CHAPTER III

THE SPIRIT OF THE UPANIŚADS

The core objective of the Upaniṣads is to impart the Supreme knowledge of Brahman. It is the non-dual principle, without a second and is beyond the space – time continuum. The Upaniṣads recognise only one spirit, viz., Brahman – infinite, eternal, comprehensible, self-existent, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world.

The concept of the Spirit or Ultimate Reality of the Upaniṣads, is regarded as the ripe fruit of the quintessence teachings preserved in the Vedas. In the Vedas, we find various conceptions regarding world-creators. As for example, we find the hypothesis of world-creators in RV, 10.72; RV., 10.81; RV., 10.90; RV., 1.164 etc. But “the ground-wok of the Vedānta which overthrew or absorbed into itself all other conceptions of the world-ground was that of Brahman. Emerging from the Brāhmaṇas, it obtained in the Upaniṣads a fundamental position which it never lost”.¹ Brahman is regarded as the Ultimate principle, the cause and substratum of all in the Upaniṣads.

¹. Hume, The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, p. 13
In the Upaniṣadic literature, different names are given to this central spirit, viz. Brahman, Ātman, Puruṣa, Sat, Bhūman, etc. Though each identification has been discussed differently in the Upaniṣads, they basically point out to the one and the only Ultimate Reality. Again, we have noticed different approaches of the seers to define this central Principle. Various mystical experiences of the Upaniṣadic seers revolve round this Highest Principle. We now propose to discuss the different conceptions of this Spirit in order to bring out the main significance of the Upaniṣads.

**BRAHMAN**

Of all the terms, denoting the spirit, the word Brahman is the most frequently used in the Upaniṣadic texts. The word Brahman is referred to in the Rgveda with different meanings. It is to be mentioned that in the Rgveda, the word conveys the meaning of a hymn or prayer\(^2\) with a mystical significance. It also denotes sacred knowledge or magic formula.\(^3\) Then, in the later Vedas and other Brāhmaṇa texts, the word Brahman gradually reveals the meaning as the Supreme Being or the guiding force, of whom all the other gods are mere manifestations.\(^4\)

---

2. RV, 1.62.13; 75.2  
4. Cf. AV, 10.8.44; Sat. Br., 10.3.5.11
According to Prof. Monier Williams, "In the Puruṣa sūkta of the Rgveda, the one spirit is called Puruṣa. The more common name in the later system is Brahman, neuter, derived from the root br.h, to expand."⁵ The various Upaniṣadic texts also in the later age, have used the term Brahman to enumerate the concept of the Ultimate Reality.⁶

The word Brahman is derived from the roots ṛbṛh and ṛbṛmh, together with the suffix man. Both the roots ṛbṛh and ṛbṛmh mean to grow, to be great, to increase, to expand etc. The suffix man denotes limitlessness. Hence, the derivative meaning of the word Brahman is that which is the greatest of all or that which has grown unlimitedly. Śaṅkara has said in his commentary that the Absolute is called Brahman because of its greatness "ṛbhottvad brahmaṭi"⁷ In another place he says, "ṛbhmati ṛbhmayati tasmāduṣcyate param brahmaṭi"⁸ (i.e., It is known as Brahman as it is fully grown and makes other things grow). Moreover, Śaṅkara says that if the derivative meaning of the word is analysed then it becomes clear that Brahman is nitya (eternal), suddha (pure), buddha (conscious) and

---

5. Vide, Wilkins W.J., Hindu Mythology, p. 94
6. TU, 3.10.4; CU, 3.14.1; KeU, 4.1; 2.1; KU, 1.3.2 ; 2.3.14; PU, 1.1
7. ŚB on KU, 1.4
8. ŚB on ŚU, 1.1
The unsurpassable greatness of *Brahman* is declared in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*. It is said that it is greater than the earth, greater than the atmospheric region, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds. That is why *Brahman* is the greatest of all. The *Puruṣasūkta* of the *Ṛgveda* also reveals this greatness of *Brahman*. In other Upaniṣads also, we find this type of statements. The *Mundaka Upaniṣad* declares that, “The heavens are the head of that Being, the sun and the moon are His eyes; the quarters, His ears; the Vedas, His speech; the wind His breath; the universe His heart. From His feet is produced the earth. He is the inner self of all beings”.

In the *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad*, again we find, “His eyes are everywhere, His faces everywhere, His arms everywhere, everywhere are His feet” and “He is the omnipresent.”

---

9. *brahmaśabdasya hi vyutpādyamānasya nityasuddhatvādayo’rthāḥ pratiyante* BSS, 1.1.1., pp. 86-87

10. CU, 3.14.3

11. MU, 2.1.4

12. ŚU, 3.3

13. Ibid, 3.11
This Great Spirit is described as Bhūman or Infinite in the Chandogyopaniṣad. This Bhūman is everywhere. It is below, above, before, behind, to the right and to the left. The Chandogyopaniṣad also describes this Great Reality as existing in objective and subjective phenomena.

SAT OR SATYAM

The Upaniṣads again depict this Ultimate Reality as Sat or Satya, in such statements as – tasya vā etasya brahmaṇo nāma satyaṁ iti, (And of this Brahman the name is the True); tasyopaniṣat satyasya satyaṁ iti (Its secret name is the Truth of Truth); satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma (Brahman is Truth, Consciousness and Infinite) etc. It is the ultimate substratum and the root – cause of all created objects. The Chandogyopaniṣad declares that before the origination of the world consisting of names and forms, there was the Sat (Being) only, one without a second. Thus in the Chandogyopaniṣad, Sat refers to this Upaniṣadic Spirit which is regarded as the undifferentiated being. It is the only real

14. CU, 7.25.1
15. Cf. CU, 3.18
16. Ibid, 8.3.4
17. BU, 2.1.20
18. TU, 2.1.3
19. CU, 6.2.1
principle because it alone exists prior to the creation. This \textit{Sat} is the Ultimate source and the ground from which the manifold effects bubble forth and also return back. It is the cause, the support and the Ultimate substance of the whole universe. This grand idea is expressed in the \textit{Chāndogyopaniṣad} with the instruction of this \textit{Sat}, as that by knowing which all else become known, the unheard becomes heard, the incomprehensible becomes comprehensible.\textsuperscript{20} Commenting on the term \textit{Sat}, Śaṅkara says that it is the Pure Being, all pervasive, one, unsullied and partless.\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Sat} alone is real. \textit{Sat} alone exists before creation as also in all created things. It is stated that “The Absolute stands for what can only be designated as pure \textit{Sat}.”\textsuperscript{22} Into this one and only \textit{Sat}, the ever-real thing, all existing forms melt and merge at the time of destruction. As the \textit{Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad} declares this \textit{Sat} or \textit{Brahman} as the incomprehensible, eternal being, without an end, infinite and the conscious one. All other empirical objects evolve out from this very being and again merge into it. After merging, there are no discriminations through individual

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 6.1.3; MU, 1.1.3

\textsuperscript{21} ŚB on CU, 6.2.1

\textsuperscript{22} Warrior, A.G.K., \textit{God in Advaita}, p. 27
consciousness. According to Śaṅkarācārya, the description of *Sat* as *ekameva* (one, without a second) points to the fact that *Brahman* is free from all differentiations. It also points out that *Sat* has no real effects which are different from it.

