

# A FOCUSED STUDY OF THE 'ANTARYAAMI' OF THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः

The following study is taken up in the form of addressing some questions/remarks contained in a blog authored by my friend Sri Mohan Suswaram titled: 'The curious case of pratyagAtman; a death blow to Advaita?'.  
<http://suswaram.sulekha.com/blog/post/2009/03/the-curious-case-of-pratyagatman-a-death-blow.htm>

This study covers only the 'antaryami' related remarks and does not address the other observations made by him. The methodology of the study is:

- Stating the nature of the two Atmans contained in the Brihadaranyaka passage.
- Analysing Shankara's commentary on the said passage.
- Presenting the Scriptural requirement of the knowledge of only One Atman for liberation.
- Some general observations.

Says my friend:

There is an interesting pronouncement of Yajnavalkya in the Brhdaranyaka Upanishad, the very Upanishad in which *aham brahmasmi* occurs, which advaitin grossly mistook for the identity of self with God). The verse is: "*ya atmani tisthan atmano antaro yamayati esa te atma antaryami*

*amrtah'*. This verse basically talks about the indwelling principle in Jivas. Interestingly, the first usage of Ātma is in the locative case (*tisthan*) and hence should indubitably stand for the Jivatman. The second usage of the word Ātma is in the nominative case (*esa te Ātma*) and that obviously refers to the God who indwells in the Jivas for their being and functioning. If the two Ātmans were one and the same, then it would be ridiculous to speak of the same Ātman being its own *indweller* as well as the *indwelt*. Shankara had cleverly introduced his two-level truth theory here (*vyavaharika satya* and *paramarthika satya*) and said that this difference (of indweller and indwelt) is something borne out of ignorance in the *vyavaharika* state. But that theory itself has no proof so far and is not worthy of acceptance.

My Response:

The above portion appears in the Brahmasutra bhashya of Shankara (I.2.20). The Bhashya reads:

//This mention of the distinction between the embodied soul (jivatman) and the internal Ruler (paramatman) is based on the limiting adjunct of body and senses, conjured up by ignorance but this is not so in the absolute sense. For the indwelling Self can be but one, and not two. The same one, however, is mentioned as two owing to conditioning factors, as for instance it is said, 'the pot-space' and 'the cosmic-space' (with reference to one indivisible space alone). //

[Thus, here Shankara gives the reasoning that there cannot be two selves indwelling in a person. In view of this one has to conclude, per force, that one self that is spoken of as the indwelt is the avidya-conditioned one and the other the Indweller, the unconditioned one. ]

Regarding the two-level theory of advaita, the dvaita equivalent of which is

'paratantra satya and swatantra satya', a blog titled: 'A vichara on Swatantra and Paratantra'

<http://atma.sulekha.com/blog/post/2008/09/a-vichara-on-swatantra-and-paratantra-independent.htm>

may be referred to where the non-contradictory nature of the two pairs is explained. In this blog is also given the scriptural proof for the 'two-level theory' from the Taittiriya Upanishad.

Shankara, in the above Sutrabhashya, goes on to substantiate his stand and reasoning by citing two sets of Shruti passages, both from the Brihadaranyaka itself:

'यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति तदितर इतरं पश्यति' इत्यविद्याविषये सर्वं व्यवहारं दर्शयति । 'यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत् तत्केन कं पश्येत्' इति विद्याविषये सर्वं व्यवहारं वारयति ।

[ 'Because when there is duality, as it were, then one sees something (other than himself) (Br.Up. II.4.14), shows that all dealings, vyavahara, are possible within the range of ignorance; and the text 'But when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should one see through what?' (ibid.), precludes all dealings within the sphere of illumination. ]

From this standpoint, the Vedic texts about the difference between the knower and things known, the means of valid knowledge like perception, the experience of transmigration, and scriptures dealing with injunctions and prohibitions – all become justifiable.

Says my friend:

Moreover, the reading into Yajnavalkya's statement of *antaryami* or indweller would carry no weight if the world were *mithya* or unreal. If there is no real world of matter and souls, then into what should Ātman enter and become an *indweller*?

Reducing Yajnavalkya's statement, at times to ignorance of *vyavaharika state* and at other times as referring to a *Paramarthika truth* is nothing but **an act of convenience** of Shankara to advance his theory unimpeded as and when he encounters a contradictory difficulty.

