

THE NATURE OF ĪŚVARA

PART - 1



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THE NATURE OF ĪŚVARA

Does Īśvara exist?

When we step into a hall arranged for a meeting or a discourse, we notice the stage, sign boards giving welcome messages, the seating arrangements for guests and invitees, arrangements on the stage for guests to address the audience. Then a thought arise in our mind that, behind all these, there must be an intelligent person.

When we observe the nature around us, the orderly changes taking place there in, such as sun-rise and sun-set, day and night, the trees sprouting the tender leaves, blossoming of flowers, the occurrence of rainfall according to the changes in the seasons and snow fall, and many other orderly changes, there must be an unseen, invisible principle with extra-ordinary intelligence, which regulates and implements all these meticulously. In our ‘BharatiyaSanaatana Hindu Dharmasamskriti’, we worship this phenomenal power, which regulates, controls and makes the nature to function in an orderly manner at all times and under all circumstances, as Bhagavan, Paramatma or Īśvara or Īśvara. This whole universe is functioning in accordance with the commandments of Īśvara.

Therefore, for believers (theists), it is an established fact, about which there is no room for arguments, that ‘Īśvara exist’. It is a declaration by Upanishads that this whole animate and inanimate universe is the creation of Īśvara.

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति ।

यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।

(Tai.U.Bhriguvali-3.2)

This mantra declares that one should try to know that Īśvara from whom all beings are born, by whom they are sustained and after death into whom they resolve.

जन्माद्यस्य यतः।

(Br. Su.1.1.2)

From which proceed the origin etc. (i.e. sustenance and dissolution) of this world.

Therefore 'Īśvara exist'.

What is the need for creation?

If we have to find an answer to this question, we have to refer to only scriptures.

The Lord resorts to creation (of the universe) to enable the Jivas to experience the fruit of their actions. Without the land or soil, we cannot sow a seed; the seed does not become a tree. In the same way, the collection of good and evil actions of a human being are the cause for the cycle of birth and death.

For each and every one of our actions, there certainly will be a fruit. Good deeds will give a stock of merit called 'Punya', whereas, bad deeds will give a stock of sin, called 'Papa'. Every Jiva has to experience the fruit of actions, which is like a released arrow. It will reach the Jiva even after several births or 'Janmas'. This is brought out by the following sloka:

अवश्यमनुभोक्तव्यं कृतं कर्म शुभाशुभम् ।

नाभुक्तम् क्षीयते कर्म कल्पकोटिशतैरपि ॥

No one can exhaust one's own Karmaphalam without experiencing them in any amount of births.

This is the theory of karma. Due to this only creation is necessary.

In what manner does action (Karma) becomes the cause of rebirth?

Actions are of three types:

1. Sanchita Karma
2. Prarabdha Karma
3. Aagaami Karma

1. Sanchita Karma (accumulated Karma):

Just as we deposit money in a bank little by little, in the same way the good and evil actions done in several births get accumulated, as it were, in the name of Jiva. It is not possible to experience the fruits of all accumulated actions in one birth alone. Therefore, Īśvara gives out the birth as human or lower species and life span in accordance with the past actions. As soon as the destined life span is over, the Jiva, leaves the body and takes another body when a part of sanchita is ready as a Prarabdha to experience the pleasure and pain. In this way, the Jiva revolves in the cycle of birth and death only for exhausting the results of his own past actions.

2. Prarabdha Karma (Released Actions):

Every Jiva experiences the fruits of actions committed in previous births as happiness and sorrow in this present birth.

This is called 'Prarabdha'. So, the Jiva experiences past good actions in the form of pleasure and past evil actions in the form of pain.

3. Aagaami Karma:

Every person who is born, has to perform some action or other. It is impossible to be without action. Every action performed, certainly reaps fruit. The actions already performed by a Jiva in this present birth and yet to be done in the same birth constitute the 'Aagaami karma'. At the end of the life span (that is, after death), the 'Aagaami Karmas' gets merged into Sanchita Karma.

In this manner, the Sanchita Karmas alone are the cause of rebirth of the Jeevas. Good or meritorious karmas or 'Punya Karmas' result in superior birth, i.e, as 'Devatas', implying a life of prosperity and enjoyment of pleasures. Similarly, bad actions or sins result in inferior species such as insects, animals and birds etc.

A mixture of good and evil actions (Punya and Papa) will result as human birth. Only for a human being the Lord has given the facility to willfully do an action and reap it's fruit. It should be understood that other births (other than humans, such as devatas and lower level species) are only for exhausting their punya and papa respectively. They have no opportunity to gain or earn fresh punya / papa in the present birth. This fact is to be borne in one's mind.

Why karma gives fruit only to human beings?

An animal does not possess the attitude of doer-ship; it performs actions as if obeying someone's commands or out of

instinct. An animal does not have the ability to reason or discriminate as to what is the action and why it is done. For this reason, it's actions do not bear any fruit.

For a human being, since he has an attitude of doer-ship ('I am doing'), his actions will give a corresponding fruit; that is actions with good and noble intentions give 'Punya' it as fruit and the actions with bad motives give 'papa' or sin. In this way, the actions performed by the Jiva, will become the cause of experiencing pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow as 'Prarabdha'.

The aforesaid fact has been given in shriti and smriti.

Kathopanishad mentions about re-birth in the following Mantra:

योनिमन्ये प्रपद्यन्ते शरीरत्वाय देहिनः।

स्थाणुमन्येऽनुसंयन्ति यथाकर्म यथाश्रुतम् ॥ (Katha.U.- 2.2.7)

Some Jivas enter the womb for acquiring bodies (and others assume plant-form according to their karma and according their upasana.

The same has been told by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita, 13th. Chapter

पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान्गुणान्।

कारणम् गुणसङ्गोऽस्य सदसद्योनिजन्मसु॥ (B.G.- 13.21)

Purusha, who is none other than Paramathma, being the in-dweller of physical body, enjoys or experiences the objects, which are themselves the product of Prakruti (matter) and having

the nature (characteristics) of the three Gunas (Satva, Rajas and Thamas). This association or attachment with gunas is the determining factor or cause of rebirths in higher and lower species.

पुरुषः सुखदुःखानां भोक्तुत्वे हेतुरुच्यते । (B.G.- 13.20)

The greatness of human birth:

The aim of every Jiva is to attain the 'liberation' (Moksha Purushartha).

But except for human beings, it is impossible for other beings to attain this. The reason is that 'Liberation' is like a sky flower (GaganaKusumam), which is possible only for beings with intellect (reasoning power). The Lord has gifted this facility only to human beings.

Other beings (of lower beings, other than humans) having forgotten the uniqueness, supremacy and importance of this rare gift, which they had in the previous birth as humans, misused that invaluable birth by performing evil actions. In the present birth they are denied this rare gift by the Lord and lead a life only according to their instincts. They ultimately leave the body of lower species (animals, plants or insects) having exhausted the Prarabdha karma (accumulated) or stock of (sin) evil acts.

Therefore with a discriminating intellect, distinguishing between good and bad, by performing all actions, a human being should strive to attain the ultimate goal of life which is Moksha or liberation along with the other goals, that is, Dharma, Artha and Kaama.

The Lord has blessed a human with free-will and freedom to decide what is good for one-self in addition to being endowed with an intellect and lives accordingly. Since, there is a possibility of the freedom being misused, the Lord has given the Vedas and advised the humans to lead a life according to Vedic injunctions; the purpose of these Vedic injunctions is to guide the humans and to protect them along the path to attain the life goals (the Purusharthas).

For example, traffic rules are only for protection of humans and not for animals. Even if a buffalo violates traffic rules, the police will not punish it, as it has no reasoning power. In the same way, the Lord has gifted humans, scriptural injunctions and guiding principles, so that they do not misuse the free-will and freedom. The scriptures guide human beings along the path of up-lift-ment through kind words of counsel, promise of reward and punishment, by laying down prohibited actions, thus controlling him. For a human being leading a life by following the scriptures, is good for his progress.

“Whether using the reasoning and discriminating faculty you will exercise your freedom and freewill and lead a life in accordance with scriptures, or, on the contrary , you will abuse and misuse the freedom and live as per your instincts (to satisfy the sense pleasures); I will leave this to you”, say Lord Krishna. “Having understood the most secret knowledge, you may do as you like”, He says.

इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद्गुह्यतरम् मया ।

विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ॥

(B.G. 18.63)

Therefore the primary responsibility of a human being is to realize his goal in life and to attain Moksha by self-effort.

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।

आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥ (B.G- 6.5)

‘A human being has to uplift himself from this misery, the cycle of birth and death by himself’. Lord Krishna cautions us through this verse that one should not destroy oneself by oneself.

Is self-effort necessary?

However, some people argue that our lives are according to fate and we are merely puppets in the hands of Īśvara.

हरिणापिहरेणापिब्रह्मणापि सुरैरपि।

ललाटलिखितरेखापरिमार्तुनशक्यते॥

Some people are of the view that everything happens in accordance with preordained fate; it is not possible to change it even for Hari (Lord Vishnu) and for Hara (Lord Siva) and by saying this, they degrade their willpower (self-effort) in their spiritual endeavors and let the time to slip by. Scriptures do not accept such people.

