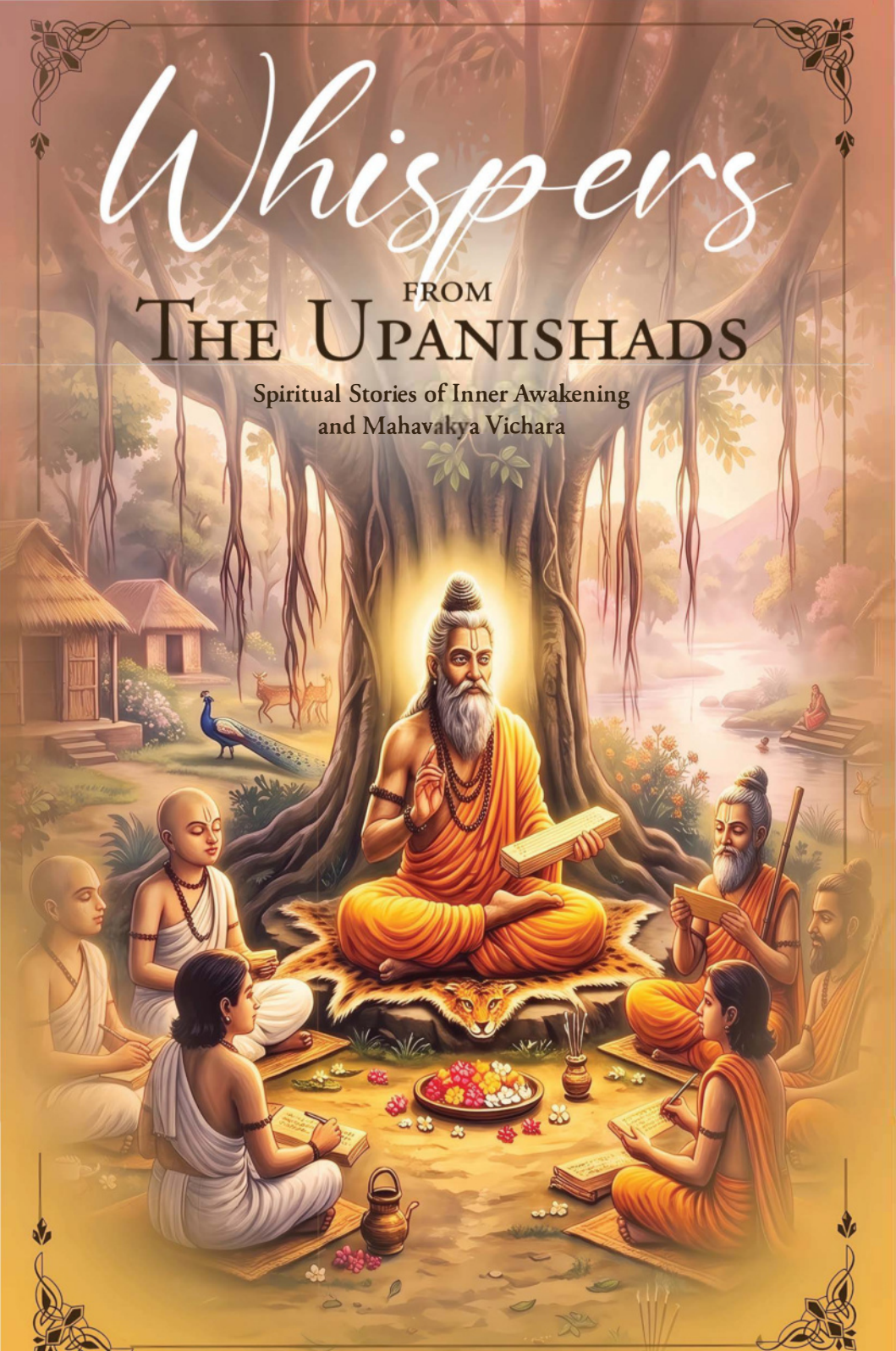


Whispers

FROM
THE UPANISHADS

Spiritual Stories of Inner Awakening
and Mahavakya Vichara



Carlos G. Lopez Camba



Subbu Venkatakrishnan



“All that is has its Self in Him alone. He is the Truth. He is the
subtle essence of all.
He is the Self. And that, Shvetaketu,
That Thou Art.

- Chandogya Upanishad



Sri Gurubhyo Namaha

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*May the Gracious Lord Ganapati be pleased,
and bless these humble words,
laid at His holy feet
like flower petals.*

Om Gam Ganapataye Namah

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Introduction

The Vedas, the most sacred scriptures of India, were preserved through an unbroken oral tradition and are therefore known as *shruti* - ‘that which is heard’. The Upanishads form the philosophical heart of this Vedic tradition. Revered as *shruti* and as the concluding portion of the Vedas, they are collectively known as Vedanta - the ‘end of the Vedas’.

How many Upanishads once existed is unknown. One hundred and eight have been preserved. The rishis whose insight they embody remain largely anonymous, their names and individual lives fading into the background, impersonal as the Truth they revealed. Their words point beyond thought and language to direct knowledge of the Self.

The word Upanishad literally suggests ‘to sit near’ – evoking the image of a student seated close to the teacher, receiving sacred knowledge. More deeply, it signifies the transmission of the highest truth to one who is inwardly prepared. Sri Adi Shankaracharya explains that the word denotes the knowledge of *Brahman* that destroys ignorance of one’s true nature and reveals the truth of the Self.

The Upanishads are not systematic philosophical treatises in the modern sense. Rather, they are records of profound dialogues between teachers and students, seekers and sages. Within these conversations, some of the deepest questions ever asked by the human mind continue to echo:

Who am I?

What is the nature of consciousness?

What is death?

What is the ultimate reality underlying this
changing world?

Again and again, the Upanishads point not toward speculation, but toward direct knowledge of the Self - the innermost reality that is beyond birth and death, limitation and fear.

Whispers from the Upanishads

The central vision of the Upanishads finds its most concise expression in the *mahavakyas* - the great statements of Vedanta. These declarations reveal the identity of the individual self and the eternal reality called *Brahman*. For centuries, seekers have contemplated these teachings through the disciplines of *sravana* (listening), *manana* (reflection), and *nididhyasana* (deep contemplation).

Containing some of the most profound spiritual insights known to humanity, these sacred teachings are available to all – irrespective of age, gender, culture, nationality, or social standing. Vedanta recognises no distinction in the pursuit of Truth. These timeless whispers reveal the mystics' secret, that the embrace of the final Truth is the birthright of all.

Yet the Upanishads teach not only through these great declarations but also through stories. These stories are not separate from the philosophy they embody. Through dialogue, inquiry, challenge, and revelation, they bring timeless truths into living experience. The courage of Nachiketa, the sincerity of Satyakama, the discernment of Maitreyi, and the inquiry of Gargi continue to illuminate the very truths expressed by the *Mahavakyas*.

This booklet unfolds in two complementary parts. The first offers a collection of stories from the principal Upanishads that illustrate those teachings through memorable encounters and timeless conversations. The second invites the reader to dwell more deeply upon the *Mahavakyas* - the great declarations of the Upanishads that reveal, directly, the Truth to which the stories quietly point and presents the traditional methods by which their meaning unfolds.

We offer this small book with gratitude and reverence to the sages who preserved these teachings, to the unbroken lineage through which they have been transmitted, to Sri Ganga Maa whose inspiration made this offering possible, and to all sincere seekers who continue the timeless journey of Self-discovery.

Carlos G Lopez Camba
Subbu Venkatakrishnan

May the pages that follow inspire inquiry, reflection, and a deeper appreciation of the wisdom of the Upanishads.

