

Advaita Vedanta – A Bird's Eye View

Philosophy of Advaita Vedanta

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Section 1 - Preparatory Spiritual Practices

1. The Karma kanda practices (*saadhanas*) are a prelude to the pursuit of jnana kanda. The human tendency to seek happiness in material acquisitions and achievements and the dawning of the wisdom that one must find happiness within oneself by recognizing one's true nature as the infinite Brahman are brought out in *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, *Mundaka Upanishad* and *Katopanishad*. *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iv.22 – “ The Braahmana, seeking to know It (Brahman) (purify their minds) through the chanting of Vedas, (and, later), performance of sacrifices and duties (of the chosen avocation), and charity, (leading) an austere and dispassionate life and thereby developing a desire to know Brahman, become sages and (thereafter,) renouncing worldly life altogether, become monks (*sanyasis*) (to engage in enquiry into the Self – *atma vicaara*).” *Mundaka Upanishad* I.ii.12 – “ Having understood by experience and inference the troubles and impermanence of worldly life and impermanence of the effects of all karma and thus developing dispassion towards the worldly life, desiring to know the eternal Reality, to pursue enquiry into atma (Brahman), a Braahmana should take to renunciation (*sanyaasa*) and go with sacrificial faggot in hand (symbolic of respect , faith and devotion) to a traditional teacher who is well versed in the Vedas and is abiding in Brahman (*“stotriya brahmanishtha”*) . (“The word, ”Braahmana” in these Upanishads refers, not to Braahmana by birth but to the seeker engaged in the practice of karma yoga, as a preparatory step to the pursuit of jnana yoga and to the seeker engaged in jnana yoga.) *Jabala Upanishad* IV.1 (Janaka is the student, Yajnavalkya is the teacher) – “ After completing the period of disciplined studentship (*brahmacarya*) one may become a householder (*grahastha*). After being a householder one may become a forest-dweller (*vanaprastha*). Having become a *vanaprastha* one may renounce the world (and thus become a *sanyasi*).

Or, alternatively, one may embrace sanyasa from brahmacarya itself or from the stage of a householder....(it can also be that) a person may renounce worldly life that very day on which distaste for it dawns on him.....” Kathopanishad Mantra II.i.1 & 2 - “The self-evident Lord has endowed the mind and the sense organs with outward-going capacity. Therefore people tend to perceive only external objects and not the atma within. But a rare wise man, seeking liberation from births and deaths and turning the vision inwards sees (i.e. after study, recognises) the pratyagatma (the Brahma caitanyam available in the individual).” “The foolish ones wallow in external objects and are caught in the bondage of mortality (i.e., the cycle of birth and death and suffering and sorrow). Whereas the wise ones, with discrimination, having learnt that the goal is immortality (i.e. liberation from the cycle of births and deaths) give up the desire for the impermanent objects of the perceived world.”

2. This does not mean that one should give up one’s occupation or cease to earn. On the other hand, except in respect of persons who have renounced the worldly life, family and possessions and have formally adopted a life style devoted exclusively to Jnana Yoga, called, *vividisha sannyasa*, Sastra enjoins on all such persons the duty of fulfilling the obligations pertaining to one’s station in life – obligations not only to one’s own family, but to society, ancestors, teachers, mankind as a whole, and environment (plant and animal kingdom and the insentient objects of the world) so as to contribute to ecological and cosmic harmony (*panca-mahaa-yagna*) as well as the obligation to oneself to obtain facilities for one’s own spiritual progress. For a spiritually inclined person, even while continuing to live a worldly life, there should be no omission of duties and obligations covered by panca maha yajna or deviation from righteousness or deviation from satyam (truthfulness), ahimsa (non-violence (exceptions will be for the defense of the nation, et.) If there is surplus wealth, it should be devoted to the welfare of the needy. This is generally referred to a life of adherence to *dharma*. Kathopanishad I.ii.24 emphasizes that, unless one desists from bad

conduct and keeps his senses under control and mind concentrated and free from anxiety, he cannot attain Brahman by gaining knowledge of identification with Brahman (*na aviratah duscaritaat na asaantah na asamaahitah na asaantamanasah va api prajnaanena enam aapnuyaat*).

3. The qualification to be acquired for studying Jnana kanda is called “*sadhana catushtayam*” – which consists of (a) discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral (*atma anaatma viveka*), (b) absence of desire for the enjoyment of the (fruits of one’s actions) in this world, as also in the other world; in other words, non-attachment to enjoyment of objects both here and hereafter (*vairagya*) (c) six –fold discipline (*shadka sampatti*) consisting of (i) control of or mastery over the mind (*sama*), control of the external sense organs (*dama*), (iii) strict adherence to one’s duties and obligations, called dharma (*uparati*), endurance of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, tolerance of all discomfort (*titiksha*), (iv) faith in sastra and *guru* (teacher) (*sraddha*), and of mind – *citta-aikaagrataa* and calmness of mind (*citta naischalyam*) (called *samadhanam* and (d) intense yearning for liberation for liberation (*mumukshutvam*) . The means for acquiring this sampatti consists of karma yoga and upasana. Though the chances of benefiting from the pursuit of jnana kanda are greater, if one takes to that pursuit after acquiring *sadhana catushtaya sampatti*, one who has not yet acquired it is not precluded from pursuit of jnana kanda for lack of it. One can practice the elements of *sadhana catushtaya samaptti* and the pursuit of jnana kanda simultaneously.

The components of *sadhana catushtaya samaptti* are mentioned in Brahadaranyaka (kanva sakha) IV.iv.23 as the features of a jnani, which are the same as qualifications of an aspirant) and what is not mentioned there, viz., *sraddha*, is mentioned in the madhyantina sakha.

Section 2 - Enquiry Into One’s Real Nature

Introduction

The core of the teaching in Advaita Vedanta is the identity of Jivatma and Paramatma. For knowledge of Paramatma, we have to rely entirely on Sastra. But the real nature of Jivatma, that is, our own real nature, can be known by inward enquiry. It is called *tvampada-vicaara*. There are variations of tvampada-vicara. These are *drgdrsyaviveka*, *pancakosaviveka*, *avasthaatrayavivieka* and analysis of stages of life. Jivatma is a mixture of pratyagatma, the sukshma sarira and sthoola sarira. When the unenlightened man refers to himself as “I”, he is referring to the sthoola-sukshma-sarira complex (what we generally refer to as the body-mind-complex). He is not aware of the pratyagatma, which is the same as Brahman, the pure, infinite consciousness. The identification with Brahman which Sastra shows as the only means of liberation from samsara is not possible unless we recognize pratyagatma as our real nature, and learning from Sastra that pratyagatma is not different from Brahma caitanyam, identify oneself with Brahman.. We have no preconceived notion about Brahman; so, we readily accept what sastra says about Brahman. But about ourselves, in successive janmas, we have been regarding ourselves as the limited personalities based on the body mind complex and so, when Sastra tells us that we are the pure consciousness identical with the infinite Brahman, we do not readily accept it. That is why enquiry into one’s own real nature (*tvam-pada-vicaara*) is more important than enquiry into the nature of Brahman (*tat--pada-vicaara*).

Subsection1 : Drgdsyaviveka

(The term, “drgdrsyaviveka” refers to the general thesis that whatever is known is *anaatma* (not-atma) and that the ultimate seer is atma. Here we are applying it to atma as the witness of the mind itself. We do not find

many passages in the Upanishads on this subject. Two prakarana granthas have been cited in this section).

Brhadaranyaka III.4.2 talks of atma as the Seer of the Seer, Hearer of the hearer, Thinker of the thinker, Knower of the knower. Kenopanishad talks of Brahman being known with each cognition, i.e., as Sankaracarya explains, as the witness of cognitions. Part I of Sankaracarya's Atmajnanopadesavidhih is a step by step presentation of drgdrsyaviveka as applied to atma as the witness of the mind. Verse 2 – "That the seen is different from the seer, the atma, is well known to all. Now, the question is asked, 'what the atma is?'" . Verses 3 to 6 establish that the body is not atma, since the body is perceived as 'this' (i.e., as an object) and also because when consciousness leaves the body, the body becomes inert like wood et, when fire leave them. Verses 7,8 and 9 exclude the sense organs because they are merely instruments of perception. Verses 10 and 11 say that the mind and the intellect are not atma because they are objects of Consciousness and are also instruments of perception. Verses 22 to 24 say that the ego (*ahamatha*) is not the atma, either, because it is also an object of perception, like jars and other things, is absent in sushupti and is endowed with various qualities like pain, pleasure and so on and possesses mundane qualities (such as aversion, desire etc.). Part II verse 1 – "What, then is the atma? It is distinct from all the things mentioned before and is the innermost, all-pervading like space, subtle, eternal, without any parts, without attributes, unblemished, having no activities like going and coming, devoid of the ideas of 'me' and 'mine' and also devoid of desire, aversion and effort, self-effulgent by nature, like the heat of the fire or like the light of the sun, having no connection with the elements such as space etc, possessing no organs like the intellect etc., free from the gunas of satva etc., not having the prana and other vital airs, untouched by hunger, thirst, grief ,delusion, old age and death; it is the atma

which resides in the hearts of all beings and is the seer of all the intellects. In verses 3 to 7, the objection is raised, "Since the agency of the action of seeing is what is called 'seeing', how can the atma which is devoid of the idea of 'me' and 'mine' and of desire, aversion and effort, be called a 'seer. Further, , unlike the intellect which undergoes modifications and knows a limited number of objects, one after another, the atma is devoid of change and does not depend on instruments etc; how can such an atma be a 'seer' in the sense of knowing a limited number of objects, one after another.". The answer is given in verses 10 and 12. ".....There is a relation of superimposition between the atma and the intellect, which, though of a non-effulgent nature, like a crystal, appears to be effulgent owing only to the proximity of an effulgence, namely, the atma which is purely of an effulgent nature." "And it is only in relation to other things that the atma is called a knower. The sun may be taken as an example. Though entirely devoid of the ideas of 'me' and 'mine' and also of desire and effort, atma is called an illuminator in relation to things illumined owing only to its proximity to them, being just light devoid of all change (*prakaasatvam prakaasa-swaroopa-sannidhi-matrena prakaasena avikriyamaanena*). It is an illuminator in no other way. It is the ignorant that superimpose the agency of the action of illumining things on the sun when things are illumined by the sun. Similarly, the agency of the quality of a seer (action of knowing objects – *drsyaatvam*) is superimposed, in relation to the manifestation of things like the intellect and other things, on the atma which is of the nature of pure Consciousness (*aatnamah drk-roopasya*) devoid of all change as well as free from attributes (*sarva-vikriyaa-viseshana-rahitasya*) and is the witness of all intellects and their modifications (*sarva-pratyaya-saakshinah*). Atma does nothing but stand in the proximity to the objects of knowledge, as Consciousness, not different from Itself (*drsya-sannidhi-matrena caitanya-swaroopena ayatiriktena*). It cannot be a seer (knower) in no other way (*anyathaa-drshtatva-*

aabhaavaatii). In verse 14, there is a comparison of the loadstone moving iron only by its proximity. The idea is given in a nutshell in *Drgdrsyaviveka* verse 1– “Colors (*roopam*) are perceived by the eye and the eye is their perceiver. It (the eye) is perceived and the mind is its perceiver. The mind with its modifications is perceived and the Witness (*sakshi*, i.e., the *atma*) is verily the perceiver. But it (the *sakshi*) is not perceived by any other. (*roopam drsyam locanam drk tat-drsyam drktu maanasam; drsyaa dhii-vrittaya-saaakshii drgeva na drsyate*). Details follow. Verse 2 – “The forms appear on account of various distinctions such as blue, yellow, gross, subtle, short, long etc. The eye, on the other hand, sees them, itself remaining one and the same.” Verse 3 – ‘Characteristics of the eye such as blindness, sharpness or dullness, the mind cognizes; the mind also cognizes characteristics of the ear, skin etc.’ Verse 4 – “Consciousness (*citih*) illumines desire, determination and doubt, belief and non-belief, constancy and its opposite, understanding, fear and others, because Consciousness is a unity (*ekadaa*). Verse 6 – “*Buddhi* appears to possess luminosity on account of the reflection of Consciousness in it. *Buddhi* is of two kinds – egoity (*ahamkruti*) and the internal organ (*antahkarana*).

Verse 12 – “Give up the misconception of the identification with the body etc and know yourself to be Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, the witness of the intellect (*dhii-saksi*). How the *apramata atma* can be said to be a ‘witness’ has been explained in the main text (Section1.).

Subsection2 : Pancakosaviveka

This is discussed in *Taittiriya Upanishad Brahmanandavalli*. . It talks of “*annamaya kosa*” corresponding to the *sthoola sarira*, “*praanamaya kosa*” corresponding to that part of the *sukshma sarira* which consists of the five vital airs – *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana*, and *samana* and the five organs of

action (*karmendriyas*), “*manomaya kosa*” corresponding to that part of the sukshma sarira which consists of the mind, i.e., the cognizing faculty, which is also the generator of emotions and shares the five organs of perception (*jnanendriyas*), “*vijanamaya kosa*” corresponding to that part of the sukshma sarira which consists of the intellect, i.e., the deciding faculty, which shares the *jnanendriyas* and which includes the ego (the *ahamārtha*) and “*anandamaya kosa*” corresponding to the *karana sarira* of the deep sleep state in which a person experiences ignorance and bliss. The kosas are introduced one after the other as *atma*. First, the Upanishad describes the *annamaya kosa* and says it is *atma*. Then, saying that there is something interior and subtler than that, namely *pranamaya kosa*, negates the *annamaya kosa* (that is, dismisses it, saying that it is not *atma* – it is *anatma*) and so on, until it negates even *anandamaya*, describing its parts as “*priya*”, *moda*” and “*promoda*” which are grades of experiential happiness and, finally, reveals the ultimate conscious principle and avers that that is *atma*, Brahman.

Subsection 3 : Avasthatrayavivieka

1. Another way of analysis is to examine the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep called, respectively, “*jaagrata avastha*”, “*swapna avastha*” and “*sushupti avastha*”. This is discussed in Mandukya Upanishad which has to be studied with Mandukya Karika which is supposed to be a commentary on the Upanishads but is, in itself, an elaborate prakarana grantha. From the Upanishad, itself, we can derive the existence of a changeless consciousness, apart from the changing mind. In Mantra 2, the Upanishad declares the identity of *atma* and Brahman in the following terms. :- “*Ayam atma Brahma*”. Thereafter it describes the experiencer of the waking state (*jaagrata avastha*), called *Vaisvaanara*, the experiencer of the dream state (*swapna avastha*), called *taijasa* and the experiencer of the deep sleep state (*sushupti avastha*), called *prajna*. In the

crucial mantra 7, it defines atma as that which is neither conscious of the internal perceived world nor conscious of the external perceived world, which is not even a mass of consciousness or simple consciousness. (*Na antah prajnam, na bahih prajnam, na prajnaanaghana, na prajnam*). Thus it rules out atma being the ahamkara operating in the jagrat avastha and the swapna avastha and lying dormant in the sushupti avastha. By saying that it is not simple consciousness, it rules out a consciousness which is aware of everything simultaneously. That is to say atma is not a knower-consciousness in any sense.. And it hastens to add that atma is not unconsciousness (*na aprajnam*). Thereafter it describes atma as being beyond empirical dealings (*avyavahaaryam*). This word clearly distinguishes atma from any consciousness which functions as the knower (pramaata) or doer (karta) or enjoyer (bhokta); thus this word serves to differentiate the changing ahamkara from the changeless atma. The other words occurring in the mantra also differentiate the changeless pure, superior consciousness that is atma from the changing ahamkara which is involved in perceived worldly transactions as the pramaata, karta and bhokta. These are *adrshitam* (unperceived)...., *pranopasmamam* (in which all phenomena cease), *saantam* (unchanging), *sivam* (auspicious) and *advaitam* (free from ideas of difference or undifferentiated). That the changeless consciousness continues as the constant conscious entity behind the changing knower –consciousness in the states of waking etc. is indicted by the words “*eka-atma-pratyaya-saaram*”.

2. In jagrat avastha, my body, my sense organs and my ahamkara are all fully active and I am perceiving external objects and transacting with an external world (persons and things outside me). In swapna avastha, my body and my sense organs are dormant and my ahamkara projects a dream world. During sushupti, both the body and ahamkara are dormant. The ahamkara operating in the jagrat avastha, called *visva*), is not there when the ahamkara operating in the swapna avastha, called *taijasa*, has come; neither the *visva* nor the *taijasa* is there when the ahamkara is dormant, as *prajna*, in the sushupti avastha.. Neither the

tajasa nor the praaajna is there when the visva has come again. But still, I regard myself as the same conscious being. In doing so, I am invoking a constant conscious entity that was there when the visva was transacting with the perceived world, that was there when the tajasa was dreaming, that was there when the prajna was sleeping and that is there when the visva has come again. This constant consciousness is the atma, the real I.