Fate is certainly strong. Even then, scriptures emphasize that along with fate, self-effort also is essential. It is for this reason that the Lord has blessed us with discriminative power and free-will.

In case, fate alone is accepted, it results in the following defects:

1. The Lord is a ‘ Samsaari’

(ईश्वरस्य सम्सारित्व दोषः).

If one thinks that I am merely a puppet in the hands of the Lord, then the Lord becomes responsible for all my actions. A puppet has no doer ship. Therefore the Lord becomes the enjoyer or experiencer of the fruit of all my actions. As a result, the Lord becomes ‘samsaari’.

This will result in the Lord being responsible for evil actions done by human beings. But how can the Lord, who is, in fact the giver of fruits of actions, become a ‘samsaari’? This is a contradiction and is the first defect.

2. Jiva is not a ‘samsaari’.

(जीवस्य असम्सारित्व दोषः)

If I, the Jiva, am only an instrument in the hand of the Lord, when I am carrying out my actions, I am neither the doer of the actions nor the experiencer of the result.

So, if I am free from experiences of the fruits of actions in the form of pleasure or pain, then I am not a ‘samsaari’. Whereas, in reality, the Jiva is subject to undergo pleasure and pain. How can such a Jiva be not a ‘Samsaari’? This is the second defect.

3. Does the Lord have partiality?

(ईश्वरस्य वैषम्य दोषः)

We may wonder, if the whole creation is done by the Lord then why some people are enjoying with prosperity and pleasure, while some others are miserable with poverty? In reality, people acquire the fruits of meritorious or evil actions done in previous births in the form of happiness and sorrow only through the Lord who is the dispenser of the fruits of actions. Therefore, if one

accepts fate only, then the Lord seems to be partial. This is the third defect.

4. Is the Lord cruel?

(ईश्वरस्य नैर्घृण्य दोषः).

In this world, while some people are enjoying with happiness, others are suffering due to ill health and misery; ‘is the Lord, who is the father of all, devoid of pity or sympathy?’; such a doubt may arise in us. Then, it becomes meaningless to the Lord to be called as compasante. How can the Lord, who is compasante be cruel? This is the fourth defect.

5. The scriptures are useless

(धर्मशास्त्र वैयर्थ्य दोषः)

If I am just an instrumental in the hands of the Lord, then I need not to follow the rules and regulations prescribed by the scriptures. Then there is no necessity of studying about the Dharma. Then for whose sake Lord has given the Dharma Sastra?

Law and order, courts of justice and the police stations; all become useless. Then where is the place for the maintenance of law and order in the society? This paves the way for the redundancy of the scriptures. Even the Vedas become useless. This is the fifth defect.

6. The Jiva has no desire or delusion

(जीवस्य मोह अभाव दोषः)

If I consider myself as a mere instrument in the hands of the Lord, then I will have no delusion. For example, a car does not have a self-will regarding its destination or the route. Its driver only will have the desire to reach a selected destination or to follow a particular route.

In the same way, if I feel I am only an instrument in the hands of the Lord, then I will have no conflicts with regard to desires. Then, the Lord only will have conflict. But, this is contrary to our experience. Because, desires and conflict due to ignorance do exist in me. If so, how can I not be a ‘samsaari’? This is the sixth defect.

Avoiding the above defects, an individual must accept the need for self-effort towards spiritual progress, in addition to fate.

Our duty is to live surrendering ourselves to the Lord, put in efforts to attain Moksha and ensure that these defects do not arise. This has been explained by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita as follows:

मयैवेते निहताः पूर्वमेव निमित्तमात्रम् भव सव्यसाचिन्॥

(B.G.-11.33)

“Oh Savyasaachi! (Arjuna!), do your duty, carry out your responsibilities. You are only an agent to do your duties”. Thus Lord Krishna advised Arjuna regarding his responsibilities. In fact, this is the counsel of Lord Krishna to the whole humanity.

In what manner did the Īśvara carry out the creation?

A potter makes pots using clay as the material cause (upaadaanakaaranam), himself being the intelligent cause (nimittakaaranam) and using his skill. Without the ‘Intelligent Cause’ (Pot maker) the material Cause (Clay) cannot take the shape of the pot by itself. Similarly, without clay the pot maker cannot create the pot.

‘In the same way, how did the Īśvara create this universe?’; if one asks this, we may reply that he used the five elements. In which case, is it not that these five elements have existed before

the Lord?. They ought to have been created by someone else. If this be true, then there must be a power, which is different and superior to the Īśvara. This (line of argument) will lead to a defect called ‘infinite regression’.

If the Īśvara himself is the power and the cause for creation, then how can any other power or entity exist before him? This goes against the authority of scriptures which assert that the Īśvara is all pervading.

So, the Īśvara has neither a beginning nor an end. The scriptures proclaim that this creation originated from the Īśvara and was carried out by the Īśvara. This creation which originated from the Īśvara is also without a beginning. We cannot determine as to when it started (that is, when was the first creation). Creation is like a wheel. It continuously revolves through a cycle of manifestation to un-manifestation. For the Īśvara, to carry out the creation, there is no need for a separate entity called material cause. The Īśvara carried out the creation, himself being both the material and the intelligent cause. He himself appearing as the universe. This has been explained by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita

बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां विद्धि पार्थ सनातनम्। (B.G-7.10)

“Arjuna! Know that I am the source of all the Jivas that have come into being”.

How is this possible? If we so enquire, the scriptures affirm that it is very much possible. Consider this example: It is common for us to dream while in sleep. If we enquire by whom these dreams are created, we reply that the dreams arose from us only without any effort. Moreover, for creating the dream

objects, what external materials do we use? None. The dream world along with the dream objects are created by me, arises from me and gets resolved into me. I myself am the material cause as well as the intelligent cause for the dream. If this is possible for an ordinary human being, is the creation not possible for the Lord?.

This concept has been explained in the Mundakopanishad as follows:

यथोर्णनाभिः स्रुजते ग्रुहते च । (Mun.U. – 1.1.7)

Just as a spider, using the minute threads made from its own saliva, creates a fine web and again merges the web into itself,

यथा प्रुथिव्यामोषधयः सम्भवन्ति ।

Just as live plant, kingdom originates from an inanimate earth,

यथा सतः पुरुषात्केशलोमानि ।

Just as from a sentient person insentient hair is born,

तथाक्षरात्सम्भवतीह विश्वम् ।

In the same way, this whole universe is created from the Īsvara who Himself is decay-less and free from destruction. Thus, the above mantra, elaborate the close relationship or combination of the Īsvara and creation of the universe.

Manifestation of the Universe

This whole creation is a mixture of lower and higher order

of nature.

Higher order is Brahman or Atma and Lower order is Maaya. The combination of Brahman and Maaya is Ishvara, who is the cause of the universe.

The following verse of Taittiriyaopaniṣad explains how manifestation of the universe happened out of Ishvara.

तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशः संभूतः । आकाशद्वायुः । वयोरग्निः ।
अग्नेरापः । अद्भ्यः पृथिवी । पृथिव्यामोषधयः । ओषधीभ्योऽन्नम् ।
अन्नात्पुरुषः ।

(Tai. U. Brahnavalli -1.2)

From the Īśvara, the five elements came into being in this order: space, air, fire, water and earth; Out of earth, different plants and from different plants, food and from food the whole multitude of living beings were born.

Brahman is the consciousness principle which has no form and has no attributes; Maaya is the (creative) power of Brahman.

Just as our shadow is not separable from us, the creative power called Maaya is also like Brahman's shadow and is not separate from Brahman.

Maaya is a combination of three 'gunaas', namely Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

Īśvara (Nirguna Brahman along with Maya), the Lord creates this Universe. When Brahman gets reflected in Maaya predominant with Sattva guna, He becomes the Īśvara, who is the cause for creation of the universe; when reflected in the prakruti, which is predominant with rajo guna (avidya), He becomes Jiva; in the tamas-dominant prakruti, the same Brahman

manifest as the universe of names and forms.

अस्ति भाति प्रियम् रूपम् नामचेत्यंशपञ्चकम्।
आद्यत्रयम् ब्रह्मरूपम् जगद्रूपम् ततो द्वयम्॥

(DrikDrishya Viveka-20)

Asti (Existence), Bhaati (Consciousness), Priyam (Aananda), names and forms are the five parts of the world. Of these, the first three (Existence, Consciousness and Aananda) are the nature of Brahman. The other two (Names and forms) are the nature of the universe.

Where does the Lord exist?

If the Lord created the whole creation from Himself, (after creation) will He not remain? If He is remaining, where does He exist? Is it Mount Kailas, Vaikunta or the Brindavan on this earth? Where does he stay? Such doubts are common.

In fact, why do we think that the Lord is in some particular place? The reason why such thoughts arise is due to our daily experiences.

For example, when we see a clay pot, we come to the conclusion that the pot maker, who is the intelligent cause for making the pot, exists somewhere. This is because, in the absence of the pot maker, a pot cannot take a shape.