Whispers from the Upanishads

Part I

Stories from the Upanishads

Nachiketa

(Katha Upanishad)

What survives death?

The Two Birds

(Mundaka Upanishad)

The witness and the experiencer

Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)

All is love for the Self

Indra and Virochana

(Chandogya Upanishad)

The danger of incomplete understanding

When the Devas Were Humbled

(Kena Upanishad)

Even spiritual power cannot grasp Brahman through the ego

Shvetaketu

(Chandogya Upanishad)

Tat Tvam Asi, That Thou Art

Ushasti

(Chandogya Upanishad)

Wisdom remains untouched by poverty

Raikva the Cartman

(Chandogya Upanishad)

Wisdom cannot be obtained through wealth

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Shaunaka Kapeya and Abhipratatin Kakshaseni

(Chandogya Upanishad)

Truth hidden in unexpected forms

Satyakama Jabala

(Chandogya Upanishad)

The power of truthfulness

Bhrigu and Varuna

(Taittiriya Upanishad)

Truth must be discovered for oneself

Yajnavalkya and Gargi

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)

A fearless inquiry of the intellect before the infinite

Nachiketa

Katha Upanishad



The sages throughout the ages say that, in order to reach God in this life we must die before we die. Implying not the premature death of the body, but the death of the belief in ourselves as separate, insular beings.

The Katha Upanishad describes the Self as that which is neither born nor dies.

There was once a boy who refused to accept what were merely empty rituals - he wanted what was true. And so, while others offered gifts to the fire, he offered himself to the question.

The Question

There was once a boy named Nachiketa. His father, a man of standing, had begun a great sacrifice - one that promised spiritual merit and honor. Priests were summoned, rituals were performed, fires lit, offerings arranged. Cows were to be given away in charity.

But Nachiketa was watching closely. The cows being offered were old, too weak to drink, too barren to give milk, too worn to be of use. They were being given not in true generosity, but in appearance alone.

A quiet unease stirred in the boy. Nachiketa thought that, as a dutiful son, he must ward off harmful consequences which would befall his father. He approached his father and asked gently,

“Father, you are offering the oldest and the most frail cows, ones which you have no use for. Should you not offer the most precious possessions instead? To whom will you give me?”

His father ignored him. Yet the boy persisted. Again he asked. And again. His father, embarrassed and angry, said, “I give you to Death.”

The words were spoken in anger. But Nachiketa heard them as truth. And once spoken, truth cannot be taken back.

The Journey

Nachiketa did not resist. If he had been given to Yama (Lord of Death), then to Yama he would go alone. With no fear and no companion, the boy set out on a path no living being seeks.

He crossed beyond the known, beyond the warmth of the living world, into the still domain where all journeys end. But when he arrived, Yama was not there.

The House of Death stood silent. Nachiketa waited. One night passed. Then another. Then a third. No food. No water. No fear. Only stillness.

The Three Boons

When Yama returned, he found a young boy waiting at his threshold, calm, unwavering. And he was troubled. For in the

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ancient code of hospitality, a guest must never be neglected. And this was no ordinary guest, but one who had waited three nights without complaint.

Yama spoke,

“O Brahmin, since you have waited in my house for three nights unfed, I grant you three boons - one for each night”.

Nachiketa bowed his head. For the first boon, he said, “Let my father’s anger pass. When I return, let him recognise me with love, as before.”

Yama granted it. For his second boon, “Teach me the sacred fire by which one attains heaven.”

Yama smiled, and taught him the ritual, the fire that leads beyond sorrow. Lord Yama also revealed the inner meaning of the sacred fire. This fire would one day bear Nachiketa’s name. Two boons were given.

Then came the third.

The Final Question

Nachiketa looked directly at Yama,

“Some say that after death, one still exists. Others say, one does not. Tell me, what is the truth?”

Yama grew still. Even the gods have doubted this. The answer was not easily given. He tried to dissuade the boy.

“Ask for sons and grandsons who will live a hundred years. Ask for wealth, cattle, elephants, gold. Ask for kingdoms. Ask for a long life. Ask for pleasures beyond imagination - music, chariots, celestial maidens. But do not ask this question.”

Nachiketa did not waver, “All these you offer, O Lord of Death, are fleeting. They wear out the senses. Even the longest life is short. Keep your chariots, your music, your pleasures. No gift can make a mortal truly satisfied. Only the answer to this question can.”

Yama looked at the boy and saw not a child, but a seeker of truth.

The Teaching

And so, Yama began. He spoke of two paths, because the

Whispers from the Upanishads

Upanishads contrast *shreyas* and *preyas*, the good and the pleasant.

The wise choose the good. The unwise choose the merely pleasant. He spoke of the Self, not the body, not the mind, but the *Atman*, eternal and unchanging. The Self is not born. It does not die. It is not slain when the body is slain. *Atman* is the immortal Self. He spoke of the one who realises this. Beyond sorrow, beyond fear, beyond death itself. He taught that this Self is none other than the ultimate reality, the infinite, the eternal. And to know that is to be free.

The Return

Nachiketa listened, not merely with his ears, but with his whole being. And he understood.

When he returned to the world of the living, his father saw him and his anger dissolved, just as promised.

But Nachiketa was no longer a mere boy. He had crossed the threshold of death and returned with the knowledge of what cannot die.

Having received this wisdom from Yama, and having understood the path that leads to the Self, Nachiketa attained the knowledge of *Brahman* and became free from fear of death. So too, may anyone who realises this truth of the Self, says the Upanishad. In a world filled with passing pleasures, Nachiketa chose the eternal. And in refusing all that fades, he discovered what remains.

*The one who seeks the deathless, must first learn to turn away
from the merely transient.*



The Two Birds

Mundaka Upanishad



High upon a great tree, in a forest untouched by time, sat two birds. Inseparable companions. Always together.

One of the birds, sitting on a lower branch, moved restlessly from branch to branch, tasting the fruits of the tree. Some fruits were sweet and it delighted in them. Others were bitter and it recoiled in sorrow. Thus it lived, moving endlessly between pleasure and pain, delight and disappointment, never completely at rest.

The other bird, living on a higher branch, did not eat. It remained still. Silent. Luminous. Witnessing. It neither sought nor avoided. It simply was.

At times, when the first bird tasted a bitter fruit, it paused. In those moments, it looked upward. And there, just above, it saw the second bird – calm, unmoving, untouched. For a brief instant, something within the first one became quiet – a stillness unfamiliar yet deeply known. But soon, drawn again by the fruits,

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it forgot. And the cycle continued. Sweetness and bitterness. Joy and sorrow. Seeking and forgetting.

Time passed. And with it, a certain weariness began to grow. The fruits no longer satisfied as they once did. The restlessness deepened. Once more, the bird paused. But this time, it did not turn away. It kept its gaze upon the silent one above. Slowly something began to change. The movement quietened. The craving loosened. The sorrow softened. And in that quiet seeing, a recognition dawned – the two birds are not separate.

The one who had been tasting and seeking is none other than the one who has always been the silent witness. Still. Whole. Free.

The restless one finds peace only in recognizing the silent one as its own true nature.



Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad



*Filled with Brahman are the things we see.
Filled with Brahman are the things we do not see.
From Brahman flows all that is: from Brahman all - yet he is still the
same.
Lead me from the unreal to the real. Lead me from darkness to light.
Lead me from death to immortality.
Om. Peace, Peace, Peace.*

There came a time when the sage Yajnavalkya felt a quiet turning within. The duties of the world had been fulfilled. A deeper call had begun to arise. He knew it was time to withdraw - not in haste, not in rejection but in a gentle movement toward That which does not pass.

