we turn from them as the vain illusions they are. Seeking Brahman, we become the true Brahmins—the knowers of Brahman.

The word translated “religious mendicant” is not sannyasi or yati—both exclusively referring to official monastics—but *bhikshacharyam*: one who lives on food-alms (bhiksha). I have no doubt that the upanishad includes sadhus in this verse, but not exclusively. It seems to me there is a much deeper meaning here. The awakened one no longer seeks the foolish and pain-giving objects so prized by the world, and so no longer desires to “make” anything of himself or his life. Rather, he wishes to be only what he eternally is. This is why one of the Venerable Master Seung Sung’s teachings is: Make Nothing. This is profound and worthy of our pondering.

Instead of “making a life” and all that entails, the wise live seeking for nothing earthly, but only awaiting and living on the “bhiksha” that life brings to them as a consequence of their karma. They reap, but sow no more. What comes to them spontaneously, as a matter of course, is the “alms” the universe gives them to evolve through. What a blessed and free life!

Therefore a brahmin, after he is done with scholarship, should try to live on that strength which comes of scholarship. After he is done with that strength and scholarship, he becomes meditative and after he is done with both meditateness and non-meditateness, he becomes a knower of Brahman. When we climb a stair we start at the bottom and go to the top. That is hardly news, but the same applies to spiritual life. Egotists and simplistic children in adult bodies are always trying to be at the top instantly. But that is impossible, so the upanishad outlines the stages we

should go through if we would really reach the heights of consciousness.

First there must be serious study, and from that will come the spiritual intelligence and resolve to engage in dedicated spiritual practice, particularly meditation. Through meditation he goes beyond even the duality of meditation/non-meditation, reaches the knowledge of Brahman, and attains liberation (moksha).

How does the knower of Brahman behave? Howsoever he may behave, he is such indeed. Everything else but this is perishable. The ego is always seeking ways to avoid real spiritual life, as that will be its dissolution. Philosophizing is a favorite byway, and that includes: "How can we know someone is enlightened?" This produces some maddening and hilarious theories that, as is intended, lead nowhere. For a sensible person asks: "How can I become enlightened?" and lets the rest fend for themselves. In the Gita Krishna describes the interior state of an enlightened person in terms that can be only known to the individual. No one can make a checklist and go around seeing who is and who is not enlightened. Like all spiritual life, it is totally subjective. As Yogananda's chant says: "He who knows...he knows. None else knows." And nothing is wrong with that, for our enlightenment never depends on another's enlightenment. Those who think it does have a very harsh and bitter road to wander, getting nowhere until the mist of their delusion lifts. As we see from the upanishads, a true teacher says: "*You are That*"—not "*I am That.*"

There is a really third-rate movie called *Blood-Bath In the House of Death* starring Vincent Price. It is pretty awful, but has some funny moments. At one point the eager little groupie-Satanists are preparing for a ritual at which Satan, "the Master," will appear. They ask their teacher, Vincent Price: "How will we know him?" And Price snaps back in disgust: "You'll know him when you see him, stupid!" That happens to be the straight truth. So the upanishad says that an enlightened person acts like he does. He is enlightened and that is that. Everything else but that state—including deeds and words of any kind—is perishable and of no

reality at all) “The form of that person is like a cloth dyed with turmeric, or like grey sheep’s wool, or like the scarlet insect called Indragopa, or like a tongue of fire, or like a white lotus, or like a flash of lightning. He who knows this—his splendor is like a flash of lightning.

“Now, therefore, the description of Brahman: Not this, not this [Neti, Neti]; for there is no other and more appropriate description than this: ‘Not this.’ Now the designation of Brahman: The Truth of truth. The vital breath is truth and It [Brahman] is the Truth of that.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2:3:6)

It is a fundamental tenet of the upanishadic philosophy that neither the Supreme Self nor the individual Self have any form or quality whatsoever. So what is the first part of this verse talking about? It is saying that any “form” of the Self is really only a kind of symbolic indication of its presence, just like a person is not his voice, but when we hear the voice speaking we know the person is present. To get this idea across several examples are given: 1) A cloth may be dyed yellow, but the yellowness is superficial, having nothing at all to do with “clothness.” 2) Sheep’s wool is the thing, and greyness merely incidental. 3) Being an Indragopa insect has nothing to do with being red. 4) A tongue of fire is just a momentary condition, but the fire persists because that is the reality. 5) Lotuses may be many colors—whiteness is not lotusness. 6) Lightning is a process of purifying the atmosphere, its flash is just happenstance. Those who know these truths about the Self are splendid, but that splendor is just what others perceive—it is not the Self of those enlightened people. They alone “see” their Self.

There is a further lesson here: the Self can take on many attributes or forms, but it never really is any of them—they are appearances only. Yet, the Self’s capacity for assuming form and quality must not be forgotten. The simplistic denial of this is a mark of ignorance, not discrimination, and certainly is not Advaita.

Brahman cannot be described as an object, for It is not separate from us nor does It have attributes or qualities. Yet, the upanishad says that Brahman can be “described” by saying It is “not this, not this.” The idea is that when we negate all that can be said, what remains is a hint of Brahman, the No Thing (not to be confused with Nothing, as Westerners are wont to do). We can say what God is not—and nothing more. It is most interesting to note that early Christian theology made a great point of this truth. Just as it also taught that God alone was real, and that evil did not exist. These three principles reveal the Indian origin of Jesus’ teaching, however far contemporary Christianity has strayed from it.¹⁰) **“It [Brahman] is neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long, neither fiery nor watery; It is neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor akasha; It is unattached; It is without taste or smell, without eyes or ears, without tongue or mind; It is non-effulgent, without vital breath or mouth, without measure and without exterior or interior. It does not eat anything, nor is It eaten by anyone.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3:8:8)**

This is extremely important for us to grasp. Brahman and the Self cannot be spoken about, but they also really do not have any qualities. They are neither gross nor subtle, large nor small, far nor near, within nor without—or any kind of duality whatsoever. They relate to no thing and no thing relates to them. We really cannot say anything at all—except that we cannot say anything at all.¹¹) **“This Self is That which has been described as “Not this, not this.”**

“It is imperceptible, for It is never perceived; undecaying, for It never decays; unattached, for It is never attached; unfettered, for It never feels pain and never suffers injury.

“That Person [Purusha] is to be known only from the upanishads, who definitely projects those beings and again withdraws them into Himself and who is at the same time transcendental.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3:9:26)

Point Nine speaks of Brahman as “not this, not this,” and now the

upanishad says the same about the Self to underline their identical nature.

The second section indicates both that the Self never changes, either of itself or as a result of its experiences within relativity.

It is very easy at this point in time to fall into a major error: to assume that in the upanishads and Gita “veda” means the collection of hymns (samhitas) known as “the Vedas.” In actuality, veda is a derivation of vidya–knowledge–and only means teachings and books of spiritual wisdom. That may include the Vedas, but it certainly is not an exclusive designation of them. Another error would be to think that in this verse “upanishads” means the writings now appended to the Vedic samhitas and officially called “upanishads.” For one thing, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad predates all the other upanishads except perhaps the Isha Upanishad. “Upanishad” comes from *shad* which means “to sit,” *upa* which means “near,” and *ni* which means “down.” So the whole word means “to sit down near,” and refers to the teachings heard while sitting down near. In other words, “upanishad” in this verse means the teaching, the philosophy that later was written down in the upanishads we presently have.

Having said what we must not think, we can consider what this verse does mean—namely that the teaching on the Self, the Purusha, is to be known only from the upanishadic philosophy. An informed person can hardly disagree with this, because in no religion other than Sanatana Dharma can we find such clear, detailed, and uncompromising statements regarding the Self as in these citations by Shankara as “a method of enlightening a disciple.” Certainly, hints are to be found in the words of mystics and the scriptures of all religions, but hints only, never the complete expositions such as can be found in the upanishads and Bhagavad Gita. (The exception would be the modern teachers in various deficient religions who shamelessly plagiarize the teachings of Sanatana Dharma, pretending that they are expressions of their own religions—whose scriptures usually deny or denounce those teachings.)

The description of the Purusha given here indicates that all things proceed from the Purusha and are withdrawn into It as Its conscious intention. Yet the Purusha remains beyond all those things, untouched and untouching.¹²⁾ **“Verily, that Imperishable is never seen but is the Seer; It is never heard, but is the Hearer; It is never thought of, but is the Thinker; It is never known, but is the Knower. There is no other seer but This, there is no other hearer but This, there is no other thinker but This, there is no other knower but This. By this imperishable is the unmanifested akasha pervaded.”** (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3:8:11)

Brahman and the Self are *akshara*—imperishable—because they are unchangeable, untouched by anything. Further, they “see” all, but themselves are never seen—as an object. They can be “known” only by themselves, by immediate perception. That is, they can know themselves by themselves, but none else can know them.

