

## **FIVE FEATURES OF CONSCIOUSNESS:**

1. Consciousness is not a part, product or property of the body.
2. Consciousness is an independent principle which pervades and enlivens the body.
3. Consciousness is not limited by the boundaries of the body.
4. Consciousness continues to exist even after the death of the body.
5. The surviving consciousness is not accessible because of the absence of the body medium.

The same five 'features' apply to Existence Bliss Brahman also.

## **FIVE CAPSULES OF ADVAITA VEDĀNTA**

1. I am of the nature of eternal and all-pervading consciousness.
2. I am the only source of permanent peace, security and happiness.
3. By my mere presence, I give life to the material body, and through the body, I experience the material universe.
4. I am not affected by anything that takes place in the material world and in the material body.
5. By forgetting my real nature, I convert life into a struggle; By remembering my real nature, I convert life into a sport / entertainment.

[The following is an Excerpt from one of my articles published in a Research Journal]

### Five 'Features' of Consciousness

H.H. Swami Paramārthananda Saraswati culls from all the Upaniṣadic statements that define Brahman and the methodology to remove all the not-Self and arrive at the subject 'I' which is Brahman, and presents his ingenious formula to understand what Consciousness is. He puts five salient 'features' that can 'describe' or help us 'identify' Consciousness. The same five 'features' are relevant for describing Brahman as Existence Bliss also, and when the seeker confidently claims 'I am Brahman', the same five 'features' are relevant to the subject 'I' also. These five 'features' are –

#### **I. Consciousness is not a part, product or property of the body.**

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.18 – 'na jāyate mriyate vā vipaścīt, nāyam kutaścīna babhūva kaścīt | ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇaḥ na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre | |' – 'The Self [Brahman] is neither born nor dies. Neither has it arrived from some origin nor did it become something. It is unborn, eternal, everlasting, ancient. It is not slain even when the body is slain.'*

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.22 – 'aśarīram śarīreṣu anavastheṣu avasthitam, mahāntaṁ vibhum ātmānaṁ matvā dhīro na śocati' – 'Bodiless amidst bodies, permanent amidst the impermanent, great and pervasive – knowing himself to be [so], the wise man does not grieve.'*

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.1.6 – 'yattadadreśyam agrāyam agotram avarṇam acakṣuśśrotraṁ tad apāṇipādam | nityaṁ vibhum sarvagatam susūkṣmaṁ tad avyayam yad bhūtayoniṁ paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ |' – 'That which is not perceivable [through sense organs], not available for [the organs of] action, unborn, attributeless, which has no eyes, ears, hands or feet (1) – the wise clearly see That as eternal, manifold, all-pervasive, the most subtle, immutable, cause of all beings (2).'*

Śaṅkarācārya draws our attention to a very interesting usage in this statement. – The first portion of the statement shown as (1) is in neuter gender, to show that the adjectives featuring there refer to Brahman, and the second portion shown as (2) is in masculine gender denoting that it refers to the individual self (*jīva*). The whole statement together shows the essential oneness of Brahman and the individual self.

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.13 – 'yena akṣaram puruṣam veda satyam provāca tāṁ tatvato brahmadevīyāṁ...' – 'That by which one would come to know the*

Imperishable Being, the Truth is known – the [guru] should truly impart that Brahman-knowledge to him.’

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.1.2* – ‘*divyohy amūrtah puruṣaḥ sabāhyābhyantarohy ajaḥ | aprāṇohy amanāḥ śubhrohy akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ | |*’ – ‘Verily, the resplendent, formless Being is both within and without, that is all-pervading, unoriginated, not-life, not-mind, pure, beyond māyā (*akṣara*) which is greater than all.’

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.2.9* – ‘*hiraṇmaye pare koṣe virajam brahma niṣkalam | tacchubhram jyotiṣam jyotiḥ, tad yad ātmavido viduḥ | |*’ – ‘That [Brahman] which the knowers of the Self know is in the innermost effulgent sheath. It is spotless, indivisible, pure, light of all lights.