Ānandagiri, explains that through defining *Sat* as *ekam* and *advitīyaṁ*, are excluded the *sajātiyaḥ svagata bheda* and also the *vijātiyaḥ bheda* respectively. Here *svagata* means the internal difference, just as the difference between flowers, leaves etc. in a tree, where as *sajātiya* means the difference between similar things like the difference of one tree to the other. *Vijātiyaḥ* reflects the difference of one tree to the rock etc. So, *Sat* or the Being is without these three kinds of differences. From this Reality alone, all the lives, gods, worlds etc. come into existence. Through the expression *Sat* or *Satyam*, all other contradictions are subsided. Though *Sat* is underneath everything, it is untouched by Vikāras or manifestations by transcending all. According to Śaṅkarācārya, *Sat* or *Brahman* remains uncontradicted in the past, present and future.

23. idam mahadbhūtaṁ anantaṁ apāraṁ viṣṇunaghaṁ eva, etetbyo bhūtebhyaṁ samutthāya tāni evānu vinaśyati na pretya samijnāsti

BU, 2.4.12

24. Ā on CU, 6.2.1
25. PD, 2. 20
26. BU, 1.4.7
27. trikālābādhya, ŚB on BG, 2.16
Therefore, *Sat* is the Absolute Reality beyond the space-time limitations.

**CIT OR JÑĀNA**

*Brahman* is again described as *Jñānam* or *Cit* i.e. consciousness in the statements – *vijnānam ānandaṁ brahman*\(^{28}\) etc. But it is to be mentioned that like *satyam*, *jñānam* too is not the attribute, but the very essence of *Brahman*. The most impressive reference in this connection is found in the *Brhadāraṇyakopanisad*. To an answer of the question of King Janaka in the form of *kim jyotirayaṁ puruṣa iti*\(^{29}\) (what is the light of this person?), after refuting one by one the empirical objects such as the sun, the moon, fire etc. for the supreme light as stated by Yājñavalkya, finally arrived at the desired answer from him that *Ātman* or the Self is the Supreme light within a human body. Here, *Ātman* is identical with *Brahman*. With the power of this Supreme light, one can perform his actions or to go anywhere.\(^{30}\) Again, in another discourse in the same *Upaniṣad*, this Self or *Ātman* is revealed as *Vijñānamayah* or endowed with supreme consciousness. That Supreme knowledge resides in every human heart. Actually the Self or *Ātman* is beyond the activities of sense-organs. But being identified with the intellect or *buddhi*, it assumes that as

---

28. BU, 3.9.28
29. Ibid, 4.3.2
30. Ibid, 4.3.6
if it meditates, as if it moves around – dhyāyatīva lelāyatīva.\textsuperscript{31} The Kenopaniṣad declares that the Self is above all the actions of sense-organs and it is the ear of the ears, the mind of the mind, the eye of the eyes etc.\textsuperscript{32}

The Supreme self is depicted as the Ultimate consciousness – cetanaścetanānām\textsuperscript{33}, (the consciousness of all the conscious elements). The Ultimate consciousness or Cit, is the source of all light, viz. of the sun, the moon, the stars etc. All things in the world are illumined through this ever-illuminating power. This Ultimate Reality is self – shining; there is nothing which can illuminate it. The sun, the moon, the stars which are the illuminator of everything else in this world cannot illuminate this reality. Rather all are lighted up only after that light – tasya bhāṣā sarvamidam vibhātī.\textsuperscript{34} The Upaniṣadic seers reveal this Brahman or Cit as pure (śubhra)\textsuperscript{35} which is devoid of any limitations and imperfections. It is the jyoti or light of all the burning objects, fire etc. It is noticed that the concept of light is again associated with time also. In this world, various distinctions of time such as day, night, month, half-month etc. are

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{31} BU, 4.3.7
  \item \textsuperscript{32} caksuśaścakṣuḥ KeU, 1.2; BU, 4.4.18
  \item \textsuperscript{33} KU, 2.2.15
  \item \textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 2.2.15; MU, 2.2.10
  \item \textsuperscript{35} tacchubhram jyotisāṁ jyotiḥ MU, 2.2.9
\end{itemize}
made depending on the movements of the earth around the sun. But the
Ultimate consciousness or light is not bound by the determinations of time
and space. It is entirely free from any limiting adjuncts. In the
Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, it is established that the time with its different
particles of year etc. roles on under the Ultimate consciousness, which is
the cause of every shining objects.\textsuperscript{36} It is considered as \textit{āmytaṁ} or the
eternal One, untouched by death or destruction. \textit{Brahman} is stated as the
entire consciousness alone (\textit{kṛṣṇah prajñānaghaṇa}).\textsuperscript{37} The \textit{Brhad-
āraṇyaka Upaniṣad} declares that just as a lump of salt is without any
differentiation as inside and outside, and tastes the same as a whole, so
also this Spirit is without any parts; it is undifferentiated consciousness,
which is an integral entity. According to Śaṅkarācārya also, no form is
found, other than consciousness as inside and outside of this Reality,
consciousness is the Ultimate nature of \textit{Brahman}.\textsuperscript{38}

The consciousness of \textit{Brahman} can be emphasised through
three stages of waking, dream and deep sleep. In the \textit{Brhadāraṇyaka
Upaniṣad}, it is analysed that in the state of deep sleep, though

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} BU, 4.4.16
\item \textsuperscript{37} BU, 4.5.13
\item \textsuperscript{38} nāśya – ātmano’ntarbahirvā caitanyāt – anyadrūpamasti caitanyameva
tu nirantarāmasya svarūpāṁ BSS, 3.2.16
\end{itemize}
The jīva or individual self does not see anything; the consciousness does not cease because it is imperishable.39 It is said that in deep sleep, Brahman is compared to the sun which shines ceaselessly even when there is nothing else to shine on.40 Actually what has happened in that state is that there is no second object for it to know or to illuminate.41 At the state of dream, the self is related with the individual consciousness with its limitations to some extent and thus, it dwells in that state. But there also it shines on by itself—atrayaṁ puruṣaḥ svayaṁ jyotirbhavati.42 According to Pañcadaśi, “Just as existence or Sat runs, like a thread through all particulars of experience, consciousness also remains one and indivisible despite the plurality of its objects in the states of waking and dream.43

In the Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad also, it is described how this Spirit, while remaining the same, moves through the world in waking and dreaming state. And finally, in deep dreamless sleep or slumber, wrapped