The final sentence is of great importance to yogis. Normally we think of there being a sharp demarcation between the Spirit—universal or individual—and Prakriti, the energy of which all levels of relative existence consist. But here we are told that the Spirit interpenetrates the ether (akasha). Here the Chidakasha is being referred to. In *Om Yoga* I have written this: “In advanced yoga treatises we frequently encounter this term, ‘Chidakasha,’ which means ‘the Space (Ether) of Consciousness.’ This is the level of existence and consciousness so pure and subtle, so interwoven with Spirit, that it is indistinguishable from Spirit...Various texts inform us that both Om and the breath arise directly from the Chidakasha. For this reason in Om Yoga meditation we join intonations of Om to the breath.”¹³⁾ **“It is Brahman, which is absolute Knowledge and Bliss.”** (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3:9:28)

Here we find one of the happy paradoxes of the upanishadic philosophy. Having been told that Brahman is indefinable, we are given a definition! One of the best approximate definitions or descriptions of Brahman and the Self is sat-chit-ananda. Brahman and the Self are: a) sat—existence, b) chit—consciousness, and c) ananda—bliss (joy). They are

blissful, conscious existence itself.

This is a valuable definition, for those that are knowers of Brahman, of the Self, must then of necessity be blissful, fully conscious, and unshaken in the perception of reality.^{14“Brahman is Reality [Satyam], Knowledge [Jnanam] and Infinity [Anantam].” (Taittiriya Upanishad 2:1)}

Brahman is eternal, infinite, conscious Reality. And so are we, though eternal, *finite*, conscious reality. The more we know our Self, the more real, knowing, and eternal we are.¹⁵) **“In the beginning all this was non-existent. From it was born what exists.**

“That created Itself by Itself; therefore It is called the self-made.

That which is Self-made is delight [rasa]; for truly, on obtaining delight one becomes blissful.

“Who could direct the prana and the apana if this Bliss did not exist in the akasha?

“Brahman verily exists because It alone bestows bliss.

“When a man finds fearless support in That which is invisible, incorporeal, indefinable and supportless, he has then obtained fearlessness.

“If he makes the slightest differentiation in It, there is fear for him.

“That becomes fear for him who does not reflect.” (Taittiriya Upanishad 2:7)

In the beginning all this was non-existent. From it was born what exists. Here we have an example of the frequent ambiguity of Sanskrit—an ambiguity based on the fact that a Sanskrit word can have so many meanings, some of them contradictory. There are upanishadic passages that speak

of the absurdity of the idea that something can come from nothing, but here we have what seems an assertion of that very idea. The words used here are Sat and Asat. Normally they mean Real and Unreal, or True and Untrue. But they can also mean manifest and unmanifest—a temporary existence or non-existence. These two sentences mean that at first there was nothing in relative existence, but from that Unmanifest Itself all things came into manifestation. That is, Brahman alone was, but everything was potentially within Brahman and eventually came into being.

That created Itself by Itself; therefore It is called the self-made. This has two meanings, internal and external. The external meaning, based on the previous statement is that Brahman the manifest “made” Itself by projecting Itself from Its unmanifest being. The internal meaning is that from its transcendent being Brahman expanded and became immanent within creation as its guiding intelligence. This is the “begetting” of the “only-begotten Son of God” which causes such turmoil (and in the past, bloodshed) in the minds of Christians who bother to think about it. My gratitude was inexpressible when after years of confusion the scriptures of India made clear to me what in the Bible was a complete muddle I was supposed to accept “on faith.” There was a question I had asked many ministers, who all shuffled and sputtered and said they had never studied it “in seminary.” They could not even refer me to a theological book on the subject! Then one blessed day, after having awakened to the reality of Sanatana Dharma, I wrote that question to a sadhu whose answer came back right away. It was a single sentence that answered my question completely. As Shankara says in one of his writings, the philosophical concepts that are common in India have never been dreamed of outside India. Why settle for a second-rate religion?

That which is Self-made is delight [rasa]; for truly, on obtaining delight one becomes blissful. Brahman as Absolute is bliss, and so is Brahman as Relative, but whereas the bliss of the Absolute is exclusively internal, a matter of Brahman rejoicing in Itself, the bliss of the manifest or Saguna Brahman can be “tasted” by the individual spirits evolving within creation. Whereas the bliss of the Transcendent is known only to Itself,

the bliss of the Immanent can be experienced by others, by the individual beings. First we savor the bliss-delight of God, and then we rise higher to our own transcendent nature and experience of own inner, eternal bliss, just as does Brahman.

Who could direct the prana and the apana if this Bliss did not exist in the akasha? If the bliss of Brahman (Brahmananda) did not arise in the ether, in the Chidakasha how could anything “breathe”—alternate in polarity—and thus enter into relative existence? The dual movements of prana and apana are the basis of relative existence, and manifest in all sentient beings as the inhaling and exhaling breaths. We could not breathe, could not live, if Brahmananda was not perpetually welling up from the heart of the Absolute. It exists in the ether, the abode of subtle sound. For this reason we join the mental sound of our repetition of Om to our inhalations and exhalations and return our consciousness to its Origin.

Brahman verily exists because It alone bestows bliss. Bliss is the manifestation of Brahman, the indication of Its existence. Bliss (ananda) is not the mere happiness of ego gratification or the thrill of the senses. It is much more, and these lesser things should not be mistaken for it. The truth is, it takes a marked degree of evolution for a human being to experience bliss, for such experience indicates nearness to God. Watch an infant who is still in touch with its Source and see how suddenly it will smile and radiate joy, bliss sweeping through and moving its entire body. It is aware of nothing but that overwhelming bliss.

When a man finds fearless support in That which is invisible, incorporeal, indefinable and supportless, he has then obtained fearlessness. Swami Gambhirananda renders it: “This unperceivable, bodiless, inexpressible, and unsupported Brahman.” Sanskrit can often be interpreted in different ways, and sometimes in opposite ways. This is intentional, so we should consider both these translations as equally accurate.

Brahman—and therefore the Self—is imperceptible to any relative entity. To “see” either of them we must divest ourselves of relative consciousness and see with the “single eye” of the atman. As Jesus said:

“If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” (Matthew 6:22) Interestingly, the Greek word in the Gospels is *aplous*, which means something that has been unified—*made* one. So to enable us to “see” Brahman we need to cultivate the consciousness of Unity.

Perhaps even more interesting is the statement that Brahman and atman are without a body. Usually we think of the universe as God’s “body,” and the five koshas as the bodies of the Self. In the cosmic dream, that is so, but in awakened reality, Brahman and the Self relate to absolutely nothing but each other. Nothing “covers” them, nor are they capable of being “inside” anything—or “outside” anything, either. Their mode of being prevents this. Nothing that can be said about the body can be applied to the Self, nor can what is said about the Self be applied to the body.

Both Brahman and the Self are beyond any form of expression, which is why point nine says that “not this, not this” is the only possible description for them.

Finally we come to an interesting “contradiction” that is an important exposition of truth. Nikhilananda translates that Brahman and the Self are “supportless,” whereas Gambhirananda translates it as “unsupporting.” Both concepts are intended. Brahman is not “supported” by anything, being totally self-existent, depending on nothing else for Its existence. At the same time, Brahman does not support anything because Brahman never touches or enters into relation with anything. Yes, through the illusion of Maya it seems that Brahman is the source and maintainer of all, the controller of all. But Maya is a dream. If we dream that we tame and ride an elephant, can we boast about it? It was just an image without substance.

Actually, Brahman and the Self are antithetical to any “other.” Brahmajnana (knowledge of Brahman) and atmajnana (knowledge of the Self) cause the experience of all “else” to cease. So they not only do not support anything, they dispel them as illusions.

