

## **Chapter 10: The Attributeless Brahman**

### **Question 1: Why is it easy to contemplate Savishesha Brahman?**

**Answer:** Savishesha Brahman is Brahman with attributes. It is easy to contemplate Him because He can be clearly distinguished **from us** through the Visheshanas like omniscient, omnipotent etc. Therefore, majority of Astikas adopt Savishesha Brahman and do His worship and good karmas.

### **Question 2: Why is it difficult to recognize Brahman through lakshanas? What does Shastra say about Him?**

**Answer:** It is difficult to recognize Brahman through lakshana because it requires separation of Brahman from **everything**. Further, this requires dhyana which is more difficult than Puja.

Therefore, Shastra instructs worship of Savishesha Brahman i.e. Ishvara for a long time and then take to second step. This is mentioned in Gita 6.3. **आरुरुक्षोर्मुनेर्योगं कर्म कारणमुच्यते । योगारूढस्य तस्यैव शमः कारणमुच्यते ॥** The one desirous of taking to Dhyana but not capable of it is called Arurukshu. He should indulge in Karma for his spiritual progress. In due course he becomes Arudha and later he needs only Sama, that is control over the Indriyas and the mind, to do dhyana only.

### **Question 3: Why is it said that it is not easy to understand the swaroop of Brahman?**

**Answer:** The swaroop of Brahman is recognized by the lakshanas by differentiating it from everything. It is understood that Brahman is different from karya, different from jadatva, different from jiva and different from Triputi. However, despite understanding Brahman as different from everything, one does not know directly as to what it actually is. Further, even the Shruti cannot describe Brahman without using Upadhi. This is so because Brahman is beyond speech and mind. Taittiriya says in 2.4.1 that **यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह** i.e. mind and speech return without attaining that which is Brahman.

Thus, we try to understand Brahman through mind but it is beyond mind. Shruti tries to explain Brahman through speech but it is beyond speech. Therefore it is said that it is not easy to understand the swaroop of Brahman.

### **Question 4: What is Sthool-Arundhati-Nyaya?**

**Answer:** Sthool-Arundhati-Nyaya refers to pointing to a very tiny star Arundhati through the help of a bigger star in its neighbourhood. Being tiny, Arundhati cannot be immediately identified by the one who is trying to see it. Therefore, the teacher first shows a big star which is there in its neighbourhood. And then shows the tiny star from there which can then be recognized.

Thus, whenever Brahman is stated to be Satyam, Jnanam and Anantam, then one should use Sthool-Arundhati-Nyaya and try to move further ahead from the Vachya-Arth (= primary meaning) of these words in order to recognize Brahman.

### **Question 5: What should the Vachya-Arth of the lakshanas of Brahman should not be taken?**

**Answer:** The lakshanas of Brahman are Satyam, Jnanam and Anantam. Now, Satyam refers to something which does not change. Such an entity cannot be perceptible by either indriyas or mind (as discussed in chapter 9). Similarly, indriyas and mind cannot perceive something which is Anantam. Further, Jnana cannot be recognized by indriyas and mind because if it is recognized then it will be Jneya (knowable) and will not be Jnana. Therefore, it is futile to take the Vachya-Arth of lakshanas and to search something which possesses these lakshanas.

**Question 6: Why are the lakshanas of Brahman described?**

**Answer:** The question arises because of the fact that Brahman cannot be understood through the lakshanas. Thus, it appears that these are unnecessary. However, this is not so. The lakshanas are described in order to withdraw our attention from unintended object. Thus, Satyam, Jnanam and Anantam lakshanas are stated in order to withdraw our attention from Asatya (changeable), Jada (inert) and Saant (limited) things.

**Question 7: How does Shruti explain the existence of Brahman?**

**Answer:** Shruti confirms the existence of Brahman by stating it to be the cause of Jagat. Further, it asks one to search for Brahman in the cave of buddhi. It thereafter states the fruit of the knowledge of Brahman viz fulfillment of all desires at once. Thus, it is clear that Shruti explains Brahman as existent.

Such existent Brahman can be recognized by buddhi if it is withdrawn from Asatya, Jada and Saant objects. By doing so, it will become extremely Nirmala, Svachcha and Sukshma. Since Brahman too is extremely Nirmala, Svachcha and Sukshma, such pure intellect can grasp Brahman. This is stated in Gita Bhashya 18.50.

अत्यन्तनिर्मलत्वातिस्वच्छत्वातिसूक्ष्मत्वोपपत्तेः आत्मनः। बुद्धेश्च आत्मवत् नैर्मल्याद्युपपत्तेः  
आत्मचैतन्याकाराभासत्वोपपत्तिः

**Question 8: How to reconcile 'मनसैवानुद्रष्टव्यं' and 'अप्राप्य मनसा सह'?**

**Answer:** मनसैवानुद्रष्टव्यं indicates that Brahman can be grasped by extremely Svachcha, Sukshma and Nirmal mind. अप्राप्य मनसा सह indicates that Brahman is unattainable by impure, gross and unclear mind.