3. In this connection we can refer to the following passage in “Upadesa Sahasri” of Sankaracarya: - The disciple is asking “But at no time Your Holiness, have I ever seen pure consciousness or anything else”. The teacher answers, “Then you are seeing in the state of deep sleep; for you deny only the seen object, not the seeing. I said that your seeing is pure consciousness. That (eternally) existing one by which you deny (the existence of the seen object) when you say that nothing has been seen, (that precisely) is the seeing, that is pure consciousness. Thus as (It) does not depart (from you) (Its) transcendental changelessness and eternity are established solely by Itself without depending upon any means of knowledge.” The pupil said, “...And there is no apprehender different from this apprehender to apprehend it.”
4. That consciousness continues even during sushupti when all instruments of knowledge including the ahamkara are dormant is expressed poetically in Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iii.23 to 30 – “ That It does not see, smell, taste, speak, hear, think, touch, or know is because although seeing, smelling, tasting, speaking, hearing, thinking, touching and knowing then, it does not see, smell, taste, speak, hear, think, touch, know; for the vision of the witness can never be lost, because it is imperishable.” Sankaracarya’s commentary – “The vision of the witness is possible like the sun, etc, revealing things. Just as the sun and the like are naturally ever-luminous and reveal things through their constant light; .so is the atma called a witness on account of its imperishable eternal vision. Just as the sun and the luminaries reveal things through their constant, natural light, and

not through one produced for the time being (so is the atma a witness through its eternal, natural consciousness) and that is its function as a witness in the primary sense, for there cannot be any other witness besides it:

Objection: This is contradicted by our experience that we sometimes see and sometimes do not see.

Reply: This is simply due to the particular activities of our organs.....Therefore the vision of the atma is imperishable, and through that imperishable, self-luminous vision the atma continues to see in the state of deep sleep. How is it, then, (it is said) that it does not seeThose things that caused the particular visions (of the waking and dream states) viz. the mind, the eyes and forms were all presented by avidya as something different from the atma. They are not unified in the state of deep sleep, as the jivatma has been embraced by Paramatma. Only when the atma is under limitations, do the organs stand as something different to help it through particular experiences. But it is now embraced by its own paramatma, which is pure consciousness and the atma of all....Hence the organs and objects do not stand as different entities; and since they are absent, there is no particular experience, for this is the product of the organs etc., not of the atma, and only appears as the product of the atma. Therefore it is an erroneous notion produced by this (absence of particular experience) that the vision of the atma is lost.

5. In short, the reference is to the continued presence of the atma caitanyam consciousness as the witness of the non-functioning mind, even when ahamkara is dormant and there is no experience of an external world of objects or an internal dream world. It is only when the sense organs and ahamkara are functioning that one perceives an external world of objects and it is only when the ahamkara is active, even though the sense organs are dormant, that one sees a dream). The atma caitanyam is eternal – there is no interruption in Its presence behind the ahamkara, whether the ahamkara is active or dormant.

Section 3 - Orders of Reality

1. Advaita Vedanta does not deny the experiential or empirical reality (*vyavaharika satyatvam*) of the perceived world. The seeming contradictions in Upanishad statements can only be reconciled on the basis of the Advaita Vedanta doctrine of different orders of reality. The concept of different orders of reality is available in Chandogya Upanishad - vide II.vi.1- “That (Brahman) created all that exists. That (Brahman), having created that entered into that very thing. And, having entered there, It became the true and the untrue, Truth became all this. (*satyam ca anrutam ca; satyam abhavat*”). Sankaracarya explains, “It follows from the context that *satyam* is truth falling within the range of the empirical, and not absolute truth. For the absolute truth is only one, which is Brahman. But here the relative truth, as found in the empirical (perceived world) is referred to; as for instance, water is said to be true in comparison with the water in a mirage which is false. Untruth is the opposite of that. Again, what is that became all this? That which is the absolute truth. What is that, again? It is Brahman; for it is Brahman that has been introduced as the topic of discussion by the sentence ‘Brahman is truth, knowledge, infinitude.’ Thus, the word, “true” “t” in small case has been interpreted as *vyaavahaarika satyam*, the word “untrue” as *pratibhasika satyam* and the word “True” with capital “T” as *paaramaartika satyam*. This is the authority (*pramaana*) for three orders of reality, in the descending order - absolute reality (*paramartika satyam*), empirical reality (*vyavaharika satyam*) and subjective reality (*pratibhasika satyam*).

Section 4 - Description of Brahman, The Absolute Reality

1. The Taittiriya mantra 2.1.1 – “*satyam jnanam anantam brahma*” reveals the nature of Brahman in a nutshell. The following is a paraphrase of extracts from Sankaracarya’s commentary:-

(a)Sankaracarya first clarifies that the sentence, “satyam, jnanam, anantam brahma” is a definition of Brahman (*brahmanah lakshanaartah vakyam*). The three words, satyam, jnanam, anantam are not adjectives (not *visheshaani*). A noun can be distinguished only when there is the possibility of its ruling out some other adjective that does not belong to it), as for instance a blue or red lotus. An adjective is meaningful when there are many nouns which belong to the same class and which are capable of having many adjectives; but it can have no meaning with regard to a single noun, where there is no possibility of any alternative adjective. There is a single Brahman, just as there is a single sun; there do not exist other Brahman from which It can be distinguished, unlike a blue lotus that can be (marked out from a red one) Definition marks out an entity from everything else (*sarvata eva nivartakaani*).

(b)Taking the words of the definition, Sankaracarya says, that that which does not change the nature that is ascertained to be its own is satyam.....So, the word, ‘satyam’ distinguishes Brahman from mutable things. ...To indicate that It is not insentient like earth, the word ‘jnanam’ is juxtaposed. The word, ‘jnanam’ means consciousness. Juxtaposed with the words, ‘satyam’ and ‘anantam’, it negates the idea of the agent of knowing. If Brahman be the agent of knowing, satyam and anantam cannot be part of the definition. If It is the agent of knowing, It becomes changeful and so cannot be satyam. That indeed is infinite which is not limited by anything. (cf. another Vedic text, ‘The Infinite is that where one does not know anything else’. If it is the agent of knowing, it becomes delimited by the knowable and the knowledge, and hence there cannot be infinitude (anantam). ...Besides, if It has such distinctive attributes as becoming the agent of knowing, It cannot logically be pure existence. In the 6th Chapter of Chandogya Upanishads starting with ‘O, good looking one, in the beginning this was existence alone’ 6.8.7 says, ‘That which is this subtle essence, all this has got That as the atma. That is

satyam...’ Thus the words, ‘satyam’ and ‘sat’ are equated, Therefore the word, ‘jnanam’ (knowledge) having been used... along with ‘satyam’ and ‘anantam’, is derived in the cognate sense of the verb, and it is used to form the phrase ‘jnanam brahma’ (Brahman is knowledge) to rule out any relationship between noun and verb as that of an agent etc. as also for denying non-consciousness like that of earth, etc. From the phrase, ‘jnanam brahma’ there is possibility of thinking that Brahman is limited, because human knowledge is limited. To obviate this, the text says, ‘anantam’ (‘infinite’).

(c) Explaining the word, “infinitude” Sankaracarya says that it has been said at the beginning of the mantra that Brahman is satyam, jnanam and anantam.As to that, there are three kinds of infinitude (*aanantyam*) – space-wise, time-wise and entity-wise. To illustrate, the sky is unlimited from the point of view of space, for it is not limited in space. But the sky is not infinite as regards time or entity. Why? Because it is a product. Brahman is thus not limited in time like the sky, since It is not a product. A created thing is circumscribed by time, but Brahman is not created. Therefore It is infinite from the point of view of time as well. Similarly, It is infinite from the point of view of entity, because It is non-different from everything else. A thing that is different acts as a limitation to another. For example, the idea of horsehood excludes the idea of cowhood and the idea of cowhood becomes delimited. Such limitation is seen in the case of distinct objects. Brahman is not differentiated in this way. Therefore it has infinitude from the point of view of substances. How is Brahman non-different from everything? Because it is the cause of everything. Wouldn’t Brahman be limited by Its own effects? No, since the objects that are effects are unreal. `Existence (i.e., Brahman as sub-stratum of everything) alone is true .(Chandogya 6.1.4 and 6.2.1)..... Brahman then is spatially infinite, being the cause of space etc. ...Indeed, no all pervading thing is seen in this world to originate from anything that is not so. Therefore, the spatial infinitude of

Brahman is absolute. Temporally, Brahman's infinitue is abslute since Brahman is not a product. And because there is nothing different from Brahman, Brahman is infinite in terms entity as well. Thus the reality of Brahman is absolute.

In his commentary on the Chandogya mantra 6.2.1, "sat *eva soumya idam agra aaseet ekam eva advidityam...*" Sankaracarya explains, "The word 'sat' means mere Existence, a thing that is subtle, without distinction, all pervasive, one, taintless, partless, consciousness, which is known from all the Upanishads. The word 'eva' is used for emphasis. (*Sadeva – sat iti astitvamaatram vastu nirvisham sarvvagatam, ekam, niranjanam, niravayavam, vijnaanam yat aagamyate sarvavedantebhyah. Ekasabdah avataaranaarthah.*) Before creation, it was not possible to grasp it as possessed of name and form.By the words, 'One only', is meant that there was nothing else coming under the category of its product. 'Without a second' means that It (Existence) has no second thing different from Itself".

Readers may notice a discrepancy from the outline of the philosophy in the main paper, when it is said, here, that Brahman is the cause of creation and that Brahman is non-different from everything. Elsewhere, Sankaracarya himself will make it clear that creation does not proceed from nirguna Brahman, but from a Brahman associated with Maya. And when Sankaracarya talks of unity and says that Brahman is non-different from everything, what he means, as far as the writer can make out, is that the one Brahman alone, as the sub-stratum, lends existence to everything and the superimposed nama roopa being mithya, Brahman is the sole reality and there is no other real entity to delimit Brahman. "There is no world other than Brahman" is like saying that there is no pot other than clay.

2. Other passages in the Upanishads revealing the *swaroopam* of Brahman (I. e the nature of Brahman) are cited below ("Brahman" and "Atma" are interchangeable

words) That Brahman is non-dual (*advayam, advaitam, adviditiiyam*) is stated in Chandogya Upanishad 6.2.1 and 6.2.2, in Kaivalya Upanishad 19 and 23, Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.22, Mandukya Upanishad 7, Nrsimhaottaratapaniya Upanishad 8 and 9, Ramopoorvatapaniya Upanishad 5, and Muktikopanishad 2.73. The Chandogya mantra 6.2.1, “*Ekam eva aviditiiyam*” negates *swagata bheda* (internal difference as in an entity having parts, by the word, ‘ekam’, *swajatiya bheda* (difference between members of the same species) by the word, ‘eva’ and *vijatiya bheda* (difference between one species and another) by the word ‘aviditiiyam’ This is an elaboration of the non-duality of Brahman, establishing the unique status of Brahman as the only reality.. That Brahman is infinite (anantam), we can see in Taittiriya Upanishad 2.1., - “Satyam, janma, anantam Brahma” and in Swesvatara Upanishad 1.9 – “Anantah ca atma visvaroopah...” In Mandukya Upanishad mantra 7, it is said- “It is not the inward awareness. It is not the outward awareness. It is not the intermediate awareness. It is not the undifferentiated mass of awareness. It is not the knowing awareness. It is not non-awareness. It is unperceivable. It is not accessible to transaction. It cannot be grasped. It is attributeless. It is not accessible to thought. It is not amenable to communication. It is the constant atma that subsists in all the changing states of the ahamkara.. It is the remainder of the annulment of the perceived universe. It is changeless. It is auspiciousness. It is the non-dual reality free of all mithya ideas of difference.That is atma tat is to be known. (*Na antah-prajnam, na bahih- prajnam, na ubhyatah-prajnam, na prajaana-ghanam na prajnam na aprajnam; adrshtam avyavahaaryam agrahyam alakshanam acintyam avyapadesyam ekatma-pratyaya-saaram prapancopasamam saantam sivam advaitam.....sa atma...*”. Kathopanishad I.ii.20 and I.ii.21 - “Subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest”. “Nearer than the nearest, farther than the farthestunmoving moving everywhere.” *Isavasya Upanishad* 4 – “It is unmoving , one, faster than the mind” (*Isavasya Upanishad* 8 – “He is all pervasive, pure, bodiless, without wound, without

sinews, taintless, untouched by sin, omniscient, ruler of mind, transcendent, and self-existent.” Kaivalya Upanishad 17 – “I am that Brahman which illumines the perceived world of waking, dream, and sleep” Kaivalya Upanishad 21 - I see without eyes, hear without ears. Assuming various forms, I know everything. There is no one who is the knower of Me. I am ever the pure consciousness. “ (“ ... *Cit sadaa aham.*”). Kaivalya Upanishad 18 “I am distinct from all those which are the subject, the object and the instrument. In all the three states - jagrat, swapna and sushupti – I am the witness who is the pure consciousness (*cinmaatra*) and who is ever auspicious.” Kaivalya Upanishad 23 – “.....the nature of Paramatma which is manifest in the mind, partless, non-dual, the witness of all, distinct from cause and effect and pure...” Taittiriya Upanishad II.iv.1 - “Words and sense organs, along with the mind return, unable to reach That” Mundakopnishad I.i.6 - “That which cannot be seen or grasped, that which has no source, that which has no features, that which has no eyes, ears, etc, that which has no hands, feet etc. that which is eternal, that which is infinite, that which is all pervading, that which is the subtlest of the subtlest, that which is undiminishing and that which is the source of all creation...” Mundakopnishad III.i.8- “ “That which cannot be apprehended by sight or by words or by other indriyas.), that which cannot be attained by penance or rituals....The divisionless.....” Mundakopnishad III.i.7 – “ That (i.e., Brahman) is infinite, effulgent, not accessible to thought, formless, subtler than the subtlest; farther than the farthest. It is, at the same time, near at hand in this body. It is available to be recognized in one’s very heart, (i.e., as the consciousness behind the ahamkara)”. Kathopanishad I.iii.15 - “That which is soundless, touchless, formless, undecaying, tasteless, internal, smellless, imperishable, immortal, beginningless, endless, (infinite), greater than the greatest, distinct from intelligence, (i.e., distinct from ahamkara) and changelessly constant.....” Isavasya Upanishad 5 - “It moves; it does not move. It is far. It is near. It is inside all this. It is outside all this. ”Kaivalya Upanishad 20 – “I (Brahman) am smaller

than the smallest and, in the same way, I am bigger than the biggest;I am the ancient one; I am the ruler of all; I am the effulgent one; I am the very auspiciousness.” Kaivalya Upanishad 6 - “Brahman which is the source of all, pure, free from sorrow, beyond thoughts, unmanifested, many-formed (in association with thoughts), auspicious, tranquil, immortal, free from beginning middle and end, non-dual, all pervasive, formless and wonderful and which is consciousness and ananda.” Kaivalya Upanishad 7 – “Brahman which is the cause of all beings, the witness of all and beyond Maya.” Kaivalya Upanishad 16 – “You alone are that infinite, eternal, supreme Brahman which is the self of all, which is the abode of all and which is subtler than the subtlest - that Brahman alone are you.” Kaivalya Upanishad 17 – “I am that Brahman which illumines the perceived world of waking dream, sleep, etc.....” Mundakopanishad II.i.2 - “Effulgent, formless, all pervading, pervading the inside and outside of the perceived universe, unborn, without prana and mind, pure, superior to the (other) superior (i.e. Maya)” Svetasvatara Upanishad VI.19 - “Without parts, actionless, beyond fluctuations, free from all defects, untainted, the means of crossing the sea of samsara and attaining moksha)” Kenopanishad I.3 - “Eyes do not reach That nor do words and not even the mind. We do not know ‘That Brahman is of this kind’. How to make Brahman known we do not know” Kenopanishad I. 4.- “ (Because) It is different from the known and It is beyond the unknown – This is what we have heard from our teachers who have taught us about That Brahman.” Kathopanishad II.iii.12 - “Not by words nor by sight and not even by the mind can It be reached. But he who says that It does not exist can never attain It.” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad III.ix.26, IV.ii.4, IV.iv.22, and IV.v.15 - “This Atma 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, It never feels pain and never suffers injury. r.....” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.20 - “It is to be realized (in accordance with the instructions of a teacher) as non dual (for) It is unknowable, eternal. The Atma is

taintless, is superior to unmanifested space (i.e. Maya), is unborn, infinite and constant” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.20 – “It should be realized in one form only. It is unknowable and eternal. It, the atma, is taintless, beyond space (*akasa*), birthless, infinite and constant”. Chandogya Upanishad VI.ii.1 “O, good looking one, in the beginning this was Existence alone, One only and without a second.” Chandogya Upanishad VIII.i.v – “This (Brahman) does not grow old when the body grows old or die when the body dies (or killed when the body is killed)..... This is the Atma which is beyond sin, beyond decrepitude, beyond death, beyond sorrow, beyond hunger and thirst....” Kenopanishad I.6 – “That which man does not comprehend with the mind. That by which.....mind is pervaded.” Kenopanishad I.5 – “That which is not uttered by speech, that by which speech is revealed, know that alone to be Brahman, and not what people worship as an object.” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iii.15 – “This infinite is relationless.” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.25 – “That great birthless Atma is undecaying, immortal, undying, fearless (because there is no second thing), and infinite.” (The word used for ‘fearless is ‘*abhayam*’. (Sankaracarya interprets *abhayam* as ‘devoid of avidya’). Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iii.6 – “Atma is self-effulgent”. “Mundaka Upanishad III.i.7 – “It is great because of its all-pervasiveness and It is all pervasive and self-effulgent. Its features cannot be thought of. It is subtler than the subtlest.....Among sentient beings It is perceived as seated in this very body, in the cavity of the heart – (“heart” is the term used for the mind.) Brhadaranyaka Upanishad III.viii.8 -”This Immutable Brahman is neither gross nor minute, neither short nor long, neither red color nor oiliness, neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor ether, unattached, neither taste nor smell, without eyes or ears, without the vocal organ or mind.....,without the vital force , not a measure, and without interior or exterior”. Kathopanishad I.iii.15 – That which is soundless, touchless, colorless, undiminishing, and also tasteless, eternal, odorless, without beginning, and without end, distinct from Mahat, and ever constant.” Brhadaranyaka 3.8.8 – “It

does not eat anything nor is It eaten by anybody”. (‘Eating’ refers to experience. So, It is neither the experiencer nor the experienced.) Brhadaranyaka V.iii.22 – “Atma has no punya or papa”. Brhadaranyaka IV,iii.30 – “That it does not know in that state, because , though knowing then, it does not know; for the knower’s function can never be lost.” (This is a description of sushupti, in which out of which the original consciousness and cidabhasa, the original consciousness, sakshi alone is functioning). “Chandogya Upanishad VI.ii.1 – “One only, non-dual”. Brahadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.16 – “That to which time is below (i.e. That which is beyond time.”) On the same lines, Brhadaranyaka IV.iv.15 – “... The Lord of all that has been and will be...” And in Brhadaranyaka III.ix.26, IV.ii.4, IV.iv.22 and IV,v.15 – “..... It is “*asitah*” (i.e., not fettered by space, time or entity). Brhadaranyaka Upanishad II.iii.6 – “Now therefore the description of (Brahman): ‘not this, not this’. Because there is no other and more appropriate description than this ‘not this’.” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.19 “There is no plurality whatsoever in It. He who regards the apparent plurality as real goes from death to death.” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.20 – “It should be realized in one form only.” – Sankaracarya adds in his commentary – “as the homogenous pure caitanyam”. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad III. Iv. 1,III.v.1 – That which is self-evident is the Brahman which is within all” Chandogya Upanishad VII.24.i – “The Infinite is that where one does not see anything else, does not hear anything else and does not know anything else”.. That which indeed is the Infinite is immortal.” Kathopanishad I.ii.14 – “...that thing which you see as different from dharma , different from adharma, different from cause and effect and different from the past and the future.” Brhadaranyaka IV.iv.15 and 17 - ‘Lord of the past and the future”. “Below which the year with its days rotates”. Kathopanishad I.ii.18 – “The intelligent Self is neither born nor does it die. It did not originate from anything, nor did anything originate from It. It is birthless, eternal, undecaying and ancient. It is not injured even when the body is killed”. Swesvatara Upanishad, 1.9. Kathopanishad I.ii.19 – “...It does not kill nor is it killed.” (I.e.