If he makes the slightest differentiation in It, there is fear for him. That becomes fear for him who does not reflect. Belief in duality is productive of fear. Fearlessness is possible only in the consciousness (not mere belief) of unity—of Brahman. To the ignorant—including those that have no knowledge of the upanishads—the very idea of Brahman is fearful because Brahman is antithetical to what they cherish: the ego and its “diversity.” I have heard radio preachers foaming at the mouth about “becoming one with a Cosmic Nothing” when faced with Advaitic truth. The concept of union with Brahman terrifies the ego and those in its grip. No matter how much they fawn on Mighty Gawd they are thrown into a panic at the idea that Mighty Gawd might be all there is! Frankly, all religions that focus obsessively on an avatar (divine incarnation) or prophet are doing so in hope that by focusing on a little personality they can avoid the truth of Infinity and the possibility of total union with It—leaving behind their little sandbuckets and shovels on the shores of the sea of samsara.¹⁶) **“That great, unborn Self, which is identified with the intellect [vijñanamaya] and which dwells in the midst of the organs, lies in the akasha within the heart. It is the controller of all, the lord of all, the ruler of all. It does not become greater through good deeds or smaller through evil deeds. It is the lord of all, the ruler of all beings, the protector of all beings. It is the dam that serves as the boundary to keep the different worlds apart. The brahmins seek to realize It through the study of the Vedas, through sacrifices, through gifts and through austerity which does not lead to annihilation. Knowing It alone one becomes a sage [muni]. Wishing for this World [i.e. the Self] alone, monks renounce their homes.**

“The knowers of Brahman of olden times, it is said, did not wish for offspring because they thought: ‘What shall we do with offspring—we who have attained this Self, this World?’ They gave up, it is said, their desire for sons, for wealth and for the worlds and led the life of religious mendicants. That which is the desire for sons is the desire for wealth and that which is the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds; for both these, indeed, are but desires.

“This Self is That which has been described as ‘Not this, not this.’ It is

imperceptible, for It is not perceived; undecaying, for It never decays; unattached, for It is never attached; unfettered, for It never feels pain and never suffers injury.

“Him who knows this these two thoughts do not overcome: ‘For this I did an evil deed and For this I did a good deed.’ He overcomes both. Things done or not done do not afflict him.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:4:22)

This is a great deal of information which needs careful analysis, part by part.

That great, unborn Self, which is identified with the intellect [vijñanamaya] and which dwells in the midst of the organs, lies in the akasha within the heart.

The Self and Brahman are not “born.” This means that they are beginningless, produced from nothing else, and therefore as already seen, self-existent. This also means that they are related to nothing. They are absolutely independent.

Yet, the Self is definitely associated with its dreams, and especially with the level of the mind known as the *vijñanamaya*—that which is permeated with both the consciousness of the Self and the highest and subtlest part of the individual mind. This Self is pervading all the organs of perception and action, but it is centered—located—in the etheric “heart” that is at the core of all our incarnate complex. (“Heart” here does not mean the organ that pumps blood, but the center from which all radiates and toward which all is oriented when the sentient being is functioning “as intended.”) Here again we see why we use sound in meditation and why the Brahma Sutras close with the statement: “By sound one becomes liberated.”

It is the controller of all, the lord of all, the ruler of all. However separated some part of us may seem to have become from the Self, ultimately It is always in control, only letting things drift so we will learn from it—learn the results of our mistaken actions and thoughts.

It does not become greater through good deeds or smaller through evil deeds. This is so crucial for all of us learn—especially Westerners who are so enmeshed in identity with the surrounding mirages. They think that kind deeds and words make a person kind, completely confusing the chain of cause and effect. Saying intelligent things does not make a person intelligent, it only reveals that he is intelligent. A lot of evil people try to cover up by doing good things and saying good words. Many cold-hearted people are busy with social action and “helping” others out of a desire for notoriety and the ability to manipulate those they “help.” A lot of sociopaths are busy reforming society so they can control it.

Since the Self cannot be altered in any way, good deeds cannot make it better or bad deeds make it worse. It always is what it is. Naturally, simplistic minds assume this means that we should not care about good or bad, but they are very wrong. Good action reveals the Self and bad action hides it. Good produces wisdom and bad produces ignorance. What is needed is the revelation of the unchanging and unchangeable Self.

It is the lord of all, the ruler of all beings, the protector of all beings. Safety is to be found only in the Self. Fearlessness is a trait solely of the knowers of Brahman.

It is the dam that serves as the boundary to keep the different worlds apart. Both Brahman and the Self keep their manifested “worlds” in order, seeing that they do not become mixed and confused. For evolution, differentiation is necessary. Without boundaries, like rungs on a ladder, we could not move from lower to higher. This is very necessary. Spiritual consciousness produces separation from many things, as well, causing the individual to increasingly become intent on what uplifts him and to avoid what degrades him. Again, a kind of simplistic “ain’t it all grand” muddle is ignorance and a hindrance to growth. Spiritual life is maximally clear-sighted, and differentiation is part of the needed clarity. The ability to make distinction is the basis for viveka, the faculty of

discrimination between the true and the untrue, etc.

The brahmins seek to realize It through the study of the Vedas, through sacrifices, through gifts and through austerity which does not lead to annihilation. Those who aspire to know Brahman study the teachings of illumined sages. They also engage in disciplines as offerings (sacrifices) to God. In Bhagavad Gita 4:25-32 you can find a list of what offering/sacrifice consists. It is much more than pointless destruction of something. Those who seek God have a heart for the needs of others and give them assistance of various kinds. They also engage in austerity for purification, but not in that which does violence to anyone's well-being—including their own—and which does not entail any destruction or loss (annihilation). Krishna said: "You may know these men to be of demonic nature who mortify the body excessively, in ways not prescribed by the scriptures. They do this because their lust and attachment to sense-objects has filled them with egotism and vanity. In their foolishness, they weaken all their sense-organs, and outrage me, the dweller within the body." (Bhagavad Gita 17:5, 6) This is a favorite activity in India I am very sorry to say. But that does not make it any less foolish and destructive. Also, a truly disciplined person does not impose his disciplines on others or make himself troublesome to them. And he certainly never implies to them that he is somehow superior and they are inferior.

Knowing It alone one becomes a sage [muni]. "Muni" means a wise person who is well-disciplined. The upanishad says this because there are a lot of exhibitionists in India who can do all sorts of amazing feats of physical control. One of the most morally bankrupt people I ever met was a super hatha yogi who could float on water (sitting and playing a harmonium!) and miraculously undergo things that would kill a normal person. He was exactly what we mean by the word "crook," a spiritual and material criminal.

Only he who knows Brahman is a true sage, whether he speaks or remains silent.

Wishing for this World [i.e. the Self] alone, monks renounce their homes. There is the World of Brahman/Self, the divine unity, and then there are the “worlds” of multiplicity and duality. Desiring only the Real World, the pravrajin–wanderers–leave their homes and become homeless. Usually “pravrajin” refers to wandering monks, but here I think it means those who understand that nothing material, nothing that is not the pure Self, can really be a “home.” In their insight they never identify with anything but the Self, never rely on anything but the Self, and abide only in the Self wherever their body may be. This is what Jesus meant when he said: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20) Those who think they are mere humans–“sons of men”–can find rest nowhere. The wise know this to be so and no longer frustrate and torment themselves by trying to find peace and meaning in the fever-dream of the worlds. Because of this they find that their home is Infinity. They find rest and peace in the Self.

The knowers of Brahman of olden times, it is said, did not wish for offspring because they thought: ‘What shall we do with offspring–we who have attained this Self, this World?’ They gave up, it is said, their desire for sons, for wealth and for the worlds and led the life of religious mendicants. That which is the desire for sons is the desire for wealth and that which is the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds; for both these, indeed, are but desires. Any earthly aspirations are pointless–this the awakened yogi knows. Others do not, yet in time they will come to this understanding, too. But the yogi should not bother them with his way of seeing things. Instead he should live his life quietly and unattached. As the Gita says: “He neither molests his fellow men, nor allows himself to become disturbed by the world.” (Bhagavad Gita 12:15) Saint Paul said: “The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Galatians 6:14)

This Self is That which has been described as ‘Not this, not this.’ It is imperceptible, for It is not perceived; undecaying, for It never decays; unattached, for It is never attached; unfettered, for It never feels pain and never suffers injury. The real escape from suffering and harm is to become fully identified with the Self which is beyond all that.