In his household were two companions. Katyayani, who tended to the rhythms of daily life and Maitreyi, who was drawn to that which lies beyond it.

One day, Yajnavalkya called both of them to him.

“I am preparing to leave,” he said quietly. “I wish to put my affairs in order. Between you and Katyayani, I will divide what I have.”

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Maitreyi listened. There was no agitation in her but neither was there indifference. After a pause, she asked, “If indeed, this whole world filled with wealth were mine, would I become immortal through it?”

Yajnavalkya looked at her. “No,” he said gently, “your life would be like the well-to-do. But there is no hope of immortality through wealth.”

Maitreyi fell silent. The question that arose in her was simple and final.

“Then what shall I do with that which cannot give what I truly seek? Tell me, revered one, that which you know. Teach me That alone.”

There was a stillness between them. Not of uncertainty but of recognition. Yajnavalkya spoke.

“Not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear, but for the sake of the Self.

Not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear, but for the sake of the Self.

Not for the sake of wealth is wealth dear, but for the sake of the Self.

All is dear only because the Self is.”

Maitreyi listened, not as one gathering ideas, but as one standing at the threshold of something vast.

“The Self is to be known not as an object, but as That by which all is known. When the Self is seen, heard, reflected upon and deeply realised, All becomes known. What one sees as separate, one clings to. But where everything is known as the Self, what is there to hold? What is there to lose?”

Silence followed, not empty, but full. Maitreyi did not speak again. The question had dissolved. Not into an answer but into understanding. And Yajnavalkya, having spoken what needed to be spoken, turned gently toward the path that called him.

All that is loved is loved for the sake of the Self. And when the Self is known, nothing remains apart.



Indra and Virochana

Chandogya Upanishad



There arose one time a question among the seekers, “What is the Self?” For it was said, the one who knows the Self becomes free from sorrow.

Hearing this, two came forward - Indra, lord of the devas and Virochana, guide of those turned outward. Though different in nature, both were drawn by the same promise.

They approached the teacher, the ancient seer, Prajapati.

“Revered one,” they said, “Teach us the Self.”

Prajapati looked upon them.

“Live here,” he said, “with discipline and attention.”

They stayed for many years in silence, in service, in waiting. At the end of that time, Prajapati asked them to look at their reflection in a vessel of still water and said, “The Self is that which you see in the eye - the one reflected.” Indra and Virochana looked. They saw themselves. The body. The face. The form.

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“Adorn yourselves,” said the teacher. They did so - clothed, decorated, arranged. Again they looked. The reflection appeared adorned.

“That is the Self,” said Prajapati.

Virochana was satisfied. What he saw was clear and immediate. The body is the Self. What is seen, is what is. He bowed and left. Indra, too, began to depart. But as he walked away, a thought arose.

“If the body is the Self, when the body is blind, is the Self blind? When the body is injured, is the Self injured? When the body perishes does the Self perish?”

He paused. And turned back, “Revered one,” he said, “this does not seem complete.”

Prajapati looked at him again. “Stay,” he said.

Indra remained. Again, for many years. In time, the teacher spoke again,

“The Self is that which moves in dreams - free, radiant, unbound.”

Indra reflected and left once more. But again, a doubt arose.

“In a dream one is pursued, frightened, confused. Can this be the Self? That which suffers in a dream, how can it be the highest?”

He turned back. “Revered one, this too is not complete.”

Again, Prajapati asked him to remain. And again, years passed.

Then he said, “The Self is that which, in deep sleep, rests in peace, free from all disturbance.” Indra considered this and once more, he left. But again, he paused.

“In deep sleep, one knows nothing. There is no awareness. How can this be the Self? That which is not aware, how can it be the knower?”

He returned once more. This time, Prajapati spoke without ambiguity.

“The Self is not the body. Not the dream. Not the absence of knowing. It is that which is aware in all states. Unseen - yet the seer. Unknown - yet the knower. Untouched by what comes and goes. That is the Self. That Thou Art.”

Indra remained silent - not in confusion, but in recognition. He did not leave immediately. He stayed a while longer, allowing

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the teaching to settle into the stillness of his heart. And when he returned, he carried not an idea, but understanding.

Virochana, having departed long before, taught what he had understood: That the body alone is the Self. And many followed him. Indra taught differently. Not what is seen but that by which all is seen is the Self.

That which appears first is not always the truth. And the one who continues to inquire comes to rest in what does not change.



When the Devas were Humbled

Kena Upanishad



There was once a great victory. The devas had overcome the forces of darkness. And rejoicing in their triumph, they thought: “This victory is ours. This greatness belongs to us.”

But *Brahman*, the eternal reality behind all power, saw the pride arising within them. And so, in order that they might truly understand, *Brahman* appeared before them.

Mysterious. Silent. Unknown.

The devas looked upon this strange presence with wonder. None recognised it. None understood what stood before them. They turned to Agni, Lord of Fire, “You are the knower of all things,” they said. “Go and discover who this is.”

Agni approached the mysterious being.

“Who are you?” The presence asked. “I am Agni,” he replied proudly. “I can burn all that exists upon the earth.”

Before him, the being placed a single blade of grass.

“Burn this.”

Agni gathered his power. Flames rose. Fire blazed. But he

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could not even burn a blade of grass. Agni returned humbled.

“I could not know what it was,” he said.

Then the Devas sent Vayu, Lord of Wind.

“You who move through all worlds - go.”

Vayu approached.

“Who are you?” asked the Presence.

“I am Vayu,” he answered. “I can carry away all that exists.”

Again, the Being placed the same blade of grass before him.

“Carry this away.”

Vayu summoned his strength. The winds roared but he could not move the blade of grass. Vayu returned, humbled.

“I could not know what it was.”

At last, Indra, King of the Gods, approached but as he drew near the mysterious presence vanished. In its place appeared a radiant woman, luminous as dawn. It was Uma, daughter of the Himalayas. And Indra asked her,

“What was that wondrous Being?”

Uma replied, “That was Brahman. Through Brahman alone came your victory. Not through your own power.”

And in that moment, Indra understood.

The power of Brahman makes the fire burn, the wind move.

The strength of the gods themselves arises through Brahman alone.

Without That nothing acts. Nothing knows. Nothing is.

Thus, the devas were humbled.

The ego claims, “I do”. But wisdom bows in silence - for all power, all knowing, all victory arises from Brahman alone.



Shvetaketu

Chandogya Upanishad



There was once a young seeker named Shvetaketu. From childhood he had been bright and capable. And when he came of age, his father, the sage Uddalaka, sent him away to study the sacred teachings.

“Live with the teachers,” he said. “Learn well”

And Shvetaketu did. The hymns. The rituals. The scriptures. The sciences of sound and recitation. He learned quickly. And he remembered much. At last, after twelve years, he returned home learned, confident and certain of his knowledge.

His father looked upon him quietly, and seeing in him the subtle pride that learning sometimes brings, he asked gently,

“Shvetaketu, have you learned That by knowing which, all else becomes known?”

The young man was puzzled. “What is that teaching, Father?”

Uddalaka did not answer immediately. Instead, he picked up

a small lump of clay.

“By knowing clay,” he said, “all things made of clay are understood. The forms may appear different - pot, bowl, vessel - but all are only clay.”

He paused. “The names differ. The essence is one. That You Are.”

Shvetaketu listened carefully.

Then his father asked him to bring the fruit of a banyan tree.

Shvetaketu brought it.

“Break it open,” said Uddalaka.

“I have broken it.”

“What do you see?”

“Tiny seeds.”

“Break one of them.”

Shvetaketu obeyed.

“What do you see now?”