Brahman is akarta and abhokta). Kaivalya Upanishad 21 – “It is without hands or feet”. Brhadaranyaka III.iv.2, III.viii.11 – “You cannot see the seer of sight.....you cannot know the knower of the knower” “It is never seen but is the Seer... It is never known but is the knower. There is no other Seer than It...There is no other knower than It”. (These are descriptions of the consciousness in oneself which is self-evident and which one cannot know as an object).

1. Upanishad passages, apart from the four famous mahavakyas which assert the identity of the consciousness recognized in oneself and the all pervading Brahma caitanyam can be found in Taittiriya 2.1.1, Chandogya 6.2.1, 8.2.3, 8.4.1, Swetasvatara 1.12, Brhadaranyaka 1.4.7, 2.4.1 3.4.1, 3.5.1, 3.8.11, 4.3.7, 4.4.25, Swetasvatara 3.13, 3.18, Aitereya 1.3.11, 3.1.4, Mundaka 2.2.8, 2.2.9, 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.2.7, Kaivalya 10, 16 etc. The passages have been cited in Note entitled “Refutation Of Plurality Of Atmas And Of Atmas Being Part Of Brahman” in the Appendix.

Section 5 - Unreality of the Perceived world

3. There are various passages in the Upanishads from which we can derive the doctrine of the unreality or the lower order of reality of the perceived world. When Brahman is said to be non-dual, or one without a second (*advayam, advaitam, advidiyam, ekam*) as in Brhadaranyaka, Kaivalya, Chandogya, Mandukya and in Swesvatara or Brahman is said to be infinite, as in Taittiriya and Swesvatara, it means that the perceived world is of lower order of reality. There are numerous other statements indicating the unreality of the experienced perceived world. Brhadaranyaka 4.4.19 and Katha 2.1.11 - “There is no diversity whatsoever in It”. (This is negation of *dwaitam*, the ignorant notion that the experienced perceived world is real.) Brhadaranyaka 4.3.31, 2.4.14 and 4.5.15 – “When there is something other than Brahman, as it were, one can see something else.....know something else.” The words, “as it were” (or “as though” – “*iva*” in

Sanskrit) indicate that everything except Brahman is unreal. Similarly, in Brhadaranyaka mantra IV.iv.19 and Katopanishad II.i.11, the word “iva” is used in the passage “He who sees diversity, as it were, in It goes from death to death” following the passage declaring that “there is no diversity whatsoever in It. (“*neha nana asti kinca na, mrtyoh sa mrtyum apnoti ya iha nana iva pasyati*”)

The word “iva” referring to the perception of plurality indicates that plurality is unreal. In Taittiriya Upanishad II.vii.1, it is said that whenever the aspirant perceives the slightest difference in It (Brahman), he is smitten with fear, In Brhadaranyaka 2.3.6, 3.9.26, 4.2.4, 4.4.22 and 4.5.15, Brahman is described as “not this, not this” (“*neti neti*”) indicating that it is of a higher order of reality than the perceived world. In 3.4.2, 3.5.1, and 3.7.23, talking of Brahman that is immediate and direct, the atma within all, the Upanishad says that except That (i.e., Brahman), everything is *aarttam*. Sankaracarya explains in 3.5.1 that “*aarttam*” means that everything else is perishable, beset with troubles and unsubstantial like dream, illusion or mirage. In Brhadaranyaka 2.3.6, the Upanishad says “Brahman is the Truth of truth, the vital force (“*praana*”) is truth, and It is the Truth of that. “*Praana*” stands for the universe. Also, read with 2.3.1 to 2.3.5, we can see that the word “truth” with “t” in small case refers to the gross and subtle parts of the perceived world and our bodies and Brahman is said to be the Truth of these. This is also meant to show that the perceived world including our bodies and minds is of a lower of reality than Brahman. .Chandogya 6.8.7 says that It (Brahman) is the subtle essence and the Reality - which implies that the perceived world, the superimposition is unreal. . Distinguishing from the infinite, immortal Brahman, Chandogya 7.24.1 says, “The finite is that that in which one sees something else..... knows something else. That which is finite is mortal.” In Prasna 3.3., it is said that from Brahman is born this prana (prana stands for the experienced universe), just as there can be a shadow when a man is there. In Yajurveda it is said of Brahman said that though, It is not one that can be born, it is born as manifold objects—which is a rhetorical assertion of the

unreality of creation. In Swetasvatara 3.10, the Upanishad talks of an entity that is superior to that which is superior and says that one who knows that entity which is attributeless and beyond the threefold affliction as oneself becomes immortal. In the commentary, it is said that 'that which is superior' refers to the perceived universe and the entity superior to that refers to Brahman. In the sixth chapter of Chandogya Upanishad, which deals with Brahman as the eternal unchanging Existence, in 6.1.4, 6.1.5 and 6.1.6, the Upanishad gives the examples of a lump of clay, an ingot of gold and a lump of iron and their formation as a pot, ornament and nail-cutter, respectively, to show that Brahman as the essence, as the Existence, alone is real and the names and forms superimposed on Brahman are unreal." Kaivalya 23 Upanishad says, "There is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air nor space." Aitereya 3.1.3 says that it is Consciousness (i.e., Brahman) that lends reality (existence) to Hiranyagarbha the five elements and all creatures.

4. There is also logic in saying that the perceived world is unreal. If the perceived world is real, it cannot be negated by knowledge. Only if *advaitam* (Brahman as the sole reality) is accepted, can we talk of moksha through the knowledge of the *mithyaatvam* of the *dwaitam* and the *satyatvam* of *advaita* (*jaganmithya brahmasatyam*). Another argument which Sankaracarya gives is that space and time are part of the perceived universe, that you cannot talk of a space and time located in which this creation took place, because that would lead to infinite regress and that therefore, creation has to be unreal. Suresvaracarya talks of an 'outward view' and an 'inward' view. Phenomenality and non-existence of the perceived world are not opposed. We cannot deny the practical reality of the world. From the relative standpoint of avidya, the perceived world exists and is real and meaningful. It is not a mirage. This is the 'outward view. But, from the standpoint of Brahman, there is neither avidya nor the perceived world. This is what Suresvaracarya calls 'the inward view'.

Section 6 - Pramanam

Authority of the Upanishad for Brahman Not Being the Actual Creator.

5. Upanishads indicate specifically that Brahman is not the cause of the perceived universe. Brhadaranyaka 2.5.19 – “Brahman is without prior or posterior”. Kathopanishad 1.2.14 “different from cause and effect”; Kathopanishad 1.2.18 – “It did not originate from anything nor did anything originate from it”. A real cause has to undergo change to become effect and once a real cause becomes effect, it ceases to exist in that form. Therefore passages in the Upanishads indicating changelessness and eternity would mean that Brahman cannot be the modifying material cause (*parinaami upaadaana kaaranam*) of the perceived world. Muktikopanishad -“It is changeless.” Kathopanishad 1.2.18 – “It is neither born nor does it die”; Kathopanishad 1.3.15, Svetasvatara 5.13, Kaivalya 6. - - .Katha 1.2.18, 1.3.15, 2.2.13,, Mundaka 1.1.6 Kaivalya 6, 16; Brhadaranyaka 3.8.8., Mundaka 1.1.5.,1.1.7, 1.2.13, 2.1.1., 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.7, 2.2.11, Prasna 4.9, 4.10, Chandogya 8.3.4,, 8.7.4, 8.1.1, 8.12.1., Brhadaranyaka 2.5.1 to 2.5.14, 4.4.16, 4.4.17, 4.4.25,, Katha 2,2.8,, Svetasvatara 1.7, 1.10, 4.8, 4.18, 5.6, 6.6, 6.17, 6.13, 6.19. – “It is immutable” “It is transcendental” “It is without beginning (*anaadi*)”, “It is birthless (*ajah*)”, “It is without end (*anantam*)” “It is eternal (*nityam*)”, “It is indestructible (*aksharam*)”, “It is immortal (*amrtam*)”. So, Brahman modifying and becoming the perceived universe is illogical. . In Taittiriya Upanishad Bhashya Vartikam, Sureswaracarya gives three reasons to show why Brahman cannot be actual creator. (I) Brahman is all-pervasive. So, there cannot be anything that can be Its effect. (ii) Brahman is one and non-dual. So, there cannot be a second entity to be related with It in terms of cause-effect relation. (iii) Brahman is immutable. Creation involves not only transformation of matter but visualisation and action. Therefore, Upanishad mantras negating thinking and action on the part of Brahman would mean that Brahman cannot be the intelligent cause (*nimitta kaaranam*) of the perceived universe. Svetasvatara 1.9,

6.19 – “It is actionless” ”; Swetasvatara 6.8 – “It has neither body nor instruments” ”; Katha 1.2.19 -“It does not kill nor is It killed (this negates action and enjoyment and suffering)” Brhadaranyaka 3.8.8 – “That immortal does not have vocal organ or a mind”. Mundaka 2.1.2 – ‘It does not have vital force or a mind ’. In Kaivalya 22, Brahman, speaking in the first person says, “I have neither birth nor body, nor sense organs nor the mind-intellect equipment. (*Na janma dehendriya buddhih asti*) So, Brahman being the intelligent cause (*nimitta kaaranam*) of the universe is also not logical. But Upanishads do say in other places that Brahman visualised, wished, thought, deliberated on creation, vide Chandogya 6.2.3 , Taittiriya 2.6.1, Aitareya 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 1.3.1.,1.3.2, 1.3.11 and created the perceived universe, vide Chandogya 6.2.3, Taittiriya 2.1.1 ”,,2,7.1, 3.1.1, Aitareya 1.1.2. The explanation is twofold. (a) The universe is not a real product of Brahman. Brahman is not a modifying material cause (not “*parinami upaadaana kaaranam*”). It is not like milk becoming curd. It is only *vivarta upaadaana karanam*. “*Vivarta*” is a technical term, indicating the unreality of creation. (The unreality of Brahman becoming many is indicated by the prefix ‘pra’ in the passage ‘bahusyaam prajaayeti’ in Chandogya Upanishad 6.2.3.). Brahman does not undergo any modification. In its nature as all pervading Existence, it is just available as the substratum (*adhishtanam*) for nama roopa to be superimposed. The actual material cause (*parinami upaadaana kaaranam*) is Maya which superimposes, on the sub-stratum, the differentiated nama roopa on account of which we perceive a world of objects. Similarly, the entity that visualises and designs the names and forms to be superimposed and impels Maya to unfold and superimpose the names and forms is Iswara. Iswara is Maya in which the Consciousness aspect of Brahman (Brahma caitanyam) is reflected. (In Taittiriya Upanishad Bhashya Vartikam, Sureswaracarya gives three reasons to show why Brahman cannot be actual creator. (I) Brahman is all-pervasive. So, there cannot be anything that can be Its effect. (ii) Brahman is one And non-dual. So, there cannot be a second entity to be related with It in terms of

cause-effect relation. (iii) Brahman is immutable. So, Brahman cannot be the cause of the world.)

Section 7 - Brahman as Existence

The Sub-Stratum of the Universe of Names and Forms

6. In various Upanishads we see that Brahman is said to be the sub-stratum (“adhishtaanam”) of the universe. Words such as “sub-stratum” “root” “support” “That in which things are fixed “ occur in Katha 1.2.11, 2.2.8. 2.3.1, Brhadaranyaka 2.5.15, Brhadaranyaka 4.4.17, Mundaka 2.2.2 Chandogya 8.14.1, Taittiriya 3.10.3, Nrsimhaottaratapaniya 2 and Ramottaratapaniya. Swetasvatara 1.8 talks of Brahman as the support of the unmanifested and the manifest universe. Chandogya VI.viii.4, starting from food and passing through water and fire, says, “O, good-looking one, through fire as the sprout understand Existence as the root and concludes “All these things have Existence as their root. Existence is their abode. Existence is their place of merger”. In the fifth section of the second chapter of Brhadaranyaka Upanishad declares that the shining immortal being (Brahman, atma) is in the cosmic body. In 2.5.1 to 14, Yajnavalkya talks of the effulgent immortal being (Brahman, atma) as the earth, water, fire, air, space, sun, moon, the human species, the cosmic body etc., as associated with them, as being the underlying unity and as Brahman and as the Self. Brhadaranyaka III,iv.1 and 2 talk of Brahman as the inner essence of all (sarvaantarah). In the eighth section of the third chapter of Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, Iswara ‘s pervasion of the universe is metaphorically said to be the warp and woof of earth, water, fire etc. , Iswara is referred to as the unmanifested space and in the eighth mantra, the Immutable Brahman is said to be That that pervades Iswara. In Chandogya Upanishad mantrasVI.iii.2 .and VIII.xiv.1. the words, “namaroope vyakaravaani” and “ namaroopayoh nirvahitaa” occur. The first says “I (referring to Brahman) shall clearly manifest name and form (- we have to add ‘through

Iswara’}. The second (based on Sankaracarya’s commentary) says”That which is indeed called space (i.e. Brahman) is the manifester of name and form. (Again, we have to add ‘through Iswara’) (‘Space’ is a word often used in Upanishads to refer to Brahman.) Sankaracarya’s commentary - “Because like space, It is bodiless and subtle.” Sankaracarya gives the example of water manifesting foam. Sankaracarya goes on to say “That which exists in the names and forms (i.e., that which is the support, the substratum of nama roopa) is Brahman. That is not touched by name and form, is different from name and form (and) yet it is their manifester. That is immortal. That is the Atma.” Chandogya 6.3.2 – speaking of Existence-Brahman, “That Deity....deliberated, ‘Well, by entering into these three gods (fire, water and earth, in the form of each individual jiva, let me manifest name and form’”. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad I.vi.1 – “The (experienced) universe verily is made up of three things – name, form, function.” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad I.iv.7 – “The universe was then undifferentiated. It differentiated itself only as name and form. So even now the universe is only manifested as name and form – it gets such and such name and such and such form.” Taittiriya Upanishad mantra II.vii.1 – “In the beginning all this was the unmanifested. From that emerged the manifested (*asat va idam agra aasiit; tato vai sat ajaayata*”. And in Brahadaranyaka 1.4.7, the Upanishad says that Brahman entered the universe. Explaining the word, “entered”, Sankaracarya says that, like the reflection of the sun etc. in water, the entrance of Brahman means only Its being perceived like a reflection in the differentiated universe. Before the manifestation of the differentiated universe, Brahman is not perceived, but after the differentiated universe is manifested, Brahman is perceived within the intellect. like the reflection of the sun, etc. in water and the like. What this amounts to is that Brahman has to be recognized as the sub-stratum of Existence, in general and, in particular, as the consciousness behind the minds and as the source of the reflected consciousness in the minds. In his commentary on Chandogya, 6, 8,7, Sankaracarya says “The Self (Atma, Brahman) through which

all this universe becomes possessed of its self (Existence) That itself is the source called Existence, the Truth, the Supreme Reality. Hence that indeed is the self of the world, its inmost, its quintessence, its very reality” In his commentary on Taittiriya 2.6.1, explaining the word, “praajaayaayeti” Sankaracarya explains, “Multiplication, here, does not refer to something becoming extraneous as one does by begetting a son. How then? Through the manifestation of name and form -- Then that evolution of name and form is (what is called) the appearance of Brahman as the many. In no other way is it possible for the partless Brahman to become either multiple or finite, as for instance the finitude and plurality of space are surely the creations of extraneous factors.Therefore it is only because of Brahman that name and form have their being under all circumstances, but Brahman does not consist of them. They are said to be essentially Brahman since they cease to exist when Brahman is eliminated.. Again, in the commentary on Taittiriya 2.6.1, Sankaracarya says, “...there being no existence for any of these modifications of name and form apart from the Brahman”. From these also, it is clear that Brahman in Its aspect as the eternal unchanging Existence provides the sub-stratum, that the sub-stratum is alone real and the changing nama roopa superimposed on It are unreal.. (In all passages which talk of manifestation of nama roopa, by Brahman, (e.g., Chandogya 6.32 – “.....entered into these three deities through this jiva and differentiated nama roopa”), we have to understand that the manifestation of the universe is due to the unfolding of the Maya part of Iswara and not any transformation of Brahman. Brahman’s role is only the eternal presence as Existence, the substratum for the alternation of unevolved and evolved nama roopa. Brahman is also the sub-stratum for the vyavaharika mithya Maya, just as the rope is the sub-stratum for the pratibhasika mithya snake.