Similarly, when we see a gold ornament, we conclude that a goldsmith exists. This is because without a goldsmith a gold ornament cannot assume a shape of its own. We extend these life experiences when observing and analyzing this creation. We conclude that the Īśvara, who is the intelligent cause for the whole creation must surely be existing in some place, since He

is not visible and perceivable to us. This is the reason, we are anxious to reach Him thinking that He must be either in Mount Kailas, Vaikunta or in the heaven. But, scriptures advise us to analyze this particular aspect.

During sleep, you create and experience a dream world and absorbs the same into you. Don't you exist there?

In the same manner, the Lord, though He created the whole universe from Himself using His creative power called Maaya, does not undergo any change in His nature and continues to exist. This is asserted by the Vedas:

स्वस्वरूपअपरित्यागेनरूपान्तरापत्तिः ।

There is no change of any kind in His nature and appears as many.

When milk gets converted into curds, we do not see milk. Only curd is seen. Milk is Parinami Upaadaana Kaaranam. It changes its nature and acquires a different nature. But Īsvara is not like milk; He is a change-less cause (Vivarta Upaadhaana Kaaranam).

He is the cause that (who) remains without undergoing any changes Himself; this means that He is the material and intelligent cause that does not undergo any subdivision, even though He created the universe from Himself. In the process He does not undergo any change or modification in His nature. That means He is Abhinna Nimitta Upaadaana Kaaranam of universe, which means He is non-different from intelligent and material cause.

In semi darkness, a rope would appear like a snake to us. Even though there is no real change in the nature of the rope.

“My God alone is superior” Is it right ?

We worship the Lord, who is the cause of this Universe, invoking him in the form an idol or a symbol like a saligramam or a shivalingam; we offer our prayers in this way either to seek from him, fulfilment of our desires, or to express our gratitude for what we may have obtained by his grace. That is, we worship the Lord in the form of our favorite or beloved God. This is called ‘devotion of Ishta Devatha (Ekarooपा bhakti).

For instance, we worship Īśvara in different forms: Devi, Shiva, Vishnu. But we keep claiming that “the Īśvara that I worship, that is Rama is superior” or “the Īśvaradess I pray to, that is Devi, is more powerful” and that other deities are inferior or less powerful , in granting one’s wishes. The reason for such a claim is ignorance regarding the nature of the Lord.

It is for this reason that a devotee prays to the Lord in this way:

तवतत्वमनजानामि कीदृशोसिमहेश्वर
यादृशोसिमहादेव तादृशायनमोनमः ।

Oh Īśvara! I neither know Your nature nor your form. In whatever manner You may be, my prostrations to You.

It is true! The form in which I worship, that is Devi form, which is my preferred form, is it the true form of the Īśvara? Other forms like Shiva; are they not the forms of the Lord? In any case, what is the true form of the Lord? What is the relationship between the Lord and me? Where is He located? Shall we reflect upon these?

We can use an item or object only when we have full and complete knowledge about it. Similarly, the rituals that we

perform, worship of the idol or symbol, chanting of prayers or meditation on the form of the Lord will enable us to obtain the full benefit only if we have knowledge about the true nature of the Īśvara. The rituals that we perform to our favorite deity without knowing the Īśvara's nature are required up-to one level of life. This will help in generating and increasing our love for Īśvara and function as an aid to attain purity of mind. We should be able to gradually attain the state of visualising that the favorite deity whom I worship , (EkaRoopa Bhakti) is manifesting in all forms in the creation and is present everywhere (ViswaRoopa Bhakti).

We should mentally grow from Ekarooपा Bhakti to VishwaRoopa Bhakti. This VishwaRoopa Bhakti also called devotion to the multitudes of forms of the Īśvara or Aneka Roopa Bhakti helps in grasping the essential nature of the Īśvara. Whatever may be the innumerable forms of the Īśvara, with whatever form we worship, in reality, there is only one form as the basis behind various forms. That underlying form is the nature of Īśvara. There are distinct divisions among the forms of worship but basically there is no plurality.

We describe pots as big and small and use different names for them based on the shape and colour as well. But the material in all pots is clay only. From the stand point of clay, all earthen wears are the same and one, but from the stand point of names and forms, they are different.

एकं सत् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।

Wise people see every form in the universe as the

manifestation of Īsvara.

The Lord is manifesting in and through trees and shrubs, mountains and mounds, the sun and the moon, the stars, the animal kingdom, the bird's kingdom and not any particular thing in the universe but everything is the Lord only. The greatness and uniqueness of Hindu dharma lies in perceiving Īsvara everywhere and in everything, at all times and places. It reveals the Hindu dharma's broadmindedness, level of knowledge and wisdom of the highest order.

The appreciation of such Vishwaroopa Ishvara is recited in Vishnu Sahasranama dhyana sloka as follows:

भूः पादौ यस्य नाभिविद्यदसुरनिलश्चन्द्रसूर्यौ च नेत्रे
कर्णावाशाः शिरोद्यौर्मुखमपि दहनो यस्य वास्तेय मब्धिः।
अन्तस्थं यस्य विश्वं सुर नर खग गो भोगि गन्धर्वदैत्यैः
चित्रं रंम्यते तं त्रिभुवनवपुषं विष्णुमीशं नमामि॥

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna has said the same;

Oh Arjuna! There is no other cause at all apart from Me .
All this is strung in Me like beads in a string.

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किञ्चिदस्ति धनन्जय ।

मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥ (B.G.-7.7)

When we examine or analyze any purana or itihasa, this alone is evident. The purpose of the Vedas is to make this revelation.

The main aim of the ten manifestations (avataaraas) also is this only.

The Īśvara has emphatically declared that He alone exists in all beings and in all forms through His several manifestations as the Mathsyavathara (fish), Kurmavathara (tortoise), Varahvathara (boar), Narasimhavathara (man-lion), Vamanavathara (divine dwarf), Parasurama, Sri Rama, Balarama and Sri Krishna. Everything in the creation is Īśvara only. This is His assertion.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ (B.G.-4.7)

Oh Arjuna! Wherever there is decline of righteousness and increase of unrighteousness, then indeed, I create Myself.

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥ (B.G.- 4.8)

Lord Krishna says, “For the protection of the righteous people, for destruction of the unrighteous people and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every time” .

Everything is the Īśvara only, all animate and inanimate entities, as well as the infinite deities (about 33 crores of them). This is the reason why our forefathers worshipped everything in nature, considering them as divine manifestations of the Īśvara. This established practice alone we are following.

These forefathers became our guides by establishing the practices of worshipping the sun, moon, Tulasi, peepal tree, cow, sacred fire, water bodies and so on. In this way, worshipping Īśvara in one form (ekarooma bhakti) paves the way for worshipping Him in several forms (Vishwarooma Upaasana).

एकत्वेन पृथक्केन बहुधा विश्वतोमुखम् ॥

(B.G. – 9.15)

Therefore, the whole universe which we perceive is Īśvara only. For a true devotee, every minute particle (atom) is an embodiment of Īśvara only.

ज्ञान यज्ञेन चाप्यन्ये यजन्तो मामुपासते । (B.G. – 9.15)

The implicit aim of devotion is to expand one's mind over a period of time and help in grasping the formless nature of Īśvara.

Other religions which do not recognize this supreme truth and even some born as Hindus describe Hindus as having “innumerable Īśvaras” due to lack of understanding.

We should understand that the cause for such an impression about Hindu religion is their lack of maturity. Therefore, the knowledge about the nature of Īśvara is essential for everyone. The Vedas are helping us to understand the nature of Īśvara.

Lord Yama, in Kathopanishad, asserts that the only path in attaining the knowledge about the nature of Īśvara is systematic study of scriptures under a competent teacher.

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । (Katha.U. 3.14)

Lord Krishna also emphasizes the necessity to study scriptures under a teacher in the Bhagavad Gita.

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन खीदुरीरया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानम् ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः॥ (B.G. – 4.34)

May you gain that (knowledge) by prostration, by service and by proper enquiry. The wise people will impart that knowledge to you.

Attaining the Lord

The ultimate or final stage of devotion is to realize through contemplation based on the teaching of scriptures under a competent teacher that, it is the Lord only who is manifesting in and through the universe in all names and forms.

We reach this stage over a period of time gradually; but, in the beginning we tend to hold the belief that Īśvara, though unseen, exists in some place, either on Mount Kailas or in Vaikunta or in Brindavan on this earth. This type of faith and belief in Īśvara, which one had held sometime earlier paves way to get knowledge about Īśvara's real nature. This firm knowledge of His true nature is not just a belief that Īśvara exists, but it is the supreme reality or Truth. This is supreme devotion of the highest order. This is the ultimate aim of devotion.

