

“Om Sri Lakshmi Narashimhan Nahama”

Atma Upanishad

*Om ! O Devas, may we hear with our ears what is auspicious;
May we see with our eyes what is auspicious, O ye worthy of worship !
May we enjoy the term of life allotted by the Devas,
Praising them with our body and limbs steady !
May the glorious Indra bless us !
May the all-knowing Sun bless us !
May Garuda, the thunderbolt for evil, bless us !
May Brihaspati grant us well-being !
Om ! Let there be Peace in me !
Let there be Peace in my environment !
Let there be Peace in the forces that act on me !*

Chapter 1

I-1. Now Angirah: The Spirit, manifests Itself, in three ways: the self, the inner Self and the supreme Self.

I-2. There are the organs – the skin, inner and outer: flesh, hair, the thumb, the fingers, the backbone, the nails, the ankles, the stomach, the navel, the penis, the hip, the thighs, the cheeks, the ears, the brows, the forehead, the hands, the flanks, the head and the eyes; these are born and these die; so they constitute the self.

I-3. Next this inner self is (indicated by the elements) earth, water, fire, air, ether, desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, desire, delusion, doubts, etc., and memory, (marked by) the high pitch and accentlessness, short, long and prolate (vowel sounds), the hearer, smeller, taster, leader, agent and self of knowledge vis-à-vis stumbling, shouting, enjoying, dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments. He is the ancient spirit that distinguishes between Nyaya, Mimamsa and the institutes of law and the specific object of listening, smelling and grasping. He is the inner Self.

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I-4. Next the supreme Self, the imperishable, He is to meditated on with (the help of) the Yogic steps, breath control, withdrawal (of sense organs), fixation (of mind), contemplation and concentration, He is to be inferred by the thinkers on the Self as like unto the seed of the Banyan tree or a grain of millet or a hundredth part of a split hair. (Thus) is He won and not known. He is not born, does not die, does not dry, is not wetted, not burnt, does not tremble, is not split, does not sweat. He is beyond the gunas, is spectator, is pure, partless, alone, subtle, owning naught, blemishless, immutable, devoid of sound, touch, colour, taste, smell, is indubitable, non-grasping, omnipresent. He is unthinkable and invisible. He purifies the impure, the unhallowed. He acts not. He is not subject to empirical existence.

Chapter 2

II-1. The good named the Atman is pure, one and non-dual always, in the form of Brahman. Brahman alone shines forth.

II-2. Even as the world with its distinctions like affirmation, negation, etc., Brahman alone shines forth.

II-3. With distinctions like teacher and disciples (also), Brahman alone appears. From the point of view of truth, pure Brahman alone is.

II-4. Neither knowledge nor ignorance, neither the world nor aught else (is there). What sets empirical life afoot is the appearance of the world as real.

II-5(a). What winds up empirical life is (its) appearance as unreal.

II-5(b)-6. What discipline is required to know, ‘this is a pot’, except the adequacy of the means of right knowledge ? Once it is given, the knowledge of the object (supervenes). The ever present Self shines when the means of Its cognition (is present).

II-7. Neither place nor time nor purity is required. The knowledge ‘I am Devadatta’ depends on nothing else.

II-8. Similarly, the knowledge ‘I am Brahman’ of the Knower of Brahman (is independent). Just as the whole world by the sun, by the splendour of the Knowledge of Brahman is everything illumined.

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II-9-10(a). What can illumine the non-existent, and illusory, non-Self ? That which endows the Vedas, Shastras, Puranas and all other beings with import – that Knower what will illumine ?

II-10(b)-11. The child ignores hunger and bodily pain and plays with things. In the same way, the happy Brahman-Knower delights (in himself) without the sense of ‘mine’ and ‘I’. Thus the silent sage, alive and alone, the embodiment of desirelessness, treats the objects of desire.

II-12. Existing as the Self of all, he is ever content abiding in his Self. Free from all wealth, he rejoices always: though companionless, he is mighty.

II-13. Though not eating, he is ever content, peerless he looks on all alike: though acting, he does nothing: though partaking of fruit, yet, he is no experiencer thereof.

II-14-17. Living in a body, he is still disembodied; though determinate, he is omnipresent; never is this Brahman-Knower, disembodied and ever existent, affected by the pleasant and the unpleasant or by the good and the evil. Because it appears to be encompassed by Rahu (the darkness), the unencompassed sun is said to be encompassed by deluded men, not knowing the truth. Similarly, deluded folk behold the best of Brahman-Knowers, liberated from the bondage of body, etc., as though he is embodied, since he appears to have a body. The body of the liberated one remains like the shed Slough of the snake.

II-18. Moved a little, hither and thither, by the vital breath, (that body) is borne like a piece of timber, up and down, by the flood waters.

II-19-20. By fate is the body borne into contexts of experiences at appropriate times. (On the contrary) he who, giving up all migrations, both knowledge and unknowable, stays as the pure unqualified Self, is himself the manifest Shiva. He is the best of all Brahman-Knowers. In life itself the foremost Brahman-Knower is the ever free, he has accomplished his End.

II-21. All adjuncts having perished, being Brahman he is assimilated to the non-dual Brahman, like a man who, with (appropriate) apparels, is an actor and without them (resumes his natural state),

II-22(a). In the same way the best of Brahman-Knowers is always Brahman alone and none else.

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II-22(b)-23. Just as space becomes space itself when the (enclosing) pot perishes, so, when particular cognitions are dissolved, the Brahman-Knower himself becomes nothing but Brahman, as milk poured into milk, oil into oil, and water into water become (milk, oil and water).

II-24(a). Just as, combined, they become one, so does the Atman-knowing sage in the Atman.

II-24(b). Thus disembodied liberation is the infinite status of Being.

II-25. Having won the status of Brahman, no longer is the Yogin reborn, for his ignorance-born bodies have all been consumed by the experimental knowledge of Being as the Self.

II-26-27(a). Because that Yogin has become Brahman, how can Brahman be reborn ? Bondage and liberation, set up by Maya, are not real in themselves in relation to the Self, just as the appearance and disappearance of the snake are not in relation to the stirless rope.

II-27(b). Bondage and liberation may be described as real and unreal and as due to the nescience (concealment of truth).

II-28-29. Brahman suffers from no concealment whatsoever. It is uncovered, there being nothing other than It (to cover It). The ideas, ‘it is’ and ‘it is not’, as regards Reality, are only ideas in the intellect. They do not pertain to the eternal Reality. So bondage and liberation are set up by Maya and do not pertain to the Self.

II-30. In the supreme Truth as in the sky, impartite, inactive, quiescent, flawless, unstained and non-dual where is room for (mental) construction ?

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II-31. Neither suppression nor generation, neither the bond nor the striving: neither the liberty seeking nor the liberated – this is the metaphysical truth.

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Here ends the Atmopanishad, as contained in the Atharva-Veda.

Reference

Dr. A. G. Krishna Warriar. The Theosophical Publishing House, Chennai. “Atma Upanishad.”