*Him who knows this these two thoughts do not overcome: 'For this I did an evil deed and For this I did a good deed.' He overcomes both. Things done or not done do not afflict him. As Saint Paul also said: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God." (Philippians 3:13, 14) Taking refuge in the unacting Self, we go beyond all action and their effects. We should neither be satisfied with past good or unhappy about past evil. None of that has anything to do with the Self. It should be forgotten, left behind, and the Self entered and made our only abode. This is wisdom.17) **"He is the self-luminous and formless Purusha, uncreated and existing both within and without. He is devoid of prana, devoid of mind, pure, and higher than the supreme Imperishable."** (Mundaka Upanishad 2:1:2)*

This first point has already been considered, but how is it I said that Brahman is neither inside nor outside anything? It is true—the upanishad's intention here is to indicate that Brahman is all-pervading. But never does Brahman "contain" anything nor is It "contained" by anything. The Gita emphasizes this, too: "This entire universe is pervaded by me, in that eternal form of mine which is not manifest to the senses. Although I am not within any creature, all creatures exist within me. I do not mean that they exist within me physically. That is my divine mystery. You must try to understand its nature. My Being sustains all creatures and brings them to birth, but has no physical contact with them." (Bhagavad Gita 9:4, 5)

Prana is the "substance" of life, but it is really not alive at all, any more than the mind—which is only a field of energy—is conscious. We mistakenly attribute life and consciousness to subtle energies, when they are really only mirrors reflecting the life and consciousness that IS Brahman and the Self. It is wisdom to never attribute divine characteristics to anything in relativity.18) **"As a lump of salt dropped into water becomes dissolved in water and cannot be taken out again, but wherever we taste the water it tastes salt, even so this great, endless, infinite Reality is Pure Intelligence alone. This Self comes out**

as a separate entity from these elements and with their destruction this separate existence also is destroyed. After attaining oneness it has no more consciousness [of separation].” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2:4:12)

Brahman is an absolutely unitary existence which is pure consciousness alone. All “else” is simply a momentary appearance, a dream.

The Self makes for itself dream-bodies from the dream-substances of the various worlds. And so it becomes “separate”–but only in experience, not in reality. When the bodies taken on by the Self dissolve totally, the mirage of independent, separate existence vanishes.¹⁹⁾ **“He [Brahman] transformed Himself in accordance with each form and each form of His was for the sake of making Him known....This Brahman is without antecedent or consequent, without interior or exterior. This Self, the all–perceiving, is Brahman. This is the teaching of the Upanishads.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2:5:19)**

Of course Brahman does not change, but enters into each form and appears to do so, making it Its own. The purpose is not to hide or veil Brahman, but to reveal Brahman to the evolving consciousness that is incarnate along with Brahman in those many forms. This is contrary to ordinary thinking, which shows how little value there is to most people’s ideas. Here, too, the problem is insistence on simple–and therefore simplistic–interpretations of the upanishadic teachings.

Nothing precedes Brahman and nothing succeeds It. There is only Brahman–and the Self–in the beginning, middle, and end. Nothing is either inside Brahman and outside Brahman, because there are no “things” at all.

There is another idea presented here: Brahman has no parts, no “in” or “out,” but is a thoroughly homogeneous Being, an absolute Unity. In God there can be no “inner” or “outer,” no “higher” “or lower,” no “greater” or “lesser.” When the upanishads and Gita appear to contradict this, they are only speaking loosely to get their ideas across to

Maya-blinded and limited human minds.20) **“It is different from the known; It is above the unknown.” (Kena Upanishad 1:4)**

In relative existence there are both the perceived and the unperceived, the known and the unknown. Even the extremely subtle levels of relativity, despite their luminescence and their power, are still material, and not at all Spirit.

The Gita puts it this way: “But behind the manifest and the unmanifest, there is another Existence, which is eternal and changeless...It is my highest state of being.” (Bhagavad Gita 8:20,21)21) **“That is called the akasha, is the revealer of names and forms. That within which these names and forms exist is, verily, Brahman. That is the Immortal; that is the Self.” (Chandogya Upanishad 8:14:1)**

It is understood that Brahman is All, that whatever we see or experience is a manifestation of Brahman. Yes, it is all a dream, but Brahman is the substratum-substance of the dream. So as yogis ascend in awareness of higher and subtler realms of existence—realms of consciousness—there comes a level which is both relative and absolute, both supremely subtle vibratory energy and spirit-consciousness. This level is indistinguishable from pure Spirit because it *is* pure Spirit. Yet, it is a “level” that has a relative existence. This is the primal Akasha (Ether) that is properly called Chidakasha—Ethereic Consciousness. It is the Element of elements, yet it is the Absolute. It is both relative and transcendental, depending on which way the yogi is “looking.” (Please be aware that to try and make some sense out of this I am having to speak a lot of nonsense to give a hint of what actually is the situation.)

From this Akasha all name and form have arisen, and it itself reveals them—makes them manifest by producing awareness of them. This is possible only because it IS name and form—at least seemingly so. So Brahman and the Self are all that “is.”22) **“This is never born, nor does it die.” (Bhagavad Gita 2:20)**

Neither Brahman nor the Self have a beginning or ending, an origin or a

dissolution. Nothing that is “born” and is therefore inevitably going to “die” is Brahman. But Brahman is all such. Only a yogi untangles this seeming paradox.²³) **“The Omnipresent takes note of the merit or demerit of none.” (Bhagavad Gita 5:15)**

Since everything is just light and shadow like a motion picture, how can anything really have merit or demerit? This is why Buddhists speak of all things being “empty.” The image of a human being in a movie is not good or evil, healthy or ill, legal or illegal. It is nothing—just an appearance. Since God knows this, how can the Divine possibly look at anything as good or evil, pleasing or displeasing, legitimate or illegitimate, harmful or helpful? It is all just a training film in consciousness for those within the motion picture, within the dream of God. In short: Brahman does not take note of merit or demerit because there is no such thing—only an appearance.²⁴) **“As the mighty wind, moving everywhere, rests always in the ether, even so, know that all beings rest in Me.” (Bhagavad Gita 9:6)**

Since Brahman is ether (akasha) this is only reasonable. But since we have spoken of how the entire “creation” is a dream, what rests in Brahman? The individual selves, the jivatmans. For they are not a dream, but part of the Reality that is Brahman. We, too, are dreamers on the finite level, and must always distinguish between Brahman, ourselves, and our dreams, cosmic and individual.²⁵) **“Know Me as the Knower of the Field in all fields.” (Bhagavad Gita 13:2)**

Just as all beings abide in Brahman, so Brahman is within them all as The Knower. That is, everything perceived or experienced by them is perceived and experienced by Brahman through them. Brahman actually experiences “being” them, but without forgetting that It is not them—except in essence. We, on the other hand, identify with our experiences and fall into the labyrinth of illusory existence.²⁶) **“Brahman is neither being nor non-being.” (Bhagavad Gita 13:12)**

The Sanskrit text has the words sat and asat that are here translated “being” and “non-being.” The more complete definitions are: Asat:

Unreal[ity]; nonbeing; nonexistence; false; falsehood. Sat: Existence; reality; truth; being. Brahman is beyond any of this, and the moment we try to drag Brahman down to the level where they apply we are only deluding ourselves. And Brahman could not care less. We need to stop trying to speak or think about Brahman and get busy preparing ourselves through meditation and spiritual discipline to experience *Brahman*.²⁷) **“Being without beginning and devoid of [any] qualities.” (Bhagavad Gita 13:31)**

Here again we see that nothing can be said about Brahman—or about the Self—nor can It or our Self be in any way described. Neither have any attributes whatsoever.²⁸) **“Existing equally in all beings.” (Bhagavad Gita 13:27)**

We cannot sensibly have a “more Brahman than thou” attitude! Divinity is equally in all things—*as* all things. No thing is more Brahman than another. However, that does not mean that some things are not heavier or lighter veilings of the Reality that is Brahman. The seeker after Brahman thus considers what will hinder or help his attainment of Brahmajñana, the Knowing of Brahman, and order his life accordingly.²⁹) **“Distinct is the Supreme Purusha.” (Bhagavad Gita 15:17)**

This is the same as Patanjali’s dictum: “Ishwara [God] is a particular Purusha.” Krishna and Patanjali mean that God is a special, unique, conscious Being—not just abstract Existence. God is a “particular Spirit” in the sense that God can be “picked out” or “singled out” from among all other things or beings. Though God is within all things and all things are within Him, yet He stands apart. This is stated several times in the Bhagavad Gita: “They are contained in me, but I am not in them...I stand apart from them all, supreme and deathless” (7:12, 13). “For my spirit stands apart, watching over Maya, the maker” (9:9). “Standing apart, He sustains” (13:14). “He is within and without: He lives in the live and the lifeless: subtle beyond mind’s grasp; so near us, so utterly distant” (13:15). “Although I am not within any creature, all creatures exist within me” (9:4). God is unique in the sense that He is *Ekam Evam*

Advityam Brahman—the God Who is One, Only, Without a Second. He is not one of many, nor is He even one of two. He is ONE in every sense of the term.^{30“He is never seen, but is the Seer; He is never heard, but is the Hearer; He is never thought of, but is the Thinker; He is never known, but is the Knower. There is no other seer than He, there is no other hearer than He, there is no other thinker than He, there is no other knower than He. He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. Everything else but Him is perishable.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3:7:23)}

Our nature is consciousness, so we are solely witnesses of all that is spread out around us as relative existence. Seeing it, we find ourselves “in” the ever-changing drama and begin to think that we are a part of it. Unfortunately, the seer begins to think he is the seen. And since we live in this dream along with billions of other dreamers who, like us, cannot perceive their real nature, we are told by all those voices that we are the ever-shifting patterns of light and shadow, that there is nothing but the shadow-plays in which our consciousness is immersed. So how could we be other than confused?