“Nothing, Revered One.”

Uddalaka looked at him gently.

“From that subtle essence, which you cannot see, arises this mighty tree. That unseen essence is the reality of all things. That You Are.”

A silence followed. Something within Shvetaketu began to soften.

The next morning, Uddalaka said, “Place this salt in water and return tomorrow.”

Shvetaketu did so.

By morning, the salt had dissolved completely.

“Bring me the salt,” said his father.

“I cannot,” replied Shvetaketu. “It has disappeared.”

“Taste the water from the surface.”

“It is salty.”

“Taste from the middle.”

“It is salty.”

“Taste from the bottom.”

“It is salty.”

Uddalaka said, “You do not see the salt, yet it is present everywhere in the water. In the same way, the subtle essence pervades all existence.”

Then, looking deeply into his son’s eyes, he spoke the words

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that echo through the ages,

“*Tat Tvam Asi*. That Thou Art.”

Again and again, through many examples, the father revealed the same truth, not as a doctrine, but as a recognition - the essence within all beings, within all worlds, within all life is one - indivisible, silent, boundless. And That is what you are.

Shvetaketu no longer replied quickly. The certainty that had come from learning began to give way to something quieter – not accumulation, but understanding. For truth was not something to be acquired. It had always been present.

Like salt dissolved in water, like the hidden life within a seed, the essence of all things cannot always be seen, yet it is never absent. And the one who seeks it deeply discovers it as one's very Self.



Ushasti

Chandogya Upanishad



There came a time of famine. The rains had failed. The earth had hardened. Fields stood barren beneath an empty sky. And among those who wandered through those difficult days was the sage Ushasti Chakrayana.

Ushasti was a qualified Brahmana who lived in poverty with his wife. Though learned in sacred knowledge, he possessed little. Hunger had reduced him to weakness. His clothes were worn. His body was thin with exhaustion. And beside him walked his young wife, equally worn by hardship.

At last, unable to continue, Ushasti came upon a man tending elephants. The man sat eating a coarse meal of beans.

Ushasti approached him quietly.

“Can you please give me some food?” he said.

The elephant keeper looked at him with hesitation.

“These are only leftovers,” he replied, “what remains from my own meal.”

But hunger had reached its limit.

“Please give them,” said Ushasti. And he ate.

Then the man offered him water but Ushasti declined.

“If I do not eat, I may not survive,” he said, “but water can still be found elsewhere.”

Though the social conventions of his time would normally have prevented him from accepting another’s leftover food. Ushasti’s wisdom lay neither in rigidly following convention, nor in abandoning it, but in responding to each situation with true knowledge and discrimination.

The same clarity would lead him to speak out in the midst of a king’s sacred sacrifice when the truth demanded it.

When Ushasti learned that a king was performing a great sacrifice, he decided to go there. Priests sat assembled. Chants were being recited. Ritual fires had been arranged with precision.

Ushasti approached the priests. Though weakened with hunger, his understanding remained clear. Listening to the chants, he perceived that something essential was missing. The rituals were being performed, but the deeper meaning had not been understood and so he challenged the priests.

“How can sacred words bear fruit if one does not know the Reality to which they point?”

Observing this, the king inquired about his identity. He answered that he was Ushasti, the son of Chakra. The king immediately invited Ushasti to conduct the sacrifice, and Ushasti accepted. The three priests then approached him to inquire about the identity of the three deities they were supposed to worship. Ushasti then revealed the identity of the three deities to each one of the three priests.

“He is Prana. From Prana all beings have emanated, and into Prana they enter at the end.

“He is the sun, Aditya. He is above all others. All beings depend on him for their subsistence. He is glorified by all.

“He is Anna, the sustaining principle of food. He is glorified by all.

“If one performs these chants without knowing the reality to which they point,” he said quietly, “what fruit can truly come from them?”

The priests fell silent for they recognised, beneath the worn

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appearance of the stranger before them, the unmistakable authority of the one who knew.

Ushasti spoke, not from pride, but from clarity, for sacred words, he explained, are not mere sounds. Without understanding, ritual becomes empty movement. Without the truth, even sacred action loses its center. And those gathered listened.

Not to a man adorned with status or wealth but to one in whom knowledge remained steady, even amidst hunger and poverty.

Thus the sage, though outwardly diminished, revealed an inner fullness untouched by circumstance. For truth does not depend on comfort; nor does wisdom belong only to those who appear great in the eyes of the world. Truth must not only be understood. It must remain steady amidst life itself. Wisdom is not measured by what one possesses, but by what remains when everything else is taken away.

True wisdom is guided neither by convention nor by status, but by the clear discernment of what is true.



Raikva the Cartman

Chandogya Upanishad



There once lived a king named Janashruti Pautrayana. He was known throughout the land for his generosity. He built shelters for travellers. He fed the hungry. He gave freely to those in need. And as the years passed, a quiet satisfaction began to grow within him, not pride exactly but the subtle feeling that he had become a man of great virtue.

One night, as he rested upon the roof of his palace, something unusual occurred. Overhead, a flock of swans flew across the dark heavenly sky.

One of the swans called out to another, “Be careful not to fly too low over the king. The radiance of his merit shines far and wide.”

The second swan replied, “Do you speak of him as though he were Raikva?”

The first fell silent. The king heard these words and they pierced him.

“Who is this Raikva?” he wondered. “What greatness does he

possess that even the heavens compare me to him?"

Sleep left him. The question remained. At dawn he summoned his attendants.

"Search the land," he said. "Find this Raikva."

They searched villages, temples and hermitages but they found no one by that name.

The king sent them again.

"Look not where greatness is expected," he said. "Look where no one thinks to search."

And this time they found him not in a palace, not among scholars, not in a forest hermitage. They found him sitting beside a simple cart, alone, poorly clothed, unknown to the world. This was Raikva.

The attendants returned and told the king and Janashruti himself set out to meet him. He brought gifts - gold, jewels, fine cattle, rich garments. Placing them before Raikva, he bowed and said,

"Teach me the knowledge you possess."

Raikva looked at the gifts, then at the king and said nothing. After a while he spoke. His words were sharp, not from cruelty but from truth.

"You think this can be bought?"

The king was stunned. Perhaps for the first time in his life, his wealth was of no use. He returned home but the encounter remained with him. Days passed and slowly something changed. The desire to acquire knowledge gave way to a deeper longing, not to possess wisdom but to understand.

Again he came to Raikva. This time with humility, not as a king but as a seeker, and Raikva received him. Then he taught him the wisdom known as *Samvarga* - the teaching of absorption. He explained that just as all things are ultimately gathered into the wind, and all experiences dissolve into the life-force, so too the many return to the One. The countless forms of the world arise, endure for a while, and finally return to their source.

The king listened and for the first time, he began to understand. The greatness of Raikva had never been in possessions nor in reputation, nor in learning displayed before others. His greatness lay in knowing That from which all things arise and into which all things return.

Whispers from the Upanishads

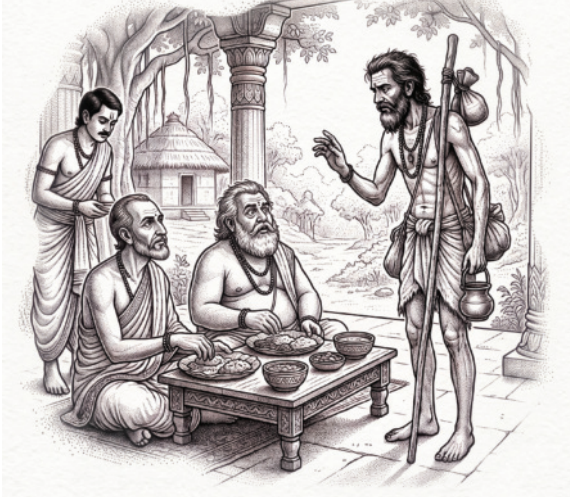
Janashruti departed richer than when he arrived though he carried away no treasure.