39. na hi draṣṭurdṛṣṭeḥ viparilopo vidyate BU, 4.3.23
40. BSS, 1.1.5
41. na tu taddvitīyamasti tato'nyadvibhaktāṁ yadvijānīyāt BU, 4.3.30
42. Ibid, 4.3.9; KU, 5.15; CU, 3.12.7
43. PD, 1.3
round by the Self that consists of knowledge (prajñā ātman) it remains the absolute knowing subject.\textsuperscript{44} The \textit{Māṇḍukyopaniṣad} gives us an analysis of consciousness leading to the same conclusion. According to this, the soul has three conditions which are all included in a fourth. They are waking, dreaming, slumber and the fourth is called \textit{Turiya}. Among them, \textit{Turiya} is the highest position which is the only one, ever peaceful and pure bliss, that is the very Ātman.\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{ĀNANDA BRAHMAN}

\textit{Brahman} which is \textit{Sat} or existence and \textit{Cit} or consciousness is again described as the Supreme Bliss or \textit{Ānanda}.\textsuperscript{46} As in the \textit{Chāndogyopaniṣad}, we find – \textit{prāṇo brahma kaṁ brahma khaṁ brahma}\textsuperscript{47} (the life or breath is \textit{Brahman}, the joy is \textit{Brahman} and the space is \textit{Brahman}). Here the concept of absolute joy is associated with the Supreme Reality. It is the absolute Bliss where there are no sufferings and pains caused from some defects. In the same \textit{Upaniṣad}, at the Sanatkumāra's teachings to Nārada, we find the reference of this Bliss which is presented there as \textit{Bhūman}, the Ultimate Infinity. From the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} BU, 4.3.23
\item \textsuperscript{45} MāU, 1.7
\item \textsuperscript{46} TU, 3.6
\item \textsuperscript{47} CU, 4.10.5
\end{itemize}
denotations of mere empirical objects, viz. name, speech, mind etc. it
successively turns to Bhūman that is endowed with eternal pleasure. It is
said there – yo vai bhūmā tat sukham, nālpe sukhastii⁴⁸ (that which is
Bhūman is the bliss; there is no bliss in finitude). It is the final, all-
pervasive and transcendental principle. One who has known this is raised
beyond death and other calamities.⁴⁹ He then is able to realise the Supreme
Bliss and becomes identical with the Absolute one. It is characterised as
that where nothing else is seen, heard, understood even.⁵⁰

In the Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad also, this Supreme Principle is
connected with the concept of pleasure or ānanda. Yājñavalkya reveals
that the Self is the dearest of all for everybody.⁵¹ All other empirical things
or beings, viz. husband, wife, children, wealth etc. are dear for an ordinary
human being. However, if this pleasure of ordinary objects are analysed, it
is found that these are dear not for the sake of the objects themselves, but
for the sake of the very Self alone – ātmanastu kāmāya sarvam priyam
bhavati.⁵² The Self is unknowingly dearer to other objects like son,

⁴⁸. Ibid, 7.23.1
⁵⁰. Ibid, 7.24.1
⁵¹. BU, 1.4.8
⁵². Ibid, 2.4. 4-5
property, money etc. This Brahman is above the reach of all difficulties. It is untouched by sins, old-age, death, pains, hunger, and thirst etc.⁵³ All these occur only empirically or to empirical things. Brahman, the highest principle is not conditioned by such imperfections.

In some Upaniṣadic passages, Brahman as Bliss is well-established through the concept of deep dreamless sleep or suṣupti. As we find in the Bhādarāṇyaṇa Pāṇiṣad that in slumber, one has no consciousness of other things.⁵⁴ In this state, one becomes transparent like water. It is pure and dwells as one single consciousness, without a second. This is the world of Brahman.⁵⁵ Here the Self attains its final substratum. This is its final repose which is the Supreme Bliss. All the living beings endowed with ignorance or Avidyā, dwell in only a small portion of this Infinite Bliss. Again, it is declared that in that state, a person either he is a king or a boy or a brāhmaṇa, rests on that Supreme Bliss entirely.⁵⁶ There, one is completely free from all desires, sins and also is without any fear.⁵⁷

---

⁵³. CU, 8.7.1; 8.1.5
⁵⁴. BU, 4.3.32
⁵⁵. esa brahmalokaḥ, Ibid
⁵⁶. Ibid, 2.1.19
⁵⁷. Ibid, 4.3.21
The individual self unites with *Prājñā* or the Supreme One, without any knowledge of his own identity and this unity is conveyed as very pleasant and blissful, with utter absorption. This can be compared to the condition when one is united with his beloved wife. Similarly, in deep sleep, *Ātman* is the utmost desirable object. It is said that here, one is free from all sufferings of the heart — *tīrṇo hi tadā sarvān śokān hṛdayasya bhavati*. Therefore, here one feels the Supreme Bliss.

Again, in another passage of the *Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, the superiority of this Bliss of *Brahman* has been established by comparing it with conceptions. As such it is revealed that the Supreme Bliss always has the highest degree in comparison to other inferior manifestations — “Pleasures of different grades of living beings (above the human level) are arranged in a hierarchy of purity and intensity. The starting point is the joy of a cultured youth, well-read, quick of understanding, firm and strong, who commands the whole earth full of wealth. His joy is defined as one of human bliss.” One hundred bliss of a human being, who is of the highest status, provided with all earthly enjoyments, is only one bliss for the fathers i.e. who have obtained their world (*jitaloka*) through their actions.

---

58. BU, 4.3.22
Again, one hundred bliss of the fathers is reduced to one for the gandharvas, whose one hundred, thereafter turns to one unit of bliss for the gods by action. Their bliss of a hundred times, who have acquired the divinity by performing virtuous deeds, i.e. sacrifices etc., makes one bliss of the gods by birth. Further, the one hundred bliss of the gods by birth, becomes again one in the world of Prajāpati, as well as for one who is devoid of any sin and desire and well-versed in the Vedas. In this way, lastly it is noticed that one hundred bliss of Prajāpati is identical to one bliss of Brahman.60 This is the Supreme Bliss, which is six times higher than the ordinary human bliss. In the view of Deussen, the highest human bliss is just a billionth part of that Brahmic bliss.61 This is also enumerated in the Taittirīyopaniṣad, thus it is said – sa eko brahmaṇa ānandaḥ (that is the one grade of bliss of Brahman).62 Again, Brahman as bliss is quite significantly described in the Taittirīyopaniṣad as rasa.63 Here, the term rasa denotes the cause of pleasures. Through the detachment of the mind and sense-organs from various desirable empirical objects, one can get

60. BU, 4.3.33
61 Deussen, P., The Philosophy of the Upanishads, p. 143
62. TU, 2.8. 2-4
63. Ibid, 2.7
infinite peace and profound satisfaction. Because though the vikāras always attract the human beings, they cannot bestow ultimate contentment to human hearts except some limited pleasures. For they are ever subjects to constant changes and the point of eternality is found nowhere in them. According to Śaṅkarācārya, the hidden source of this Infinite Bliss that can be attained through detachment from desires and contemplation is Brahman or rasa or Ānanda. All the world with its numerous varieties set forth from this Bliss alone, sustained by it and at last, they merge and melt in that Bliss. Here Brahman and Bliss are clearly identical with one another. It is indescribable and inexplicable, one and only principle. One who has acquired the knowledge of this One Bliss, never fears anything or there is nothing else to fear.