But in time we begin to intuit the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the unknown knower. When we develop the courage to dare the venture, we seek out the way to find this Unknown, however much others—and our past experience—may insist that there is no such Person. When that urgency is well-developed in us, then we find others who hold the same conviction, and find the testimony of those that have sought and found. Writings of sages come to us. If our aspiration is strong enough we may even come into the orbit of those who have sought and found, whose very existence will be our assurance that the Goal can be reached.

“But if that is true, why don’t I see it?” This question in many variations is asked by us and others when we first hear of realities hitherto unheard of by us. Shankara tells us by citing the statement of the Chandogya Upanishad:³¹) **“The mind consists of food.”** (Chandogya Upanishad 6:5:4; 6:6:5)

This is incredibly important. It is the mind that marks us out from animals; it is the mind that enables us to seek and find the Goal Supreme. The mind is an essential factor of liberation because it controls the way we handle all the other aspects of our being. For this reason Sri Ramakrishna continually told aspirants: “The mind is everything.”

This upanishadic verse tells us that “the mind consists of food.” Some of the other verses from that section of the upanishad are these that explain how food becomes mind. “Food when eaten becomes threefold. What is coarsest in it becomes feces, what is medium becomes flesh and what is subtlest becomes mind.” (Chandogya Upanishad 6:5:1) “That which is the subtlest part of curds rises when they are churned and becomes butter. In the same manner, that which is the subtlest part of the food that is eaten rises and becomes mind.” (Chandogya Upanishad 6:6:1, 2) So the character or quality of the food we eat determines the character and quality of the mind. This is a principle we must take extremely seriously. Many mental and emotional problems arise solely from diet. And the quality of intellect depends utterly on diet. There is no possibility of anyone comprehending the full range of dharma and esoteric philosophy unless their mind—and therefore their diet—is pure. This applies to the practice of yoga as well.

If the mind is everything, so also is our diet. Diet is discussed in the Bhagavad Gita (17:7-10) and in *Spiritual Benefits of a Vegetarian Diet*.³² **“Having created all this, He entered into it. Having entered into it, He became both the manifested and the unmanifested, both the defined and undefined, both the supported and unsupported, both the intelligent and the non-intelligent, both the real and the unreal. The Satya [the Real, the True] became all this: whatever there is. Therefore call It the True.”** (Taittiriya Upanishad 2:6)

Brahman has not really “become” anything, but we have only the language of this world to speak in. The important points are that Brahman is within all AS all, that even the “unreal” is real in essence, and that all this should be called Real—not sneered at or despised as

“unreality.” This is real Advaita.³³) **“Entering into them He rules all creatures.”** (Taittiriya Aranyaka 3:11:12)

There is no chaos. Everything is perfectly ordered and under divine control, whatever the appearance may be.³⁴) **“This Self has entered into these bodies, as a razor lies hidden in its case, or as fire, which sustains the world, lies hidden in its source. People do not see the Self, for when viewed in parts It is incomplete....The Self alone is to be meditated upon, for in It all these become unified. Of all these, this Self alone should be known, for one knows all these through It.”** (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1:4:7)

Although Brahman is ever present, we do not see It because we are only looking at fragments of reality. Only in the Self, in Brahman, are the fragments united into the Whole. Therefore we should meditate on the Self, leaving all partial things aside. Yet, when we know the Self, all will be seen by us as the Self in perfect unity.³⁵) **“So, piercing the end [the brahmarandhra, the crown of the head], the Lord entered through that door. That door is known as the vidriti, the cleft. This is the place of bliss.”** (Aitareya Upanishad 1:3:12)

The Self enters the body through the crown of the head, the brahmarandhra, “the hole of Brahman,” the subtle (astral) aperture in the crown of the head, and dwells in the thousand-petaled lotus (sahasrara) that corresponds to the brain in the physical body. Liberated beings are said to exit the physical body through this aperture at death. Consequently yogis keep their awareness in the sahasrara as it is the abode of bliss.³⁶) **“That Self hidden in all beings does not shine forth; but It is seen by subtle seers through their one-pointed and subtle intellects.”** (Katha Upanishad 1:3:12)

Here is another very yogic citation. None but those who focus and refine their minds, themselves becoming focused and refined, can see the Self. “Therefore, Arjuna, become a yogi.” (Bhagavad Gita 6:46)³⁷) **“That Deity thought: ‘Let Me now enter into those [potentially] sentient beings.’”** (Chandogya Upanishad 6:3:2)

Here the upanishad is speaking of the bodies which can become sentient—at least through association—by the entrance of Brahman and the Self.³⁸) **“The embodied one rests happily in the nine-gated city.” (Bhagavad Gita 5:13)**

The Self is ever immersed in its own blissful being, even though embodied in the subtle and physical bodies. Incarnation is not a misery for the spirit—only for the ego-mind. This is an important point because many think that bliss is attained by dropping the body or somehow cutting off awareness of it. What is really needed is reestablishment in the Self. Nothing else will work.³⁹) **“The Supreme Lord [is] existing equally in all beings, the unperishing within the perishing.” (Bhagavad Gita 13:28)**

All beings are shrines of Divinity. Although some will express that Divinity more than others, will be more transparent to the light of the Self, still the One is equally within all. So the spiritual value of all is the same, though naturally we value those in whom Spirit is revealed.

Within the mortal the Immortal is to be found. When that departs, the mortal dissolves and is seen no more.⁴⁰) **“The Supreme Soul in this body is also called the spectator, the permitter.” (Bhagavad Gita 13:22)**

Our Self is not just the witness it is the permitter—actually, it is the director. We are always in charge and all is for our betterment. The fact that we have forgotten and do not experience this shows how advanced our dis-ease has become.⁴¹) **“Distinct is the Supreme Purusha called the highest Self, the indestructible Lord who, pervading the three worlds, sustains them.” (Bhagavad Gita 15:17)**

And so, on the individual level, does our Self.⁴²) **“The wise man, having realized the Atman as dwelling within impermanent bodies but Itself bodiless, vast and all-pervading, does not grieve.” (Katha Upanishad 1:2:22)**

This is quite clear, but one point should be considered. How can the individual Self, which is finite, be considered all-pervading? First, because space does not really exist, so every one of us is everywhere at all times. Second, because the Self has the potential for experiencing the Total Conscious that is God.⁴³) **“This Self was indeed Brahman in the beginning. It knew itself only as ‘I am Brahman.’ Therefore it became all. And whoever among the gods had this enlightenment, also became That Brahman. It is the same with the seers (rishis), the same with men. The seer Vamadeva, having realized this Self as That, came to know: ‘I was Manu and Surya.’ And to this day, whoever in a like manner knows the Self as ‘I am Brahman,’ becomes all this universe. Even the gods cannot prevent his becoming this, for he has become their Self.**

“Now, if a man worships another deity, thinking: ‘He is one and I am another,’ he does not know. He is like an animal to the gods. As many animals serve a man, so does each man serve the gods. Even if one animal is taken away, it causes anguish to the owner; how much more so when many are taken away! Therefore it is not pleasing to the gods that men should know this.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1:4:10)

This Self was indeed Brahman in the beginning. Brahman and the Self have the same eternal nature.

It knew itself only as ‘I am Brahman.’ This is quite significant. The Self has always known that it is one with Brahman, yet it has also been aware that there is a distinction (a better word than “difference”) between the two. Who can say what else the Self has always known? But one thing is sure: it is not inherent in the Self to be unaware of anything, just a peaceful, happy lump as some “non-dualists” teach, who would have us think that those who have attained perfect realization are not aware of anything. It is just the opposite—the liberated are aware of everything, but know what it is and what it is not: Brahman.

Therefore it became all. Just as it witnessed Brahman projecting and evolving and withdrawing the worlds, so did the Self, manifesting itself

as all it ever could be, including the subtle and gross bodies. Yet it remained unchanged in essence.

And whoever among the gods had this enlightenment, also became That Brahman. It is the same with the seers (rishis), the same with men. To know Brahman is to be Brahman. It is interesting to see this classification of gods, seers, and ordinary human beings. This indicates that there is a stage in human embodiment in which the person is no longer completely human, but is both human and god. "God" in this passage means those who have evolved beyond the human form and the material plane. This includes the various deities that preside over the forces of nature and are worshipped by humans. More about them in a bit.