Wisdom does not dwell where the world expects to find it. It reveals itself to the Heart that approaches in humility. For truth cannot be purchased. It can only be received.



Shaunaka Kapeya and Abhipratatin Kakshaseni

Sometimes remembered as ‘The Bold Beggar’
Chandogya Upanishad



There once lived two respected men, Shaunaka Kapeya and Abhipratatin Kakshaseni. They lived together in a forest hermitage and devoted themselves to study, worshiping and contemplation.

Both were learned. Both were known for their generosity and devotion. And together they performed their sacred duties with great care.

One day, as they sat preparing to take their meal, a wandering mendicant approached. His clothes were worn. His appearance was unremarkable. He carried nothing but a bowl. Standing before them, he asked quietly, “Will you give me food?”

The two men hesitated. For reasons known only to themselves, they declined.

The beggar remained standing. He neither argued nor pleaded. Instead, he asked a question. “Tell me,” he said, “who

is the One God who consumes the food of all beings, yet whom none can consume?"

The two men looked at one another. They did not answer.

The stranger continued, "There is One who dwells in all creatures. Through Him all eat. Through Him all live. Yet, He Himself is beyond all hunger. Knowing Him, one sees all beings as one's own Self."

His words settled into silence.

Suddenly the men understood. The one before them was no ordinary beggar. Though outwardly poor, he possessed a vision they had not fully grasped. At once they rose. With respect they offered him food and asked forgiveness for failing to recognise the truth hidden beneath a humble appearance.

The wanderer accepted. No trace of resentment appeared in him for his purpose had never been merely to receive food. It had been to awaken understanding. And so, through the words of a beggar, the learned were reminded of a deeper truth: That the one life lives in all. The same reality shines through sage and king, rich and poor. And that wisdom cannot be judged by appearance.

The eye sees status and form. Wisdom sees one life shining through them all. And often, the teacher arrives in the guise least expected.



Satyakama Jabala

Chandogya Upanishad



Truthfulness itself prepares the heart for truth.

There once lived a boy named Satyakama Jabala. From an early age, he felt drawn to the life of learning and spiritual inquiry. As he grew older, a longing arose in him. He wished to live with a teacher and learn the knowledge that leads to freedom.

One day he approached his mother. Her name was Jabala.

“Mother,” he said, “I wish to become a student of sacred knowledge. Tell me, what is my family lineage?”

His mother became quiet. After a time, she replied honestly,

“My son, I don’t know. In my youth, I served in many households and was occupied with much work. When you were born, I did not know who your father was. My name is Jabala. Your name is Satyakama. Tell them simply that you are Satyakama, son of Jabala.”

The boy listened. There was no shame in him. Only simplicity. Only truth.

Soon afterwards he journeyed to the hermitage of the sage

Gautama Haridrumata. Bowing before the teacher, he said: “Revered Sir, I wish to live as your student.”

The sage looked kindly upon him.

“What is your lineage, child?” he asked.

Satyakama answered exactly as his mother instructed. He concealed nothing. He added nothing. He simply spoke the truth.

The sage listened carefully. Then a smile appeared upon his face.

“My child,” he said, “no one who is not established in truth could speak with such honesty. You are truly a seeker. I accept you as my student.”

After initiating Satyakama, one day, the teacher gave Satyakama four hundred lean and weak cattle.

“Take these into the forest,” he said. “Care for them. Return when they have become a thousand.”

Satyakama obeyed. He led the cattle into the wilderness and lived among them for many years. The seasons passed. Rain came and went. The stars wheeled overhead. The forest became his companion.

At last, the herd had grown into a thousand and then something extraordinary happened. One evening, the leader of the herd spoke, “Satyakama,” said the bull, “we are now a thousand. It is time to return to your teacher. Before you go, I shall teach you one quarter of Brahman. The east is a portion of Brahman, and so are the west, the south and the north. Together, the four directions form one quarter of Brahman.”

The boy listened with wonder. As he continued his journey, the sacred fire taught him, “Satyakama, I will teach you a quarter of Brahman. This earth is a portion of Brahman. The sky and the heavens are portions of him. The ocean is a portion of him. All these form a quarter of Brahman.”

Later, a swan taught him, “I have come to teach you a quarter of Brahman. This sacred fire before you, O Satyakama, is a part of Brahman. And likewise the sun, the moon, the lightning, too, is a part. All these form a quarter of Brahman.”

Then a *Madgu* (diving bird), “I will teach you one quarter of Brahman. Breath is a part of Brahman. Sight is a part of Brahman. Hearing is a part of Brahman. Mind is a part of Brahman. All these form a quarter of Brahman.”

From each he received a portion of the teaching. Not through

books. Not through argument. But through direct revelation from life itself.

At last Satyakama returned to the hermitage. When his teacher saw him approaching, he paused, for something had changed. The boy's face shone with a quiet radiance - not the radiance of knowledge acquired, but of wisdom awakened. The teacher asked, "My child, who has instructed you?"

Satyakama bowed. "I have learned from beings other than men," he replied, "but now, revered Sir, I desire that you should teach me."

And Sage Gautama completed the teaching. For the highest truth must finally be received from the one who knows.

Thus Satyakama came to realise that Brahman is not distant.

It shines through all life. Through forest and fire. Through sky and bird. Through teacher and student. Through every form. And beyond every form.

Be true, and the path will reveal itself.

The one who is steadfast in truth finds the entire universe revealing the Truth.



Bhrigu and Varuna

Taittiriya Upanishad



There was once a young seeker named Bhrigu. His father was the sage Varuna. Though Bhrigu had studied much, still questions remained alive within him. The questions that have stirred the hearts of seekers throughout the ages.

What is Brahman?

What is the ultimate reality from which all beings arise, by which they live, and to which they return?

One day he approached his father. Bowing respectfully, he said, “Revered Father, teach me Brahman.”

Varuna looked upon his son with affection. But he did not give a lengthy explanation. Instead he said, “Seek to know That from which all beings are born, by which they live, and into which they finally return. That is Brahman.”

Then he added, “Meditate deeply.”

And Bhrigu went away.

He sat in silence. He reflected upon life. He observed

the world around him. And gradually a realisation arose. All creatures depend upon food. From food they are born. By food they are sustained. Into food they return. Surely, he thought, food is Brahman. Satisfied, he returned to his father.

But Varuna simply said, "Meditate further."

Again Bhrigu withdrew into silence. Again he observed. Again he reflected. This time he saw something deeper. Food alone is not enough to live. Life depends upon breath. When breath departs, the body becomes still. Surely, he thought, breath is Brahman.

Again he returned.

Again his father listened. Again he said, "Meditate further."

So Bhrigu continued.

Through sustained inquiry he came to see that mind directs experience. Without mind, the world is not known. Surely, he thought, mind is Brahman.

Yet once more Varuna encouraged him to continue.

Years seemed to pass within moments. Moments seemed to contain years. Such is the way of true contemplation. Gradually Bhrigu saw beyond mind itself. He recognised the light of understanding, the power of knowledge, the faculty that discerns truth from falsehood. Surely, he thought intelligence is Brahman.

But still the journey was not complete. So once again he entered silence. Not seeking. Not grasping. Only resting in profound inquiry. And then, beyond thought, beyond intellect, beyond every attempt to define, a deeper recognition dawned.