*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad Ch.6 Mantra 11* – ‘*eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ sarvavyāpī sarvabhūtāntarātmā | karmādhyakṣaḥ sarvabhūtādhivāsaḥ sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇṣca | |*’ – The one resplendent [Brahman] is hidden in all beings, is all-pervading, is the inner self of all, presides over all actions, abides in all beings, is the Witness, is the Animator, is Absolute, and is without any qualities.

*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad Ch.6 Mantra 19* – ‘*niṣkalam niṣkriyam śāntam niravadyam niranjanam | amṛtasya param setum dagdhenam ivānalam | |*’ – [Brahman] is without parts, without activity, tranquil, taintless, detached, the supreme bridge to immortality, and is like a fire that has burnt its fuel.

## II. **Consciousness is an independent principle which pervades and enlivens the body.**

*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* – Definition in ‘Brahmavalli’ – *brahma satyam* – Independently existent; *anantam jñānam* – all-pervading

*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad Ch.6 Mantra 11* – ‘*eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ sarvavyāpī sarvabhūtāntarātmā | karmādhyakṣaḥ sarvabhūtādhivāsaḥ sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇṣca | |*’ – The one resplendent [Brahman] is hidden in all beings, is the inner self of all, presides over all actions, abides in all beings, is the Witness, is the Animator, is Absolute, and is without any qualities.

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.2.10* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad Ch.6 Mantra 14* – ‘*na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra-tārakam, nema vidyuto bhāti kutoyam agniḥ | tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam, tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti | |*’ – ‘Neither does the sun shine there [in the sky] nor the collection of moon and stars. Neither does this lightning shine, then how can that fire [shine]? All shine after That [Brahman] only which shines. All this shine due to Its radiance.

**III. Consciousness is not limited by the boundaries of the body.**

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.1.2 – ‘divyohy amūrtah puruṣah sabāhyābhyantaroḥy ajaḥ | aprāṇoḥy amanāḥ śubhroḥy akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ | |’ – ‘Verily, the resplendent, formless Being is both within and without, that is all-pervading, unoriginated, not-life, not-mind, pure, beyond māyā (akṣara) which is greater than all.’*

**IV. Consciousness continues to exist even after the death of the body – Consciousness survives the death of the body**

*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 4.5.14 – ‘avināśī vā are ayamātmā anucchittidharmā’ – ‘This Self is indeed immutable and of indestructible nature, my dear.’*

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.18 – ‘na jāyate mriyate vā vipāścit, nāyam kutaścinna babhūva kaścit | ajo nityaḥ śāśvato’yam purāṇaḥ na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre | |’ – ‘The Self [Brahman] is neither born nor dies. Neither has it arrived from some origin nor did it become something. It is unborn, eternal, everlasting, ancient. It is not slain even when the body is slain.’*

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.22 – ‘aśarīram śarīreṣu anavastheṣu avasthitam, mahāntam vibhum ātmānam matvā dhīro na śocati’ – ‘Bodiless amidst bodies, permanent amidst the impermanent, great and pervasive – knowing himself to be [so], the wise man does not grieve.’*

*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad Ch.6 Mantra 13 – ‘nityo nityānām cetanaś-cetanānām, eko bahunām yo vidadhāti kāmān | tat kāraṇam sāmkhya-yogādi-gamyam jñātva, devam mucyate sarva pāsaiḥ | |’ – ‘He is freed from all fetters after knowing the Eternal of the eternal, Consciousness of the conscious, the non-dual who fulfils the desires of many, that Cause which is known through Knowledge (Sāmkhya) and Yoga, and is luminous.*

**V. The surviving Consciousness is not available for transactions because of the absence of the reflecting medium, that is the body.**

*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 4.5.13 – ‘sa yathā saindhavaghano nāntaro bāhyaḥ kṛtsno rasaghana eva syāt, evam vā are imam mahadbhūtam anantam aparāḥ kṛtsnaḥ prajñānaghana eva | etebhyo [bhūtebhyah] samutthāya tānyeva anuvinaśyati | na pretya saṁjñāsti’ – “As a lump of salt has neither inside nor outside, but is a homogeneous mass of taste, so too this self has neither inside nor outside but is a homogeneous mass of consciousness. After arising from the elements, it vanishes in them again following their destruction. After death, it [the self] has no more consciousness. That is what I say, my dear.” So said Yājñavalkya.*