The seer Vamadeva, having realized this Self as That, came to know: 'I was Manu and Surya.' Enlightenment is the knowing of our oneness with Brahman, but it does not cancel out the remembrance of past lives. (Buddha said that the memory of all our past lives is a sign of enlightenment.) Further, the enlightened are still able to say: "I was..." and enumerate their past lives, though knowing it was all a dream.

There have been several Manus—ancient guides of the newly manifested human race. Surya is the Lord of the Sun who is directly concerned with the development and evolution of the human race. "Surya" is really an office like President. When he attained full liberation Vamadeva remembered having been both a Manu and a Surya. From this we see that even these exalted beings are not liberated. So when we get a touch of higher consciousness and maybe a bit of psychic power we must not think we have really attained anything, but must keep pressing on. God will let us know when we have finished the race and won. Until then we keep on keeping on.

And to this day, whoever in a like manner knows the Self as "I am Brahman," becomes all this universe.

This has already been discussed.

Even the gods cannot prevent his becoming this, for he has become their Self. It is an ancient tradition in India that the gods (demigods) want homage from human beings, but are very jealous—even nervous—of yogis who might evolve to a point in which they could supplant the gods. (We have already seen that Vamadeva remembered being the demigod Surya in a previous birth.) There are many legends of the gods actually trying to stop or ruin the tapasya of yogis so they could feel secure in their exalted positions. But the upanishad tells us that this cannot happen for one who seeks the Self, because he remains invisible to the egocentric and power-addicted gods. Also, since he is intent on that level of being which is common to all sentient beings—their own Self—they will see such a yogi as a dear friend and not a rival, since he disdains the whole cosmos, intent on the Highest. Thus he is not a competitor, for the deluded gods have no interest in knowing Brahman and being free. They love the prison as long as they can be in charge.

Now, if a man worships another deity, thinking: 'He is one and I am another,' he does not know. It is foolish to become involved with “gods” in a dualistic manner, for they have no power or glory that is not innate in each one of us. By seeking and finding the Self we gain infinitely more than any god could give us. More important, by worshipping such beings we lose sight of the truth of our divine Self. This statement also applies to those who seek union with Brahman as though Brahman were separate from them. We should seek Brahman solely because It is the only Reality, the Reality of our Self.

He is like an animal to the gods. As many animals serve a man, so does each man serve the gods. Even if one animal is taken away, it causes anguish to the owner; how much more so when many are taken away! Therefore it is not pleasing to the gods that men should know this. And it is not pleasing to sociopathic religionists who wish to ensnare people in their ideological cages in order to profit from them and fatten their egos on the adulation and obedience of their “cattle.”⁴⁴) **“The brahmin rejects one who knows him as different from the Self. The kshatriya rejects one who knows him as different from the Self. The worlds reject one who**

knows them as different from the Self. The gods reject one who knows them as different from the Self. The [sentient] beings reject one who knows them as different from the Self. The All rejects one who knows It as different from the Self. This brahmin, this kshatriya, these worlds, these gods, these beings, and this All—are that Self.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2:4:6)

In the early days of psychiatry, specialists were called “alienists,” meaning that they worked with people who had become alienated from reality. The upanishad tells us that those who do not seek and know the Self are alienated from Reality Itself, that they are alienated from all levels and forms of being. This conflict cannot but result in pain and frustration. It is silly to talk about “universal brotherhood” outside the context of Universal Being.⁴⁵) **“Through the mind alone is Brahman to be realized. He goes from death to death who sees in It [Brahman], as it were, diversity.”** (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:4:19)

Through the mind alone is Brahman to be realized. Although external conditions can be favorable to spiritual practice, Brahman is realized through the mind alone—by no other faculty. Therefore the yogi works intently with the mind that lies within, knowing that just as churned milk yields up the butter, so the mind “churned” by meditation will reveal Brahman. Of course, “mind” here refers to the highest faculty of the mind, the chidakasha, which is “churned” by the japa and meditation of Om.

There is in It no diversity. He goes from death to death who sees in It, as it were, diversity. How aptly does the upanishad call death what we foolishly call “life.” For we have the habit of saying that we go from life to life, when really we are going from death to death—the death that is ignorance of the Self. Dual consciousness is the producer of that death from which we can escape only through knowing the Self.⁴⁶) **“That which is the subtle essence—in it all that exists has its Self. That is the True. That is the Self. That thou art.”** (Chandogya Upanishad 6:13:3)

This is the essence of everything that has been said or will be said in this

“catechism.” Realizing its truth is the purpose of our being here.⁴⁷⁾
“Just as someone might lead a person, with his eyes covered, away from the country of the Gandharas and leave him in a place where there were no human beings; and just as that person would turn toward the east, or the north, or the south, or the west, shouting: ‘I have been brought here with my eyes covered, I have been left here with my eyes covered!’ And as thereupon someone might loosen the covering and say to him: ‘Gandhara is in that direction; go that way;’ and as thereupon, having been informed and being capable of judgement, he would, by asking his way from one village to another, arrive at last at Gandhara—in exactly the same manner does a man who has found a teacher to instruct him obtain the true knowledge. For him there is delay only so long as he is not liberated from the body; then he reaches perfection.” (Chandogya Upanishad 6:14:1, 2)

A person in ignorance is not really blind, but has had the covering of Maya bound over his mind-eyes and been “kidnapped” to an alien place where nobody really belongs. Once he has the good sense to call out for help, help will come in the form of knowing how to journey back to his home. In the same way, those that yearn to know the way out of inner desolation will be given instruction in that way—whether through another person who knows the way or through the written teachings of those that have found the way. Actually, the parable indicates that as he travels along he will be given directions by various people. His getting back home is assured, the only delay being in the time it takes him to return. In the same way the liberation of the questing yogi is assured, and upon his being freed from the body he will enter the state of perfect freedom, having already enjoyed it inwardly even before the dropping of the body.

48) “One who has known the Real [Brahman] is not born again.” (Chandogya Upanishad 6:16:3)

This is because the very purpose of birth in relative existence has been

fulfilled and there is no need for further birth.⁴⁹) **“This is the eternal glory of Brahman: It neither increases nor decreases through action. Therefore one should know the nature of That alone. Knowing It one is not touched by evil action.**

“Therefore he who knows It as such becomes self-controlled, calm, withdrawn into himself, patient and collected; he sees the Self in his own Self [body]; he sees all as the Self. Evil does not overcome him, but he overcomes all evil. Evil does not afflict him, but he consumes all evil. He becomes sinless, taintless, free from doubts and a true Brahmana [knower of Brahman]. This is the World of Brahman.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:4:23)

This is the eternal glory of Brahman: It neither increases nor decreases through action. I do not think it is any surprise that God cannot be made larger or smaller by anything he might do! But what is implied is that no action can increase or decrease our divine Selfhood which we draw from Brahman. Nor can action make us more or less divine. What we are and what God is, is immutable. So no one is less or more divine than another. Difference between sentient beings is a matter of realization, not of essence. And those that know Brahman can never say: “I am more than you are.” Nor do they have a false humility that would make them say: “I am less than you are.”

Therefore one should know the nature of That alone. Since Brahman alone exists in the absolute sense, we should at all times realize that we are always experiencing Brahman—nothing else. This also means that we should have enough sense to center our entire life on Brahmajnana, aware that since all else is a mirage there is really nothing else we can know. Knowing Brahman should be our life’s purpose.

Knowing It one is not touched by evil action. This does not mean that a knower of Brahman can do evil and not be touched, for a knower of Brahman has become incapable of evil acts. The upanishad is talking about negative karma from the past. Knowing Brahman puts us beyond karmic reaction. Finally, it means that no one can harm or act evilly

against a Brahmajñani. That is, he cannot be harmed by anyone, though attempts might be made.

Therefore he who knows It as such becomes self-controlled, calm, withdrawn into himself, patient and collected; he sees the Self in his own Self; he sees all as the Self.

He sees the Supreme Self within the core of his own individual, finite Self.

Evil does not overcome him, but he overcomes all evil. Evil does not afflict him, but he consumes all evil. He becomes sinless, taintless, free from doubts and a true Brahmana [knower of Brahman]. This is a result of the transmutation brought about by prolonged yoga practice.