The impurity of mind arises due to its attention on Asatya, Jada and Saant objects. Shruti therefore tries to withdraw the attention from there.

**Question 9: How does Shruti describe Nirvishesha Brahman?**

**Answer:** Shruti first describes Savishesha Brahman. And thereafter describes Nirvishesha Brahman by negating everything in It. The following are a few instances:-

- अस्थूलमनण्वहस्वमदीर्घमलोहितमस्नेहमच्छायमतमोऽवाय्वनाकाशमसङ्गमरसमगन्धमचक्षुष्कमश्रोत्रमवाग मनोऽतेजस्कमप्राणममुखममात्रमनन्तरमबाह्यं न तदश्नाति किञ्चन न तदश्नाति कश्चन (बृहद आरण्यक ३।८।८)
- अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथारसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् । (कठ १।३।१५)
- तदेतद्ब्रह्मापूर्वमनपरमनन्तरमबाह्यमयमात्मा ब्रह्म (बृहद आरण्यक २।५।१९)

- अकायम्, अत्रणम्, अपापविद्धम् (ईश ८)
- अतः आदेशम् नेति नेति (बृहद आरण्यक २।३।६)

**Question 10: Beginner Sadhakas should take up which Brahman, Savishesha or Nirvishesha?**

**Answer:** Beginner Sadhakas should take up Savishesha Brahman and engage in karmas including Puja etc. This will purify the mind and will make one eligible for Dhyana.

**Question 11: Who should contemplate on Nirvishesha Brahman?**

**Answer:** One who has undergone the karma by doing the worship of Savishesha Brahman and has thus achieved pure intellect can thereafter renounce the interest in karma and take up the contemplation on Nirvishesha Brahman through Dhyana.

**Question 12: What can we understand from the description by Shruti of Brahman through contradictory qualities?**

**Answer:** The description by Shruti of Brahman through contradictory qualities teaches that Brahman is without attributes in its swaroopa. And it appears to have contradictory dharma due to upadhi. The instances are as under:-

- अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो नैनददेवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत् । तद्धावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठ—तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति (Isha 4)
  - It is one. It does not move. It is swifter than mind. It is static and yet passes beyond others as they run.
- तदेजति तन्नैजति तद्दूरे तद्वन्तिके (Isha 5)
  - It stirs. It does not stir. It is very far off. It is very near.
- दूरात्सुदूरे तदिहान्तिके च (Mundak 3.1.7)
  - It is farther from the thing far away. It is very near, here itself.
- तेजोमयोऽतेजोमयः काममयोऽकाममयः क्रोधमयोऽक्रोधमयो धर्ममयोऽधर्ममयः (Brihadaranyaka 4.5.5)
  - It is Tejomaya. It is Atejomaya. It is Kamamaya. It is Akamamaya. It is Krodhamaya. It is Akrodhamaya. It is Dharmamaya. It is Adharmamaya.

**Question 13: How to reconcile the Shruti statements which teach Savishesha and Nirvishesha?**

**Answer:** The reconciliation is to be achieved by understanding the Brahman is without attributes in its swaroopa. It appears with attributes in presence of Upadhis.

Attributeless Brahman is Para Brahman. Brahman with attributes is Apara Brahman. Para Brahman is to be realized. Apara Brahman is to be attained.

**Question 14: What is the reason for featurelessness of Brahman?**

**Answer:** There are two reasons for featurelessness of Brahman:-

- I. The contradictory description of statements of Shruti prove that It has to be attributeless. For eg, if someone states that a stone is red and also not red. Blue and also not blue. Then it means that the stone

is a transparent crystal and appears to be of different colours in conjunction with coloured Upadhi. Thus, Brahman is with attributes in connection with Upadhi while It is completely attributeless in Its swaroop.

- II. It is attributeless owing to It being the cause of Jagat. Since the Jagat, having several attributes, has come from Brahman, It has to be attributeless. Like the attributeless clay is the cause of all effects made of clay having attributes. Or all colours come from the colourless white light.

**Objection:** But how can Upadhi be there when there is only Brahman? Upadhi by definition has to be different from the object which it explains.

**Clarification:** Names and forms are Brahman in their swaroop. But due to avidya, one understands them as different from Brahman. Such names and forms, believed as different from Brahman, function as Upadhi to Brahman and transaction is possible. With removal of avidya, one understands that names and forms are also Brahman and hence the knowledge of Brahman with Upadhi is negated and transaction ceases. The transactional view i.e. Upadhi Drishti is in the LH of Karya-Karana-Ananyatva statement and the transcendental view i.e. Swaroop Drishti is in the FH of Karya-Karana-Ananyatva statement. Thus, the jivas in LH are ruled by Ishvara while the liberated ones in FH are not ruled by Ishvara.