1. When we say that Brahman is non-dual or Brahman alone is real, we are referring to the paramarthika satyam. When we say that Brahman is

everything, we are including vyavaharika satyam and referring to the substratum, the paramarthika satyam and the names and forms, the vyavaharika satyam, superimposed on It, together, without prejudice to the latter being of a lower order of reality (Brahma satyam jagannmithya). When we say that the world is unreal or mithya, we are referring to the names and forms only, the vyavaharika satyam.

7. Brahman is not just Existence but Existence-Consciousness-Infinity. However, the Consciousness aspect is recognizable only in certain forms of nama roopa, what we call the animate as distinguished from the inanimate. But the essence of the entire cosmos is Brahman alone. In Brhadaranyaka, from 3.7.2 to 3.8.11, the Upanishad leads us from the subtle principle of the universe (Hiranyagarbha, called *sootra*), from *sootra* to the causal principle (Iswara, called *antaryami* and *aakasa*) – up to this, the vyavaharika prapanca - and from akasa to the absolute, Brahman, called *aksharam* (the Immutable) – i.e., from the *samashti sukhma prapanca upahita caitanyam* to *samashti kaarana prapanca upahita caitanyam* to *nirupaadhika caitanyam*. (This is to teach us that the ultimate essence is nirguna Brahman, not any form of saguna Brahman). Brhadaranyaka 3.7.23, dealing with Iswara, the Inner Controller, Iswara and 3.8.1, dealing with nirguna Brahman as” it is never the known, but is the Knower; there is no other Knower than He/It”. Description in the same terms indicates that Iswara, in His real nature is Brahman. There is only one Brahman on which the notions of jiva and Iswara are superimposed. In his commentary on 3.8.12, which concludes the topic, Sankaracarya says, “What is the difference between them, the Immutable (aksharam) and the Internal Ruler (antaryami)? Intrinsically there is neither difference nor identity among them, for they are by nature pure Consciousness.....The unconditioned Self (nirupadhika atma) , being beyond speech and mind, devoid of attributes and one, is designated as ‘not this, not this’; when it has the limiting adjuncts (upadhis) of the body and organs, which

are characterized by avidya , desire and work, It is called the samsari jiva and when the atma has the limiting adjunct of the power of eternal and unsurpassable knowledge (i.e. Maya), It is called the Internal Ruler, Iswara. The same atma, nirupadhika, absolute and pure, by nature is called the Immutable, the Supreme (aksharam, para). Similarly, having the limiting adjuncts of the bodies and organs of Hiranyagarbha, the Undifferentiated, the gods, the species, the individual, man, animal, spirits etc., and the atma assumes the particular names and forms. Thus we have explained through the Sruti vakyam ‘It moves and does not move’ (Isavasya 5). In this light alone such texts as ‘This is your atma (within all) (Brhadaranyaka 3.4.1,2 and 3.5.1), “He is the inner self of all beings (Mundaka 2.1.4), ‘This (Brahman) is hidden in all beings’ (Katha 1.3.12), Thou art That (Chandogya 5.8.7), ‘I myself am all this’ (Chandogya 7.25.1), ‘All this but the atma’(Chandogya7.25.1) and ‘There is no other witness but He’ (Brhadaranyaka 3.7.23) will not become contradictory; in any other view they cannot be harmonized. Therefore the entities mentioned above differ only because of their limiting adjuncts, but not in any other manner, for all the Upanishads conclude ‘One only without a second’ (Chandogya 6.2.1).

To say that ‘everything’ is Brahman is the same thing as to say ‘Brahman alone is real; the world is mithya’ – vide Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.v.7 - “idam sarvam yadayam atma’. Idam sarvam yadayamatma = Everything that is here is atma = Nothing exists separate from atma = Everything is dependent on atma for its existence. Whatever has dependend existence is mithya = everything other than atma is mithya = The nama roopas including our body mind complexes are mithya. Even Iswara is mithya.

Section 8 - Creator is Iswara Together with Maya

1. We have already seen in Section 6 that since Brahman is non-dual, eternal, changeless, and devoid of attributes and devoid of instruments of knowledge and action, Brahman cannot be creator of the perceived world, whether as the material cause or the intelligent cause, though passages are there saying that Brahman visualized and Brahman created the universe. We have to look for an entity or entities other than Brahman, as the intelligent and material cause (parinaami upaadaana kaaranam and nimitta kaaranam) of the universe. In certain passages, Upanishad itself introduces Maya and talks of creation proceeding from the association of Brahman with Maya. In abhasa vada we regard this association to be a reflection of Brahma caitanyam in Maya and we talk of the entity formed by such reflection as Iswara and we attribute to Iswara the functions of visualizing creation and impelling Maya to unfold nama roopa and superimpose the nama roopa on the substratum, Brahman, the Existence. And, so, even though the word, “Brahman” and “Iswara” occur without a clear distinction, wherever we meet with passages in the Upanishads which talk of omniscience and omnipotence, or of visualization or the act of creation or of differentiation of nama roopa, we have to take them to refer to such an Iswara aided by Maya as the cause of the perceived universe, the nirguna Brahman (the pure Existence-Consciousness- Infinity) serving only as the sub-stratum , without undergoing any change.), Since Brahman is non-dual, Iswara and Maya have, necessarily, to be of a lower order of reality.
2. In his bhashyam on Brahmasutra II.ii.14, Sankaracarya makes the following statements:-
 - Brahman is changeless and eternal and cannot undergo any modification whatsoever.

- Origin, continuance and dissolution of the world would result from 'Iswara' who is by nature eternal, pure, consciousness and free, as also omniscient and omnipotent.
 - Nama roopa, which are in the omniscient 'Iswara' conjured up by avidya which cannot be categorized as existent or non-existent, the seed of the samsara universe, are mentioned in the sruti and smriti as the Maya sakti of the omniscient Iswara or as Prakriti.
 - 'Iswara' conforms to the limiting adjuncts - nama roopa – created by avidya, like space conforming to the conditioning factors like pot, jar etc.
 - 'Iswara's rulership, omniscience and omnipotence are contingent on the limiting adjuncts (upadhis) conjured up by avidya.
 - Sruti also talks of functions like rulership only in the vyavaharika plane. Though we do not get a clear picture from these, this much is certain – Nirguna Brahman is not the creator. Creation is a matter of nama roopa conjured up by Maya. God conforms to the limiting adjuncts, the nama roopa, created by Maya.
3. As an example of the same entity being both the intelligent cause and the material cause of the universe, Upanishad refers to the spider producing the web out of its own body guided by its own instinct (vide Mundaka 1.1.7 - "Just as the spider spins out the web out of its own body and withdraws it unto itself, so out of the Immutable does the universe emerge here (in this phenomenal creation.)". Another example is the person perceiving his own vasanas as a dream world. He is not only the creator of the dream inasmuch as it is he who is creating a dream world

but the raw material for the dream world is also his own vasanas. Like that Iswara is not only the visualizer, but the material for creation is also in Iswara as Maya.

8. What are the Upanishad passages from which we can derive Iswara, together with Maya, being the cause of the universe?

Mundaka Upanishad I.i.9 - "That omniscient Onefrom His envisioning (jnanamaya tapah')does Hiranyagarbha and this universe of nama roopa originate." Chandogya Upanishad VI.ii.3- "That (Existence) visualized (*tat aikshata*) 'I shall become many. I shall be born.'" Taittiriya Upanishad II.vi.1 - "He (the Self) wished (*sa akamayata*) 'Let be many. Let me be born.....He undertook a deliberation (*sa tapah atapyata*). Having deliberated, he created all that exists."- Aitereya Upanishad I.i.1 ".....He thought (*sa aikshata*) 'let me create the worlds'

Swetasvatara Upanishad IV.1—"Know Maya to be *prakriti*) and *maheswara* to be *mayii* .Prakriti is the word used for the material cause of the universe. Mayii means the master of Maya." Swetasvatara IV. 9 says that Mayii creates vedaand whatever is mentioned in the Veda, i.e. the entire universe. In the commentary, which some believe is Sankaracarya's, the question is asked, "How can the changeless Brahman be the creator of the universe?" The answer given is that that is possible because of Its power called Maya. Maya conjures up the universe and owing to the influence of that Maya, jivas regard themselves to be different from Brahman and wallow in the ocean of samsara. Swetasvatara Upanishad I.9 talks of three unborn entities- (i) *jna* (the omniscient), the *iisa* (the ruler), (ii) *ajna* (the ignorant), *aniisa* (the ruled) and (iii) *eka bhoktrubhogyaayukta* (the one ordained to provide experienceable objects for the experiencer), says that the infinite atma is in the form of the universe and is

akarta. It concludes saying that the one who realizes the three – iisa, aniisa and bhoktrybhogyayukta - to be Brahman (is liberated). In the commentary, jna, ajna and bhoktrubhogyayukta are equated to Iswara, jiva and prakriti (i.e. Maya). The significance of this passage is that Iswara and Maya are distinguished from nirguna Brahman. (In the commentary, here also, there is a discussion as to how the changeless non-dual abhokta Brahman be in the form of Iswara, jiva and the universe. And the answer given, again, is that on account of the upadhi, Maya, associated with Maya Brahman appears to be divided into the products of Maya - Iswara, jiva and the universe. And it is clarified that there is no question of duality because the anirevacaniya Maya is not a substance. Knowing Iswara, jiva and the universe to be Brahman means that Brahman is the adhishtanam and since Iswara, jiva and the universe are products of Maya (i.e. mithya), they are not different entities. Swetasvatara 1.7 says that the three are supported by Parabrahman. In the commentary, in keeping with 1.12, the three are said to refer to bhokta, bhogyam and *prerita* (i.e. jiva, jagat and Iswara). 1.12 says that bhokta, bhogyam and prerita are said to be Brahman. In the commentary, it is clarified that 'bhokta' refers to jiva, 'bhogyam' to the jagat and 'prerita' to antaryami, parameswara. Though as, Swami Mrdananda points out, the distinction of jiva, jagat and Iswara as three entities is relevant only in the state of ignorance and when one gains knowledge one will come to know that they are all only manifestations of the non-dual Brahman, the significance of 1.7 and 1.12 is that Iswara is mentioned as an entity separate from Brahman and as the impeller (i.e. the one who sets in motion the creation process) and as the Inner Controller. (In the Sastra, the Inner Controller, antaryami, is an appellation of iiswara). Swetasvatara 4.12 talks of the creator of gods as *maharshi* (all-seeing, i.e. omniscient). Swetasvatara 1.11 distinguishes jnanam and upasana. It says by jnanam (the knowledge. 'I am Brahman') one gets freed of papa and other afflictions and overcomes the cycle of births and deaths. It continues and says that, by meditation on Brahman, one attains Iswara, on the fall of the physical

body, enjoys, there, visvaaiswaryam (all auspicious benefits) and, getting all desires fulfilled and realizing identity with nirguna Brahman (cf. commentary), at the end, becomes Brahman. The significance of this mantra also, is that Iswara is distinguished from nirguna Brahman (- the word used for Brahman is 'kevala').

1. 10 talks of the one God who rules over *Pradhana* and *atma* (here, the word 'atma' refers to jivatma) (in the commentary the word, is 'Purusha'). The significance is that the mantra goes on to say that by meditating on that God, and (later) by *tattabhaava* (knowing 'I am Brahman') one gets liberated from *visvamaaya*. Pradhanam is the word for the material cause of the universe in the Sankhya system and has been borrowed in Advaita Vedanta as the equivalent of Maya. Viswamaya means samsara. Swetasvatara 6.16 – “He (Brahman) is the creator of the universe, the knower of the universe (*viswavid*), the atma of all, the origin of all, the omniscient, the creator of time, one endowed with attributes (such as freedom papa) (*gunii*), the repository of all knowledge, the master of pradhanam and intellect of jivas (*kshestrajna, vijnanaatma*), the ruler of gunas, i.e satva, rajas, tamas, - which means Maya - and the cause of the bondage by, experience of and liberation from samsara. The significance is that the mantra talks of saguna Brahman, Brahman endowed with omniscience as being the ruler of Maya and being the creator. Swetasvatara 1.8 – “The ruler of the universe (i.e. Iswara) rules over the perishable manifested universe (*ksharam, vyaktam*) and the imperishable unmanifested (*aksharam, avyaktam*) and also the jivas who are bound by the notion of being bhoktas.” In the commentary, it is said that by meditating on the sopadshika paramatma in the macrocosmic and microcosmic forms (*samashti* and *vyashti*) and gaining knowledge of the nirupadhika Iswara, one gets liberated. Swetasvatara Upanishad VI.17 talks of Brahman as being in the form of the universe, as immortal, as being in the form of Iswara (*iisasamstah*), the knower of everything, , all pervading, protector of the universe and as the one who administers (the laws of) this universe, because no other entity is capable of doing so. In Kaivalya Upanishad 7, there is mention of

Iswara, saguna Brahman, clearly distinguished from nirguna Brahman; this mantra talks of meditation on Parameswara, the Lord, with three eyes and blue neck, the cause of all the manifested world and the witness of all. In his commentary on 3.8.12, which concludes the topic, Sankaracarya says, “What is the difference between them, the Immutable (aksharam) and the Internal Ruler (antaryami)? Intrinsically there is neither difference nor identity among them, for they are by nature pure Consciousness.....The unconditioned Self (nirupadhika atma) , being beyond speech and mind, devoid of attributes and one, is designated as ‘not this, not this’; when it has the limiting adjuncts (upadhis) of the body and organs, which are characterized by avidya , desire and work, It is called the samsari jiva and when the atma has the limiting adjunct of the power of eternal and unsurpassable knowledge (i.e. Maya), It is called the Internal Ruler, Iswara. The same atma, nirupadhika, absolute and pure, by nature is called the Immutable, the Supreme (aksharam, para). Similarly, having the limiting adjuncts of the bodies and organs of Hiranyagarbha, the Undifferentiated, the gods, the species, the individual, man, animal, spirits etc., and the atma assumes the particular names and forms. Chulika Upanishad talks of Maya as the cause of modification. Gopichand Upanishad talks of “mayaasahita Brahman”. Certain other Upanishads also talk of Maya as the power of Brahman or of Brahman with Maya (Mayasahita Brahman) in connection with creation. In Brhadaranyaka Upanishad first chapter, section 2 and 3, we see Hiranyagarbha creating the five elements, and living being including gods and asuras and animals. Prasnopabishad 1.4 also talks of Prajapati (i.e. Hiranyagarbha) as deliberating (on knowledge acquired in the past life and which related to objects revealed by the Vedas) and creating the pair of food and prana (which stand respectively the experiencer and the experienced. In Swetasvatara Upanishad VI.18 (and in Yogasara Upanishad), it is said that Iswara created Brahmaa (Hiranyagarbha) first and gave the Veda to him. In Mundaka Upanishad also, in 1.1.1., it is said that Brahmaa (Hiranyagarbha) was the first

among the gods to be born. Kaivalya 6 talks of Brahman as “brahmayonim” (the cause of Brahmaa, i.e. Hiranyagarbha). Iswara alone is uncreated. All gods, personified aspects of Iswara’s cosmic functions are all created. (Iswara, Maya, jiva, karma and time are alone beginningless in the vyavaharika plane).

Hiranyagarbha is the personified aspect of Iswara in his function as creator. We also find in Bhagavadgita Prakriti as the modifying material cause and the instrument used by the Lord for creation vide 7.6, 9.7, 9.8, 9.10, 13.19 and 13.20.) . Maya consists of matter only and can only be the material cause of the universe. For any entity being the intelligent cause, consciousness has to be derived from the Brahman, the non-dual Consciousness.

4. On the basis of the passages cited in the present section and the previous section, we arrive at an entity called Iswara, constituted of Maya in which Brahma caitanyam is reflected , as the intelligent cause (nimitta karanam), visualizing and planning creation in accordance with the karma of jivas and guided and impelled by him Maya, as the modifying material cause (parinami upadana karanam) transforming into the perceived world, i.e. what was nama roopa in unevolved form becoming manifested nama roopa and being superimposed on the changeless substratum, the Existence-Consciousness, Brahman, by the combination of which sub-stratum and the superimposed nama roopa we are able to experience the universe, though what we perceive is only the nama roopa. Brahman, the sub-stratum is not only Existence. It is also Consciousness. Some of the nama roopa, viz., our minds are so constituted that they can reflect the Consciousness aspect of Brahman, the sub-stratum. Thus, the minds of living beings become conscious entities and they, in turn lend sentiency to the sense organs and bodies.
5. Though Iswara, instead of Brahman, is postulated as the intelligent and material cause of the universe.(“abhinna nimitta upadaana kaaranam”)

and Maya becomes the changing cause of the universe (parinami upadana karanam) we call Brahman as the “vivarta kaaranam” of the universe, because Brahman does not undergo change when nama roopa are superimposed. But, without undergoing any change, the Existence aspect of Brahman serves as the sub-stratum for nama roopa to be superimposed. But for the existence of the sub-stratum, the unreal universe cannot appear. The false snake that is perceived on the rope encountered in semi-darkness cannot appear but for the existence of the rope. Brahman is also, indirectly, the nimitta kaaranam, because, but for the presence of Brahma caitanyam, Iswara will not have the reflected consciousness, which enables him to function as the intelligent cause of the universe.