Attaining such knowledge about Īśvara's nature is the goal of human life. Īśvara has given the discriminative power to every human being in order to obtain only such knowledge. This is the reason why human birth is highly valuable. Getting such a birth is very rare, as AdiSankara has said in the following sloka:

दुर्लभम् त्रयमेवैतद्वैवानुग्रहहेतुकम्।

मनुष्यत्वम् मुमुक्षुत्वम् महापुरुषसंश्रयः॥

(Vi.Ch.3)

It is very rare to get human birth, intense desire for liberation and close association with the right teacher. These are obtained only by the grace of Īśvara. Realizing this, a man should direct his efforts to get the knowledge about the Īśvara. The difference between human and other beings is further elaborated in this verse:

आहारनिद्राभयमैथुनम्वसामान्यमेतत्पशुभिर्नराणाम्।
बुद्धिर्हितेषाम् अधिकोविशेषः बुद्धिर्विहीनः पशुभिस्समानः॥

Other beings such as animals and birds do not have the discriminative power even to know they are animals and birds. But, a human being has been given this power. Knowing this, instead of only indulging in worldly activities of eating, sleeping, living in constant fear and searching for remedies, one should get the knowledge about Īśvara. If not, the scriptures warn that you are no different from an animal.

Lord Krishna says, “In reality, I am that desire which is not unrighteous in human beings”:

धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ ॥ (B.G. -7.11)

Therefore, one should make life fruitful by attaining self-knowledge through the scriptural study under a competent teacher who is well versed in scriptures and established in the Self.

Lord Krishna says that rarely one gets such teacher.

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः॥ (B.G.-7.19)

In this way, knowing the value of a teacher, gaining knowledge of scriptures from a teacher and gradually proceeding step by step along the five stages of devotion enumerated by Lord Krishna in Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gita, a human being should get the knowledge about Īśvara.

Five Stages of Devotion

1. Devotion with desire (Sakaama Bhakti)
2. Devotion without desire (Nishkaama Bhakti)
3. Devotion characterized by surrender to one particular form (Ekaroopa bhakti)
4. Devotion characterized by appreciating the universe as Īśvara (Vishwaroopa bhakti)
5. Devotion with true knowledge (Jnani Bhakti)

Jnani Bhakti is the final stage of devotion, which is the supreme devotion.

Every individual should try to rise oneself towards Jnani Bhakti.

The greatest devotee among all is the one who worships Me as manifesting in all forms (that is, Vishwaroopa bhakti)

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते।

श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः॥ (B.G.- 12.2)

Lord Krishna said — fixing the mind upon Me with great faith, those ever-steadfast (devotees) who meditate upon Me are considered to be the best yôgis by Me.

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।

सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ॥ (B.G.- 12.3)

सन्नियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः।

ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः॥ (B.G.- 12.4)

Having restrained the sense organs, being even-minded towards all, and being interested in the welfare of all beings, Jnani Bhaktas meditate (does enquiry upon 'Me') upon the imperishable (Brahman) which is indefinable, unmanifest, all-pervading, incomprehensible, immutable, immovable, and eternal. They attain Me alone.

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोऽधिकः।

कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन॥ (B.G- 6.46)

It is My assertion that a Jnana Yogi (one with self-knowledge) is superior to one who performs strict penance or one who has thorough scriptural knowledge, one who performs actions with a motive or desirous of obtaining results. Therefore, Arjuna! May you become a Jnana Yogi.

It is not proper or conducive for a person to look upon devotion as the goal, rather than a means to a goal and remain therein and it should not limit him to the particular practice of devotion alone, but make him grow to the next higher stage of devotion.

So a human being must change from one's animal instincts to human nature. Further he must change from basic human nature to divine nature. Everyone must get the knowledge by which he perceives Īśvara at all times, at all places and in all things and beings. He can preserve this great wisdom by teaching to the deserved people as a dedication to Guru Parampara. Only then his life becomes more meaningful.

It is the duty of every individual to offer, this body, as a flower of knowledge, in return to the Īśvara; since, this body has been gifted to him (by Īśvara's grace) only for attaining Self knowledge.

This is the Supreme Truth, which is revealed by the Vedas. This is the supreme Truth, which is constantly made loud and clear in the teachings of traditional Acharyas from time immemorial. This is the Vedic culture, reflecting the uniqueness and greatness of the Hindu Dharma. Such an ancient culture (Sanatha Dharma) has to be adopted universally and put into practice. This is the direct teaching from the Īśvara and is the nature of Īśvara, it triumphs against all odds and it remains steady for ever.

To conclude,

- ❖ All forms of worship are only for knowledge about the Īśvara.
- ❖ The teachings of traditional teachers are also for understanding the nature of the Īśvara.
- ❖ Human birth is for attaining this sacred knowledge only.
- ❖ It is the duty of each and every one to strive to attain this knowledge

Therefore, Oh Devotee! Direct all your thoughts, words and deeds towards Īśvara.

OM TAT SAT

THE NATURE OF ĪŚVARA

PART - 2

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We worship the invisible, supreme power, which is the cause of the creation of this universe and which operates the universe in a controlled and orderly manner as ‘Bhagawan’ or ‘Īśvara’ the Lord . In our culture, this attitude towards worship is termed as devotion.

In fact, what is the nature of worshipping the Lord? Is it an expression of our gratitude with humility to that Primal Īśvara who created me, the animate and the inanimate and also makes them function? Or, is it an act, with a selfish motive based on the firm belief that Īśvara is capable of fulfilling my desires?

If an analysis is made in this way, it may lead to an understanding that, in one’s devotion there are several gradations.

Our Understanding about Īśvara

When we notice that each and every entity in this creation is functioning in a regulated and controlled manner, it would be clear to us that there exists an omniscient ‘Īśvara’. That ‘Lord’ is the intelligent cause for this creation.

Giving a form (such as an Idol, a statue or a picture), treating the form as a symbol and worshipping the same is termed as ‘Idol worship’. Consequently, the individual’s mental instability will end and facilitates the one pointedness of the mind. Subsequently, the person gradually progresses to worshipping Īśvara as manifest in all forms in the universe, so as to become a worshipper of Universe as Īśvara’s form only (that is, ‘Vishwa Roopa Bhakti’).

द्वैतम् मोहाय बोधात्प्राक् प्राप्ते बोधे मनीषया ।
पूजार्थं कल्पितं द्वैतम् अद्वैतादपि सुन्दरम् ॥

It is acceptable to offer worship to the Lord (Bhagavan) in various forms such as Rama, Krishna, Devi and so on, which may facilitate us to express our gratitude; however, such forms do not completely represent Īśvara. This is told by Lord Krishna in the Bhagvad Gita.

एकत्वेन पृथक्त्वेन बहुधा विश्वतोमुखम् । (B.G. 9.15)

People worship 'Me' as endowed with various forms as a 'Universal person' not realizing 'My' true nature. Not only is 'Īśvara' intelligent cause for the creation but also (having become the material cause) has created the universe as an assemblage of various elements: this is the declaration of the Upanishads.

इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूप ईयते । (Bri. U. 2.5.19)

He(Īśvara) himself is manifesting as this Universe. Not only is He located in Kailas or Vaikunta but is also recognizable as the form of this entire Universe. Therefore In 'Viswa Roopa Bhakti' all aspects of nature, animate and inanimate are nothing but His manifestation only.

As a result of 'Viswa Roopa Bhakti', an individual obtains 'broad mindedness'. Even then this 'Viswa Roopa Bhakti' is not ultimate devotion. Because he has not yet having proper understanding about the true nature of Īśvara. If the entire creation is nothing but Īśvara's manifestation, then, it is likely that aspects in creation such as miseries, diseases, conspiracies, duping and cheating, inequalities, limitations, inhuman and cruel nature could be attributed to Īśvara (as part of His nature). If this be so, how can He, with so many defects, be the 'Overlord'? How can He be worthy of being worshipped? We have an outlook

of gratitude towards Him if everything in life turns out to be smooth and pleasant. On the other hand, when faced with problems (in life), an impression that, “these situations are created by Īśvara alone and so I do not need such a harsh (unkind) Īśvara”, could arise. There is a risk of becoming a ‘non-believer’. To this, the scriptures say: “Even though the entire universe of names and forms that can be perceived (by sense organs, mind or intellect) by you is but His form, in reality, it is not His original nature. This is told by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita in the following verse:

अथवा बहुनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवार्जुन ।
विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकाम्शेन स्थितो जगत् ॥ (B.G.10.42)

Arjuna! Even though, one understands that this whole universe is ‘My’ manifestation, it is only a part of my ‘Power of Maya’ (or Enchanting potency).

So, the Lord implies that one must progress from ‘Eka Roopa Bhakti’ to ‘Viswa Roopa Bhakti’ and then to attain the knowledge about His true nature.

Even though the Lord Himself became this creation, He did not undergo any change . in other words, He became the changeless ‘intelligent cause without undergoing any modification. In association with His ‘enchanting potency – Maya’, which is ‘lower’ nature. He is appearing in the form of Universe.

Lord Krishna has pointed it out in Bhagavad Gita:

भूमि रापोनलो वायुः खं मनोबुद्धि रेव च ।
अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टथा ॥ (B.G. 7:4)

अपरेय मितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।

जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥

(B.G. 7:5)

Earth, water, fire, the air, space (ether), the mind, intellect, ego: these eight categories comprise the lower order of Prakriti (Primordial matter). All these are inert by nature. My higher nature (Existence-consciousness) is the underlying entity which is the support for the universe and enables its functioning.