The Taittiřyopanisad when dealing with the four kośas or sheaths of Ātman as annamaya, (i.e. consisting of food) prāṇamaya (breath), manomaya (mind), vijñānamaya (consciousness) suggests that the ānandamaya kośa or the sheath of bliss is the innermost kernel of these. It is the basis of all and is denoted as pucchaṁ pratiṣṭhā. In this way,

64. SB on TU, 2.7
65. TU, 3.6
66. ānandam brahmaṇo vidvān na bibheti kutāścana Ibid, 2.9
67. TU, 2.5
Brahman as Bliss is explained in the various Upaniṣadic Texts.

ANANTA OR INFINITE

In the Taittirīyopaniṣad, Brahman is defined as anantaṁ braхman.68 This word refers to the infinite and limitless character of Brahman. Brahman is free from all limitations. Here limitation means limitation of time, space and cause, while Brahman is non-spatial, non-temporal and non-causal. In the view of S. Radhakrishnan, “While containing space, it is not spatial; while including time, it transcends time; while it has a causally bound system of nature within it, it is not subject to the law of cause”.69

Brahman is free from all conceivable and non-conceivable dualities. This is the difference between other empirical objects and Brahman. That which is produced or born comes under the boundary of time and space. But Brahman has no cause ever to be produced of. Therefore, through the word ananta, it is declared that Brahman is never produced, nor destroyed. It has no beginning and no end,70 and hence is beyond all these limitations of time. This Brahman is described as beyond the limitations of past and future, the eternal one, below which the time

68. Ibid, 2.1
70. aṇādyanantaṁ mahataḥ paraṁ dhruvaṁ KU, 1.3.15

136
revolves with its units as days, nights etc, and in which the space is established.\textsuperscript{71} Space, time and causality are related to the empirical world alone, \textit{Brahman} is independent of these imperfections. In the \textit{Svetāsvataraopanishad}, \textit{Brahman} is said to be all-pervading and everything is \textit{Puruṣa} or \textit{Brahman}\textsuperscript{72}, whatever is there as past, present and future – \textit{parastrīkālāt}\textsuperscript{73} (It is beyond the three kinds of time). Again \textit{Brahman} is never bound by space rather by this Imperishable \textit{Brahman}, space is woven as narrated by Yājñavalkya.\textsuperscript{74} It is below, above, behind, in front, to the south, to the north and is everywhere\textsuperscript{75} and so, there is nothing on earth which is different from \textit{Brahman}. Thus the \textit{Mundakaopanishad} depicts that the sun and the moon are its eyes; Agni (the atmosphere) is its head and the quarters are its two ears.\textsuperscript{76} It is self-caused or \textit{svayambhuḥ}\textsuperscript{77} and

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{yasmāt arvāk saṁvatsaraḥ} – ahobhīḥ parivarttate BU, 4.4.16; 4.4.17; KU, 2.1.5, 1.2.14
\item \textit{puruṣa evedam sarvaṁ yadvātānī yacca bhavyaṁ} ŚU, 3.15
\item \textit{ŚU}, 6.5; \textit{trikālātānī} MāU, 1
\item BU, 3.8.11
\item CU, 7.25.1; MU, 2.2.11
\item \textit{agnirmūrdhā caksuṣī candrasūryau diṣṭāḥ sroṭre} MU, 2.1.4
\item ĪU, 8
\end{enumerate}
hence, is not limited by a cause, unlike other empirical objects which are somehow produced and always are subject to varied changes. *Brahman* is the absolute being, never-changing, Infinite Principle. *Brahman* is devoid of birth and death, and is incomprehensible, full, eternal and primeval.\(^{78}\) Thus, through the term *anantam*, all other finite things that have an end or are subject to destruction, become apart from the Ultimate Principle, *Brahman*.

**SOME OTHER CONCEPTS OF *BRAHMAN***

In the Upaniṣads, again we find some other systematic attempts to define *Brahman* – the Ultimate Reality, by different Upaniṣadic seers. In the *Brhadārānyaka*, all the gods have been reduced to one, i.e. *Brahman*.\(^{79}\) *Brahman* is the Supreme of all. At the beginning of the creation, there is alone *Brahman*, the omni-present one – *brahma vā idamagra āsīt*.\(^{80}\) This is called *Aksara* or imperishable. This *Aksara* is the ruler of all. Yājñiwalkya reveals that under the rule of this *Aksara*, everything else held in their respective positions. Through its rule, the sun always rises in the east and sets in the west, some rivers flow eastward and

---

78. KU, 1.2.8
79. BU, 3.9.1-9
80. Ibid, 1.4.10
some flow to the west.⁸¹ Everything in the universe such as earth, atmosphere, mountains, days and nights etc. are governed and disciplined by this Akṣara. Thus all are smoothly run by the governance of the Akṣara Brahman. Akṣara, the ruler or governor of all, is perhaps the same as Rta, the natural law or order. In the Rgveda, Rta is said to reign everywhere including the sun, the moon, mountains etc.⁸²

Brahman is again defined as space or ākāśa in some Upaniṣadic passages. In the Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, Brahman which is symbolised as Aum is defined as ākāśa or kham brahma.⁸³ It is said as primeval and eternal. In the Chāndogyopaniṣad also, ākāśa is identified with Brahman. Here, it is depicted that from this space all the transient and non-transient objects are evolved and at the time of destruction again merge into it.⁸⁴ Here the term ākāśa is not used to denote the empirical space, but it denotes transcendental Brahman. This is established in the Brahmasūtra by Bādarāyaṇa.⁸⁵

---

⁸¹. Ibid, 3.8.8-11
⁸². RV, 4.40.5
⁸³. BU, 5.1.2
⁸⁴. imāni bhūtānākāśādeva samutpadyanta ākāśaṁ pratyustam yanti 
CU, 1.9.1 ; 4.10.4; 8.14.1
⁸⁵. ākāśastalīṅgat BS, 1.1.22
Brahman is again described as Puruṣa in some Upaniṣadic passages. Puruṣa means the Supreme Spirit or Self. It is avyakta or inexplicable and the highest principle of all the phenomenalties of the world. As into a wheel of a cart, all the spokes are united, similarly all the multiplicity of empirical world is being absorbed by this very Puruṣa or Spirit. In the Kaṭhopaniṣad, it is beautifully announced – pūruṣānna param kincit sākṣātthā sā para gatiḥ, (There is nothing higher than Puruṣa, it is the Ultimate support of all). So, all other things are subject to mere imagination and ignorance only. They have no eternal reality at all. This is what is known as Māyā in later philosophical speculations.