At the heart of existence, at the source of all life, he discovered a fullness beyond measure. Not a thing. Not an object. Not a concept. A boundless presence. Whole. Complete. Self-luminous. And he knew. Bliss is Brahman. Not pleasure. Not excitement. Not happiness dependent upon circumstance but the inherent fullness of reality itself. The fullness from which all things arise. The fullness within which all things live. The fullness into which all things return.

Bhrigu returned to his father. No questions remained. Varuna looked upon his son and saw that the teaching had flowered, not because it had been explained, but because it had been realised. Thus Bhrigu came to know Brahman. Not through borrowed knowledge. Not through belief. But through direct discovery.

Whispers from the Upanishads

Truth may be pointed to, but it cannot be handed over. Each seeker must walk inward, through layer after layer, until the source is found. At the heart of all things shines a fullness that has never been absent.



Yajnavalkya and Gargi

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad



A fearless inquiry of the intellect before the infinite.

There came a time when King Janaka, renowned for his wisdom and love of truth, convened a great gathering of sages. The most learned seekers of the land assembled in his court. Among them was the sage Yajnavalkya. Before the assembly stood a thousand cows, their horns adorned with gold.

The king announced, "Let the greatest knower of Brahman among you take the cows."

A silence followed, for who would dare claim such knowledge?

Yajnavalkya turned to one of his disciples, "Take them home."

The assembly stirred. Some were amused. Others offended. Several sages challenged him. Questions were asked. Arguments presented. One after another, Yajnavalkya answered them all.

Then a woman arose from the assembly. It was Gargi Vachaknavi. A sage of deep insight and fearless intelligence. The hall became silent for all knew that Gargi was no ordinary questioner.

She bowed respectfully and spoke, “O Revered Sage, upon what is this world woven?”

Yajnavalkya replied, “Upon space.”

Gargi continued, “And upon what is space woven?”

Again he answered. And again she questioned.

Each answer led to another question. Deeper. Further. Beyond the visible. Beyond the known.

At last Gargi asked, “Upon what, then, is everything woven and interwoven?”

The court fell silent for she had reached the very heart of the inquiry.

Yajnavalkya looked upon her carefully. Then he spoke, “Gargi, the knowers of Brahman call it the imperishable. It is neither gross nor subtle. Neither short nor long. Neither shadow nor darkness. Neither within nor without. It is unseen, yet the Seer. Unknown, yet the Knower. By That, O Gargi, is all this woven and interwoven.”

A profound silence filled the court. Gargi stood silent, not because she had been defeated, but because the inquiry had reached its limit. Words could not go any further.

Turning to the assembled sages, she said, “Revered ones, consider yourselves fortunate if you can bow before Yajnavalkya and depart. None here will surpass him in the knowledge of Brahman.”

And she resumed her seat.

The discussion continued but something had changed, for those present had glimpsed a truth beyond thought, a reality that cannot be grasped by the mind, yet by which the mind itself is known. And in that silence, the highest teaching had already been given.

The mind may question without end but beyond every question lies the imperishable. Not an object to be known, but the eternal knower of all. And when inquiry reaches its limit, silence begins.



Final Reflection

Throughout these pages, sages and seekers have spoken.

A boy questioned death.
Two birds sat upon a tree.
A wife asked about immortality.
A king searched for wisdom beneath a humble cart.
A truthful child found a teacher.
A seeker discovered the fullness of Brahman.

Again and again, the stories pointed beyond themselves. Not towards something distant. Not toward something to be attained. But toward That which has always been present. Closer than the breath. Nearer than thought. The silent witness of every experience. The light by which all things are known.

The Self.

And now, as these ancient stories fall silent, one final message remains. Not spoken from the page. But heard within the Heart.
Wake up!

You who awaken to the dawn,
awaken to That which never sleeps.

Om
Shanti Shanti Shanti

Part II

Mahavakya Vichara

What are the Mahavakyas?

The *Mahavakyas* (Sanskrit: “Great Sayings”) are supremely concise utterances drawn from the Upanishads, encapsulating the entire teaching of Advaita Vedanta, the non-dual school of Hindu philosophy. They are not merely philosophical propositions but living pointers meant to trigger direct recognition of the identity between the *jiva* (individual self) and *Brahman* (ultimate reality). In Advaita, these passages are often grouped under the broader category of *abheda-srutis* (scriptural statements of non-difference), of which four *Mahavakyas* are simply the most celebrated examples. In fact, traditional Advaita commentaries cite dozens of such *abheda-srutis* when establishing the identity of *jīva* and *Brahman*.

The four principal Mahavakyas are:

Prajananam Brahma

„Consciousness is Brahman”
(Aitareya Upanishad, Rigveda)

Tat Tvam Asi

“That Thou Art”
(Chandogya Upanishad, Samaveda)

Aham Brahmasmi

“I am Brahman”
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajurveda)

Ayam Atma Brahma

“This Self is Brahman”
(Mandukya Upanishad, Atharvaveda)

Each Veda contributes one *mahavakya*, suggesting a deliberate fourfold completeness. Together they affirm the same truth from different angles:

Mahavakya Vichara

- *Prajnanam Brahma*, from the standpoint of pure consciousness and classified as *laksana vakya*, (definitional statement)
- *Tat Tvam Asi*, as the relational teaching of a teacher to a student and classified as *upadesa vakya* (instructional statement)
- *Aham Brahmasmi*, from the first-person standpoint and classified as *anubhava vakya* (statement of realization/ experience)
- *Ayam Atma Brahma*, as direct pointing to what is immediately present and classified as *anusandhana vakya* (statement for assimilation/repeated reflection)

What is Vichara?

Vichara means ‘enquiry’, ‘investigation’, or ‘discernment’. In the Advaita tradition, *vichara* is the highest form of spiritual practice – the disciplined, sustained turning of attention toward the nature of the Self. It is not mere intellectual pondering but a living enquiry conducted with sincerity, clarity, and guidance from a Master (Guru).

The classical text *Vivekachudamani* by Adi Shankaracharya declares, “*Vichara* alone leads to liberation.” Similarly, Ramana Maharshi famously taught *Atma Vichara* (Self-enquiry) through the question “Who am I?”, as the most direct path to recognizing one’s true nature.

Mahavakya Vichara, then, is the enquiry into and through the great sayings. It is not memorization of the sentences but a prolonged, meditative investigation into the meaning of each term and the relationship between them until the apparent contradiction between ‘I’ (finite) and ‘*Brahman*’ (infinite) dissolves in direct understanding.

The Structure of Mahavakya Vichara

The inquiry follows a classical method involving three stages:

Sravana – Listening

The student first **hears** the *Mahavakya* from a Master (Guru) in the context of scriptural study. This is not passive hearing; it is careful, attentive reception of the teaching in its full context. The teacher explains the meaning of each word. In “*Tat Tvam Asi*,” for example:

Tat (That) = *Brahman*, the infinite, self-luminous, attributeless Consciousness

Tvam (Thou) = the individual, finite self or *jiva*

Asi (Art) = a statement of identity, not similarity.

The student must understand that the apparent contradiction – how can the finite be the infinite? – is resolved by distinguishing between the **apparent** (conditioned) and **essential** (unconditioned) nature of each term. The “*Tvam*” does not refer to the ego-body-mind complex, but to the pure witnessing awareness behind it. The “*Tat*” does not refer to a God elsewhere, but to the very ground of all existence. When both are understood in their essential nature, identity is self-evident.