**Question 15: Jagat is sat (=existent) or asat (=non-existent)? What is the essence of this discussion?**

**Answer:**

**Objection:** It was stated that Jagat is non-different from Brahman. Now Jagat is with attributes and with parts. However, Brahman is without attributes and without parts. How can a Jagat with parts and with attributes arise from attributeless and partless Brahman?

**Clarification:** Parts are imagined in the partless Brahman by buddhi. The imagined parts of the rope give rise to the shape of snake. Similarly the buddhi-parikalpit parts of the Brahman give rise to the shape of the Jagat.

**Objection:** Then one needs to accept two things; partless Brahman and Jagat with parts.

**Clarification:** Not so. One who accepts the partlessness of Brahman from Shruti needs to accept the Vacharambhan Shruti also.

**Objection:** See, if one accepts Vacharambhan Shruti then there remains only Brahman without creatio, dissolution etc and the parts are no longer required to be imagined. But Taittiriya Shruti says in 2.6.4 that Brahman desired to be born as many. How can a transaction-less Brahman be born as Vacharambhan effect?

**Clarification:** Just like clay takes the form of pot OR rope takes the form of imagined snake.

**Objection:** Then just as snake is non-existent, this Jagat is also non-existent.

**Clarification:** Not so. It is only the existent Brahman appearing as many in special forms in a different way. Nothing here is non-existent at any time. The logicians (KLH) imagine a thing different from its cause and speak of it as non-existent before its appearance and after its disappearance. However we say that there is no name or form which is different from the cause at any time (KFH). Though the clay is called pot as if it is different from the clay, we know that it is after all clay only. Similarly, when the rope is examined properly, we conclude that though it appeared like a snake, it is not a snake. With this realization we only get rid of the idea

of a snake. Similarly after examining Brahman we get rid of the idea of Jagat and we also stop referring to it as Jagat. In other words, after realizing Brahman in accordance with the Shruti, one's understanding that It is transactionless will not be shaken, though for sense perception It is seen in the form of the Jagat.

**Objection:** How can it be said that there is no transaction of creation etc in Brahman when it is clearly stated that Brahman desired to be born as many?

**Clarification:** It is not so. Brahman is not born in the form of the Jagat and become many like a father becoming many through the birth of his children. In the example the children are different from the father. But the name-forms of the Jagat are not like that. They existed in it even previously in an unmanifest state, became manifest without losing their Brahman-ness. They were never different from Brahman anywhere at any time. This type of manifestation of the one as many cannot be deemed as transaction in Brahman (Tai.2.6.4). Any transaction should necessarily result in a change in the transactor. When one removes his money from his left pocket and puts it in his right pocket, nobody calls it a money transaction obviously.

**The essence of the discussion is that Brahman is existent. Name-forms are also existent by virtue of being Brahman. They appear different during manifestation without losing their Brahman-ness. This different appearance vanishes during dissolution. Such difference in appearance is not a transaction.**

**Question 16:** What are the two imaginations by buddhi explained by Bhashyakara? What is the difference between them?

**Answer:** The two imaginations by buddhi explained by Bhashyakara are as follows:-

- Imagination of parts in partless Brahman (I-1)
- Imagination of names and forms of the Jagat. (I-2)

These two imaginations are different.

**Purpose:**

I-1 seeks to teach us as to how Jagat with parts has come up from partless Brahman without dropping the idea of creation.

I-2 seeks to teach us, without dropping the idea of creation, as to how despite Jagat emanating from Brahman and hence being non-different therefrom, Brahman remains transactionless and that there is no transaction of creation etc in Brahman.

**Analogies:**

I-1 uses only rope-snake example.

I-2 uses both rope-snake and clay-pot example.

**Shruti:**

I-1 is mentioned in Chhandogya 6.2.2. निरवयवस्य सतः कथं विकारसंस्थानमुपपद्यते ? नैष दोषः, रज्ज्वाद्यवयवैभ्यः सर्पादिसंस्थानवत् बुद्धिपरिकल्पितेभ्यः सदवयवैभ्यः विकारसंस्थानोपपत्तेः

I-2 is mentioned in 6.2.3. तत्कथमैक्षतेति, आह — बहु प्रभूतं स्यां भवेयं प्रजायेय प्रकर्षणोत्पद्येय, यथा मृद्घटाद्याकारेण यथा वा रज्ज्वादि सर्पाद्याकारेण बुद्धिपरिकल्पितेन

**Imagination:**

I-1 is the imagination by jiva.