The greatest significance of the Upaniṣadic Spirit is that it is the Ātman, the Real of the real. Here, these two conceptions, Ātman and Brahman, are noticed as inter-changeable in the Upaniṣad texts. In the Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, the Highest Reality is said to be Brahman, which is immediately (sākṣāt) and directly perceived (aparokṣād) and is again expressed as Ātman which is the inner-dweller of everything. Again, this very Self or Ātman which is free from birth and death is identified with Brahman directly – sa vā eṣa mahānāja ātmā brahma (This the unborn

86. KU, 1.3.11
87. BU, 3.4.1
88. Ibid, 4.4.25
Self is Brahman). The Ātman is the omni present principle who transcends all. It is the all pervading one and that is Brahman.89 Thus, the words Ātman and Brahman become synonymous and interchangeable.90

NIRGUṆA BRAHMAN – THE ABSOLUTE

From the above discussion, it is evident that the Upaniṣads conceive Brahman as indeterminate, unconditioned and unqualified Supreme Spirit. Nirguṇa or unqualified here means Brahman is without any qualities, good or bad. This Brahman is above all, it is the Ultimate. It is the Supreme unity of all contradictions. In the Upaniṣads, this Nirguṇa Brahman is propounded as the Absolute. It is anādi91 (beginningless), ananta92 (endless) and aksara93 (absolute or indestructible). In the Muṇḍakaopaniṣad, it is said as amūrta94 or incorporeal who resides both inside and outside the world. This Brahman is beyond names and forms; time and space. Nirguṇa Brahman is the witness of all and of the nature of consciousness as we find in the Śvetāsvataropaniṣad – sākṣi cetā kevalo

89. prajñānarām brahma AU, 3.1.3; ŚU, 1.16
90. Cf. te yadantarā tad brahma … sa ātmā CU, 8.14.1; MU, 2.2.9
91. MU, 2.1.2; KU, 1.3.15
92. TU, 2.1.1
93. PU, 4.10; MU, 2.2.3
94. divyo hyamūrtaḥ puruṣa savāhyabhyantarō hyajaḥ MU, 2.1.2
nirguṇaḥ⁹⁵ (The Absolute is the witness of everything, impersonal and ultimate consciousness). It is the inner-dweller of every living being. Though it is immanent in everything, but at the same time, is transcendental too.

In the Upaniṣads, two conceptions are available, viz., Para Brahman and Apara Brahman.⁹⁶ Here Para is the Supreme, indetermined one. This Para Brahman is the one, without a second and is the higher. Apara Brahman is the lower. This Para Brahman is described in the Upaniṣads through the method of negation. In the Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, Brahman is expressed as neti neti⁹⁷ or not this, not this. These negations are used to exclude Brahman from all qualities. It is completely attributeless and full in itself. Though being the source of all variations, it is perfect and untouched by them. In the Kaṭhopaniṣad, it is revealed that the sun which is considered as the eye of all beings and through which power, they can be able to see and visualise anything, is itself unaffected by the blemishes of eye or the seeing, similarly, this Brahman is also not touched by the phenomenal multiformities of this creation, though it is the

---

95. ŚU, 6.11
96. etad vai ... param cāparaṁ ca brahma PU, 5.2
97. sa eṣa neti neti BU, 3.9.26
Supreme Spirit of all. It is defined as formless or partless (niskalam), without any activities (niskriya), flawless (niravadya) and unsmeared (nirajana). It is devoid of sound (asabdam), tough (asparsa), colour or form (arupa) and smell (aganda). It is not grow (asthula), not-subtle (ana), not-short (ahrasvam), not long (adigha); neither is it red (alohita), nor viscid (asneha), nor shady (acchaya), nor dark (atama) etc. It is not like any kind of substances i.e. air, ether, fire etc. Nevertheless, any of the material elements and sensible qualities can refer to this Supreme one. It is stated as devoid of eyes, ears, hands and feet, breath, mind, speech and mouth. Though it is beyond all sense-organs, the powers of all senses are possessed through it. It is also without any cause (agotra) and cannot be measured (amatra). This Supreme

98. KU, 2.2.11
99. niskalam niskriya santam niravadya nirajana/ amrtasya param setum dagdhendhanamivanal// SU, 6.19
100. KU, 1.3.15
101. BU, 3.8.8
102. MU, 1.1.6; 2.1.2; 3.1.8; sarvendriya – guabhasa sarvendriya -vivarjita SU, 3.17
103. MU, 1.1.6
104. BU, 3.8.8
Brahman is anirdeśyam and ungraspable by sense-organs and even by actions such as performances of Vedic rites i.e. agnihotra etc. and austerity. In the Upaniṣads, it is emphatically declared that Brahman is one, without a second and as such all kinds of perceptions in regard to the Absolute are denied. As in the Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, it is clearly narrated that when everything is united in Brahman, then who will see whom. This means that when there is a duality, then only there can be the differences of jñātā (the knower), jñeya (the object of knowledge) and jñāna (the knowledge). All these activities are only just superimposed on Brahman which is Nirguṇa and unconditional. In Absolute, there is no duality to differentiate one from another. Brahman is also actionless and as such is immutable, because “to be associated with any act is to be in time and therefore to change.”

Thus Brahman as Nirguṇa is the absolute consciousness i.e. prajñānāgamaṇa. Hence, this Supreme Brahman is regarded as svayam -

105. KU, 2.2.14
106. MU, 3.1.8
107. yatra tvasya sarvamātmāvabhūt, tat kena kaṁ paśyeta BU, 4.5.15; 2.4.14; 4.3.21
108 Warrier, A.G.K., God in Advaita, p. 31
109. BU, 4.5.13; MaU, 7; āha ca tanmātraṁ BS, 3.2.16
prabhā\textsuperscript{110} or self-luminous one, who shines steadily forever all through the divisions of time such as months, years etc. It never arises nor sets. It is beyond the temporal, spatial and causality-bound world. This Absolute is the Ultimate Principle, there is no other seer, hearer, thinker and knower than this Imperishable (Aksaraṁ) Brahman.\textsuperscript{111} Unable to comprehend this, the speech along with the mind turns back and so this is inexpressible.\textsuperscript{112}

Thus, the Upaniṣadic seer confirms that it cannot be described by our limited words, nor can it be comprehended by our limited knowledge.