Manana – Reflection

After hearing, the student reflects deeply and repeatedly on the teaching to remove all intellectual doubts. Questions such as - If I am *Brahman*, why do I experience limitation? If Consciousness is one, why does multiplicity appear? - are taken up and resolved through careful reasoning. Key tools of *manana* include:

Anvaya-Vyatireka (presence/absence method): tracing what remains constant across all changing states

Adhyaropa-Apavada (superimposition and negation): a teaching method wherein *Brahman* is first described as a personal God, then those descriptions are sublated to reveal the formless Absolute

Neti-Neti (not this, not this): the systematic negation of all that the Self is not - not the body, not the senses, not the mind, not the ego.

Nididhyasana – Deep Meditation

Finally, the student engages in *Nididhyasana* - sustained, unbroken meditation upon the identity proclaimed by the *Mahavakya*. The intellect has done its work; now the truth must be allowed to settle into direct, lived understanding. This is not visualization or concentration on an object, but a relaxed, vigilant resting as awareness itself.

Nididhyasana breaks the force of the deeply rooted habitual identification with the body-mind. Even when the intellect knows “I am *Brahman*,” the habitual sense of being a separate person continues to arise. *Nididhyasana* is the practice that erodes this habit until non-dual recognition becomes natural and effortless.

The Four Mahavakyas: Source, Context and Meaning

Prajnanam Brahma

“Consciousness is Brahman”

(Aitareya Upanishad, Rigveda, Laksana Vakya)

The Aitareya Upanishad from the Rigveda opens with a meditation: before creation only the *Atman* (Self) existed. From it, the worlds were fashioned. After a brief description of deities being placed in the human body as its organs and faculties, the text then poses the climactic question, “Who is this Self we meditate upon?” After systematically examining whether the Self is the body, the senses, or the vital functions, and finding each insufficient, the text arrives at its answer: *Prajnanam Brahma* - “Consciousness is *Brahman*”. *Prajnana* is more than ordinary knowledge. It points to pure, undivided awareness, the witnessing consciousness behind all cognition. Not knowledge of an object, but knowing itself as the ground of all existence. In the Advaita Vedanta tradition, this *mahavakya* is used as a *laksana vakya*, a statement that points out the nature of *Brahman* through its most essential quality. The meditator is invited to recognize that the very awareness by which everything is known, by which thoughts arise and dissolve, is not personal or limited - it is *Brahman*, the infinite, self-luminous ground of all being.

Tat Tvam Asi

“That Thou Art”

(Chandogya Upanishad, Samaveda, Upadesa Vakya)

This *mahavakya* is spoken by the sage Uddalaka to his son Shvetaketu. Shvetaketu returns home having spent twelve years studying the Vedas. He is learned but proud and arrogant. His father, Uddalaka gently challenges him, “did you ask your teacher about that by knowing which everything becomes known?” Shvetaketu is humbled - he has not learned this. Uddalaka then proceeds to teach him the nature of *Sat* (pure being/existence) through a series of nine vivid analogies: clay and pots, gold and ornaments, iron and implements, bees and honey, rivers and ocean, tree and its sap, salt dissolved in water, sleeping traveller, sick man and his truth. After each analogy, Uddalaka concludes

with the refrain: *Tat Tvam Asi*, Shvetaketu. Nine repetitions break through layers of the student's ignorance progressively. The statement *Tat Tvam Asi* is not metaphorical. It does not say the individual resembles *Brahman* or is a part of *Brahman*. It declares absolute, non-dual identity. This *mahavakya* is classified as an *upadesa vakya* - a statement of direct instruction from Guru to disciple. The power of this *mahavakya* lies in its direct address - it is not about a distant truth to be attained, it is a recognition of what already and always is the case.

Aham Brahmasmi

“I am Brahman”

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajurveda, Anubhava Vakya)

In the section dealing with the *Purusha Brahmana* (primordial person), a passage describes the very dawn of creation: In the beginning, this universe was *Atman* alone, in the form of a person. Looking around, it saw nothing other than itself. It first said, *Aham Asmi* (I am). From this primordial self-recognition, the cosmic person became aware of itself as *Brahman* - the all pervading, self-sustaining substratum. The text then declares: *Aham Brahmasmi*. It is *Brahman's* own self-recognition at the moment of cosmic awakening, making this *mahavakya* unique in that it originates as the universe's own first-person realization. This *mahavakya* is classified as an *Anubhava vakya*, the statement of direct, first-person experience and realization. True *Aham Brahmasmi* arises only in the complete absence of ego, in the pure transparency of the liberated awareness. When *Aham Brahmasmi* is truly known, not as a concept but as direct experience, the result is *jivanmukti*, liberation while living. The body continues, the mind functions, but the false identification with the limitation is permanently dissolved. What remains is the recognition, steady and unbroken, that the I which sees, knows, and is - was always, only, and entirely *Brahman*.

Ayam Atma Brahma

“This Self is Brahman”

(Mandukya Upanishad, Atharvaveda, Anusandhana Vakya)

The Mandukya opens with a sweeping declaration about the

sacred syllable Om, and immediately situates the *Mahavakya* within it: Om - this syllable is all this. All that was, is, and will be - all of it is Om. And whatever transcends the three divisions of time - that too is Om. The very next verse delivers the *Mahavakya*:

Sarvam Hi Etad Brahma (all this is indeed *Brahman*)

Ayam Atma Brahma (this Self is *Brahman*)

This statement is the axial pivot of the entire Upanishad - the truth upon which its entire teaching of the four states of consciousness *jagrat* (waking), *svapna* (dream), *sushupti* (deep sleep), *turiya* (fourth) is built. What distinguishes *Ayam Atma Brahma* from the other three *mahavakyas* is the demonstrative pronoun *Ayam* (This). *Ayam* is the pronoun of proximate, direct pointing, like a finger pressed to the chest. It does not say that Self, or some Self, or the universal Self. It says this - the one that is undeniably, immediately, inescapably present right here, which makes it most direct and non-negotiable. This *Mahavakya* is classified as the *Anusandhana Vakya*, the statement for sustained enquiry and consolidation of the realized truth. *Anusandhana* means continuous, uninterrupted inquiry - holding the thread of recognition steady across all experiences. After the flash recognition of *Aham Brahmasmi*, the one who is not yet fully established in the Self must allow this truth to permeate and pervade all the states of consciousness. *Ayam Atma Brahma* serves this function: wherever one turns, outward to the waking world, inward to the dream, downward into sleep - the Self is there, and that Self is *Brahman*. The practitioner who fully assimilates *Ayam Atma Brahma* cannot find anything that is not *Brahman*. This is the fullness of vedantic liberation - complete transformation in the light of non-dual recognition.

The Fruit of Vichara: Jnana and Liberation

When Mahavakya vichara matures, it culminates in *jnana* - direct, immediate knowledge of one's identity with *Brahman*. This is not a mystical experience that comes and goes, but a permanent reorientation of understanding, technically called *Aparoksha Anubhuti* (direct, non-mediated recognition).

The liberated state - *jivanmukti* (liberation while living) - does not mean the disappearance of the body or the cessation of activity. The *jivanmukta* (liberated one) continues to live, act, and respond to the world, but without the false identification that creates bondage. As the Mandukya Upanishad Karika of Gaudapada states: "There is no creation, no dissolution, no bondage, no one striving for liberation, no one liberated – this is the ultimate truth."

The *Mahavakyas*, in this sense, are not doctrines to be believed but mirrors to be looked into – and to finally recognize that the one looking, and the mirror, and the reflection are all one undivided awareness.