6. As examples of the same entity being both the intelligent cause and the material cause of the universe, Upanishad gives the example of the spider producing the web out of its own body guided by its own instinct (vide Mundaka 1.1.7 - “Just as the spider spins out the web out of its own body and withdraws it unto itself, so out of the Immutable does the universe emerge here (in this phenomenal creation.)”. Another example is the person perceiving his own vasanas as a dream world. He is not only the creator of the dream inasmuch as it is he who is creating a dream world but the raw material for the dream world is also his own vasanas. Like that Iswara is not only the visualizer, but the material for creation is also in Iswara as Maya.

Section 9 - Status of Maya

9. The avarana sakti of Mayii is indicated in certain Upanishads. - Swetasvatara Upanishad 1.3 talks of Paramatma being veiled by the three gunas (satva, rajas, and tamas of His power (*paramaatmasakti*). Paramatmasakti is Maya). 1.6 says that jivas, regarding themselves to be different from Iswara (*prerita*), get caught

up in samsara and, blessed by Iswara, attain immortality through Iswara. 1.8 says that jivas are bound on account of the sense of enjoyership (bhoktrubhava). Kaivalya 12 says “The jivatma deluded by Maya, identifies with the body, does all and actions”. Krishna Upanishad talks of the world being deluded by Maya. Swetasvatara IV.9 also talks of jivas being under the influence of Maya. (Delusion caused by Maya and the power of Maya which veils our Bramatvam is mentioned in Bhagawadgita 7.5, 7.13, 7.15 and 7.25.)

10. That Maya does not enjoy the same order of reality as Brahman we can infer from certain Upanishad mantras. The non-dual nature of Paramatma itself excludes the existence of any other entity of the same order of reality. Maya is no exception. Besides we have Upanishad mantras which indicate the lower status of Maya. Following the Sankhya system, the first category in the order of the evolution of the differentiated universe is called ‘Mahat’. Katopanishad I.3.11 says, “Superior to Mahatis Avyaktam (i.e. Maya). Superior to Avyaktam is ‘Purusha’ (i.e., the infinite, Brahman). There is nothing superior to Purusha. He is the ultimate and He is the supreme goal.” Mundaka Upanishad III.ii.8 – “The *vidwaan* (i.e., the one who has known himself to be Brahman), having become freed from name and form, reaches the self-fulgent Purusha (i.e. Brahman) that is superior to the superior.” Here, the second “superior” refers to Maya. Mundaka Upanishad II.i.2 “Purusha (i.e., the infinite, Brahman) is transcendental, because It is formless, complete, coextensive with all that is external and internal, birthless, without prana and without mind, pure and superior to the superior *aksahara* (imperishable).” (Here also, the second “superior” called *akshara* refers to Maya and Brahmanis said to be superior even to Maya. Maya is said to be *aksharam* (imperishable) because it is an endless cycle of projection and resolution of nama roopa and it is said to be superior because in its status as the cause of the material universe, it is superior to the its effect, the projected universe. (The word ‘akshara’ (imperishable) has different meanings in different contexts. In Mundaka Upanishad passage “aksharaat paratah parah”, the word,

‘aksharam’ means Maya. In Brhadaranyaka 3.8,10 and 11, the word, ‘aksharam’ means nirguna Brahman. In Brahadaranyaka 3.8.9, the word, aksharam means ‘Iswara’.)

The same kind of phrase “paraatpara” as a description of Brahman occurs elsewhere. Svetasvatara Upanishad 3.8 and Kaivalya Upanishad 7 and Svetasvatara Upanishad 3.3 stalk of Brahman as being beyond Maya (tamasahparastaat). Svetasvatara Upanishad 5.1. is a very clear enunciation of the lower status of Maya. It says that in the imperishable, infinite Brahman rest vidya and avidya; vidya is imperishable (in the sense that once the covering of avidya is overcome, vidya, the knowledge of one’s nature of Brahman is indestructible); avidya is perishable (in the sense that the avidya-covering is destroyed when one gains the knowledge of jiva brahma aikyam); the one who rules over these (the atma) is different from the two..

(On the macrocosmic scale, superimposed on the Existence-Consciousness-Infinity and endowed with the reflected consciousness the universal causal body is called “Iswara”, the universal subtle body is called “Hiranyagarbha”, and the universal gross body is called “Virat”. On the microcosmic scale, similarly superimposed on the Existence-Consciousness-Infinity and endowed with the reflected consciousness, the individual causal body is called “prajna” and it experiences the deep sleep state, the individual subtle body is called “taijasa” and experiences the dream state and the individual gross body is called “visva” and it experiences the waking state.)

Section 10 - Brahman as Consciousness

All Pervading and Immanent in Beings as Atma

1. We experience mind as a conscious entity entertaining one thought after another. Various Upanishad passages teach us that, superior to the mind, we have in us an unchanging consciousness, called atma or pratyagatma or sakshi. Apart from the four famous mahavakyas, many of them reiterate that the pratyagatma is none other than Brahman. Thus, Upanishads make it clear that there are not many atmas but there is only one all pervading, divisionless, non-dual consciousness; it is this consciousness that is available for recognition by individual beings through observation of the functioning of the mind. Kaivalya Upanishad 10 – “Clearly recognizing Atma to be present in all beings and clearly recognizing all beings in oneself.....” Isavasya Upanishad 6 – “ He who sees all beings as non-different from his Atma and sees the Atma of those beings as his own Atma....”Kaivalya Upanishad 16 – “You alone are that Infinite eternal supreme Brahman which is the Atma of all.....” Kaivalya Upanishad 17– “I am that Brahman which illumines the worlds of waking, dream, sleep etc.” Kaivalya Upanishad 14 refers to Jivatma as indivisible Bliss-Consciousness (aanandam akhandabodham) in whom alone the three ‘cities’ go into dissolution”. (“Three cities’ refers to the jagrat prapanca, the swapna prapanca and the sushupti prapanca, i.e., the sthoola, sukshma, karana prapanca – this negates the idea of plurality of atmas). Taittiriya Upanishad II.1 and I.6, Mundaka Upanishad III.i.7, Svetasvatara Upanishad III.11 and Brhadaranyaka Upanishad I.iv.7 talk of Brahman as being available for recognition as Sakshi in the Jivatma (- interpretations based on Sankaracarya’s commentary -) (“yo veda nihitam guhayam” “ Tat srushtva tat eva pravisat.”, “nihitam guhayam” ”sarva bhoota guahasaya” “sa esha pravishtah”) . Similar expressions occur in Svetasvatara Upanishad mantras III.7, IV.15, IV.16, IV.17, VI.11, Mundaka Upanishad II.i.10, Kaivalya Upanishad 23 etc. Kena Upanishad 1.6 – “That which man does

not comprehend with the mind, that by which, they say, the mind is encompassed, know that to be Brahman”. (What encompasses the mind is the atma. ‘That atma is Brahman’ means that there is the only common atma in all). Svetasvatara III.19 -“Though It is devoid of hands and legs, It grasps everything and moves about everywhere. Though It is devoid of eyes, It sees everything. Though It is devoid of ears ,It hears everything. Though It is devoid of mind, It knows everything but nobody knows It. The rishis call It the First, the infinite and the Supreme.” (This is a reference to Brahman as being the atma in all, appearing to see etc. when the cidabhasa is seeing etc.). Mundaka Upanishad II.ii.9 - “In the supreme bright sheath i.e., in the vijnanamaya kosa, the intellect of individual beings, is Brahman, the light of lights (“jyotisham jyoti”), free from taints and divisionless (“virajam, nishkalam)” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iii.7 talks of the infinite entity (Purusha) as being in the midst of the organs as the self-effulgent light within the heart. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iii.32 – “.....one, the witness, without a second (the reference is to sakshi). This is the sphere of Brahman.” Kathopanishad II.ii.9, 10, 11 and 12 talk of Atmaas being the one in all beings. Taittiriya II.1. which is invoked as 1 – “Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma; He who knows that Brahman as hidden in the cavity that is the intellect.....” Mundaka Upanishad II.i.10 -“He who knows this supremely immortal Brahman as hidden in the cavity that is the intellect....” (Brahman is Existence-Consciousness-Infinity. As the eternal Existence forming the substratum of nama roopa – Sat – It is recognizable everywhere but as Consciousness- cit – It can be appreciated only as the witness of the mind.) Mundaka Upanishad III.i.7 – “It (Brahman) is great (because of its all pervasiveness) and self-effulgent..... It is further away than the far off. It is near at hand in this body. Among sentient beings, it is perceived in the cavity of the

heart (.i.e. the intellect) by the enlightened”. “Swetasvatara Upanishad II.15 – “When one knows atmaas Brahman”. Kenopanishad I.2. - “The ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the breath of the breath, the eye of the eye.” Those who know this atma, after giving up identification with the sense organs and renouncing this world become immortal.” (“Mind of the mind” means that atma is different from the mind and is superior to the mind). Kenopanishad 1.6 – “That which man does not comprehend with the mind, that, by which, they say, the mind is comprehended, know that to be Brahman.” A very clear support for the proposition that the original consciousness available in Jivatmas is none other than the consciousness that is Brahman occurs in Chandogya Upanishad VIII.xii.3. It says, “This tranquil one, that is, jivatma, rising up from this body (the reference is to videhamukti) becomes one with the Supreme Light(i.e., Brahman) and is established in his own nature.” (The words, “ becomes one with the Supreme light” and “ is established in his own nature” clearly mean that the consciousness constituting the essence of the individual jivatmas called Atma is the same as the all pervading, infinite consciousness called Brahman.) Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.13- (based on Sankaracarya’s commentary”) – “He, the knower of Brahman, who has realized and intimately known the Self – How? – as the innermost Self – as ‘I am the supreme Brahman’ that has entered this place (the body).....all this is his Atma and he is the Atma of all.....” “In Aiterya Upanishad mantra III.1.2, enumerating various functions of the mind, it is said that all these are the names of Consciousness and III. 2. 3 says that this atma is Brahman.

Section 11 - Reflected Consciousness (Cidabhasa)

11. While the existence of a changing conscious entity which we call the mind and an unchanging conscious entity which is referred as the atma or Pratyagatma or Sakshi is a matter of personal experience, the fact that what there is in the mind (antahkarana) is the reflected consciousness is a matter of inference. Since Brahma caitanyam is all pervading, the question arises why is it that we experience only our antahkarana as a conscious entity and our body and sense organs as sentient and why things we categorize as inanimate objects are not sentient. This disparity cannot be explained unless we predicate a reflected consciousness and a special capacity, on account of its subtlety, on the part of antahkarana to reflect consciousness and to impart it to the sense organs and the body. - which capacity grosser nama roopa like table etc do not possess. There are various passages in the Upanishads to show that the body mind complex by itself is inert (being made of food – vide Chandogya Upanishad VI.v.4 and VI.vi.2) and it is the atma that lends sentience and consciousness to the body, sense organs and the antahkarana. Cf. the portion in Taittiriya Upanishad III.7.i which says, “....Because if the space-like all pervadingBrahman was not there, who could inhale and exhale?.....This one, this supreme atma which resides in the heart (i.e., in the mind, as the witness of all thoughts) blesses everyone with consciousness and happiness.” Commenting on Kenopanishad I.i – (“Directed by whom does the mind pervade the objects? Directed by whom does prana function?” and I.i - “.....the mind of the mind, the prana of the prana.....”), Sankaracarya says, “Because the antahkarana is not able to perform its functions – thinking, determination etc. – unless it is illumined by the light of consciousness.”). Similarly, in his commentary on Kena Upanishad mantra 1.6 – “That which man does not comprehend with the mind, that by which, they say, the mind is encompassed, know that to be Brahman”, he says, “The mind can think only when it is illumined by the light of the Consciousness”. . Svetasvatara Upanishad VI.11– “Hidden in all beings is the non-dual Effulgent One (Brahman). It is all pervading, is the real nature of all beingsIt resides in all beings. It is the

witness of all. It is what makes (the mind) conscious. the lender of consciousness. (“*ceta*” = *cetayita*). Sankaracarya says, in his commentary on Brhadaranyaka Upanishad III.iv.2, “(Yajnavalkya addressing Ushasta) ‘you asked me to present the Atma as one would a jar etc. I do not do so, because it is impossible. Why is it impossible? Owing to the very nature of the thing. What is that? Its being the witness of vision etc, for the atma is the witness of vision. Vision is of two kinds – ordinary vision and real vision. Ordinary vision is a function of the mind as connected with the eye; it is an act and as such it has a beginning and an end. But the vision that belongs to the Atma is like the heat of the fire; being Its very nature, it has no beginning or end. Because it appears to be connected with the ordinary vision, which is produced and is but a limiting adjunct of it, it is spoken of as the witness, and also as differentiated into witness and vision. The ordinary vision, however, is colored by the objects seen through the eye, and of course has a beginning; it appears to be connected with the eternal vision of the Atma and is but its reflection; it originates and ends, pervaded by the other. Because of this, the eternal vision of the Atma is metaphorically spoken of as the witness, and although eternally seeing, is spoken of as sometimes seeing and sometimes not seeing. But as a matter of fact the vision of the Atma never changes....You cannot know that that pervades knowledge which is the mere function of the intellect.”.Brhadaranyaka UpanishadIII.vii.23– “..... Mundaka Upanishad II.ii.10 and Kathopanishad II.ii.15 – “There the sun does not shine, nor the moon nor the stars, not to speak of lightning or fire – (i.e., Brahma caitanyam as Sakshi illumines the mind and sense organs by being the source of cidabhasa and through them the world. But nothing in the world or the sense organs or the mind can illumine It, because they themselves are illumined by It. The illumined cannot illumine the illuminator.) It alone is thelight (i.e., It alone is the independent consciousness.) Other lights come after It. It is by Its light alone all else shines. (i.e., Whatever else is sentient or conscious is sentient only because it reflects this real light, that is, the original consciousness. Mind is conscious only

because the original consciousness is reflected in it.) Kathopanishad II.ii.13 talks of atma as the conscious among the conscious. Sankaracarya explains, in his Bhashyam that the words, “among the conscious” refers to the manifesters of consciousness, such as the living creatures beginning with Hiranyagarbha and adds “just as it is owing to the fire that water etc. that are not fire come to be possessed of the power to burn, similarly, the power to manifest consciousness that is seen in others is owing to the consciousness that is the Atma”.

Brhadaranyaka Upanishad II.v.19 – “He transformed Himself in accordance with each form; that form of His is for the sake of making Himself known. (*Roopam roopam pratiroopo babhoova; tadasya roopam praticakshanaaya*)” (

Sankaracarya’s commentary – “The same Lord, in the process of manifesting name and form, ‘transformed Himself in accordance with each form’. Why did He come in so many forms? ‘That form of His was for the sake of making Himself known’ Were name and form not manifested the transcendent nature of this atma as undifferentiated Consciousness would not be known. When, however, name and form are manifested as the body and instruments of knowledge, it is possible to know this nature of the atma.”) Kathopanishad II.ii.9 and 10, giving the example of the shapeless fire principle assuming the shape of the different logs of wood that are being burnt and the air assuming separate forms in accordance with different shapes of different objects, the atma, though the same in all beings, assumes different forms in accordance with each shape (i.e. the different character of different body-mind complexes) (*roopam roopam pratiroopah*).. The division is not in the original consciousness, but the antahkaranas, the reflecting media, being many, the reflections are also many. Brahadaranyaka II.v.19 – “Paramatma assumes manifold forms on account of Maya” (“*Indro mayaabhih pururoopa iiyate*”. Here, the word, ‘Maya’ means cidabhasa. In each intellect, there is reflected consciousness. And, through the many reflected consciousnesses, atma appears to be many. Brhadaranyaka IV.iii.7 (“Which is the atma?’. ‘This infinite entity (Purusha) that is identified with

the intellect and is in the midst of the organs, the light within the heart, *hrdayantarjyotih*. Assuming the likeness – i.e., the likeness of the intellect, it moves between two worlds; it thinks, as it were, and shakes, as it were”) within the intellect”), In his commentary, “..’*vijnanamaya*’, identified with the intellect; atma is so called because of our failure to discriminate its association with its limiting adjunct (*upadhi*), the intellect, for it is perceived as associated with the intellect..... ‘Within the heart’;....heart, here, means the intellect, which has its seat in the heart.....The word, ‘within’ indicates that the atma is different from the modifications of the intellect. Atma is called light, because it is self-effulgent, for, through this light, the self-effulgent atma, this aggregate of body and organs – i.e., the body-mind complex - effulgence of Atma that the body mind complex goes out and works, as if it were sentient, like the shining of a jar placed in the sun .Or likean emerald or any other gem dropped into milk etc imparts its lustre (effulgence) to the milk etc., so does the effulgent atma..... imparts its lustre to the body and organs, including the intellect.The intellect being clear (*svacca*) and close to the atma, easily catches the reflection of the atma.....next comes the manas which catches the reflection of the atma through the intellect; and lastly the body through the organs”That is why, depending on the degree of discrimination, each one identifies himself with one or other component of the body mind complex.....’It thinks as it were’; By illumining the intellect, which does the thinking, atma, through its self-effulgent light that pervades the intellect.....seems to think.Hence the people think that the atma thinks but really it does not.” Chandogya Upanishad VI.iii.2 – “That Deity (which is the non-dual Existence – Brahman -) envisioned, “Let it be now, by entering into these three Gods, in the form of the jivatma of each individual being.....” Sankaracarya, in his Bhashyam, explains, “each jivatma is merely the manifestation of the Deity (Brahma caitanyam.). It arises from the ‘contact’ of the Deity with the subtle elements like the intellect etc. It is like the reflection of a person, seeming to have entered into a mirror and like the reflection of the sun in water, etc. This becomes

the cause of multifarious ideas, such as, 'I am happy', 'I am sorrowful', 'I am ignorant' etc., owing to the non-realization of the true nature of the Deity. Since the Deity has entered merely as a reflection in the form of a jivatma, It does not itself become connected with happiness, sorrow etc. As a person, the sun, and others enter into a mirror, water etc. merely through their reflections, are not touched by the defects of the mirror, water etc." In his commentary on Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.7 which talks of the atma entering into the created bodies, Sankaracarya, in his commentary poses an objection, "Since the objects that have been entered into are subject to transmigration, and the Supreme Self is identical with them, It too comes under transmigration. It will also be subject to samsara that we experience". To this, Sankaracarya answers, "the consciousness that experiences samsara is not that of Brahman Itself. Like the reflection of sun in water, the consciousness that is involved in such perceptions as one is happy or miserable is only the reflection of Brahman in the limiting adjuncts (upadhis) like the intellect". Brhadaranyaka 4.3.7 says – "He thinks, as it were; He shakes, as it were." (This means that the original consciousness does not itself think, but when the mind thinks, it appears to think. Mind, being inert, cannot think, by itself. So, here also, association of the original consciousness with the mind is envisaged in the form of a reflection). In his commentary on Brhadaranyaka 2.1.19, which deals with sushupti, Sankaracarya says, "The atma caitanyam (*vijnaanamaya atma*) pervades the intellect with a reflection of its own consciousness.....It follows the nature of its limiting adjunct, the intellect, just as a reflection of the moon etc, follows the nature of water and so forth."