In the Māṇḍukyopaniṣad also, this Absolute is known as Turīya or the Supreme Self transcending the other three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. This Supreme Self is without a second, ever-peaceful, the benign and into which the world dissolves on the ultimate resting place.\textsuperscript{113}

\textbf{SAGUṈA BRAHMĀN AS THE WORLD-CAUSE}

Now, it is to be mentioned that in the Upaniṣads, we find both the nirguṇa and saguṇa aspects of Brahman, expressed in many passages. Both the conceptions are equally flourished, no distinction is made in this

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{110} māśābda –yuga – kalpeṣu gatāgamyeṣu anekathā / 
\textsuperscript{111} BU, 3.8.11; 3.7.23 
\textsuperscript{112} TU, 2.9; KeU, 1.4; KU, 2.3.12 
\textsuperscript{113} prapañcopesaṁaṁ śaṁtaṁ śivamadvaitaṁ caturthaṁ manyante 
\end{flushright}

MāU, 7
respect in the Upaniṣads. Only the later commentators made the differentiation of *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* necessitated by their own views. In the Upaniṣads, the *Saguṇa* aspect of *Brahman* is expressed in many passages. It is said that *Brahman* is endowed with infinite super qualities. In the Upaniṣads, this *Saguṇa Brahman* is stated as *Apara-Brahman* or the lower *Brahman*. It is ascribed with numerous perfections and good qualities. For example, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, this is described as the controller, the ruler, the Lord and the sustainer of everything – *sarvasya vāṣī sarvasyeśāṇah sarvasyaadhapatih*, ... *eṣa sarveśvara eṣa bhūtādhipatireṣa bhūtapāla*.114 Again, it is expressed as omniscient, inner – controller, the cause and the ultimate support, solvent of the cosmic manifold.115 The *Saguṇa* aspect of *Brahman* is directly involved with the objective variations of the creation. This is the cause of the world and hence, on the basis of this *kāraṇatva* i.e. the characteristic of being the cause, it is regarded as *Īśvara* or the Lord of everything. Because, He is all powerful and the Ruler of the entire creation. In the *Brahmasūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa, this Ultimate causality of *Brahman* is explained by the

114. BU, 4.4.22

115. sarveśvara eṣa sarvajñā eṣo’ntaryāmyeṣa youṁ sarvasya prabhavā- pyayau hi bhūtānāṁ MāU, 6
aphorism -janmādasya yataḥ. By the word adi, sthiti (sustainence) and pralaya (destruction) are referred to here. It means that Brahman is the root from which the entire world evolves forth (janma), in which it is sustained (sthiti) and unto which it returns at the time of destruction (pralaya). This idea is also revealed in the Upaniṣads – yato vā imeṇi bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jīvanti yaṁ prayantyaḥ saṁviṣanti. This Brahman is the context of all blessed qualities like omnipotence, omniscience, love, power, strength, glory, knowledge etc. By his unlimited power, the Lord upholds all beings. Under his control, the objects of the world, i.e. the sun, the moon, cloud, stars etc., even death perform their own allotted duties following a disciplined moral and physical order or rta. The God is the originator of everything and because of his power, this order is prevailed and underlined through the universe and the beings. It governs the entire world which is mere manifestations of the Lord. This Brahman is qualified with numerous attributes, names and forms and also the Lord of the Law of Karman (deeds). He is attributed with having real thought and desire satyakāmaḥ

116. BS, 1.1.2
117. TU, 3.1
118. BU, 3.8.9; 4.4.22; TU, 2.8.1; KU, 2.3.3
satyasamkalpaḥ and also all-pervading.¹¹⁹ All the super and best qualities are associated with it.

The *Chāndogyopaniṣad* describes *Brahman* as *tajjalan*,¹²⁰ by which the causality of *Brahman* is made clear. Here, it is clearly conveyed that this entire universe with various names and forms is originated from this *Brahman* alone (*tajja*). Again, in reverse at the time of destruction, it merges into it (*talla*). Moreover, it is the Self or *Brahman*, where the universe, after being created, breaths or moves on (*tadan*). This is the very import of the mystic word ‘*tajjalān*’ signifying the Ultimate Reality or *Brahman*. Hence the whole creation is identical with *Brahman*. According to Śaṅkarācārya, by the three expressions (*tat – ja – la – an*) in the word *tajjalan*, *Brahman* is to be considered as creator, preserver and destroyer of the world.¹²¹ This mystic description of *Brahman* is also emphasised in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*. Thus, it is clearly declared there: That from which these beings are originated, that by which, when born, they live, that into which, at the time of dissolution they enter, that is *Brahman*.¹²²

¹¹⁹.CU, 8.1.5; 3.14.2; sa paryagāt ĪU, 8
¹²⁰.sarvam khalvidam brahma tajjalaniti CU, 3.14.1; 7.26.1
¹²¹.ŚB on CU, 3.14.1
¹²².TU, 3.1
The Upaniṣads also point out that at the time of creation, the Lord at first thought or desired to become many.123 Having thus thought to be many, the Lord created the subtle elements and manifested names and forms.124 Thus creating this universe, the Lord enters into it as the living selves. Thus, it is immanent in all objects and beings of the world.125 However, it must be mentioned that the Upaniṣads do not regard Brahman as immanent only, it is also transcendent.126

According to the Advaita Vedāntins this thought or desire of Brahman is what is called Māyā. Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary on the Brahmaśūtra, states that the Supreme God or Lord dwells as different selves, assuming the form of various entities through his power (Māyā) or his thinking to create different effects.127 The God is the efficient and material cause of the world who is Sagāṇa in every respect.

In the Upaniṣads, this Brahman is further regarded as bhūtayoni or the creator of the beings.128 This is again stated as brahmayoni. The

123. tadaikṣata bahu syāṁ prajāyeyeti CU, 6.2.3; TU, 2,6
124. CU, 6.2.3
125. Ibid, 7.25.1; IU, 1
126. KU, 1.2.20, 21
127. BSS,2.3.13; 2.1.5
128. MU, 1.1.6
Mundakopanisad declares Him as the imperishable creator, the Lord, the Person who is full in itself and the source of the world.\textsuperscript{129} In the Taittirīyopanisad, the role of Brahman as active consciousness (cetanatva) to produce the entire effects which are again inherent in its self, is beautifully delineated in the statement – \textit{tadātmānāṁ svayamakuruta}\textsuperscript{130} (He has done himself in such manner). Thus, from all these expressions, Brahman is established as the efficient and the material cause of the world. He through his power of tapaḥ (meditation), expands to create Hiranyagarbha and different names, shapes and food.\textsuperscript{131} This tapaḥ is generally regarded as Māyā or the cosmic power of the omnipotent Lord who is the master of all. It is a way through which the God manifests himself into different objects. In the Śvetāsvataropanisad, this Māyā is expressed as \textit{triguṇātmikā},\textsuperscript{132} or constituted of three guṇas i.e., \textit{sattva}, \textit{rajas} and \textit{tamas}. Thus God creates the world with his powers or guṇas. Māyā is sometimes revealed as \textit{prakṛti}\textsuperscript{133} also.

\begin{flushright}
129. kartārmīśam puruṣaṁ brahmayoniṁ MU, 3.1.3
130. TU, 2.7; also cf. MU, 1.1.7
131. MU, 1.1.9; 1.1.7
132. devatmaśaktinī svaguṇainirgūḍham ŠU, 1.3; guṇān ca śarvān viniyojayed yaḥ Ibid, 5.5
133. Ibid, 4.10
\end{flushright}
THE ULTIMATE REALITY - SAGUÑA OR NIRGUÑA?