Abheda-Srutis – scriptural statements of non-difference

Beyond the four celebrated *mahavakyas*, the Upanishads are filled with statements that declare the absolute identity of *Atma* and *Brahman*, the individual and the infinite. Here are a few of them with their contexts:

Ekam Eva Advitiyam

“One only, without a second”

(Chandogya Upanishad, Samaveda)

This statement appears in the same dialogue as Tat Tvam Asi. Before all the analogies Uddalaka says: “In the beginning, my dear, this was *Sat* alone - *Ekam Eva Advitiyam* (one only, without a second).” This is the ground of all *abheda* teaching. The phrase *Advitiyam*, without a second, does not merely say *Brahman* is One (which could imply that a second could exist, but happens not to). It says there is no second of any kind. Duality itself is negated at the root.

Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman

“All this is indeed Brahman”

(Chandogya Upanishad, Samaveda)

This statement opens the Sandilya Vidya. After declaration of *Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman*, all this is indeed *Brahman*, what follows is the Sandilya teaching: *Brahman* is smaller than the smallest, larger than the largest. It is the innermost Self dwelling in the heart, the size of a thumb, yet encompassing all worlds. The word *Khalu* (indeed, verily) carries emphatic force. This is not a tentative proposition but a direct, unequivocal declaration. The entire phenomenal world, every object, every being, every event, is not in Brahman like objects in a container, nor of *Brahman* like parts of a whole, but **IS Brahman**.

Neha Nanasti Kinchana

“There is no multiplicity whatsoever here.”

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajurveda,
also Kathopanishad, Yajurveda)

This statement is spoken by Yajnavalkya. He states “*Manasa Eva Anudrashtavyam Neha Nanasti Kinchana* - it has to be

realised by the mind alone that here there is no multiplicity whatsoever” - and follows it up by saying that, “he who sees multiplicity here, goes from death to death”. The context in the Brihadaranyaka is Yajnavalkya’s teaching on karma and rebirth, and the radical assertion that as long as one sees multiplicity, one remains bound in the cycle of death. The perception of a world of separate objects and selves is the root of *samsara* itself. The Kathopanishad places this in the mouth of Yama, the god of death, teaching the young Nachiketa. That death himself teaches non-duality is itself a profound statement – the one who knows *Brahman* transcends death entirely. For death has dominion only over what is born, and *Brahman* is never born.

Tat Srshtva Tad Eva Anupravisat

“Having created that, It entered into it.”

(Taittiriya Upanishad, Yajurveda)

This verse from the Brahmananda Valli describes creation not as an external act but as self-entry. This is the upanishadic doctrine of *antaryamin*, the inner controller. *Brahman* does not create the world and stand apart from it as a craftsman stands apart from his product. *Brahman* enters into its own creation and becomes the innermost Self of every being. The world is, therefore, not external to *Brahman*, it is *Brahman*’s own self-manifestation from within.

Brahmavit Brahmaiva Bhavati

“The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman itself”

(Mundaka Upanishad, Atharvaveda)

The Mundaka Upanishad is structured around the distinction between *Para Vidya* (higher knowledge, knowledge of Brahman) and *Apara Vidya* (lower knowledge - all sciences, arts, and even the Vedic rituals). Only *Para Vidya* leads to liberation. This verse is the culmination of that teaching. The knower does not merely know *Brahman* as an object. The knower becomes what is known, because the subject and object were never two. Knowledge of *Brahman* is, therefore, self-dissolving in the highest sense; the knower, the knowing, and the known all collapse into the one non-dual reality.

Atma Eva Idam Sarvam

“The Self alone is all this”

(Chandogya Upanishad, Samaveda)

After stating that The Self alone is below, the Self is above, the Self is to the west, the Self is to the east, the Self is to the south, the Self is to the north, as part of his teaching to Narada, Sanatkumara declares, “The Self alone is all this.” This directional enumeration is the Upanishad’s way to declaring total spatial pervasion. There is no direction one can turn, no region of space one can point to, where *Atman* is not.

Sa Yosavaditye Purushah Soham Asmi

“That Person who is in the sun – I am He”

(Chandogya Upanishad, Samaveda)

This makes a striking statement of macrocosm - microcosm identity. The Person who is seen in the eye - His form is the same as that Person in the sun - that Person I am. The identity declared here is between the Person in the eye (the witness of all visual experience - one’s own innermost awareness) and the Person in the sun (the cosmic *Purusha* that illumines the entire universe). The individual light of awareness and the cosmic light of existence are one and the same. This is a vivid expression of the *abheda* teaching - the microcosmic and macrocosmic lights are not two lights, but one Light appearing in two registers.

Atmanastu Kamaya Sarvam Priyam Bhavati

“Everything becomes dear for the love of the Self”

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajurveda)

Yajnavalkya is about to renounce the worldly life. Maitreyi asks him about the nature of true wealth and immortality. In response, he explains a radical philosophical insight: We love our husband/ wife, children, wealth, gods – but not truly for their own sake. We love them because through them we experience the *Atman*, the universal Self. All love is ultimately Self-love – love of the one underlying consciousness in all things. The *Atman* is *Brahman*, so loving the Self means loving the universal ground of all being. True love is recognition of non-separation. This verse is foundational to Advaita Vedanta.

Tameva Bhantam Anubhati Sarvam

“Him alone shining, everything shines after”

(Kathopanishad, Yajurveda, also Mundaka Upanishad,
Atharvaveda)

While explaining the nature of the Self to Nachiketa, Yama quotes this mantra. The rest of the verse reads, *Tasya Bhasa Sarvam Idam Vibhati*, by His light alone does all this shine. Common understanding is that the sun shines by itself, the moon reflects sunlight, Stars, fire, lightning - these are independent sources of light. But the Upanishadic truth reveals that everything in existence, matter, mind, intellect, ego - is inert without consciousness. They ‘shine’ only because pure awareness illumines them. The previous mantra stated that Everything is loved because of the Self. This mantra states that Everything shines because of the Self. Together they form a complete picture: The Self is the source of all love. The Self is the source of all light/knowledge. Both point to the same truth - *Brahman/Atman* is the one ground of all existence, love, and awareness.

Tyagenaike Amritatvam Anashuhu

“By renunciation alone did some attain immortality”

(Kaivalya Upanishad, Yajurveda, also Mahanarayana
Upanishad, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda)

The fuller mantra is *Na karmana na prajaya dhanena, tyagenaike amritatvam anashuhu* - not by action, not by progeny, not by wealth, but by renunciation alone did some attain immortality. This mantra is a direct, uncompromising declaration that cuts through the three most common human pursuits – *karma* (action/ritual), *praja* (progeny), *dhana* (wealth). Through *karma* people seek merit, heaven, good rebirth etc. Through progeny continuity, legacy, love is sought. And through wealth one seeks security, power, pleasure. All three are legitimate and honoured in Vedic life, yet the mantra says none of them leads to immortality, only *Tyaga* (renunciation) does. *Tyaga* is far deeper than mere external giving up. Though it operates at multiple levels, at the deepest level, even the one who renounces must be renounced. True *tyaga* is when there is no one left who is renouncing anything. *Amritatvam* (immortality) does not mean

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living forever in the body, rather *Amritatvam* is the recognition of that which was never born and can never die. The *Atman* is already *amrita* - immortal, birthless, deathless. No one attains immortality - immortality remains when the mortal illusion is dropped. Along with the above two mantras, a progression in the teaching is recognised. The Self is the ground of all love. The Self is pure Consciousness. The Self is already immortal – *tyaga* removes what hides it.

Om Tat Sat

Further Abheda-sruti reading references

Yatra Nanyat Pasyati

Where one sees no other

(from Bhuma Vidya of Chandogya Upanishad),

Idam Sarvam Yad Ayam Atma

All this is indeed the Self

(Yajnavalkya's teaching to Maitreyi, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad).

Brahmaiva Aham

I am Brahman alone

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)