1. Yet another important mantra which establishes clearly that there is in the body mind complex a consciousness which is different from Brahma caitanyam is Brhadaranyaka Upanishad mantra II.iv.12 (clarification in mantra 13) where the phrase "na pretya samjna asti" ("there is no longer any consciousness") occurs. In this mantra, in the Yajnavalkya Maitreyi

dialogue, Yajnavalkya gives the example of salt water and salt crystals formed out of it. Atma, the original, all pervading consciousness is compared to salt water or the ocean. Here, there is no plurality or individuality; the original consciousness is divisionless; being all pervading, it is also available in the jivatmas. But parts of the salt water can become crystallized on account of heat, and thus acquire individuality. Like that, on account of the presence of the body mind complex, which is compared to the heat, the divisionless consciousness gets reflected in the mind and thus, with a separate reflected consciousness – a particular consciousness - in each mind, having an individuality of its own, emerges. Thus there is a plurality of ahamkaras, experiencing the world in diverse ways. When the salt crystals are put back in the water, salt again becomes homogenous (divisionless). Like that, when the jnani's sthoola sarira dies and sukshma sarira and karana sarira disintegrate at the time of videhamukti, the particular consciousness perishes. The words are, 'there is no longer consciousness' ("na pretya samjna asti"). These words cannot refer to atma caitanyam (brahma caitanyam), because it is eternal; what the jnani attains at the time of videhamukti is oneness with Brahma caitanyam. So, there is no question of the Brahma caitanyam ceasing to be. What ceases, in videhamukti, is the sukshma sarira which includes the ahamkara comprising the antahkarana and the reflected consciousness. It is the ahamkara which is referred as ceasing to be, in videhamukti, when the mantra says "na pretya samjna asti". Therefore the cessation of consciousness that is mentioned in the mantra can only refer to the reflected consciousness, the cidabhasa in the antahkarana with which the jivanmukta was carrying on the day to day activities until the fall of the sthoola sarira.

Section 12 - Significance of Cidabhasa

1. Another question that arises is that if Brahma caitanyam is all pervading, how is it that I do not know what you are thinking and I do not see the movie you are seeing. The answer is that for knowing anything as an object or idea, two things are required. (i) there must be a second entity other than the knower and (ii) a focusing on or exclusive pervasion of a single object or idea at a time by the consciousness involving modification of the consciousness from one configuration to another, corresponding to the objects or ideas coming one after another. Brahman, being non-dual, there is no second entity that It can know. Even if It is taken as the knower, since It is all pervading (sarvagatah), divisionless (nirvikalpa) and changeless (nirvikara), Brahma caitanyam cannot arise as one flash after another to focus on or pervade one particular object to become a particular configuration after another corresponding to the particular objects. Division and differentiation in the form of a separate reflected consciousness in each antahkarana – multiple secondary consciousnesses as abhasa vada would have it - or conditioning by the individual intellects as avacceda vada would have it or the false notion of reflection in the multiple modes of Maya, the intellects, as pratibimba vada would have it, is necessary for multiple knower –consciousnesses to be formed. Since my knower-consciousness is confined to my intellect and yours to you, I do not know what you are thinking and you do not know what I am thinking. That is why, when the teacher shows the sushupti as an example for us to understand the state of mukti, Brhadaranyaka IV.iii.30, says, “There is not that second thing separate from it that It can know.” And, describing videhamukti, when the jnani’s sukshma sarira and karana sarira themselves have disintegrated – talking of the paramarthika plane where there is nothing

other than Brahman, Brhadaranyaka Upanishad II.iv.14 says “What can one see through what?” Chandogya 7.24.1 – “The Infinite is that where one does not see anything else, does not hear anything else, does not know anything else.” For Brahman, there is not even knowing transaction (Cf. Mandukya Upanishad mantra 7 – “avyavaharyam”). The vyavaharika prapanca exists only for the vyavaharika jivas. The jnanis among them see it as mithya and the ajnanis see it as real. It is the different minds in different individuals that enable each of us to perceive and think separately about separate things. If a stone is thrown into a pool of water where sun is reflected, that reflection alone is disturbed, not the reflection in other pools. (2). When we refer to Brahman as Sakshi, we are not diluting this proposition in any way. There, we are only reiterating the eternal presence of the all pervading consciousness, with emphasis on Its availability in the individual beings. The knowing of objects and ideas occurs, not at the paramarthika level, but at the lower order of reality, the vyavaharika level. At the vyavaharika level, there is a multiplicity of names and forms and there is division of knower, known and knowing instrument. The presence of Sakshi serves as the source for the antahkarana to obtain a reflected consciousness. The antahkaranas with their cidabhasas are multiple; each individual being has its own separate antahkarana with cidabhasa in it. Each antahkarana with cidabhasa in it (called ahamkara) focuses on a particular object or idea, separately, and, having the capacity to undergo modification, assumes one configuration after another, corresponding to the objects and ideas coming one after another. This is what is said in the first portion of Brhadaranyaka mantra II.ii.14. Talking of mithya dwaitam, - knower, known and knowing instrument – it says, “when there is duality (dwaitam), as it were, (the words, ‘as it were’ are significant, because they are the authority for saying that the

division of knower, known and knowing instrument is unreal – mithya -) one sees another..... one knows another.” If the knowing consciousness was not in the form of separate individual consciousnesses, and if there was only the original consciousness common to all, the objects of the world would all enter the common consciousness, in one jumbled confusion – confusion, space-wise and time-wise. For example, you may see the garbage being dumped in the street in the food you are about to take. You may see a grandfather who died long ago holding the new-born grandson – and so on.

Section 13 - Brahman as Bliss

12. Brahman is described as Sat Cit Ananda. Ananda is translated in English as Bliss. But the word ananda used to define Brahman's nature, does not refer to experiential happiness. It should be equated with anantatvam i.e. infinitude – infinitude not only space wise, but time wise and entity-wise – indicated by the word “anantam’ occurring in the Taittiriya Upanishad mantra II.i – “ Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma”. This anantatvam (or poornatvam) is reflected in the pure, calm mind of a Jnani who has identified himself with the infinite Brahman. Having identified himself with Brahman, the infinitude, he can have the sense that he is the infinitude, which is also a sense of utter fulfillment. Such a sense, we can say, is supreme happiness. We have to distinguish between “swaroopa ananda”, ananda as the nature of Brahman and “kosa ananda”. Kosa ananda is, as a sense of fulfillment caused by the reflection of the anantatvam aspect of Brahman. It is experienced by all of us when our mind is calm at the interval between the attainment of a desired object and the arising of another desire. The ananda experienced by a jnani is unconditional happiness. i.e., it is not dependent on contact with objects and it has no gradation.; happiness experienced by others is conditional and graded. The word ananda denoting the infinitude of Brahman is used as such in some places in the Upanishads.–

Brhadaranyaka Upanishad III.ix.28 (7) –“vijnaanam aanandam Brahmaparaayanam tishtam aanasya tat vida’ (“Knowledge, Bliss, and Brahmanthe supreme goal of him who has realized Brahman and is established in It.”- Taittiriya Upanishad 2.41, 2.91 – “....if one knows the bliss that is Brahman (*aanandam brahmano* vidwaan) Taittiriya Upanishad III.vi.1 – “aananda brahma iti vijanaat” (“He knew Bliss as Brahman”). Taittiriya Upanishad II.v.1– “ananda atma” (“Bliss is Atma” ,i.e., Brahman) Taittiriya Upanishad II.vii – “ ko hi eva anyaat kah pranyaat yat esha aakaasa (Brahman) aananda na syaat” (“Who indeed will inhale, who will exhale, if this Bliss be not there in the supreme space within the heart) - Taittiriya Upanishad II.iv.1 and II.ix.1 – “anandam bramano vidwaan na vibheti kadacaneti (kudascaneti)” (“The enlightened man is not afraid of anything after realizing that Bliss that is Brahman”) Chandogya VII.xxiii.1 “yo vai bhooma tat sukham” (“ The Infinite alone is Bliss”). – Brhadaranyaka IV.iii.32 “Esha brahmalokah....esha asya parama aanandah. Eta anandasya anya bhootani maatram upajivati” (“This is the state of Brahman....This is Its supreme bliss. On a particle of this very bliss other beings live.”) Kathopanishad II.ii.14 refers to Brahman as supreme bliss (“paramam sukham.”). Kaivalya Upanishad 6 refers to Brahman as consciousness and bliss (“cidaandam “).

1. The ananda, the experiential happiness which a Jnani derives from his sense of utter fulfillment or desirelessness (the state of being without any desire) is brought out in certain places in the Upanishads. In the “Ananda mimamsa” portion in Taittiriya Upanishad (Chapter II, Valli 2, anuvaka 8 and in Brhadaranyaka Upanishad mantra IV.iii.33),it is equated with the absence of desire for the happiness available in the plane of Hiranyagarbha,which is the highest planeof the vyavaharika satyam. When no object is desired, the mind is calm and quiet; not lacking anything, there is a sense of fulfillment. H ere there is absence of

desire for the highest attainable world. So, the sense of fulfillment must be the most intense. In Taittiriya Upanishad Chapter 2, Valli 2, anuvaka 7), the name for Brahman is “rasah”. “Rasah”, in Sanskrit, in such contexts is the synonym for ananda. The mantra says, “The One described as Self Created (i.e. Unborn) in the previous mantra, is indeed rasah (ananda swaroopam). Attaining that rasah (identifying himself with that ananda, the Brahman)the jivatma becomes anandi (enjoys supreme happiness.) Uninterrupted ananda is obtained by the knowledge ‘I am the infinite Brahman’.

2. The logic of saying that Brahman’s nature is ananda is contained in Brhadaranyaka Upanishad in the second chapter, fourth section, fifth Mantra. Here, Yajnavalkya tells Maitreyi, his wife (who is such an expert in Vedic lore that she carries on a long and wonderful debate with her husband who is a Jnani) “Verily the husband is dear (to the wife) not for the sake of the husband, my dear, but it is for her own sake that he is dear. Verily the wife is dear (to the husband) not for the sake of the wife, my dear, but it is for his own sake that she is dear. Verily sons are dear (to parents) not for the sake of the sons, my dear, but it is for the sake of the parents themselves that they are dear. Verily wealth is dear not for the sake of wealth, my dear, but it is for one’s own sake that it is dear.verily worlds are dear not for the sake of the worlds, my dear, but it is for one’s own sake. Verily gods are dear not for the sake of gods, my dear, but it is for one’s own sake that they are dear. Verily beings are dear not for the sake of beings, my dear, but it is for one’s own sake that they are dear. Verily all is dear not for the sake of all, my dear, but it is for one’s own sake that all is dear.....” The argument is that everyone ultimately loves only oneself and all other love is only because it subserves the primary love of oneself. And one loves only that which is a

source of happiness. So, it is conclude that Atma is the source of happiness and, therefore the nature of Atma is ananda.

13. In his commentary on Brhadaranyaka III.ix.28 (7), Sankaracarya discusses whether the bliss (ananda) of Brahman mentioned in Sruti passages – such as Brhadaranyaka IV.ix.28 (7) Taittiriya III.6, Taittiriya II. 7, Chandogya VII.xxiii.1, IV.iii.22 is an object of cognition. The word, ‘ananda’ is commonly used to refer to pleasure that is cognized. And the passages cited above would (seem to) fit in if the bliss that is Brahman is an object of cognition. But, since negation of knowing when there is oneness, such as in Brhadaranyaka II.vi.14, II.v.15 – “But when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the atma, then what should one see and through what?”, Chandogya VI.xxiv.1 – “Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else, that is the infinite”...we have to discuss in order to ascertain the true meaning of the ananda passages. The discussion between the opponent, an intermediary and the Advaitin proceeds. Advaitin says, “Absolute separation from body is liberation, and when there is no body, there can be no organs.....there will be no knowledge, there being no body and organs....I it is said that , being of the nature of eternal knowledge-bliss, Brahman cognizes his own nature as bliss eternally, that is not possible. Because, if that is so, a videhamukta would also cognize bliss. But the man under bondage, when freed from relative existence, would regain his real nature as Brahman. He is like a handful of water thrown into a tank. He does not retain a separate existence so as to know the blissful Brahman. Hence to say that the videhamukta knows the blissful atma is meaningless. If, on the other hand, if it is said that the videhamukta, standing different from Brahman knows the bliss of Brahman and the pratyagatma as ‘I am ananda-swaroopam’, that will contradict the oneness of Brahman and go against all sruti passages. There is no third possibility. If it is said that Brahman ever knows Its own bliss, then it is superfluous to distinguish between awareness and non-awareness. If It is constantly aware of Its bliss, then

that is its nature; hence there is no sense in maintaining that it cognizes Its own bliss.Therefore, the text 'Knowledge Bliss Brahman' (*vijnaanam aanandam brahma*) must be interpreted as setting forth the nature of Brahman (Brahman's swaroopam) and not signifying that the atmaananda is cognized." (In other words, experiential pleasure which is an object of experience and is subject to gradation and arrival and departure is opposed to the aprameyatvam, nirvikaratvam and nityatvam of Brahman. The word 'ananda' should therefore be translated as 'anantam', infinitude).

Section 14 - Benefit of Identification with Brahman

1. All over the Upanishads, we get statements mentioning the benefit of the knowing, "I am Brahman". (Some of the statements have been paraphrased, in the light of Sankaracarya's commentaries). Chandogya Upanishad VII. 1. iii – "I have heard from masters like you that he who knows the Brahman transcends sorrow." Taittiriya Upanishad II.i.1 "The knower of Brahman attains Brahman. ("Brahmavid apnoti param"). Mundaka Upanishad III.2.ix – "Anyone who knows that supreme Brahman becomes Brahman indeed."He overcomes grief, rises above punya papa; and becoming freed from the knots of the heart (i.e., overcoming self-ignorance), he attains immortality." Kathopanishad II.ii.12 – "Eternal peace consisting in the blissfulness of the Self is for those who recognize the One God (Paramatma) who, because of his inscrutable power makes by His mere existence one form, His own Self that is homogenous and consists of unalloyed consciousness diverse through the differences in the impure conditions of name and form and who recognize Him as residing in the space of the heart within the body, i.e., as manifested as knowledge in the intellect, like a face appearing to exist in a mirror and have identified with Parmatma., not for others".