Only a puremind can understand this. The understanding of the true nature of Īśvara (His formless nature without attributes) is the real devotion. Meditating upon or worshipping Īśvara as a form with attributes is only a means to acquire the necessary qualification to gain (self) knowledge; it is not the ultimate . Gaining the knowledge as about attributes-less nature (of Īśvara) is true devotion.

नहि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।

(B.G. 4.38)

There is nothing more sacred than knowledge. All paths or forms of devotion are like steps leading towards knowledge about formless nature of Īśvara. Without resorting to ‘Karma Yoga’, worship of Īśvara in a form or as a universal person manifest in all forms, it is impossible to gain knowledge about His true nature . Moreover all types of worship remain incomplete if this knowledge about Īśvara’s true nature is not acquired. It is possible to obtain such knowledge only for a person who is having discrimination, detachment, sense control, control over mind and internal faculties as well as endowed with ‘six-fold qualifications’.

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये।

यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः॥

(B.G. 7.3)

In Bhagavad Gita, lord Krishna says that out of thousands of people very few put in effort to know my true nature and among them still fewer are successful in knowing Me.

What is knowledge about formlessness?

Knowledge about ‘formless’ nature of Īśvara implies that there is an understanding that the nature of the Lord, who is the cause of the universe and I the individual self are one and the same.

How is this possible? How can I, the Jivatama, limited by a body, which itself is not permanent, be the same as the Lord, who is the support for the whole universe? If such a question arises, the Vedas say that it is certainly possible.

The forms of Krishna, Rama, Devi,.....are relative.your body also relative(Vyavaharika reality). Names and forms come and go; but your real nature, that is the nature of ‘Atma’ is the Existence, permanent, non-dual”: this is the declaration of scriptures.

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् । (B.G. 2.17)

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः। (B.G. 2.18)

All bodies are perishable. But the individual soul only is bereft of decay, un objectifiable and eternal.

This understanding about the ‘formless’ nature of Īśvara alone is true devotion.

How to understand the higher nature of the Īśvara?

The concluding portion of Vedas called ‘Vedanta’ have ‘Brahma Vidya’ or knowledge about ‘Brahman’ as their subject

matter. This portion is also known as ‘Upanishad’. One can obtain knowledge about the (true) nature of Īśvara by listening to the exposition of a Guru, with devotion and full faith in his words and scriptures, for a length of time; one must learn the Bhagavad Gita, the ‘Upanishads’ and ‘Brahma Sutra’ from a competent teacher, who is not only well versed in Vedic scriptures but is also firmly established in the (Absolute Reality) ‘Brahman’. Even though many people study the texts, in order that their effort should result in understanding of the ultimate truth, Īśvara’s grace is essential. We cannot obtain the blessings of ‘Mother of scriptures’, as long as we do not fully surrender to knowledge giving up our pride. One must approach a teacher with the humble attitude that ‘I do not know anything’.

‘I am your disciple; please protect me (uplift me), who has surrendered to you!’ It was because Arjuna expressed his helplessness and surrendered to Lord Krishna with these words then the Lord let the stream of nectar in the form of Bhagavad Gita flow even though, stationed in the battle field and so became the ‘Universal Teacher’.

The Upanishads explain about the creation, Īśvara as the cause of the universe and about the Jiva. If one gets to know the nature of Jiva, universe and Īśvara, the creator, then one can understand their mutual relationship. The whole universe originated from the Īśvara who is changeless.

Creation = Brahman + Maya
 = Īśvara the cause of universe
 (Brahman with attributes)

Brahman without attributes is the 'Higher Nature'. But the 'Lower Nature' is Maya. Īśvara Himself is appearing and available for cognition in the form of the universe.

The characteristics of Brahman:

It is only the Brahman which is invisible and limitless power behind the order of the universe because of which the universe is functioning in an orderly manner.

बृहत्त्वमत्वात् ब्रह्म

Brahman is infinite nature. Its description is that there is nothing superior or greater than Brahman. This very same Brahman is called 'Atma' at micro level (at the level of individual bodies).

यच्चाप्नोति यदादत्ते । यच्चात्ति विषयानिह ।

यश्चास्य सन्ततोभावः । तस्मादात्मेति कथ्यते ॥

(Katha.U.Bhashyam – Sri Adi Shankara)

That which pervades the universe, that which knows (is aware of) everything and experiences everything, the same is called 'Brahman' at macro level.

The Nature of Brahman:

- 'Brahman' is formless, attributeless, unembodied, unobjectifiable, self-effulgent, thus scriptures define Brahman

अशब्दमस्पर्श मरूपमव्ययम्

तथारसं नित्यमगन्ध वच्चयत् ।

अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परंध्रुवम्

निचाय्य तन्मृत्यु मुखात् प्रमुच्यते ॥

(Katha.U. 3:15)

The same is emphasized by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita:

अव्यक्तोयमयिन्त्योयं अविकार्योयमुच्यते। (B.G.: 2.25)

नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः। (B.G.: 2.24)

Such 'Brahman' who is limitless, activating His Maya power and appears as Īśvara with attributes, whom one worships (in various names and forms) as 'Īśvara' and also as Jiva (embodied soul) and the universe.

The nature of 'Brahman' is mentioned by Taittiriya Upanishad as "satyam (Existence), Jnanam (Consciousness), Anantam (Infinite)".

Satyam is known as Truth, the Ultimate Reality. Here 'Truth' does not mean speaking truth but it is 'absolute truth'.

त्रिकाले अपियत्तिष्ठति तत्सत्यम्

i.e. 'Satyam' is that which exist in three periods of time.

The same is termed as 'Existence'. This is the supreme or ultimate reality or higher order of reality. It is also termed as 'Is-ness'.

In this creation every object reveals itself through its 'Existence'. For example, a flower, book, pen, etc.; for such objects, we say, flower 'is', book 'is', pen 'is'. We cannot speak about any object without saying 'is'. The name of the object may change, as 'flower', 'book' or 'pen, but the 'Existence' which is the 'is-ness' is present always. This is 'Satyam' which is not within the ambit of sense organs.

That which exists at all times has been said to be 'Brahma'. Therefore, this higher order of reality 'Existence' is 'Brahman'. This is pure 'Existence', without any adjuncts.

Brahman is also described as the nature of knowledge.

When we see any object in this world, then a 'thought' about that object arises in the mind and gives the knowledge about that object in the mind.

For example, on seeing a rose flower (an object), a thought about that flower arises in the mind and through that the 'knowledge' of rose flower arises in us. Similarly, when we see a pot, pot knowledge takes place in the mind. Thus when we see an object, which means our thought pervades the object and the knowledge of that object takes place. Objects such as flower, pot, book, pen and so on may change but there is no change in knowledge. Hence, 'knowledge' never changes. This is invariably described as 'Chit' or 'Consciousness' or awareness principle.

That which knows everything has been described as 'Brahman'. Therefore, it is amply clear that 'Consciousness' or 'Knowledge' is 'Brahman'. 'Brahman' is not only 'Existence' and 'Consciousness' principle but is also 'Infinite' – this is the statement of Upanishad.

That which has no limitation is infinite. Brahman, which is of the nature of 'Existence' ('Is-ness') and 'Consciousness' ('Awareness') is infinite.

देशकालवस्तु परिच्छेद शून्यः

Which means, that it has no space limitation, in the sense that it is available here in one place) but not in another location, nor limited by time in the sense that it is available (or exists) at one time but not at some other time, nor limited by an object implying that a situation of its presence in one object and absence

in another object cannot arise – this is the nature of the ‘infinitude’.

The description of the Brahman is also the same.

Brahman is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Infinite; this has been firmly established. This Brahman is ‘ non-dual’, it is ‘One’.

Maya

Undescribable. That which cannot be described.

या मा सा माया

Meaning, that which (in reality) does not exist really, that is ‘Maya’.

Though it does not exist, in reality, it appears to exist.

अघटित घटना पटीयसी माया

That which shows an impossible thing as possible. We cannot emphatically say that it exists nor can deny its existence. Though it does not exist, it appears as though it does exist. But on careful analysis, it is revealed that it has no real existence. This is the greatness of Maya.

Since it is not really true nor is it false, Maya has been termed as ‘Sadasadvilakshanam’ (different from Existence and non-Existence).

For example, in our experience, a rope appears like a snake, mirage gives a (false) impression of water and a sea shell looks like a tiny goblet of silver. But, on enquiry, we come to know that they are all false. That is the power of Maya.

That is why Sankaracharya calls it as that which cannot be defined or described. Maya is like shadow of Brahman.

In Panchadasi, Vidyananda calls Maya as

सच्चिदानन्द ब्रह्म प्रतिबिम्ब समन्विता माया

Nature of Maya

Maya is subject to change, undergoes modification. It is associated with the three attributes, viz., Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. It is insentient or inert in nature.

How can one know the nature of Maya?