## Five Capsules of Advaita Vedānta

When we have understood what Brahman or Consciousness is, and have understood that 'I am [That] Brahman' by employing the methodology suggested by the Upaniṣads, we confidently 'replace' 'Brahman' or 'Consciousness Existence Bliss' with 'I' and present the crux of Advaita Vedānta. Here again, H.H. Swami Paramārthananda Saraswati encapsulates the message of the Upaniṣads and presents the crux as 'Five Capsules of Advaita Vedānta'.

### **I. I am of the nature of eternal and all-pervading consciousness.**

The self (I) = Brahman = Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Self-effulgence

*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* 1.2 – '*ayam ātmā brahma*' – 'This self is Brahman.'  
(*Atharvaveda*)

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.2.18 and *Bhagavadgītā* 2.20 – '*ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yam purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre | |*' – 'This self / Brahman is not born, is eternal, permanent (unchanging), primeval. It is not destroyed when the body is destroyed.'

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.1.6 – '*yattadadreśyam agrāyam agotram avarṇam acakṣuśśrotram tad apāṇipādam | nityam vibhum sarvagatam susūkṣmam tad avyayam yad bhūtayonim paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ |*' – 'That which is not perceivable [through sense organs], not available for [the organs of] action, unborn, attributeless, which has no eyes, ears, hands or feet – the wise clearly see That as eternal, manifold, all-pervasive, the most subtle, immutable, cause of all beings.'

### **II. I am the only source of permanent peace, security and happiness.**

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 2.2.7 (2.2.8 according to some) – '*mano-mayaḥ prāṇa-śarīra-netā pratiṣṭhito'nne hṛdayam sannidhāya, tad vijñānena paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ ānanda-rūpam amṛtam yad vibhāti |*' – 'By fixing the intellect in the [cavity of] the heart, the wise realize everywhere through knowledge That [Brahman] which has become one with the mind, [That Brahman which is] the guide to the vital airs and [subtle-]body, [That Brahman which is] consecrated in the food, [That Brahman which] shines ever as blissfulness and immortality.'

*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 3.9.28 – '*vijñānam ānandam brahma ...*' – 'Brahman is Consciousness Bliss...' Read with *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1.4.10 – '*aham brahma asmi*' – 'I am Brahman,' *Tripādvibhūti-Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* 1.3 – '*sat-cit-ānandam svaprakāśam brahma*' – 'Brahman is Existence, Consciousness, Completeness, Self-effulgent,' and such other definitions of Brahman, the wise man confidently claims, 'I am Existence, Consciousness,

Completeness, Self-effulgent Bliss.' Hence he has no more wants, fear of the future or sorrow. He finds peace, security and happiness within himself.

**III. By my mere presence, I give life to the material body, and through the body, I experience the material universe.**

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.2.10* – ‘... *tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvām; tasya bhāsā sarvām idam vibhāti*’ – ‘... All shine after That [Brahman] only which shines. All this shine due to Its radiance.’

*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad Ch.6 Mantra 11* – ‘*eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ sarvavyāpī sarvabhūtāntarātmā | karmādhyakṣaḥ sarvabhūtādhiṅvāsaḥ sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇśca | |*’ – The one resplendent [Brahman] is hidden in all beings, is all-pervading, is the inner self of all, presides over all actions, abides in all beings, is the Witness, is the Animator, is Absolute, and is without any qualities.

*Kena Upaniṣad 1.2* – ‘*śrotrasya śrotram manaso manasaḥ ... sa u [devaḥ]...*’ – ‘That divine principle, that is Brahman, is the ear of the ear, mind of the mind, speech of the speech, life of the life, eye of the eye...’