Kathopanishad II.ii.13 – “To those who recognize the Paramatma in their hearts, the eternal among the ephemeral, the indestructible consciousness among the destructible manifesters of consciousness such as the living creatures beginning with Hiranyagarbha accrues eternal peace that is their very Self, not for others. Kathopanishad I.iii.15 – “One becomes freed from the jaws of death by knowing That (i.e., Brahman) which is soundless, colorless, undiminishing, and also tasteless, eternal, odorless, without beginning, and without end, distinct from Mahat, and ever constant.” Taittiriya Upanishad II.vii – “whenever an aspirant gets established in this unperceivable, bodiless, inexpressible, and unsupported Brahman, he reaches the state of fearlessness.” Svetasvatara Upanishad II.14. – “Knowing the Atma, one becomes non-dual, fulfilled and free of sorrow.” Swesvatara Upanishad II.15 – “when one knows Brahman as Atma, i.e., knows “I am Brahman” (“the original consciousness in me is the infinite Brahman”), the Brahman which is unborn, whose nature is immutable, which is unaffected by avidya and its products and which is effulgent, one becomes freed from all bonds.” Swesvatara Upanishad III.7 – “Knowing that Brahman that is beyond the universe and Hiranyagarbha and is infinite, that is the indweller of all beings, that encompasses the universe, men become immortal.” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.23 - “This (Brahman described as ‘not this, not this’) is the eternal glory of a knower of Brahman. It neither increases nor decreases through work; 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, enduring and concentrated and sees the Atma in his own body; he sees all as the Atma. Papa does not overtake him, but he transcends all papa. Papa does not trouble him but he consumes all papas. He becomes free of

papa, taintless, free from doubts and a Brahmana, i.e., knower of Brahman.” Swesvatara Upanishad IV.17 - “Benefited by the teaching that negates the universe and discriminates between atma and anatma and reveals the unity of Jivatma and Brahman, he who knows that Brahman becomes immortal.” Taittiriya Upanishad II.ix.1 - “He who knows ananda that is Brahman has no fear.” _ Taittiriya Upanishad II.1.1- “Brahman is Existence-Consciousness-Infinity; he who knows that Brahman as existing in the cave-like space of the heart (I/e., mind) (i.e., as the consciousness behind one’s own mind) and thus having identified himself with that infinite Brahman, enjoys, simultaneously, all the desirable things.” Chandogya Upanishad VII.xxiv.2 – “The atma is indeed below, the atma is above, the atma is behind, the atma is in the south, the atma is in the north, the atma indeed is all this. Anyone who sees thus, reflects thus, understands thus, revels in the atma, disports in the atma, has union in the atma, and has joy in the atma. He becomes a sovereign. He has freedom of movement in all the worlds’ (“..., Evam pasyan evam manvaana evam vijaanan aatmaratih aatamakridah aatmamithunah aatmaanandah sa swaraat bhavati tasya sarvaeshu lokeshu kaamacaarah bhavati”. Mundaka III.i.3 – “When the seeker recognizes the effulgent Sakshi as the all pervading Brahman, who, in the form of Iswara, is the creator of the universe, becomes free from punya papa, becomes taintless and attains total identity with Brahman.” Mundaka Upanishad II.i.10 – “He who knows this supremely immortal Brahman as existing in the heart destroys, here, the knot of ignorance.” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iii.21 – “That is his form (The identity with all is his form); it is the form of atma in which all objects of desire have been attained; hence there is no desire. Desireless, he abides in the atma.” (“Tat vaa asya etat aaptakaamam aatmakaamam akaamam roopam.” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.12 – “If a man knows Atma

(Brahman) as “I am this” then desiring what and for whose sake will be suffer when the body is afflicted?” Sankaracarya’s commentary – “If a man.....knows the atma which is his own atma as well as the Paramatma – knows how? – as ‘I am this Paramatma’, the sakshi of perceptions of all beings, which has been described as ‘not this, not this’ and so on, than which there is no seer.....knower and is in all beings, and which is by nature eternal, pure consciousness and free, desiring what other thing, of the nature of a result, distinct from his own Self and for whose sake, i.e., for the need of what other person distinct from himself , because he as the atma has nothing to wish for, and there is none other than himself for whose sake he may wish it, he being the atma of all, therefore desiring what and for whose sake will he suffer in the wake of the body – deviate from his own nature, or become miserable, following the misery created by his limiting adjunct, the body, i.e., imbibe the afflictions of the body? For, this is possible for the man who identifies himself with anatma (that which is not atma, i.e. the body mind complex) and desires things other than atma and struggles and desires something for himself, something else for his son, and a third thing for his wife and so on, goes round the births and deaths and is diseased when his body is diseased. But all this is impossible for the man who sees everything as his atma.” Kathopanishad II.ii.11 – “ Just as the sun which is the eye of the world is not tainted by the ocular and external defects, similarly the Atma that is one in all beings is not tainted by the sorrows of the world, it being transcendental.”

Sankaracarya’s commentary – “People, after having superimposed on the Self (the atma) the false notions (adhyasa) of action, agent, and the results of action, like the snake falsely perceived on the rope, experience the misery of birth, death etc. consequent on that superimposition; but the atma, though it is the Self (atma) of all, is not tainted by the sorrow

of the world arising from false superimposition. Why? (Because It is) outside, i.e., just like the rope vis a vis the snake, it is extraneous to the superimposition of false notion. Prasna Upanishad IV.10 – “He who realizes that shadowless, pure, immutable attains the supreme immutable itself.” Kaivalya 9 – “He alone is everything which was in the past , which is in the present and which will be in the future and He alone is eternal. Having recognised Him, one crosses immortality. There is no other means for liberation.” Kaivalya Upanishad 10 - “Clearly recognizing oneself to be present in all beings and clearly recognizing all beings in oneself, the seeker attains the supreme Brahman; not by any other means”. (“Sarva bhotastam atmaanam sarva bhootani ca aatmani sampasyan brahma paramam yaati na anyena hetuna”). Kaivalya Upanishad 23 – “Recognizing the paramatma for which there is no earth, no water, no fire, no air, no akasa, which is in the cavity of the heart of beings, which is divisionless, and non-dual, which is the witness of all, and which is beyond the manifested and the unmanifested , one attains that pure paramatma. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad I.iv.2 – “From a second entity only fear arises.” (The gist is that the jnaani has the advantage of fearlessness, in that nothing in the world which is mithya can disturb him who is the satya atma.

Section 15 - Benefit of Knowing That I Am All (Sarvatmabhava)

1. As explained earlier, Sarvatmabhava (the sense that I am all) is without prejudice to the knowledge, “Brahmasatyam jaganmithya” Whereas asangatvam (the sense that I am satyam Brahman, the world is mithya; the mithya world cannot affect me) is paramarthika drshti, sarvatmabhava is a vyavaharika drshti; it is a positive perspective of the

all pervading aspect of Brahman... Isavasya Upanishad 6 – “He who sees all beings in the atma and the atma in all beings feels no hatred.” (“yastu sarvaani bhootani atmani eva anupasyanti sarvabhooteshu ca atmaanam tato na vijugupsate”). ‘Seeing all beings in the atma’ refers to the nama roopa and ‘seeing atma in all beings’ refers to the adhishtanam, Brahman. In this connection, we can usefully refer to Brhadaranyaka Upanishad II.4.vi. “The Brahmana rejects him who knows the Brahmana to be different from the Self. The Kshatriya rejects him who knows the Kshatriya to be different from the Self. Worlds reject him who knows the worlds to be different from the Self. The gods reject him who knows the gods to be different from the Self. Beings reject him who knows beings to be different from the Self. All reject him who knows all to be different from the Self. This Brahmana, this Kshatriya, these worlds, these gods, these beings and this all are only the Self (one’s own atma)” Brhadaranyaka II.iv.6 – “One who views Brahman as if having diversity in It goes from death to death.”

Section 16 - Karma is not the Means of Liberation

Knowledge of Identity with Brahman is The Only Means of Liberation.

14. Upanishad statements that knowledge, not karma, is the means of liberation are as follows: - Kaivalya Upanishad 3 – “It is through renunciation that a few seekers have attained immortality – not through rituals, not through progeny, not through wealth....” (“ na karmana na prajayaa na dhanena tyaganaike amrutatvamaanasuh”). Mundaka Upanishad I.2. 7 “....Indeed those who consider karma to be a means for moksha are fools. They enter old age and death again and again.” Mundakopanishad I.9 – “....These ritualists do not know the glory of moksha due to their attachment. Consequently these wretched ones fall down when the Punya is exhausted.” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad III.viii.10 – “ He...who

in this world, without knowing this Immutable, offers oblations in the fire, performs sacrifices and undergoes austerities even for many thousand years, finds all such acts but perishable; he, O Gargi, who departs from this world without knowing this Immutable, is miserable. But he, O Gargi, who departs from this world after knowing this Immutable, is a knower of Brahman". The same idea is expressed in different words in Brhadaranyaka Upanishad I.iv.10 – “Whoever in like manner knows It as, ‘I am Brahman’, he becomes all this. Even the gods cannot prevail against him, for he becomes their self. Whereas he who worships another god thinking, ‘He is one, and I am another does not know. He is like an animal to the gods.” Kenopanishad II.4 – “Through knowledge is attained immortality” (“...vidyayaa vindate amrutam”). Brhadaranyaka IV.iv.14 – “Those who know It become immortal” Also cf. Nrsimhapurvatapani Upanishad I.6. Cf. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.19 – “Brahman has to be recognised by the mind alone. (“manasaa eva anudrashtavyah.”) Kathopanishad II.i.11 – “This is to be attained by the mind alone. “Taittiriya Upanishad II.2.1 – “The knower of Brahman attains Brahman” (“Brahmavid apnoti param”) “The knower of Brahman becomes immortal.” Kathopanishad II.iii.8 – “Superior to the Unmanifested (Maya) is the Infinite who is.....without worldly attributes, knowing Whom a man becomes freed and attains immortality.” (“....Yam jnaatva mucyate jantuh...”). Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.7 – “....that very Atma I regard as Brahman. Knowing Brahman, I am immortal.” (“Tam eva manya atmanam vidwaan brahma amrutah amrutam.”) Brhadaranyaka IV.iv.14 – “Those who know It become immortal”. Mundaka III.ii.9 – “Anyone who knows that supreme Brahman becomes immortal”. Swesvatara Upanishad 2.15 says that the knower of Brahman is released from bondage. Prasna Upanishad IV.10 – “He who knows that shadowless, bodiless, pure, immutable attains that supreme Immutable itself” Prasna VI.6 – “You should now that Purusha (the infinite) who is worthy to be known” Kena II.5 – “The wise ones, having known (Brahman) to be in all beingsbecome immortal”. Swetasvatara I.11 – “Knowing

Brahman, one becomes.....free from the cycle of births and deaths.” The same mantra talks of the result of meditation, as distinguished from knowledge, as the means of kramamukti. Swetasvatara Upanishad III.7 – “That to which there is nothing superior, which is not limited, which is in every jiva conforming to the body of that jiva, which is non-dual, which encompasses the universe, knowing that parabrahman one becomes immortal”. Swetasvatara Upanishad III.8 and VI.15- “ Knowing that Paramatma that is Pratyagatma, Sakshi, that is the infinite, that is all pervading, that is effulgent.....men become immortal. For attaining this Brahman, there is no other means” (“.....na anya panthaa vidyate ayanaaya.”). Kaivalya Upanishad9 - “He alone is everything which is in the past, which is in the present and which will be in the future. Having known Him one crosses mortality. There is no other means for liberation.” (“..... na anya panthaa vimuktaye”). Swetasvatara Upanishad Vi.15- “.....Knowing That one becomes immortal. For moksha, there is no other means (Tameva veditvaa atimrtyumeti; naanyah panthaaa vidyate ayanaaya). “Kaivalya Upanishad 10 – “Clearly recognizing oneself to be present in all beings and clearly recognizing all beings in oneself, the seeker attains the Supreme Brahman, not by any other means”). (.....na anyena hetuna”)..Karma and Upasana involves the attitude that Brahman is different from oneself (*dwaita bhaava*). Brhadaranyaka I.iv.10 says ‘He who thinks that Brahman is one and he is another does not know.’”

1. Many philosophers, including even some exponents of Advaita Vedanta and yoga sastra talk of an accomplishment beyond knowledge or a mystic experience or nirvikalpa samadhi in which the mind is stilled (manonaasa takes place) as the ultimate means to realize Brahman. Visishtadvaita and dwaitam philosophers talk of bhakti as the ultimate means of liberation. But, as shown above, Sastra itself says that knowledge of Brahman is the only means of liberation (manasaa eva anudrashtavyah}. Mind is the only instrument available to man to gain

knowledge. If the mind is stilled, no knowledge, not to speak of knowledge of Brahman, is possible.

15. Some exponents of Vedanta talk of the necessity of mental repetition of 'ahambrahmasmi' (called *prasankyaayana*), after gaining ahambrahmasmi jnanam. To refute this, Sankaracarya uses Brhadaranyaka IV.iv.1 where Yajnavalkya tells Janaka that by gaining knowledge of Brahman he has attained that which is free from fear, i.e., Brahman; there is no instruction to do prasankyaayana. In Naishkarmyasiddhi II.82, Sureswaracarya says praskhyayana is a mental action and action is not undertaken for attaining something which is already available. Moksha is not a thing that is attained; it is ever one's nature (*nityasiddha*).

Section 17 - Liberation in This Life Itself - Jivanmukti

16. There is more than one place in the Upanishads where there is a clear indication that it is possible to be liberated from samsara in this very life. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.6 – “Being but Brahman he becomes merged in Brahman. (*Brahma eva san brahma aanpoti*”). (This refers to jivanmukti followed by videhamukti.) In this mantra, the Jivanmukta is described as “one without desires (*akaamah*), who is free from desires (*nishkaamah*), whose desires have been fulfilled (*aaptakamah*) and for whom all objects of desire are but the atma (*aatmakamah*)” (His goal was atma and he has attained it. When a person has attained atma, i.e. has gained and assimilated ahambrahmasmi jnanam it is as good as having fulfilled all anaatma desires as well, because atma is the essence of everything. Identified with Brahman he has a sense of completeness (*poornatvam*) and is without desires. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.14 – “Being in this very body we have somehow known that Brahman.....Those who know It become immortal,” Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.iv.7 – “When all the

desires that dwell in his mind are gone, he.....becomes immortal and attains Brahman in this very body. Just as the slough of a snake is cast off and lies in the ant-hill, so does this body lie.” Nrsimhapurvatapani Upanishad II.6 talks of the knower of Brahman becoming immortal, here itself. In Kathopanishad 2.3.14, it is said, “when all desires clinging to one’s heart fall off, then a mortal becomes immortal (and he) attains Brahman here (i.e. even when he is living.)” In 2.3.15, it is said “when all knots of the heart are destroyed, then a man becomes immortal and attains Brahman here (even when he is living).” Mundaka Upanishad 3.2.5 – “Having attained (known) Brahman, the seers become contented with their knowledge, established in identity with paramatma, composes with the senses withdrawn. Having known the all pervasive One everywhere, these discriminating people, ever merged in contemplation enter into the All (at the time of the falling of the body, i.e., they drop the upadhis conjured up by avidya, like space confined within a pot on the breaking of the pot”. Jivanmukti is not attainment of any new nature. It is discovery of one’s eternal nature. That is why in Chandogya, the guru tells Swetaketu “Thou art That” in the present sense and not in the future tense, “Tat tam bhavishyati”. Sankaracarya cites the instance of Rishi Vamadeva. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, citing Rg veda IV.xxvi.1, says, “knowing Brahman, Rishi Vamadeva attained sarvatmabhava”. The present participle, says Sankaracarya, is used only when what it indicates is simultaneous with what the main verb indicates. So, knowing Brahman and attaining sarvatmabhava are simultaneous. It means that liberation has been attained in this life itself (even while the rishi was in the womb).

Section 18 - Videhamukti

1. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV.4.vi – “Regarding this there is this Mantra verse: ‘Being attached, the (transmigrating self) together with its karma attains that on which its subtle body or mind is set. It

experiences (in the other world) the karma phalam for whatever karma it had done in this world. When it is exhausted, it comes again from that world to this world for new karma. Thus does the person with desires (transmigrate). But in the case of the person who is without desires, (without desires because) for whom all objects of desire have been attained, (attained because has no desires), (he has no desires because) for whom there is no desire other than the atma (identified with the atma, what should one see, hear, think or know and through what?), his organs do not depart. (Since the man who has no desire has no work and therefore his organs (sukshma sarira) have no cause to go to the next world). Being but Brahman, he is merged in Brahman (ya akaamah nishkaamah aaptakaamah aatmakaamah na tasya praana utkraaamanati, brahmaiva san brahma aapyeti)". Kaivalya Upanishad 4 – "Through a life of renunciation, the pure minded seekers clearly grasp the meaning of teaching of Vedanta. Having become one with the Infinite Brahman (while living), all those seekers get totally resolved into Brahman at the time of final death." Mundaka III.ii.4 – "The atma of the knower (of Brahman) merges in the abode that is Brahman". Prasna Upanishad VI.5 – " Just as the these flowing rivers that have the sea as their goal get absorbed on reaching the sea, the sixteen constituents of the all seeing Purusha, i.e., one who has recognizes his identity with Brahman , the one who has Purusha (Brahman) as one's goal, (the sixteen digits being the ten indriyas, the five pranas and the ahamkara) disappear on reaching Purusha (Brahman), when their nama roopa are destroyed and the one (the entity that remains undestroyed) is simply called Purusha (Brahman)". (Depending on the context, the word, "Purusha" refers to jivatma or Iswara or Brahman). Mundaka Upanishad III.ii.7 also indicates that the sukshma sarira and karma sarira of a jivanmukta disintegrate and are dissolved in their cosmic

source - “.To their sources return the constituents of the body and to their respective gods go all the presiding deities of the senses”.

Brhadaranyaka III.ii.11 – “Yajnavalkya’ asked he, ‘when this liberated person (jivanmukta) dies, do his organs go up from him, or do they not?’ ‘No’, replied Yajnavalkya...”.