This is the World of Brahman. The world of Brahman is not a place, not a “world” or a level of existence. Rather, it is the eternal state of Brahman, of perfect liberation.^{50“In this state a father is no more a father, a mother is no more a mother, the worlds are no more the worlds, the gods are no more the gods, the Vedas are no more the Vedas. In this state a thief is no more a thief, the killer of a noble brahmin is no more a killer, a chandala is no more a chandala, a paalkasa is no more a paalkasa, a monk is no more a monk, an ascetic is no more an ascetic.}

“This form of his is untouched by good deeds and untouched by evil deeds, for he is then beyond all the woes of his heart.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:3:22)

This needs no comment, just a determined seeking-after.⁵¹) **“Three he designed for himself”—that is to say, the mind, the organ of speech and the vital breath; these he designed for himself. They say: ‘My mind was elsewhere, I did not see it; my mind was elsewhere, I did not hear it.’ It is clear that a man sees with his mind and hears with his mind. Desire, determination, doubt, faith, lack of faith, steadfastness, lack of steadfastness, shame, intelligence and fear—all this is truly the mind.**

Even if one is touched from behind, one knows it through the mind; therefore the mind exists.

“Whatever sound there is, it is just the organ of speech; for it serves to determine a thing, but it cannot itself be revealed.

“The prana, apana, vyana, udana, samana and ana—all these are but the vital breath [prana]. This atma consists of these—the organ of speech, the mind and the vital breath.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1:5:3)

Since the previous verse spoke of the liberated person’s “form,” Shankara has put this next. For just as Prakriti is one with Purusha, so our personal energy systems are always with us—even in liberation. Consequently they can be spoken of as our “Self,” though they are not the atman. This is why the expressions “higher self” and “lower self” have come into common usage. This verse is speaking of the lower self which is the “form” still possessed by the liberated.

This lower self consists of three things: manas (mind—which includes the buddhi), vakya (the faculty of speech, which includes hearing), and prana (life force and breath.) These three remain with us forever, though transmuted into the subtlest possible forms. Therefore to say the mind, the faculty of speech, and the prana are not the Self is incorrect. For they are the Self in the sense of permanent adjuncts of the Self.

Because this is so, authentic yoga makes use of these three. Within the mind the faculty of speech is exercised in the repetition (japa) of Om in conjunction with the flow of the breath. (See *Om Yoga: Its Theory and Practice*.)⁵² **“In what does the sun find its support? The eye. In what does the eye find its support? Colors, for one sees colors with the eye. In what do colors find their support? The heart [hridaya], for one knows colors through the heart. Therefore it is in the heart that colors find their support.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3:9:20)**

By citing the prior upanishad Shankara has shown us that the lesser self consists of mind, speech, and prana-breath. Now by presenting us with

this verse he shows that the faculty, body, or level which embraces the three together, which is the unity of the three, is the “heart,” the hridaya. We see from this verse that the heart is the ultimate sensorium, that which perceives all and also unifies and assimilates them to the atman-self. It is not at all the physical organ that circulates the blood, nor is it the anahata center or “heart chakra.” The hridaya is far, far beyond them. The heart is the core of our experiential existence, the essential faculty of objective awareness blended with the subjective awareness of the pure Self.⁵³) **“When all the desires that dwell in his heart are got rid of, then does the mortal man become immortal and attain Brahman in this very body.**

“Just as the slough of a snake lies, dead and cast away, on an anthill, even so lies this body. Then the Self becomes disembodied and immortal Spirit, the Supreme Life [Prana], Brahman, the Light.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:4:7)

The subject of the heart is being continued. That is where the desires dwell, but when they are expelled from the heart, “then does the mortal man become immortal and attain Brahman in this very body.” Perhaps Jesus had this very verse in mind when he said: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8)

The second part that speaks of the glory to be attained at the dropping of the body is thrilling. It is interesting that in India the birth of a saint or avatar is celebrated, but never the anniversary of his death. Yet here in America Yogananda instituted the celebration of the mahasamadhi (departure) of great masters. In the context of this verse it is perfectly reasonable.⁵⁴) **“That Self, after enjoying himself and roaming in the dream state and merely witnessing the results of good and evil, hastens back in the reverse way to his former condition, the waking state. He remains unaffected by whatever he sees in that state, for this infinite being is unattached” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:3:16)**

This has a twofold meaning. One is that the Self is the witness who “lives” in dream and waking, yet is unaffected and unattached. The

other is a wider meaning, and is speaking of the Self's entry into the Cosmic Dream. There it roams through many dream-incarnations, seeming to undergo so many things as a result of its "karma." But in time through yoga it reverses the process and returns to its eternal "waking state," having ever remained unaffected by whatever it dreamed, for it is forever separate from any "other" and is unattached to any thing or experience.⁵⁵) **"That indeed is his form—free from desires, free from evils, free from fear. This infinite being, when fully embraced by the Supreme Self, knows nothing that is without, nothing that is within.**

"That indeed is his form, in which all his desires are fulfilled, in which all desires become the Self and which is free from desires and devoid of grief." (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:3:21)

Here we see that the term "form" (rupa) when used in regard to the Self, which is essentially formless, means the bhava, the stithi, the state of the Self when resting in its own swarupa. (Please see *A Brief Sanskrit Glossary* for definitions of these important terms.) The Self can have no desire, negativity, or fear. Yet it feels and thinks it does while immersed in samsaric existence. But when it turns back to the Source and is "embraced by the Supreme Self" all such disappear and the duality of inner/outer is no more. There is only THAT in which all desires are fulfilled because they have been transmuted into desire-affinity for Brahman, its ultimate Self. In this way it becomes free from desires and devoid of the pain desires inevitably produce.

The liberated Self is tranquil and joyful—not a negative blank.⁵⁶) **"This [Self] is said to be unmanifested, unthinkable and unchangeable. Therefore, knowing This to be such, you should not grieve." (Bhagavad Gita 2:25)**

The previous verse says at the end that the Self is "devoid of grief." The reason for this is given in this verse from the Gita. There can be no grief or frustration for that which is unmanifest, unthinkable and unchangeable. When we know (not just speculate or believe) that this is

true by having experienced it for ourselves, then we shall never grieve, either.57) **“Unknowable and constant, It should be realized in one form only. The Self is free from taint, beyond the akasha, birthless, infinite and unchanging.”** (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:4:20)

All forms are the forms of Brahman, being Its manifestations. But those forms are evanescent dreams. The necessary realization of Brahman must be in Its eternal form of Pure Consciousness, the Absolute Unity. The same applies to the Self, who takes on many forms in its wanderings in relativity, but is really only pure consciousness, as well. The Self is transcendent, so it is beyond even the subtle Ether.58) **“When there is duality, as it were, then one smells another, one sees another, one hears another, one speaks to another, one thinks of another, one knows another. But when everything has become the Self, then what should one smell and through what, what should one see and through what, what should one hear and through what, what should one speak and through what, what should one think and through what, what should one know and through what? Through what should One know That owing to which all this is known—through what should one know the Knower?”** (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2:4:14)

In ignorance we think there are “others” to perceive, and in realization we see that those “others” are not other—or many—at all, but the One Brahman. So we will continue to perceive the forms or modes, but will know they are no “things” but The One. The triad of seer, seen, and seeing will have become The One as well.

Through what should One know That owing to which all this is known—through what should one know the Knower? Through the Knower alone can It be known. That is why we use the expression “Self-knowledge.” What, then, is the way to know the Knower? Meditation. “This effulgent Self is to be realized within the lotus of the heart by meditation.” (Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.5) “Taking as the bow the great weapon of the Upanishads [Om], one should place in It the arrow sharpened by meditation. Drawing It with a mind engaged in the contemplation of That [Brahman], O beloved, know that Imperishable Brahman as the

target. The Syllable Om is the bow: One's Self, indeed, is the arrow. Brahman is spoken of as the target of that. It is to be hit without making a mistake. Thus one becomes united with it [Brahman] as the arrow becomes one with the target. He in Whom the sky, the earth, and the interspace are woven, as also the mind along with all the pranas, know Him alone as the one Self. Dismiss other utterances. This [Om] is the bridge to immortality. Meditate on Om as the Self. May you be successful in crossing over to the farther shore of darkness." (Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.3-6)⁵⁹) **"As these flowing rivers, bound for the ocean, disappear into the ocean after having reached it, their names and forms being destroyed and are called simply the ocean—even so, these sixteen parts of the seer, whose goal is the Purusha, disappear into the Purusha after having reached Him, their names and forms being destroyed and are called simply the Purusha. He becomes free of parts and immortal."** (Prashna Upanishad 6:5)