From our foregoing discussion it is clear that the Upaniṣads describe Brahman or the Ultimate Reality as both Nirguña (qualityless) and Saguña (possessed of qualities). In some passages both these aspects of Brahman are equally emphasised. Thus in the Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, Brahman is described as having two forms - formed (mūrta) and formless (amūrta), perishable (marttya) and imperishable (amṛtaṁ), stable (sthitam) and moving (vat), (sat) directly existing or gross and indirectly existing or subtle (tyat). This Brahman who is the transcendental Reality, entered into the world i.e. the effect and became corporeal and incorporeal, definable with time – space and indefinable; both grounded and ungrounded, the conscious and unconscious, and also the real and empirical. Hence Brahman is expressed in both the affirmative and negative ways. It is both the manifest and unmanifest, the gross and subtle, static but faster than even the mind, the near and the far off etc. Among the midst of the phenomenal manifestations, there remains only one entity and that is Paramātmā or the sole reality, which cannot be detained by

134. BU, 2.3.1

135. sacca tyaccābhavat, niruktaiṁ caṇiruktaṁca, nilayanaṁ caṇilayanaṁca, vijñānaṁ ca viṣṭvaṁ ca, satyaṁ caṇṭtaṁca TU, 2.6

136. ŠU, 4, 5; KU, 1.2.20-21; MU, 2.2.1
mere ignorance – eko hañso bhūvanasyāsyā madhye.\textsuperscript{137}

The most important point in this regard is to be mentioned that the same thing cannot logically be both qualified and qualityless at the same time. Hence, to make some synthesis between these two sets of Vedāntic views declaring Brahman as Saguna and Nirguna, the commentators made one aspect principal, the other secondary. Thus according to Śaṅkarācārya, the Ultimate Reality is completely attributeless or Nirguna in essence. It is regarded as the main basis of the Advaita philosophy. There is nothing other to exclude or include\textsuperscript{138}, except the one and only, non-dual principle. All the empirical multiformities are only mere superimpositions on this Absolute. It assumes the Saguna form only through Māyā. It is the Ultimate ground of everything temporal that exists in the universe. It cannot be distinguished. Hence, it cannot be misunderstood as non-entity\textsuperscript{139}, rather it is the all-pervasive and transcendental. Nothing exists outside this Nirguna Brahman. According to the Advaita views, it is not compared to mere nihilism or śūnya, because it is the very ground for all those false – assumptions and appearances of

\textsuperscript{137.} ŚU, 6.15

\textsuperscript{138.} ŚB on MaU, 7

\textsuperscript{139.} Radhakrishnan, S., \textit{The Principal Upaniṣads}, p. 68
this phenomenal world.\textsuperscript{140} It is the sole reality, no existence of other than this ever arises. The Advaita Vedāntins, therefore offer two types of definitions of Brahman, viz., essential definition (svarūpalakṣana) and accidental definition (taṭasthālakṣana). The essential definition speaks of absolute nature of Brahman as nirguṇa and nīṣkriya. Its svarūpalakṣana is denoted through the expressions of truth, wisdom, infinity and bliss. As we find in the Upaniṣads, satyāṁ jñānamanantam brahma,\textsuperscript{141} (truth, wisdom and infinity is Brahman), vijñānaṁ ānandaṁ Brahman,\textsuperscript{142} (bliss and wisdom is Brahman), ānando brahmeti vyajānāt\textsuperscript{143} (bliss is indicated as Brahman) etc. The words satyāṁ, vijñānaṁ, anandaṁ etc. are the different identifications denoting the same Brahman, the non-dual principle. They are not the specific attributes of Brahman, as there is no attribute in it, rather they serve as the very essence of Brahman. In the view of Śaṅkarācārya, these are not mere adjectives, but the initial indications of invariable characteristics\textsuperscript{144} or dharma of Brahman, the main

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{140} Śūnyameva tarhi tat, na mithyāvikalpasya nirmimittatvānupapatteḥ SB on Māu, 7
\item \textsuperscript{141} TU, 2.1
\item \textsuperscript{142} BU, 3.9.28
\item \textsuperscript{143} TU, 3.6
\item \textsuperscript{144} lakṣaṇārthatvādviṣeṣaṇānāṁ, ... yasmāllakṣaṇārthapradhānāṁ viṣeṣaṇāṁ, na viṣeṣaṇapradhānāṁyeva SB on TU, 2.1
\end{itemize}
subject. Because the attributes or adjectives only separate one entity from other similar entities, but the characteristic properties or dharma separate Brahma from all kinds of entities, similar or dissimilar. This Satyam is the Sat or Being and nothing else as reflected in the Chāndogyopaniṣad. Thus, the affirmations such as satyam Brahman, jñānam Brahman and anantam Brahman, though they are three independent ones, they all together mark Brahman apart from the entire, mere appearances and falsity of the world. These empirical forms and names are real as the reflections of Sat, but unreal in themselves. Hence, these three are not actually separate from Brahman, the indivisible Spirit. But, due to the ignorance of antahkarana or mind, they may be mistaken as distinguished factors from Brahman. As is said in Pañcapādikā — “Bliss, consciousness, eternality, truth etc. are the essential natures. Though they are not separate, from the integral consciousness, they appear as different from it”. The tatasthalakṣaṇa, on the other hand, deals with the Saguna aspect of Brahman. The accidental definition of Brahman is that ‘it is the cause of the world’. We find Brahman as the cause and the Ultimate basis of all

145.CU, 6.1.4
146.ŚB on Ibid, 6.3.2
147.ānando viṣayānubhavo nityatvaṁ ceti santi dharmāḥ/
aprthaktve’pi caitanyāt prthagivāvabhāsante // Pañcapādikā, 23
and this is the very accidental feature or *tāṭastha laṅṣanaṁ* of *Brahman*. Thus when *Brahman* is described as the efficient and material cause of this universe in certain statements of the Upaniṣads, that are regarded as its *tāṭastha* or accidental features. As in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, it is denoted, from which all the beings evolve out, in which they are sustained and to which they return back that is *Brahman*\(^{148}\) This and other such statements refer to the *Tāṭasthalakṣana* of *Brahman*.