The scriptures says “Know (Understand) that whatever is subject to change or can be modified or is manifesting with three natures (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) is ‘Maya’. Attribute-less Brahman alone associate with Maya, assumes the form of ‘Īśvara’, the cause of universe, as also Himself manifests as the Universe itself. He (Brahman) is manifesting in the form of Universe.

Who am I?

If this vast Universe, is Īśvara only and nothing other than Īśvara, then in this creation, Who am I?

What is the relationship between me and the universe? What is the nature of the relationship between me and Īśvara? Where is my position in the creation? Such doubts are possible to arise. Scriptures says,

“Oh, my dear! Since the whole Universe is nothing but Īśvara (as manifest) are you not a part of Him? In that case”,

thinking Īśvara is some where else, worshipping Him with duality, do enquiry for Him.....how far all these are correct?" There is a possibility to this question to arise.

योवेद निहितं गुहायां परमेव्योमन्। (Tai. Upa. Anandavalli 1.1)

अनुष्ठ मात्रः पुरुषः मध्य आत्मनि तिष्ठति। (Kathopanishad. 4.12)

Īśvara is not located elsewhere, at some distant place, but is in me, in my heart. The scriptures says, "Until you realize that Paramatma (Īśvara) and you are non-different but are one and the same, this type of worship of Īśvara as endowed with attributes, religious observances and practices, muttering of prayers (or chanting His divine names), fasting and such restraints are necessary.

To begin with, if you are able to know yourself or in other words, if you are able to acquire the knowledge about 'your' nature, then you will obtain complete (doubtless) knowledge about 'Me', so says the Supreme Lord.

In the Bhagavad Gita, which is the scripture for liberation (Moksha), the essence of all scriptures and the text which imparts regarding the true nature of Īśvara, Lord Krishna has explained (elaborated upon) these aspects. In the initial group of six chapters, about 'Nature of Jiva – the embodied soul' (through analysis of the word 'You'), in the middle group of six chapters, about nature of Īśvara (through analysis of the word 'That') and in the remaining group of six chapters, about the identity (non-difference) of Jiva (the embodied soul) and Īśvara (Brahman without attributes (by analyzing the word 'Are')). This way Acharyas explain Mahavakya.

It is natural that the curiosity 'Who Am I' would arise in us some day or the other. Am 'I' the body made up of five elements or is it something else? If so, what is it? Such contemplation is essential for every individual.

Reducing worldly activities gradually (related to family or society), leading a life to meet the bare essentials, studying systematically under a Guru (spiritual Teacher) for a length of time, an individual should proceed in the 'path way to self knowledge' and at the same time should develop the association with noble people. This is the actual life style to be adopted by a spiritual seeker.

The entire creation of names and forms is nothing but Īśvara (the Creator) and is the combination of Brahman, who is of the nature of Consciousness and Prakriti (primordial matter) or Maya which is insentient (inert).

As I am a part of this creation, 'I' too am a combination of these two (the consciousness principle and matter).

कारणगुणाः कार्ये अनुवर्तन्ते

The nature and characteristics of the cause will be present in the the effect, which is evolved out of the cause. Therefore in 'Me' too, the consciousness principle of the Īśvara, the creator as well as the insentient nature of 'inert matter' will be present in the form of body-mind complex.

I am = OC + RC

Among these Who am 'I'? Am I the Brahman, the pure Consciousness principle or the inert body-mind complex? what is my real nature?

The Upanishads declare that 'I' means 'Consciousness Principle' only. This body, mind, intellect, memory and ego are products of 'Maya' and part of the inert matter. They are always undergoing the change; they are not permanent and are dependent on another entity (consciousness principle) for their existence. How am I? I am short, tall, fat....such attributes belong to the visible (tangible) gross body.

The emotional upheavals are connected with the mind (subtle body). This body is a mixture of gross and subtle bodies. You are not this impermanent, inert body, which is a product of the matter that has three fold nature. You are the 'Consciousness principle'.

In what way is this possible? It is natural for such a doubt to arise in us.

Adi Sankaracharya has said that this fact has to be grasped through scriptural analysis. The understanding that "I am Brahman" takes place.

How can I be of the nature of Brahman?

$I = RC + \text{Gross body} + \text{Subtle body} + \text{Causal body} + \text{Consciousness (Principle)}$

The analysis of five Sheaths:

Our body is structured with five layers named physical sheath, vital (air) sheath, Astral (Mental) sheath, Intellectual sheath and Ananda sheath.

The visible gross body is called the 'Physical Sheath'. That (part of the body) which is born through food (whose very origination depends on food), which grows through (nourishment

obtained from food) and which finally merges into food (as food for other animals or into the basic five elements) is called the physical sheath.

स वा एष पुरुषोन्नमयरसः। (Tai. U. Anandavalli - 2.1)

अन्नं ब्रह्मेतिव्यजानात् । अन्नाद्येव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते ।
अन्नेन जातानि जीवन्ति । अन्नं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्तीति ॥

(Tai. U. Bhriguavalli - 2.1)

The Physical (Sheath)body

The physical body is that which is subject to six modifications (or changes):

जायते अस्ति वर्धते विपरिणमते अपक्षीयते विनश्यति

Before this body was born, it did not exist. Not only that; it does not remain in the form (shape) it has at the time of birth, but keeps growing every second. After some time (a few years), losing its strength it starts to deteriorate (decay). Finally, the (physical) body perishes. This is the nature of the physical body.

In creation, there is a general law that is, the knower (subject) is different from the known (object).

यत् यत् दृश्यम् तत् तत् मिध्य

On the basis of this law, since 'I' am knowing the body and the changes, it is undergoing, 'I' the knower (awarer / subject) am different from the body (object of knowledge) which is known by me.

In other words, 'I' am not the physical (gross) body.

Am 'I' the vital (sheath) body?

There are five different types of vital entities in the body which generate the energy and in turn, make all organs to function; these are 'Prana', 'vyaana', 'Apaana', 'samaana', 'udhaana' and 'This vital sheath' (composed of the five entities) is subtler than the 'physical sheath'. It is not visible for our perception. The vital sheath is the support for the physical sheath. The physical sheath cannot function without the vital sheath. Therefore, the vital sheath is superior to the physical sheath. However, since the vital sheath is also known by 'Me', 'I' am not the vital sheath.

Am 'I' the Mental (Astral sheath) body?

The sheath which functions with the combination of mind and the five sensory organs of perception (of sound, touch, form, taste and smell) is the 'astral sheath'. The mind is described as "Samshayaatmikaa Manaha - संशयात्मिका मनः. The nature of mind is unsteadiness. At one instant it is happy and at another moment it is unhappy; at one instant it is filled with love. whereas at other times, it will be agitating due to a feeling of dislike or hatred. "I am not this mind. The reason is, I am the 'knower' of my mind. Even the thoughts which arise in the mind are known to 'Me'. So, 'I' am not the astral sheath(mental body).

Am 'I' the Intellectual body?

The intellect is described as "Nischayaatmika Buddhi". I come to know even my intellectual faculty. So, I am not the intellect. The vital, astral (mental) and Intellectual bodies put together called as the Subtle body.

That is to say, 'I' am not even the subtle body.

Am 'I' the Anandamaya Kosha (sheath)?

We get happiness and pleasure from many events or objects. But this happiness is not firm; it changes. Happiness is of three types, viz., Happy, Happier and Happiest.

Sankaracharya describes happiness in the following way:

इष्ट दर्शनजं सुखम्

The joy that occurs in the mind on perceiving an object is (Priya) "Happy".

इष्ट ग्रहणजं सुखम्

'Happier (Moda)' is the feeling of happiness that arises (in the mind) on acquiring the object for which one has a liking.

इष्ट अनुभवजं सुखम्

'Happiest (Pramoda)' means joyful feeling which occurs on experiencing the object of desire. Hence, happiness is not firm or steady. There is a gradation among these three. One is superior to the other respectively. I am getting to know such a happiness also. So, the 'I' who am experiencing (is aware of) the happiness am different from the emotion of happiness, pleasure. Therefore, I am not the Anandamaya kosha also. This kosha is nothing but 'Causal body' and so, 'I' am not the 'Causal body'. It becomes clear that 'I' am not any one of the physical, vital, mental, intellectual or Anandamaya kosha. 'I' am beyond the five koshas, by this methodology of discrimination from the five koshas.

It is established that 'I' am neither the gross body (physical body) nor the subtle body (a combination of vital, mental and

intellectual sheaths), nor the causal body (the Anandamaya kosha). Therefore, I am apart from these three bodies distinct from and different from the three bodies.

The technique of differentiation from the three states of experience:

We have three types of states (fields of experience), namely waking ('Jaagradavastha'), dream ('swapna avastha') and deep sleep state ('sushupti avastha')

Waking State ('Jaagradavastha')

श्रोत्रादिज्ञानेन्द्रियैः शब्दादि विषयैश्च ज्ञायते इति यत् सा जाग्रदवस्था
(*Tattva Bodha*)

That state in which we obtain knowledge through organs of perception and the sense objects is the Waking State ('Jaagradavastha')

In waking state, 'I' am existing; that is known to 'Me'. Without any external evidence I know that 'I am'. I am aware of myself by myself. This, in the words of scriptures is termed as, 'self evident'. ('Swaprakasha').