I-2 is imagination of Apara Brahman. **This is evident from the Bhashya and is crucial to understand the subtle difference.**

**Method:**

In I-1, Bhashyakara teaches that just as the snake appears due to the imagined parts of rope, Jagat with parts appear due to the imagined parts of Brahman. This is the imagination by jiva. Just as the snake is absent despite appearing, similarly parts are absent in Jagat despite appearing. Rope-snake example is necessary and sufficient to explain the Jagat with parts appearing from partless Brahman. And this is achieved by stating that parts in Jagat are like appearance of snake in rope.

In I-2, Bhashyakara takes two examples of clay-pot (upadana) and rope-snake (nimitta) because his idea is to explain the transactionlessness of Brahman despite creation. Clay-pot example explains that Jagat is effect of Brahman. However, one may deem that just as clay transforms into pot, similarly there is transformation in Brahman. To negate this erroneous presumption, the example of rope-snake is given so that the transformation-less nature of Brahman is conveyed. Just as rope is untransformed, Brahman is untransformed. The snake is mental construct of Apara Brahman in whom the transaction of creation is found and not in Para Brahman. This entire creation is indeed the mental construct of Hiranyagarbha. Thus while clay-pot shows the non-difference of Jagat from Para Brahman, the rope-snake shows the absence of transformation in Brahman and the imagination of names and forms by Apara Brahman and thus absence of transaction of creation in Para Brahman. **[If one appreciates that it is not the clay which undergoes transformation but the clay lump, then even clay-pot example is necessary and sufficient to explain I-2. However, generally people understand that clay undergoes transformation, hence rope-snake example is given].**

**Question 17: What is Adhyaropa-Apavada?**

**Answer:** At the initial stages, aspirants consider Jagat (Maya) as different from Brahman. Shastra instructs the treatment of such Jagat (Maya) as Upadhi to Brahman and explains Brahman as the one endowed with Visheshanas. Such Brahman is Savishesha Brahman and is the creator and destroyer of Jagat. This superimposition of transactions of creation, sustenance and destruction in Brahman due to the treatment of Jagat (Maya) as the Upadhi is called as Adhyaropa. It happens due to the ignorance of the fact of Brahman being the upadana of Jagat and hence its non-difference from Maya. At this level, the aspirant understands that Jagat is different from Brahman and hence Brahman is understood as the Nimitta Karana of the Jagat and Maya as upadan karana of Jagat.

Subsequently, Shastra teaches that Jagat is non-different from Brahman by virtue of Brahman being the Upadana of Jagat and hence it cannot be the Upadhi to Brahman. Shastra teaches that Maya is non-different from Brahman. Hence, Shastra does the Apavada, negation of the initial Adhyaropa. Thereafter, despite seeing the changing Jagat with the indriyas, one does not lose sight of the attributeless Brahman.

This Adhyaropa-Apavada is explained in Brihadaranyaka 2.1.20, 4.4.25 and Gita Bhashya 13.13.

**Question 18: What is the Adhyaropa because of which Visheshanas of Brahman are stated? How is its Apavada done?**

**Answer:** The treatment of avidya-kalpit jagat i.e. the jagat seen as different from Brahman by ajnani as the Upadhi of Brahman is known as Adhyaropa. Such Brahman is Savishesha Brahman and is endowed with Visheshanas.

Its Apavada is done by instructing the non-difference of Jagat from Brahman. Such instruction makes impossible the treatment of Jagat as Upadhi as Brahman. And thus only Nirvishesha Brahman remains.

**Question 19:** What truth does the Mumukshu see after knowing the Adhyaropa-Apavada?

**Answer:** The Mumukshu sees the truth that there are no transactions in Brahman. This understanding is never shaken despite seeing the transactions of world. This is like the understanding of the round shape of earth despite seeing the flat surface of earth by the eye.

**Question 20:** Write the import of Brahma-prakarana in brief?

**Answer:** Brahman is the cause of Jagat. And It is very different from Jagat. Initially, aspirants regard the upadan karan of Jagat as Maya. And consider Brahman with the Upadhi of Maya by thinking of Maya as different from Brahman. Such misconception leads to understanding of Brahman as Ishvara who rules such jivas having the vision of LH. Subsequently, Shastra teaches the non-difference of Jagat and hence Maya from Brahman and explains that Jagat or Maya can never become the upadhi of Brahman. This is done by teaching the Satyam, Jnanam and Anantam features of Brahman that is another form of Neti Neti. Thus the person becomes liberated by shifting from LH to FH and gets situated in Brahman. Now despite seeing the transactions of Jagat, his vision of Nirvishesha Brahman is not disturbed.

Whatever is spoken of Brahman is spoken with respect to Upadhi. Brahman cannot be described as such by any words. Brahman despite being named variously such as Vijnanghana, Atman, Brahman etc and despite being these, is not the subject of any word.