In the *Māṇḍukyaopaniṣad*, *Brahman* is said to be the lord of all, omniscient, the creator of the world and the beings, and also the inner-controller of everything.\(^{149}\) In the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* also, we find that this *Sat* thought to be many through innate urgency and started to create – *tadaiksata bahusyāṁ praṇāyea*.\(^{150}\) This body is regarded as an effect or *śuṅgam*\(^{151}\) which has its cause as the food, then the water as the prime cause for the food, the fire for the water and ultimately the Being or *Sat* for the fire. It also said that at the time of deep sleep and death, the *jīvas* merge into the *Brahman* without any awareness of their own, just like the juices of different flowers becoming one with honey.\(^{152}\)

---

148. TU, 3.1
149. MāU, 6
150. CU, 6.2.3
151. Ibid, 6.8.3-6
152. Ibid, 6.9.2
However, both these two definitions of *Brahman* are only for help in our logical speculations. *Brahman* as the non-dual principle is devoid of any qualities and manifestations. The accidental features are only some limited, or in other sense, *kalpita* i.e. superimposed characters of the Supreme Reality.\(^\text{153}\)

Rāmānuja, Madhva and other *Vaiṣṇava* Vedāntins, on the other hand, hold just the opposite view in this regard. In their view, *Brahman* is essentially *Saguṇa*.

Rāmānuja takes the word *Brahman* to denote the Supreme Person or *Puruṣottama*, who is endowed with infinite supreme qualities, devoid of all imperfections and blemishes.\(^\text{154}\) It is said as *Nirguṇa* only to signify that there is no bad quality in *Brahman*. The Supreme *Brahman* is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, subtle, eternal, infinite and immanent in all, beyond the limitations of space, time and causality. He is endowed with many auspicious qualities and also is unconditional, unequalled and un-excelled. He is devoid of any homogeneous and

\(^\text{153}\) A on BG, 2.16

\(^\text{154}\) brahma-śabdena svabhāvato nirasta - nikhila-doṣaḥ-anavadhi-
kātiśaya – asaṅkhhyeya kalyāṇaguṇa-ganaḥ puruṣottamaḥ
abhidhiḥyate Śrībhāṣya, 1.1.1
heterogeneous differences which convey it as one, and without a second.
However, according to Rāmānuja, there is internal difference is Brahman.

He is the Lord of all the beings. He is the inner controller and
guide of all conscious and unconscious entities. He is again regarded as
the material cause, efficient cause and the Governor of the moral law. He
is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. The unconscious
matter and conscious souls originate from Him, are sustained by Him and
are dissolved in Him. This creation is the expression of His glory, which
is real and not a mere appearance. He is the soul of the world and the
individual souls, which are His attributes (viśeṣaṇa)\(^{155}\) or modes (prakāra).
They are the ēṣas (parts) of Him, the God is the ēṣin. All these are real
as His manifest forms. According to Rāmānuja, there is the inseparable
relation between Him and the world and individual souls (aprthak-
siddhi)\(^{156}\). But they are pervaded by Him as He is not touched by their
limitedness and impurities.\(^{157}\) He is perfect, immutable and different in
nature from them. Again, He is possessed of truth, knowledge and bliss,
being self-luminous and self-manifested. Thus, Brahman is not an

---

155. jīvo'yaṁ brahmano'ṁśa iti, Ibid, 2.3.42, 43

156. Ibid, 2.3.42-45; 3.2.28

157. Ibid, 1.1.1 ; 2.3.45
indeterminate one. It is to be noted that as He is real as the Ultimate substance of all the beings and the world, they are also real because of being his attributes. He, the non-dual one governs the beings according to their merits and demerits, which are regarded as His body (śarīra).\textsuperscript{158}

God created all things according to his free will, by his power \textit{prakṛti}\textsuperscript{159}, and they inhere in God. In this way, the effect is not an unreal appearance of the cause, but the very transformation of it and is real in essence. There are also some Upaniṣadic texts where we find this \textit{Saguṇa} aspect of \textit{Brahman} in support of Rāmānuja’s philosophy. In the \textit{Śvetāsvataropanisad}, \textit{Brahman} is described as the controller of individual souls, the master of three \textit{guṇas} i.e. \textit{sattva}, \textit{raja} and \textit{tamas}, the Supreme cause with excellent qualities, the blissful knower and creator of the world.\textsuperscript{160} Again, it is said that the individual souls, the world and the God, though different in nature, are inseparable from one another.\textsuperscript{161} The God is the non-dual principle, of which the others are simply attributes. The Lord

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid, 2.1.9

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid, 1.1.1; 1.4.10; 2.1.1

\textsuperscript{160} \textit{ŚU}, 6.16; 6.8-9; 1.10

\textsuperscript{161} bhoktā bhogyāṁ preritāraṅca matvā sarvāṁ proktāṁ trividham brahmametat Ibid, 1.12
creates all these through the power of Māyā that is also called prakṛti.\footnote{asmān māyī śrjate viśvametat \ Ibd, 4.9; also see Ibd, 4.10} Rāmānuja also maintains that the nature of Brahman cannot be comprehended by our limited knowledge. He declares that “God cannot be comprehended and described as endowed with a definite quantity or number of qualities (etāvat), since He is unlimited and immeasurable. Speech cannot describe and the mind cannot comprehend the unlimited and measureless Being.”\footnote{Sinha, J., The Philosophy of Ramanuja, p. 50} According to Madhva also, God is definitely Saguna or qualified. He recognizes two realities, one being svatantra (independent) and the other, paratantra (dependent) and therefore, his philosophy is called Dvaitavada or the dualistic philosophy. Svatantra or the independent reality is the God and Paratantra or the dependent are the individual souls and the world. God is the Supreme Person, devoid of all blemishes and possessed of infinite auspicious qualities.\footnote{svatantraṁ paratantram ca dvividham tattvamiṣyate /
svatantro bhagavān – viśūnumirṛddoṣeṣa sadguṇāḥ //
\textit{Sarvadarśanasaṁgraha}, 5, p. 128} He is not any way Nirguna or attributeless. The highest and the perfect Lord is Viṣṇu.\footnote{MBS, 1.1.7}
Madhva distinguishes two kinds of *aṁśas*, viz. *svarūpa–aṁśa* and *bhinnā-aṁśa*. According to him, the manifestations of the Lord as *Matsya*, *Kūrma* and other incarnations (*Avatāraḥ*) are the (*svāṁśas*) *svarūpa-aṁśas* or non-different parts, of the Lord’s perfect bliss, which are the almost identical with Him, with all powers. *Jīvas* or the individual souls are *bhinnāṁśas* with lesser powers compared to the former one. He is the cause of creation, sustenance and dissolution of all.

Thus, the various Upaniṣadic statements influence the later Vedāntic scholars to a great extent, to expound their own philosophical speculations and beliefs regarding *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality. However, we can definitely say that the Upaniṣads are decisive about the principle that *Brahman* is the sole source of all plurality; it is the repository of all super qualities. The Upaniṣads speak only in the language of similes and symbols and do no give any definite answer to questions of distinction between *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa*. Actually, according to the Upaniṣads, *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* are not two different things, the same *Brahman* is both *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa*. There is no difference whatsoever.

166. Vide, *svāṁśaścātha vibhinnāṁśa iti dvedhāṁśa iṣyate* MBS, 2.3.47

167. *srṣṭisthitisaṁhāraniyamanajñānajñānabandhamokṣā yataḥ*  
Ibid, 1.1.2; 1.1.6