My Reply:

This is no difficulty. Any teacher who aims at removing a person's ignorance has before him a task that has two aspects: 1. He has to first impress upon the person that he is ignorant. And show him how he acts in the wake of ignorance. When this is mirrored to him, the fact of his being in ignorance is accepted.

2. The scenario that is free from ignorance also should be communicated to him so that he grasps it and sees the contrast and strives to come out of ignorance.

The Shruti in general and Yajnavalkya in particular are exactly doing this. The above two passages are proof for the Shruti resorting to show the avidya avasthaa where in seeming duality one sees everything else as other than him. In contrast, the Shruti subsequently shows the vidyaa avasthaa where in the absence of ignorance/duality, the differentiated vision is no longer there.

In fact this itself is a proof of the Shruti teaching the vyavaharika-paramarthika levels which Shankara has only formalized and explicitly mentioned. So, going by the first quoted passage, the Shruti talks of ' य आत्मनि तिष्ठन् .....एष ते

आत्मा अन्तर्याम्यमृतः' - wherein the first word aatmani in the locative means the conditioned self, the jivatma and the second word Atma in the nominative refers to the unconditioned Paramatma. There is nothing odd here as throughout the scripture whenever 'atma' is spoken of as kartaa, bhoktaa, transmigrating from body to body, etc., it is this ignorance-induced-conditioned self alone. And whenever identity is taught as for example in Tat tvam asi, the tvam-atma is the self that is freed of the ignorance-born-conditioning upadhis of body-mind. This is the manner of the Upanishad. There is no resorting to 'an act of convenience' by Shankara; it is the natural way of the Shruti. I do not know if Dr.B.N.K. Sharma has quoted the two Br.Up. passages that Shankara has cited in the above sutra bhashya. For, the appreciating of Shankara's stand on the 'antaryami' shruti heavily depends on these two quotes. If they have not been quoted 'for convenience sake' by Dr. Sharma, it leaves much to be said.

### The malicious motive:

From what has been reproduced from Dr.Sharma's book, it is evident that he has not presented the complete picture about Shankara's comments on the 'antaryami' mantra. The comments from the Sutra bhashya is the basis for Dr.Sharma's tirade against Shankara. Shankara bases his view of the 'antaryami' mantra on the premise that the two atman-s in the mantra have to be seen as a portrayal of the vyavaharic position and not the paramarthik. This premise is developed and established on the strength of two important pramanas: 1. The Reason, yukti: For the indwelling Self can be but one, and not two and 2. The two Br.Up. passages teaching the avidya-based vyavaharik duality and the correcting vidya-based paramarthik unity of Atman. If these two crucial pramana-s are not reproduced along with

Shankara's premise, great injustice is done to the reader. There is a maxim in jurisprudence: *suppressio veri, suggestio falsi*. When the crucial facts are suppressed from the reader's view, a falsified version of the situation is what the reader gets. Surely this trickery on the part of Dr.Sharma can be discerned only by an informed reader; the gullible reader has no way of finding out the truth.

Now, let us see the scriptural support for Shankara's premise and the reasoning he advances for the establishing of the premise:

All over the Upanishadic literature, Moksha, liberation, is taught to be the result of realizing (the true nature of) the Atman. And everywhere the teaching is about the Knowable One Atman and nowhere is the knowledge of two Atman-s prescribed as leading to liberation. For example:

1. The Kathopanishad (1.iii.10,11) teaches:

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः ।

मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्बुद्धेरात्मा महान्परः ॥

महतः प्रमव्यक्तं अव्यक्तात्पुरुषः परः ।

पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित् सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥

[The sense-objects are higher than the senses, and the mind is higher than the sense-objects; but the intellect is higher than the mind, and the Great Soul is higher than the intellect. The Unmanifested is higher than Mahat; the Purusha is higher than the Unmanifested. There is nothing higher than the Purusha. He is the culmination. He is the highest goal.]

This pair of mantras shows that starting from the outward world of objects when one takes a stock of members one is lead to the Purusha, as the Inmost Self, the pratyagAtman. Nowhere in this list is 'another Atman' that could be specified as the jiva. The Unmanifested and Mahat are decidedly part of the created world and therefore anAtma. By the words 'He is the highest goal' the Upanishad is instructing that the knowledge of this One Purusha is what is required for liberation. There is no exhortation to know any other 'jivaatman' other than this Purusha for liberation.

2. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad also teaches the same through the mantra which is in the form of a dialogue:

कतम आत्मा इति. योऽयं विज्ञानमयः प्राणेषु हृद्यन्तर्ज्योतिः पुरुषः

अत्रायं पुरुषः स्वयंज्योतिर्भवति । (4.3.7..9)

[Which is the Atman? This infinite entity (PuruSha) that is identified with the intellect and is in the midst of the organs, the self-effulgent light within the heart (intellect). *Assuming the likeness of the intellect,* it moves between the two worlds, it thinks, as it were, and digresses, as it were. ...In this state of dream, this Purusha becomes his own light.]

The above dialogue is a part of the teaching session that Sage Yajnavalkya has with the aspirant King Janaka. Janaka questions: 'Yajnavalkya, what serves as the light for a man?' It is in a detailed elucidation in reply to this question that the mantra quoted above occurs. Therein, 'location' of the Atman is specified in order to realize it. Atman is shown as residing amidst the intellect, etc. It is the

knowledge of this Light that is the Atman that leads to liberation. It is with a view to know this that Janaka questions Yajnavalkya. Interestingly this dialogue proceeds in such a way that the jivatma is also spoken of as the very Paramatma who has identified Itself with the intellect, etc. and experiencing the triad of states, the samsara. Here too, as in the Kathopanishad mantra, we are taught about Only One Atman that is beyond all the anaatman.

3. In the Bhagavadgita 13.12, the Knowable, Jneyam, is presented thus:

ज्ञेयं यत्तत् प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वा अमृतमश्नुते ।

अनादिमत्परं ब्रह्म न सत्तन्नासदुच्यते ॥

[That which is to be known, I shall describe, knowing which one attains the Immortal. Beginningless is the Supreme Brahman, It is not said to be 'sat' or 'asat'.]

And where is that Brahman to be realized?

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिः तमसः परमुच्यते ।

ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य विष्ठितम् ॥ (13.17)

[The Light even of lights, That is said to be beyond darkness. Knowledge, the Knowable, the Goal of knowledge, It is implanted in the heart of every one.]



So, in the Bhagavadgita too we are taught that there is Only One Atman/Brahman that is to be realized for Moksha. The verse 13.24 uses the word Atman to denote the word Brahman:

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना ।

[By meditation some behold the Self in the mind by the sharpened, purified intellect....] This 'beholding' of the Atman/Brahman is what is *sine qua non* for Moksha.]

The Gita specifically teaches the knowledge of One Atman as saattvic jnAnam:

सर्वभूतेषु येन एकं भावं अव्ययमीक्षते ।

अविभक्तं विभक्तेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि सात्त्विकम् ॥ (18.20)

[That by which a man sees the One Indestructible Reality in all beings, inseparate in the separated, that knowledge know thou as Saattvic.]

Lord Krishna contrasts the above by specifying the raajasik jnAnam:

पृथक्त्वेन तु यज्ज्ञानं नानाभावान् पृथग्विधान् ।

वेत्ति सर्वेषु भूतेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि राजसम् ॥ (18.21)

[But that knowledge which by differentiation, sees in all creatures various entities of distinct kinds, that knowledge know thou as Rajasic.]

These two Gita verses seem to be the exact re-phrasing of the two Brihadaranyaka Mantras that we saw earlier - one for the ignorant-vision

and the other for the vision of the wise, quoted by Shankara in the antaryaami context.

Thus, in the Gita too we are not taught of any 'other jivaatman' whose knowledge is mandatory for Moksha.

From all these passages we conclude that the Scripture recognizes only One Atman as the True Atman which is the pratyagAtman that indwells every being. It would be now clear that Shankara in that mantra on 'antaryami' has this position of the Scripture in mind while commenting that 'the two-Atmans is not the ultimate position of the Scripture and that it is unreasonable to admit two pratyagaatmans in a being'. Also, his assertion that the 'other Atman' is only the avidya-caused conditioned Atman can be appreciated by us, especially in the light of the Gita verses we saw above. Further, it is only a conditioned Atman that can be said to be controlled by the unconditioned Atman. Again, when the jivAtman is admitted to be all-pervading (by Advaitins and Dvaitins), it would be illogical to say that the All-pervading Paramatman dwells in the all-pervading jivAtman. Considering all these, it is only Shankara's position that is admissible. If the 'other Atman' is admitted to be conditioned by the association of mind, intellect, etc. due to avidya, then one can accept the possibility of the Parmatman to indwell in it and control it.