अप्रमेया स्वप्रकाशा मनोवाचाम गोचरा

This is the supreme implied meaning that 'Brahman' is self evident, when one glorifies 'Jagan Matha' while chanting 'Lalitha Sahasranama'.

Not only that I am evident to Myself and also everything in the creation is evident to 'Me'. Apart from my body, mind and intellect, the external universe the objects and persons all such entities are known to 'Me'. I the subject who is the

knower of all the objects is different from them. According to this principle, I am the awarer of the waking world objects. So I am different from the waking state.

Even though this universe is changing every moment, 'I', the one who knows these changes, do not change at all.

The Dream State ('Swapnavastha')

जाग्रदवस्थायां यद्दृष्टं यच्चतुं तज्जनितवासनया । निद्रासमये यः प्रपञ्चः
प्रतीयते सा स्वप्नावस्था ॥ *(Tattva Bodha)*

The dream state is nothing but the activity of the mind in picturisation of things that one saw or experienced during the waking state.

When one analyses a dream , in the dream 'I' exist as the dreamer. I am knowing the dream itself, the dream objects and the dream experiences. The dream is known by me . Therefore, I am not the dream . In the dream state there is no waking state. However, 'I' exist in both these states. I alone am there experiencing the dream in dream state, and experiencing the waking world in waking state. There is no change in 'Me' the experiencer of both; only the states are changing.

Deep Sleep State (Sushuptyavastha)

अहं किमपि न जानामि सुखेन मया । निद्रा अनुभूयत इति
सुषुप्त्यवस्था ॥ *(Tattva Bodha)*

Deep sleep state (Sushupti) is that in which 'I' am not aware of anything.

I the observer of waking state and dream state alone continue as the witness of the sleeping state also. But, in that

sleep state, nothing is known to me. My body, mind , intellect: none of these are known to me . But after waking up I recall the fact that ‘nothing is known to me’.

अहं सुखम् अस्वाप्सं न किञ्चिदवेदिषम् (Tatva Bodha)

So say the scriptures. “I slept well. I did not know anything”. That means that I observe the deep sleep state too as a witness. I, the knower, am different from the deep sleep that is known by me.

While awake, there is neither dream nor deep sleep. In the same way, in dream, the other two, namely waking and deep sleep are not there. That is, in one state, another state does not exist. They (the states) are limited.

But ‘I’ am present in all the three states. I exist as distinct from them as a witness who is the knower of them. These three states are only the nature of the three bodies but not of ‘Me’. Waking, dream and sleep are being known by me. Therefore, it is clear that these three states are for gross, subtle and causal bodies and not for ‘Me’, who is the witnessor of them.

‘I am the witnesser of three states’

The Shruti (Vedas) emphatically declare that Brahman is one which knows everything. Because it is ‘I’ alone who at all times , being in all the states, am knowing everything. ‘I’ am the nature of Brahman.

अहं ब्रह्मास्मि

Depending on the passage of time, although changes take place in the body, there is no change what so ever in Me at any instant. ‘I’ exist in the past, presnt as well as in the future. So,

‘I’ am of the nature of ‘Existence’ principle. As ‘Existence’, ‘I’ am in all three periods of time. ‘Existence’ is my real nature. This has been stated by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita:

देहिनोस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिः धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥ (B. G.2:13)

I alone exist in childhood, adulthood and in old age.

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णानि
अन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥ (B. G.2:22)

Just as a person (human) discards worn out garments and wears a new dress, in the like manner, Jeevaatma drops a physical body and acquires (takes up as a dwelling) another body.

‘I’ know (am aware of) this objective universe, my body, the modifications (changes) in that body and everything as well as all the three states.

So, ‘I’ am of the nature of ‘consciousness’ principle. My nature is ‘consciousness’.

Brahman is limitless (all pervading) has no limitation of space, time or object.

How can ‘I’ be of the nature of Ananda?

I desire pleasure and happiness from every object in the universe and every experience. As long as they generate happiness for ‘me’, ‘I’ like them. The moment I am not getting happiness, ‘I’ turn away from them. This subtle idea has been

stated by Yagnyavalkya in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad in the following mantra:

आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति।

(Bri. U. Maitreyi Brahmanam Mantra 5)

Therefore every object and every person who gives me happiness, becomes an object of love for me.

For example, a husband feels, “I love my wife”. The reason is that his wife gives happiness to him.

Suppose if we say “ I love my house “; why? Because ‘I get comfort and pleasure from my house. It is an object of love for me.

Since my real nature is ‘ananda’, ‘I’ love every object and every person for my happiness.

Brahman is of the nature ‘Existence’, Consciousness ‘Ananda’. ‘I am Brahman’: this is the declaration of Vedas. Therefore I am not the physical,subtle and causal bodies made out of three gunas of Maya.Because of the veiling power of Maya,the individual’s intellect gets deluded,so that one is not able to understand this truth. This alone has been said by Lord Krishna in the following verse, in seventh chapter of Bhagavad Gita :

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।

मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥

(B.G. 7:14)

‘My’ Maya endowed with three gunas is difficult to cross over. However, one who always remembers Me , can overcome Maya.

But, until a traditional vedantic teacher imparts knowledge to us, we will not be able to know that 'I' am of the nature of 'Atma'. Therefore 'Guru' is very essential in everyone's life.

I, the Brahman, the absolute Reality alone is giving existence to the Īśvara, the relative reality, who is the creator of universe. I alone am appearing in the form of creation. All names and forms are experientially real but not factually.

Except a human being, no other being can attain the knowledge that 'I', of the nature of 'Existence', 'Consciousness'. A flower cannot admire its own beauty. It cannot even declare that it is a flower. Someone else only can appreciate its beauty. A flower, a desk, a book, a pen... such objects cannot know their 'Existence'. Although these objects have both 'Existence' and 'Consciousness' principle within them, they are unable to know their nature. They do not have a subtle body. For this reason they are called 'Inanimate'. In the same way although both 'Existence' and 'Consciousness' principle are present in animals and birds, since their intellect is not fully developed, they are not able to declare 'we are such and such'. The Īśvara has gifted only a human being with an intellect by which, he can know himself.

It is only Īśvara, who is none other than Brahman associated with Maya, who pervades the entire universe, that is present in this body with the name as 'Jivatma', with the adjunct of ignorance. So the 'Jivatma' of micro level is same as 'Paramatma' at the macro level. Every human being must make the human birth, fruitful by obtaining the knowledge of identity that the 'Jivatama' at micro level and 'Paramatma' at macro level are one and the same.

But here, a doubt may arise in us. The same scriptures, which stated that the process of creation was implemented by Īśvara to facilitate the individual Jivas to experience fruits of past deeds, teaches us that ultimately, what really ‘is’, is only Brahman without attributes. “This universe of names and forms is false; it is due to ignorance that one considers it as real.”: so says the scripture clearly. Why such a contradictory statement about the universe? We will get such a doubt.

To impart knowledge, the scripture adopts some unique methodology. Explaining what is known, what is very familiar to us and then proceeding systematically towards the unknown: this is one method – technically termed as ‘thatastha Lakshanam’.

‘Existence, Consciousness, Infinite’ is the nature of Brahman. But there will be very few persons who are eligible to understand this. The scripture adopts the technique of ‘thatastha Lakshanam’ for mediocre seekers.

As the universe with its names and forms (Brahman with attributes or in other words Īśvara) which is well known to all of us, is very close to Brahman, (in the beginning) scripture describes about the universe and about Īśvara, the creator of the universe. Once the universe is understood, the (knowledge about) the real nature of ‘You’, who are a part of the universe, is also known.

In order to convey, the (subtle) information to us, who are under the (false) impression and think ‘I’ am a Jiva, ‘I’ have birth and death, the vedas temporarily without contradicting our understanding about the world, come down by a step to our level

of thinking and accepts the names and forms of the universe, though they are unreal.

जन्माद्यस्य यतः ।

(B. Su.2)

After stating that the entity from which this universe of names and forms emerges out is 'Īśvara', the creator and subsequently describing the nature of Jiva, Īśvara and universe, the vedas systematically lead us on to the nature of Absolute Reality, that is Brahman, which is not cognizable and cannot be reached by any sense organ nor can be comprehended by mind or intellect and which is the (support) substratum for all. Temporarily, the scriptures superimpose the universe of names and forms on Brahman. This is termed as 'Superimposition' (Adhyaropa).

My Dear! You attain birth in accordance with the type of acts you perform. The performance of evil acts takes you to the lower lokas, inferior birth and misery, whereas, noble acts result in reaching higher lokas, getting superior birth and happiness.

Therefore, the first part of Vedas, called the 'Karma Kanda' (the part dealing with vedic rituals and their practices) regulates the (course of life of a) human being through commands and injunctions and encourages one to undertake noble acts . It also counsels one to avoid prohibited acts. It tells us to follow 'Karma Yoga' called 'Pancha Maha Yajna'. It systematically uplifts us from devotion to a single form to devotion to 'universal names and forms' based on the firm belief that all names and forms of the universe are Īśvara only.