**IV. I am not affected by anything that takes place in the material world and in the material body.**

*Kaivalya Upaniṣad Mantras 19 – 24* – Of these Mantra 18: ‘*triṣu dhāmasu yad-bhogyam bhokta bhogaśca yad-bhavet | tebhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ sākṣī cinmātro’ham sadāśivaḥ | |*’ – ‘I am distinct from all that which is the experienced [object], experiencer [subject], experience, [and instrument of experience] in all the three states [of waking, dream and deep sleep]. I am the Witness, Pure Consciousness and ever auspicious.

*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 4.4.22* – ‘*sa eṣa neti netityātmā agrhyo na hi grhyate, aśīryo na hi śīryate, asaṅgo na hi saṅgyate, asito na vyathate, na riṣyati, etamu haivaite na tarata iti - ataḥ pāpam akaravam iti, ataḥ kalyāṇamakam akaravam iti, ubhe u aivaiṣa ete tarati, nainam kṛtākṛte tapataḥ | |*’ – ‘This self is That which has been described as ‘Not this; Not this.’ It is imperceptible for It is never perceived, undecaying for It never decays, unattached for It is never attached, unfettered, not afflicted with pain, and never suffers injury. [Therefore the wise] is never overwhelmed by both [thoughts as] “I had done an evil act,” and “I have done a good act.” He is never troubled by what was done or not done by him.’

*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 4.4.25* – ‘*sa vā eṣa mahānaja ātmā’jaro’maro’mṛto’bhayo brahmābhyam vai brahmābhayaṁvovai brahma bhavati ya evam veda | |*’ – ‘That great unborn Self is the undecaying, immortal, undying and fearless

Brahman. Verily fearless is Brahman. He who knows it thus verily becomes Brahman.’ This is a very significant statement in all the Upaniṣads put together. In his introduction to this statement, Śaṅkarācārya says – “This much alone is the essence of the entire [Bṛhadāraṇyaka] Upaniṣad.” (*‘etāvān samastā’raṇyakā’rtha iti |*’ And, in his commentary on the statement, he says – “This is the epitome of the meaning of all the Upaniṣads.” (*eṣa sarvasyā upaniṣadaḥ saṁkṣipto’rtha uktaḥ |*’)

**V. By forgetting my real nature, I convert life into a struggle; By remembering my real nature, I convert life into a sport / entertainment.**

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.1.2 – ‘samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagnaḥ, anīsayā śocati muhyamānaḥ | juṣṭam yadā paśyaty-anyam īsam asya mahimānam iti vītaśokaḥ |*’ – ‘In the same tree (=body), the self sits sorrowing, dejected, deluded by its own powerless-ness (=despondency). But, when it sees [itself as] different [from the tree, that is the body] and its glory as the Lord of this universe, it becomes free from sorrow.

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.12 – ‘tam durdarśam gūḍham anupraviṣṭam, guhāhitam gahvareṣṭham purāṇam | adhyātma-yogādīgamanena devam matvā dhīro harṣaśokau jahāti’* – ‘The Self is difficult to see, hidden for access (= inaccessible), and lodged amidst miseries since time immemorial. Upon realizing That Supreme Being by resorting to the science of the Inner-Self, the wise seeker conquers joys and sorrows.’

## **Conclusion**

What has been presented here from the Upaniṣads is but a fraction of what has been said in the 108 – 200 or so Upaniṣads available today. Besides the Upaniṣads, there are the secondary texts like the *Purāṇa*-s (for instance *Uddhava-gītā*, *Jāyanteya-gītā*, *Aṣṭavakra-gītā*, etc.), the epics of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* (*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, *Sanat-sujātīyam*), works like Vālmīki’s *Yoga-vāśiṣṭha*, and explanatory works by various preceptors of Advaita Vedānta.

A vital point to be noted from the entire discussion is that the Advaitin’s definitions of Brahman, Existence, Conscience, Bliss are from the Absolute perspective (*pāramārthika-dṛṣṭi*) in contrast to all other schools of philosophy which look at these concepts from an empirical perspective (*vyāvahārika-dṛṣṭi*). H.H. Swāmī Paramarthananda has condensed as ‘Five Features’ all that has been said in the Upaniṣads about Brahman Existence Consciousness Bliss and based on those five ‘features’ has condensed the entire teaching of Advaita Vedānta into ‘Five Capsules of Vedānta’.