The case of '*dvaa suparnaa*' of the Mundaka Up.(3.i.1) is also similar. The 'two' here are not two pratyagAtmans in one body. They are to be seen as - one conditioned self and the other unconditioned Self.

It is to be noted that the 'antaryami' mantra that is the focus of this discussion is occurring in the 'माध्यन्दिनशाखा' 'Maadhyandina' recension of the Brihadaranyakopnishad for which Shankara has not commented as a whole. His complete commentary for this Upanishad is only for the 'काण्वशाखा' 'kANva' recension. Yet, Shankara takes up this one mantra of the M recension in his Brahmasutra Bhashya which we are currently discussing. Now, it would be interesting to note that the entire long list of 'objects' that are the loci for the antaryAmin to be dwelling comprises of created objects of the world. The five elements and their evolutes, the Veda, yajnas, etc. are all part of the created universe. 'Atma' in the locative case occurring in the mantra 3.7.30 of the M recension, also has to be a part of the created universe. This 'Atman' is commented upon as 'jeevaatman' by Sri Vidyaranya Swamin. 'JivAtman' is that entity comprising primarily of the Ego, ahankara, operating through the upadhis of manas, buddhi, prana, indriya-s and the gross body. The need for the antaryAmin to be behind the entire created universe, sentient and inert, micro and macro, arises from the fact that the created universe is inert, jaDa. It cannot function of its own; it requires a sentient, chaitanya, entity for its being and functioning. This entity is the antaryAmin. In other words, the entire gamut of the loci that is listed in this section of the antaryAmi brahmana is termed as Kshetram in the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. The AntaryAmin that indwells this Kshetram is called the Kshetrajna in the Gita. Thus, we conclude that the term 'Atman' in the locative case is the ego-sense, ahankara, primarily the jiva. Ahankara, like the buddhi, manas, etc. is only an evolute of the five elements, that are inert. Jiva is the Chaitanyam that has identification with the jaDa prakRiti. It is only this avidya-based

AdhyAsic commingling of the Chaitanya, Kshetrajna, with the jaDa, prakRiti, kshetram, that brings about the jeeva-hood into existence. This is clearly stated in the Bhagavadgita 13.26 as:

यावत्सञ्जायते किञ्चित् सत्त्वं स्थावरजङ्गमम् ।

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञसंयोगात् तद्विद्धि भरतर्षभ ॥

[O Scion of Bharata! Know that whatever moving and unmoving beings that are born in this universe, is because of the commingling of the field and the field-knower.]

It can be readily appreciated that the inert kshetra and the sentient kshetrajna can never really come in union. Their uniting/commingling is only ignorance-based. It is with this background that Shankara has commented in the 'antaryami' mantra sutra bhashya thus:

//This mention of the distinction between the embodied soul (jivatman) (the word 'atman' in the locative case) and the internal Ruler (paramatman) (the word 'Atman' in the nominative case) is based on the limiting adjunct of body and senses, conjured up by ignorance but this is not so in the absolute sense. For the indwelling Self can be but one, and not two. The same one, however, is mentioned as two owing to conditioning factors, as for instance it is said, 'the pot-space' and 'the cosmic-space' (with reference to one space alone)//

Now we can easily conclude that the entire creation being inert and produced has to go out of existence at a future time. It can never be amRta. The Upanishad distinguishes the entire creation from the One amRta, Immutable, Atman and calls this the antaryAmin. Thus, the word 'atman' in the locative case is non-amRta as distinguished from

the 'Atman' that is in the nominative case which is amRta. In English the two terms could be distinguished by expressing them as 'self' and 'Self' respectively. And the Ultimate Message of the Upanishad in this section is: 'Oh Aspirant, this antaryAmin is your Real Self and not whatever you have imagined as yourself and as your's and related to you in one way or the other, due to ignorance.' This is conveyed by the Mahavakya in this section: 'एष त आत्मा अन्तर्याम्यमृतः' [This Indweller is your Immortal Self]. This is the way this section teaches 'Tat tvam asi'.