It leads such a person, who in this manner has got single pointed focus of the mind and broad minded view towards the

latter part of vedas also known as; ‘Vedanta’ or ‘Upanishads’. After explaining the nature of Jiva (embodied soul), Īśvara and the universe, it ultimately establishes that, what really exists is Brahman only which has no form and is devoid of attributes, thus revealing the ultimate Truth.

The following verse of Chandogya Upanishad says:

सदेव सोम्य इदमग्र आसीत् एकमेवाद्वितीयम् । (Cha. U. 6.2.1)

Prior to creation, what existed was non-dual Brahman only. That attribute-less Brahman visualised that He should change into several entities; the very next moment, ‘He’ became the Īśvara, by associating with His Maya. This ‘Īśvara’ became both the ‘change-less intelligent cause as well as material cause and manifested in manifold way as living and non-living entities. He himself ‘entered’ into names and forms: it is stated in the following verse:

सोकामयत । बहुस्यां प्रजायेयेति । सतपोतप्यत । स तपस्तप्त्वा ।
इदग्ं सर्वमसृजत । यदिदं किंच । तत्सृष्ट्वा तदेवानु प्राविशत् ॥

(Tai. U. Anandavalli 6.3)

“The Īśvara, who is the creator, Himself entered in the creation” means that the attribute-less Brahman who is omnipresent is present in all names and forms (entire universe) as ‘Existence, Consciousness, Infinite’ principle and not perceivable though omnipresent.

The following verse states that Brahman alone is present not only in living (animate) beings and also in non-living (inanimate) objects.

तदनुप्रविश्य । सच्चत्यच्चा भवत् । निरुक्तंचानिरुक्तं च । निलयनं
चानिलयनं च । विज्ञानं चाविज्ञानं च । सत्यं चानृतं च सत्यमभवत् । यदिदं
किंच । तत्सत्यमित्याचक्षते । तदप्येष श्लोको भवति ।

(*Tai. U. Anandavalli 6.3*)

The non-dual Brahman, which has no attributes, using His Maya, is prevalent far and wide (omnipresent) right from Brahma (four headed deity) to a minute ‘ant’ with various names and forms; apart from this, there is no such fresh action as ‘creating’ something new . This is a subtle aspect to be noted.

‘Creation’ is nothing but the manifestation of Īśvara.

‘Universal Dissolution’ is destruction of names and forms and adopting un-manifest state.

The association of gross and subtle bodies is called as ‘birth’ and their dissociation is called as ‘death’.

This is what has been explained in Tatva Bodha in this verse:

अविद्योपाधिः सन् आत्मा जीवः इत्युच्यते । मायोपाधिः सन् आत्मा
ईश्वरः इत्युच्यते ॥

(*Tatva Bodha*)

This self- same Brahman which is without attributes, when reflected (lending its consciousness, thereby enlivening) in the part of Nature / Matter (Maya) which is predominantly ‘Sattvik’ (of the nature of knowledge) manifests as Īśvara, when reflected in that part of nature predominantly of the nature of ‘Rajas’, otherwise identified as ‘Ignorance’ (causal body), manifests as Jiva; when reflected in predominantly insentient (dull) part of ‘Maya’, Brahman manifests as universe.

However because of the veiling power Maya, the individual identifies himself with the body-mind complex, birth and death and experience pleasure and pain. The scriptures reveals Brahman alone is the Reality of this Universe and negates the jiva and Īśvara as mere names and forms at micro and macro level.

Lord Krishna declares in chapter 15 of Bhagavad Gita in the following way:

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्येत्युदाहृतः।

यो लोकत्रय माविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः॥ (B.G.15:17)

“Oh Arjuna! ‘I’ am not neither this perishable Universe (Ksharapurusha) nor imperishable Maya(Aksharapurusha) but different from the cause and effect(Uttama purusha).

By the process of ‘Bhaga Tyaga Lakshana’ – an analytical process by which one rejects the redundant part and includes the relevant part of a statement – it is proved that , by discarding the attributes which are temporary, the individual self at micro-level and the ‘Supreme self’ (Brahman) are essentially one and the same.

The Conviction about the false nature of Universe

Through the reasoning and our own experience, it is clear that ‘I’ am not this visible gross body as well as the (intangible inner faculties) mind, intellect and ego but ‘I’ am the witness consciousness entity which is different from them. “Even then, in what manner can this universe of names and forms, which is perceptible to my sense organs and is being experienced, be ‘false’? how is it possible such a doubt arises in our mind.

We must have the firm conviction born out of self-knowledge that, when the I- thought arises in the mind, ‘I’ do

not refer to the gross, subtle or causal bodies, but to the ‘Supreme Consciousness’ which is substratum and separate from them.

“Even the universe of names and forms is, like a dream, false”; so declares Goudapadacharya in his commentary on Maandukya Upanishad.

Dream is real for the Dreamer at the time of Dream. The dream arises from ‘me’, sustains because of ‘me’ and resolves into ‘me’.

Similarly this experience of the world also is not real because it belongs to the lesser order of reality.

How is it possible?

There is no substance called ‘pot’ even though we are seeing the ‘pot’. In real sense, clay alone is appearing in the form of ‘pot’. In order to carry out the transactions, we are naming the clay as ‘pot’.

वाचारंभणं विकारो नामधेयं मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्यम्। (*Cha. U. 6.1.4*)

So, pot is merely a name which is playing on our lips. What exists is only clay. There is (in reality) neither a form called ‘pot’ nor a name called ‘pot’. This applies to each and every name and form in the creation. It is only for enabling transactions that names and forms have been given to attribute-less Brahman. This is only a relative order of reality. But not the absolute Truth. It is possible to say this waking world is not real, only when we understand our true nature.

The Upanishads declare that just as one can say that a dream is false and is not true only after waking up, so also, only a ‘wise’ person who has doubtless knowledge about his true nature, will know that this universe of names and forms also is false not real.

Therefore there is no real 'creation'. We perceive the attribute-less Brahman, which is omnipresent, as having different names and forms, due to our ignorance. A wise person who knows this, even though he always remain in the universe and is transacting in it, does not give reality to it and realizing that all these transactions are for this individual body only and not for 'Me', who is of the nature of 'Atma' ('Brahman') and consequently remains like a drop of water on a lotus leaf, observing the transactions like a witnesser, without attachment and worry.

अहं वृक्षस्य रेखिवा । कीर्तिः प्रुष्टं गिरेखि । ऊर्ध्वपखित्रो
वाखिनीवख्वमुतमख्खि । द्रखिणगं सुवख्चख्खम् । सुमेथा अमृतोख्खितः । इति
त्रिशङ्कोर्वेदानु वख्चनम् ॥

(*Tai. U. Shikshavalli 5-10*)

Therefore, in order to obtain such supreme Ananda, a spiritual seeker must get the firm knowledge that this body and the (universe of) names and forms are false and not true. So long as this firm knowledge does not arise, to such an ignorant person, this 'Waking world' of names and forms always appears to be 'True'.

That is why Yama Dharma Raja exhorts Nachiketetus in Kathopanishad thus:

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्यवख्खान्निबोधत ।

(*Katha.U.1.3.15*)

He (Yama Dharma Raja) is counselling Nachiketetus to 'wake up' to the reality of the true nature of self by learning the scriptures under a competent teacher.

Just as a dream originates from 'Me' (the waker), remains in 'Me' and again merges into 'Me', in the same way, the 'wakingworld of names and forms which one experiences

through the mind and sense organs arise from ‘Me’, the ‘Absolute Reality’, is supported and sustained by ‘Me’ and is resolved into ‘Me’.

मय्येव सकलं जातं मइ सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।

मइ सर्वं लयं याति तद्ब्रह्माद्वयमस्म्यहम् ॥ (Kai. U. 19)

‘I’ alone am manifesting as the universe of names and forms. The names and forms are not real. ‘I’ (the Brahman) alone am the Truth. This is conveyed by Lord Krishna in Chapter 2 of the Bhagavad Gita:

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत ।

अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥ (B.G. 2.28)

Therefore a spiritual seeker starting with the worship of the Lord as endowed with attributes, (in the course of time) acquiring the four fold qualification (Discrimination, Dispassion, Detachment, Discipline and intense desire for self knowledge) obtains the eligibility to receive self knowledge. Subsequently, such a qualified seeker acquires the knowledge of the nature of Īśvara, by systematic study of scriptures under a competent teacher for a length of time, reflecting on that teaching (Mananam) and Nididhyasanam. In other words, the seeker must understand that ‘I’ the ‘Jivatama’ am non different from the ‘Paramatma’ “ This only is the (purpose) aim of human birth, the ultimate goal”: thus proclaim the Upanishad from time immemorial.

The attainment of ‘ Self Knowledge’ or ‘liberation (Jeevanmukti)’ (called Moksha) is the purpose of human birth.

Then only is the human birth becomes meaningful.

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्य जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः ।

त्यजेदज्ञान निर्माल्यं सोहं भावेन पूजयेत् ॥

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