When the creation is withdrawn into Brahman at the end of the creation cycle, it ceases to exist as a separate entity and returns to the state of Brahman. Brahman alone remains. When our subtle bodies are withdrawn into our Self at the end of relative manifestation, the same thing occurs. Only when we are free of "parts" will we be truly imperishable and immortal.⁶⁰) **"It is the heart and the mind. It is consciousness, lordship, knowledge, wisdom, retentive power of mind, sense knowledge, steadfastness, thought, thoughtfulness, sorrow, memory, concepts, purpose, life, desire, longing: all these are but various names of Consciousness [Prajna]."** (Aitareya Upanishad 3:1:2)

This is cited to support and explain the preceding statement of the Prashna Upanishad. All that is withdrawn ultimately into Brahman and into the Self are only the One Consciousness that has been (seemingly) existing separately under various names.⁶¹) **"The non-dual and resplendent Lord is hidden in all beings. All-pervading, the inmost Self of all creatures, the impeller to actions, abiding in all things, He is the Witness, the Animator and the Absolute, free from gunas."** (Svetashvatara Upanishad 6:11)

Brahman and the Self are witness, but they are also actor—though only in a dream.^{62“The knowing Self is not born; It does not die. It has not sprung from anything; nothing has sprung from It. Birthless, eternal, everlasting and ancient, It is not killed when the body is killed.” (Katha Upanishad 1:2:18)}

The salient point here is that nothing has really “come from” Brahman or the Self. All projections for the purpose of “creation” are really only concepts—dreams. The dreams are real, but the things in the dreams are not real.⁶³) **“It is through the Atman that one perceives all objects in sleep or in the waking state. Having realized the vast, all-pervading Atman, the calm soul does not grieve.”** (Katha Upanishad 2:1:4)

This simply underscores what was just said in the last section.⁶⁴) **“He is my Self—This one should know.”** (Kaushitaki Brahmana Upanishad 3:8)

This is true knowledge of Brahman—not as an object, but as our inmost reality.⁶⁵) **“The wise man beholds all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings.”** (Isha Upanishad 6)

This is self-explanatory.⁶⁶) **“It moves and moves not; It is far and likewise near. It is inside all this and It is outside all this.”** (Isha Upanishad 5)

No comment needed.⁶⁷) **“He [it is] in whom the universe finds a single place of rest. Having seen that Paramatman, one becomes a true knower of all the worlds and proclaims that Reality as immortal. He knows that all-pervasive One.”** (Mahanarayan Upanishad 1:15)

There is no place of rest but Brahman and the Self—that are really one. Those who know Brahman and the Self know all the worlds that have come forth from Brahman and the bodies (little “worlds”) that have come forth from the Self. Such a one proclaims Reality both in his life and in his words. His authority is his knowledge.⁶⁸) **“All beings are the**

body of One who resides in the hearts of all.” (Apastamba Dharma Sutra 1:8:22)

No mystery here. Brahman is the Self in all bodies, the Self in all selves.⁶⁹) **“All gods verily are the Self.” (Manu Smriti 12:119)**

We have already said a lot about “gods,” including this fact. To really worship gods or God we need to know our Self.⁷⁰) **“The knowers of the Self look with an equal eye on a Brahmana endowed with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a pariah.” (Bhagavad Gita 5:18)**

This is because they see that they are all indwelt by the eternal Self—that is their own Self as well.⁷¹) **“Undivided, yet He exists as if divided in beings; He is to be known as the supporter of beings; He absorbs and He projects also.” (Bhagavad Gita 13:16)**

Brahman is never divided, but he experiences unreal division by his will. He is “supporter of beings” because he is dreaming them, is the basis of their existence. He alternately absorbs and projects them within the cosmic dream.⁷²) **“At the end of many births the wise man comes to Me, realizing that all this is Vasudeva [“He who dwells in all things”]; such a great soul [mahatma] is very hard to find.” (Bhagavad Gita 7:19)**

It is only the ripened soul that at last comes to the realization that all is Brahman, and therefore all is his own inmost Self. Such a one is a “great soul” by reason of his identification with the Supremely Great. They are hard to find since they live quiet and contented while the ignorant run about teaching and “enlightening” others. In India I learned quite early that those who volunteered their “wisdom” were ignoramuses, and that the wise had to be asked persistently to tell me anything worthwhile. Sometime Indian texts liken sages to a honeycomb: you have to keep poking them to get the honey of their knowledge.⁷³) **“When in the waking and dream states there is, as it were, another, then one can see the other, then one can smell the other, then one can speak to the**

other, then one can hear the other, then one can think of the other, then one can touch the other, then one can know the other.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:3:31)

But when awakened we know that the “other” is Brahman, is our Self.⁷⁴ **“By one clod of clay all that is made of clay is known, the modification being only a name, arising from speech, while the truth is that all is clay.” (Chandogya Upanishad 6:1:4)**

When the yogi knows the “clod” that is his individual Self, then he knows all selves and the Self of the selves—Brahman. He knows: “All is Vasudeva” as pointed out a couple of sections ago.⁷⁵ **“For when there is duality, as it were, then one sees another, one smells another, one tastes another, one speaks to another, one hears another, one thinks of another, one touches another, one knows another. But when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should he see and through what, what should he smell and through what, what should he taste and through what, what should he speak and through what, what should he hear and through what, what should he think and through what, what should he touch and through what, what should he know and through what? Through what should one know That Owing to which all this is known?**

“This Self is That which has been described as ‘Not this, not this.’ It is imperceptible, for It is never perceived; undecaying, for It never decays; unattached, for It never attaches Itself; unfettered, for It never feels pain and never suffers injury. Through what should one know the Knower?

“Thus you have the instruction given to you. This much, indeed, is the means to Immortality.

“Having said this, Yajnavalkya renounced home.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:5:15)

This catalog of facts has been cited before from other parts of this same

upanishad. Two points at the end are worth noting. One is the statement that the teaching on the Self is the means to immortality, since it awakens and stimulates the worthy student to pursue knowledge of the non-dual Brahman. The other is the statement that having said all this Yajnavalkya “renounced home.” So will all who truly hear with inner ears the truth and glory of the Self. They will refuse to live anywhere but in the Self. It is not a matter of where or how their body lives.⁷⁶) **“To the seer, all things have verily become the Self: what delusion, what sorrow, can there be for him who beholds that oneness?”** (Isha Upanishad 7)

So it is.⁷⁷) **“In this there is but a single one-pointed determination.”** (Bhagavad Gita 2:41)

In summation Shankara quotes this and the following verse to remind us that mere philosophizing is not what he is doing. We are being advised to be completely practical. The first thing needed is “a single one-pointed determination” to know the Self.⁷⁸) **“When a man completely casts off, O Arjuna, all the desires of the mind and is satisfied in the Self by the Self, then is he said to be one of steady wisdom!”** (Bhagavad Gita 2:55)

The final and most effective steps are two: completely casting off all desires and becoming satisfied in the Self—not through ideas or feelings but by the Self alone, by entering into and regaining the experience and identification of the Self. Then such a one is of permanent wisdom.⁷⁹) **“In the beginning this aggregate of desirable objects was but the Self, one only. He cherished the desire: ‘Let me have a wife, so that I may be born as the child; and let me have wealth, so that I may perform rites.’ This much, indeed, is the range of desire; even if one wishes, one cannot get more than this. Therefore, to this day, a man who is single desires: ‘Let me have a wife, so that I may be born as the child; and let me have wealth, so that I may perform rites.’ So long as he does not obtain each one of these, he thinks he is incomplete.**

“Now, his completeness can also come in this way: The mind is his

Self, speech his wife, the vital breath his child, the eye his human wealth, for he finds it with the eye; the ear his divine wealth, for he hears it with the ear; the body his instrument of rites, for he performs rites through the body.

“So this sacrifice has five factors—the animals have five factors, men have five factors and all this that exists has five factors. He who knows this obtains all this.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1:4:17)

We live in two worlds, inner and outer. The inner is the world of the Self, the outer is the Not-Self. Completion in this latter world avails nothing, but we are swept from life to life and in each one find ourselves incomplete and once again strive for a completeness that by its nature must melt away—if it is ever attained, which in most lives it is not. Finally, weary of seeking the will-o-the-wisp of outer completeness, we turn within and find another path altogether.

The five factors of liberation are common to subhuman as well as human life. These are the primal elements that are reflected in us as five faculties which are also great powers. Those who are moving out from the human level to the divine realm employ Yoga to unite the mind, speech, prana (breath), inner eye, and inner ear through Yoga. In this way the seeker becomes complete, becomes the Self alone.

This is the final counsel of Shankara to us who have followed his course of instruction in the path to enlightenment. Like Krishna (Bhagavad Gita 6:46), his last message to us is: “Therefore become a yogi!”