## How is the Atman separated from the 'jivAtman'?

In Vedanta, the jiva is not mithyA; only the *jivatvam*, jivahood, is mithya. In other words, the embodied, bound, nature that is born of ignorance alone constitutes jeevatvam to the ever-free, pure and pristine Atman. It is the identifying with the matter, prakRti, that has resulted in samsara to Consciousness, Brahman as per the Gita 13.26. So, the remedy lies in the separating/negating the matter from the Consciousness. When this is done, Consciousness remains *as it is*. This Consciousness is One only; the differentiating factor between one jiva and another is only the unreal matter. It is by viveka, knowledge of one's true unembodied, pristine state, that one frees oneself from bondage. Shankara says in the commentary for Bhagavadgita verse: 13.26 (quoted already):

यथाशास्त्रं क्षेत्र-क्षेत्रज्ञलक्षणभेदपरिज्ञानपूर्वकं प्राग्दर्शितरूपात् क्षेत्रात् मुञ्जादिव ईषीकां यथोक्तलक्षणं क्षेत्रज्ञं प्रविभज्य 'न सत्तन्नासदुच्यते' [गी. १३.१२] इत्यनेन

निरस्तसर्वोपाधिविशेषं ज्ञेयं ब्रह्म स्वरूपेण यः पश्यति, क्षेत्रं च मायानिर्मितहस्ति-  
स्वप्नदृष्टवस्तु-गन्धर्वनगरादिवत् असदेव सदिव अवभासते इत्येवं निश्चितविज्ञानः यः, तस्य  
यथोक्तसम्यग्दर्शनविरोधात् अपगच्छति मिथ्याज्ञानम् ।

[This illusion vanishes, because of its opposition to the right knowledge, when a man attains to a knowledge of the distinction between Kshetra and Kshetrajna as defined in the Shastra, when he is able to separate Kshetrajna from Kshetra like the ishikaa reed from the munja-grass and to realize that Brahman, the Knowable, which is devoid of all upadhis as described in the words 'It is not said to be existent or non-existent' (BG 13.12) as his own Self, when he is convinced that, like the elephants and palaces projected by a juggler's art, or like a thing seen in a dream, or like a gandharvanagara (an imaginary city in the sky), *Kshetra is non-existent and only appears to be existent.* ]

**A key point to be noted in Vedanta** is that whenever sentient objects are referred to as 'chetana', it means that the One Only Chaitanya that is Brahman is reflected in the reflecting medium of mind/intellect/ego. Thus, when a human being or a devataa or an animal is considered 'chetana' it is the reflected consciousness, प्रतिबिम्बचैतन्यम्, that is being referred to and not the Original Consciousness, बिम्बचैतन्यम्. Thus, in keeping with the Kenopanishad (1.i.2) mantra: श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं, मनसो मनः.(the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind..), the Kathopanishad (2.ii.13)mantra: नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानां (the Immutable among the perishable, the Conscious of the conscious..) too separates the Original Consciousness, Brahman, antaryAmin, from the avidya-created beings, the reflected-conscious entities. These entities are in truth the Original Consciousness alone but conditioned,

due to avidya, by the body-mind upadhis. This rule is perfectly reflected in the antaryAmi mantra of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad too.

## A synopsis:

- The 'antaryAmi' mantra contains two 'Atman' words; one of which is the conditioned jiva and the other the unconditioned Iswara/Brahman.
- Everything that is spoken of as the locus for the antaryAmin to dwell is the elemental evolutes alone and therefore anAtma.
- The 'Atma' which is seen to be the locus of the antaryAmi-Atma is only the ego-sense, the primary non-Atman-content of the jiva.
- Shankara reasons that there cannot be two 'Selves' in one being and therefore one of them has to be the ignorance-based jivatman.
- The two Shruti passages to substantiate his stand reveal the two standpoints: paramarthika and vyavaharika, or the Swatantra and paratantra states.
- The Scripture nowhere prescribes knowledge of two Atmans for liberation; everywhere only one Atman is taught as the Knowable.

- The scripture also explicitly censures the perceiving of multiple Atmans as constituting raajasic knowledge and therefore not conducive for liberation.
- The method of separating the Atman from the body-mind complex is through viveka born of scriptural study.

श्रीसद्गुरुचरणारविन्दार्पणमस्तु

ओं तत् सत्