Section 19 - Kramamukti

1. We get references to kramamukti in Prasna Upanishad V.5 and Swesvatara Upanishad I.11 Prasna 5.5. – “Any one who meditates on the supreme Purusha, using the three letters of Om (as aalambanam, symbol) goes, after death, to the bright Sun-world.....He becomes freed from papa and he is led to the world of Brahmaa (Hiranyagarbha) by the saama mantras. There he sees (gains knowledge of) the supreme Purusha (i.e. Brahman)”. After teaching that that by knowing Paramatma all afflictions (klesas) are destroyed and one is liberated from the cycle of births and deaths, Swetasvatara Upanishad I.11 goes on to describe the process of upasana and kramamukti. It says “If one meditates on Parameswara during life, on the fall of the physical body, the sukshma sarira goes to join Iswara (the kaaranabrahma, the macrocosmic causal body, enjoys sarva-aiswarya (all happiness, powers, etc.), and, thereafter, as aaptakaamah (i.e. with a sense of all desires being fulfilled by knowledge of identity with Brahman) becomes Brahman”

Section 20 - Purpose of Teaching about Gods with Attributes

1. The ultimate reality, in Advaita Vedanta is not a principle external to ourselves. It is pure existence, i.e., an eternal all pervading presence without form and without attributes which is also pure consciousness. Or, as gratefulness to Iswara for having provided facilities for gaining jnanam and seeking His grace to retain jnanam, he may use ahamkara, without prejudice to his identification with Brahman, and do namaskara to Iswara.” This is the nirguna Brahman (attributeless Brahman). And that is identical with our own consciousness. There is no duality whatsoever. However, with that as the substratum, there is, as a lower order of reality, as mithya, a superimposition of manifold forms; the combination of the two appears to us as objects of the world including living beings. This is the vyavaharika plane, as distinguished from the paramarthika plane, where there is no universe at all, not to speak of gods. In the vyavaharika plane, the objects include gods. At the highest level, there is Iswara, the saguna Brahman (Brahman qualified with the attributes of omniscience, omnipotence and all pervasiveness), the creator. Iswara is uncreated (i.e. He is always there, in the vyavaharika plane, without beginning and without end.). Iswara himself, as reflected consciousness in Maya belongs to the vyavaharika plane. When Iswara creates the various constituent parts of the universe, he designates subordinate forms of reflected consciousnesses to preside over them. These are personified as gods. Starting with Hiranyagarbha presiding over the whole cosmos, we have deities like Indra, Agni, Vayu, Varuna etc. presiding over various forces of nature and over the constituent parts of living beings. Aspects of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe are also personified as Brahmaa (Hiranyagarbha), Vishnu and Siva. Incarnations of Iswara, (called “avatars”) like Rama, Krishna etc. are also accepted as phenomena on the vyavaharika plane. Avatars are regarded as Iswara descending in various worlds in various forms

and with various manifestations of his powers on critical occasions when restoration of cosmic harmony is called for. The bodies and minds of gods and even avataras are also mithya (vyavaharika satyam.) It is made clear in certain Upanishads that there is only one absolute reality; that is called Brahman, and gods are only manifestations - nama roopa – on the vyavaharika plane. In Brhadaranyaka Upanishad III.ix.1 to 9, in the dialogue between Vidagadha and Yajnavalkya, read with Brhadaranyaka Upanishad III.ix.26, it is made clear that the various gods mentioned in Vedas , like Vasus, Rudras, Adityas, Indra, Prajapati, Hiranyagarbha are only manifestations of the one absolute non-dual, attributeless Brahman. To the question, “how many gods are there”, the answer starts with 3003 and comes down, step by step to 33, to 6, to 3, to 2, to 1 ½ and finally to one To the question “Which is that one God? the answer is “It is Brahman”. That gods are only nama roopa and the reality is only Brahma caitanyam is brought out in the story in Kenopanishad where the gods think that what was the victory of god is their glory. To disabuse them of this false idea, Brahman appears as a Yakshha. The gods could not make out what it was. One god after another is sent by Indra to find out. Agni goes; the yaksha asks “What power is there in you”. Agni says “I can burn up all this that is there on the earth”. The Yaksha places a straw in front of Agni. Agni is not able to burn it. Similarly Vayu goes; Vayu is unable to blow the straw away. Then Indra himself goes; when Indra approaches, the Yaksha vanishes. Then Uma appears; Indra asks “What is the yaksha that appeared and vanished?” Uma tells him “It was Brahman”. He long and short of it is that the essence of everything, even of the gods is Brahma caitanyam. But for Brahma caitanyam, gods are also inert. Svetasvatara Upanishad VI. 7 – “He is the ruler of all the rulers; he is the god of all gods...” Mundaka Upanishad II. I. 7– “From him take their origin the numerous

gods, the heavenly beings.....” Kaivalya Upanishad 8 - “ He (Brahman) is Brahmaa, he is Siva, he is Indra, He is the imperishable, the supreme majesty, the self-effulgent; He is Vishnu, he is prana, He is time, He is fire, He is the moon.” –Aitereya UpanishadIII.i.3–“This one that is essentially consciousness is Brahmaa (‘a’ with elongated a); he is Indra, he is Prajapati, he is all these gods. And he is the five elements – earth, air, space, water, and fire – and he is all the beings in subtle seed form and all beings born from eggs, wombs, sweat, and the soil, horses, cattle, elephants and human beings. Including all these, whatever there is in this universe, flying beings, those moving on the ground, those that are immovable – have their existence only in consciousness and everything is functioning in their own field of work or role only by getting the requisite power and knowledge only from that consciousness. That consciousness is the substratum of everything. (Consciousness is the one reality in which all phenomenal things end, just as the superimposed snake ends in its base, the rope, on the dawn of knowledge.) That consciousness is Brahman.” Mahanarayana Upanishad III.12, talking of Brahman, says that He (Brahman) is Brahmaa (‘a’ elongated), Siva and Indra. Maitri Upanishad 4.5-6) says “devas like agni, vayu and surya are but the body of Brahman”. Taittiriya Upanishad 1.5.1 – “The gods are the limbs of Brahman”. Svetasvatara Upanishad IV.8 – ‘All Gods are superimposed on Brahman’. IV. 12 –“Gods are created by the omniscient Creator”. IV.13 - “The creator is the master of the gods”. IV.17 – “The gods are united in Brahman or Iswara, i.e. they are non-different from Brahman or Iswara”. From all this, it is clear that the various gods like Indra, Varuna etc. are merely aspects of the one Iswara and the personification is a symbolic way of expressing Iswara’s powers and functions; the personification is meant for meditation. Iswara himself is mithya. The

sole reality is Brahman which is nothing but pure existence-consciousness. . Moreover, even these personifications as Gods, according to Sastra, these so called gods, apart from Iswara, the gods like Indra, Varuna, Agni, Vayu, Surya, Candra etc, are only exalted jivas, i.e., those whose prarabdha karma is sopunya-predominant that they deserve to enjoy life in the higher worlds and are entrusted by Iswara to perform certain delegated functions in the cosmos for the duration of a particular unit in the cycle of creation. When that unit of creation is over, period is over they take rebirth on the earth or lower worlds, depending on the punya-papa proportion of the prarabdha karma assigned for that particular janmas in that unit of creation, unless they attain knowledge of identity with Brahman while they are there in the other world.

17. In regard to Hiranyagarbha, there are two views – one that He is Paramatma Himself and the other that He is also an elevated jiva only – a jiva who, in the previous creation, was an aspirant and being the foremost among those practicing meditation and rites has attained the status of Hiranyagarbha in the current creation. The view is based on Rg. Veda I.clxiv.46 – “They call It Indra, Mitra, Varuna and Fire”, Aitereya Upanishad 3.1.3 – “The Consciousness that is Brahman is Hiranyagarbha, It is Indra, It is Virat and all these Gods” and Manusmriti X.ii.123 – “Some call It Agni, others Manu and Virat”. Mundaka Upanishad I.i.1 talks of Brahmaa (Hiranyagarbha) as the first-born among the gods and qualifies him as the creator of the universe and protector of the world (Sankaracarya - “He was born independently, unlike other worldly creatures who take birth under the impulsion of punya and papa.”). The second view is based on Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.1 speaking of Hiranyagarbha– “ ...Because he was first and before this whole (band of aspirants) burnt all papa” (Sankaracarya’s commentary begins with “it has been explained that one attains the status of

Hiranyagarbha through a combination of meditation and rites”, Brhadaranyaka 1.4.2 – “He was afraid”, Brhadaranyaka 1.4.3 – “ He was not at all happy”, Swetasvatara 4.12 – “Hiranyagarbha, the first-born” and Manusmriti Xii.50 – “ Sages are of the opinion that attainment of oneness with Virat....

Hiranyagarbha.....is the highest result produced by satva or pure materials (rites coupled with meditation). In his commentary on Brahadaranyaka 1.4.6, Sankaracarya says, in effect, that different predications are possible depending on the quality of the limiting adjuncts of the consciousness that is paramatma.

Hiranyagarbha, possessing limiting adjuncts of extraordinary purity, is described by srutis and smritis mostly as the paramatma and seldom as the transmigrating jivatma gaining the status of Hiranyagarbha. The beauty of it is that all the gods, not excluding Iswara, is unreal. The *ajnaani*, the one who does not know his own real nature worships them as different persons.

18. On analysis, it will be seen that since nirguna Brahman cannot be an object of worship, the purpose of teaching saguna Brahman is only to enable man to go through worship and meditation of saguna Brahman and graduate to jnana yoga (study of Upanishads) and gain knowledge of nirguna Brahman. Cf.

Sankaracarya’s statement “citta avataara upaaya maatratvena”. The infinite Brahman or even the all pervading formless Iswara cannot be visualized. So, in order that devotees may have symbols of their choice for purposes of doing worship (*pooja*) or meditation, scriptures provide various forms, called gods. The spiritual seeker should not regard the gods that they worship as real, vide Kenopanishad 1.5,6,7,8. A devotee starts the spiritual practice (*sadahana*) with worship and meditation of a particular form, a particular god, such as Rama, Krishna, etc. But, as emphasized in Kena Upanishad 1.5, 6, 7.8, the gods worshipped by people are unreal. Therefore, the spiritual seeker has to progress further and leaving adherence to a particular form, learn to appreciate the whole universe as the manifestation of Brahman. He must see everything and every being that is glorious as Brahman. This is called *viswaroopa-darsanam*. But even

this also is only a stepping stone. Ultimately he has to dismiss all the gods, not excluding Iswara and the universe itself as unreal, learn to appreciate the nirupaadhika, nirguna Brahman and go on to identify himself with that real Brahman.

2. A jnani has no need of saguna Brahman worship or saguna Brahman meditation, but, as an example to those in the lower stages of spiritual progress, he may do saguna Brahman worship and saguna Brahman meditation. In this, a jnani who has gained knowledge through the teaching of Advaita Vedanta does not make any distinction between gods of one religion and another. He can accept Jesus and Mohamed as he does Rama and Krishna as avataras of Iswara, appearing in the vyavaharika plane and he can happily worship in a church or a mosque as he does in a temple. The idea is that, in religion, meant as the teaching of preparatory, purificatory disciplines that qualify a seeker of liberation for jnana kanda, there can be many paths. But when it comes to philosophy, the Advaita Vedanta devotee will adhere to his faith that the sole reality is nirguna Brahman, the Existence-Consciousness – Infinity and the ultimate means of liberation is only one and that is identification with nirguna Brahma (jivahbrahma aikyam). Even when the jnani worships in a temple or pray to god, he does so with the knowledge that it is not he (i.e., by identity, the Brahman) but the mithya sarira and the mithya ahamkara that are doing so.
3. The jnani will concede sufficient reality to the world, as vyavaharika satyam, in order to follow dharma but will, at the same time dismiss the world as mithya so that it does not affect him.”

Section 21 - Process of Obtaining Knowledge of Identity with Brahman

19. The sadhana or process for obtaining the knowledge “I am Brahman” consists of “sravanam”, “mananam” and “nididhyasanam”. Cf. the passage in Brhadaranyaka Upanishad II.4.5 – “atma vai are drashtavyah srotavyah nididhysativyah.”

a) Sravanam is study of sastra by listening to the teaching of a competent teacher who can interpret the scripture properly, i.e., a teacher belonging to the teacher-student lineage of Vedantic teaching – the guru sishya parampara. Upanishads are full of seeming contradictions and obscurities. The problem is that any part of the upanishadic lore can be subjected to harmonious interpretation only by a person who knows the whole; since no student will know the whole until he reaches the end of his study, studying by oneself will only end up in confusion or misconceptions. Seeming contradictions and obscure portions can be clarified only through study of commentaries that analyze the purport of the passages in accordance with the rules of harmonious construction called mimamsa. There are countless commentaries and sub-commentaries and explanatory works and there are works containing arguments and counterarguments among philosophers of different schools of thought and only a teacher who has himself studied under a competent teacher in a course covering the original works, the commentaries and important prakarana granthas and works of disputations can convey the purport and meaning of Upanishadic passages. An ideal teacher is a jnani of the gurusishya parampara (the traditional teacher-disciple lineage, a stotriya brahmanishta i.e., one who has himself learnt under a competent teacher belonging to the guru sishya parampara and has himself also acquired the clear and fully assimilated knowledge that he is Brahman. The idea is that unless he himself has learnt under a competent teacher how can he teach and unless he himself is convinced without any mental reservation that he is Brahman, how can he tell the student sincerely, “Tattvamasi” (“You are Brahman”) to enable the student to be convinced “aham brahma smi” (“I am Brahman”). Since one cannot know whether the teacher one

has approached is a brahmanishta (the difficulty is that jnanam is a mental state and only a jnani himself knows whether he is a jnani; no external signs are infallibly reliable to indicate whether one is a jnani.), the best thing is to make sure that the teacher is at least one who has himself learnt under a teacher of the guru-sishya parampara (i.e., a srotriya), hoping that your punya has made you reach a srotriya who is also a brahmanishta. If the student is perfectly endowed with sadhana catushtaya sampatti, sravanam itself should enable him to gain the knowledge 'ahambrahmasmi' effectively. But for others, there may be obstacles to the gaining of this knowledge, at the intellectual and emotional levels.

b) Mananam is meant for getting the obstacle at the intellectual level removed. It is the process of getting doubts arising in the course of the study clarified by one's own cogitation and by discussion with the teacher.

c) Nididhyasanam is meant for getting the obstacle at the emotional level removed. Even after mananam has eradicated intellectual doubts, the habit of emotional identification with the body mind complex (dehaatmabhaava) acquired through the countless past janmas may remain. Nididhyasanam is meant for the destruction of this habit. It is of no use if the mind is able to say, 'I am Brahman' when the listening to the guru has taken place, but on reaching home, habitual fixations of the mind take over and one does action and thinks, attributing reality to the body-mind-complex and its relations, such as " my son has a chronic health problem; I am distressed", " I had invested in shares; the stock exchange index has come down; I am dejected", " I am becoming old; I am fearful; nobody will look after me", " What shall be in my next janma? Shall I be born in a good family? Or shall I become a plan or an animal or an insect?". "Shall I be healthy in my next janma or shall I suffer from heart problems and diabetes?" "Why not go and see what heaven is like? Let me find out what Yagna or meditation I should do to go to heaven". "Ice cream is so tasty; I must have it

during lunch today”. ““T.M Krishna is singing at the Academy. Sanjay is singing at the Millipore Fine Arts. Both are at 5 p.m. I want to listen to both. Why should these sabhas clash like this? In any case I must listen to one of them. The Vedanta class also happens to be at 6 p.m. But I will cut the class today and go to listen to Sanjay”. To remove these emotional disturbances (called *vipariita bhaavana*)” which blow away ‘the ahambrahmasmi’ thought one had in the class, one has to dwell on the various important aspects of the teaching such as - “I am the immortal Brahman. Where is the question of any worry about what I shall be in the next birth or where is the question of going to heaven?”. “I am not this body or this mind. No doubt prarabdha is there and the physiological afflictions of the body will be there, but I have placed my “I” in the pure consciousness. I should not let this mind worry about anything. Let the body go through its prarabdha; this mind which is attuned to the pure consciousness should be calm and reposed”. “I am the asanga Brahman. “Wife, children etc. are all nama roopa superimposed on me, the Brahman. Since, in this janma, this particular nama roopa of a body has married that nama roopa called wife and given birth to certain other nama roopa called children, this nama roopa has to discharge its duties to those nama roopa but there is no place for sorrow, worry or anxiety. No doubt as the vyavaharika father, if my son is ill, I have to take him to the hospital and put him under the care of a competent physician. But his condition should not disturb the mind. I have disidentified from the mind. I am saantam Brahman. Whatever happens to my son is prarabdha. Nothing that happens to him should disturb this mind.” And so on. Even while experiencing things, transacting with persons and handling situations in the world, the “I am Brahman” thought should be running as a constant undercurrent in the mind and should surface immediately if there is the slightest tendency of intrusion of any notion related to dehaatmabhaava (identification with the body mind complex).

20. In the course of the study of Sastra, three kinds of doubt have to be overcome.

(a) *Praamaana asambhaavana* – Whether sruti reveals Brahman? This is discussed and the conclusion is that sruti does not reveal Brahman but only removes one's false notion of *abramatvam* (sense of limitation).

(b) *Prameya asambhaavusna* – Whether Sruti teaches advaitam or dwaitam? This debated by the opponents of advaita and advaitin. The conclusion is that sruti teaches advaitam.

(c) *Pramatru asambhaavana* – How can I, occupying a small corner in a town or village and going through the vicissitudes of life be the infinite Brahman. The conclusion arrived at by nididhyaasanam removing the *vipariita bhaavana* is not only “ I am Brahman’ but ‘I have never been anything other than Brahman’.

1. When we talk of jivabrahma aikyam, it is from the point of view off nirupadhika jiva and nirupadhika Brahman. When we talk of karya-karana-sambandha, it is from the point of view of sopadhikamjiva and sopadhika Brahman.