

there and how many overgraspers?' Yājñavalkya replied: 'There are eight graspers and eight overgraspers.'

'What are the eight graspers? And what are the eight overgraspers?'

<sup>2</sup> 'The out-breath is a grasper, which is itself grasped by the in-breath, the overgrasper; for one smells odours by means of the in-breath.

<sup>3</sup> 'Speech is a grasper, which is itself grasped by word, the overgrasper; for one utters words by means of speech.

<sup>4</sup> 'The tongue is a grasper, which is itself grasped by flavour, the overgrasper; for one tastes flavours by means of the tongue.

<sup>5</sup> 'Sight is a grasper, which is itself grasped by visible appearances, the overgrasper; for one sees visible appearances by means of sight.

<sup>6</sup> 'Hearing is a grasper, which is itself grasped by sound, the overgrasper; for one hears sounds by means of hearing.

<sup>7</sup> 'The mind is a grasper, which is itself grasped by desire, the overgrasper; for one entertains desires by means of the mind.

<sup>8</sup> 'The hands are graspers, which are themselves grasped by action, the overgrasper; for one performs actions by means of the hands.

<sup>9</sup> 'The skin is a grasper, which is itself grasped by touch, the overgrasper; for one senses various types of touch by means of the skin.

'These, then, are the eight graspers and the eight overgraspers.'

<sup>10</sup> 'Yājñavalkya,' Ārtaḥhāga said again, 'tell me—since this whole world is food for Death, of which deity is Death the food?' Yājñavalkya replied: 'Death is fire, and it is the food of water. [Whoever knows this] averts repeated death.'

<sup>11</sup> 'Yājñavalkya,' Ārtaḥhāga said again, 'tell me—when a man dies, do his breaths depart from him, or do they not?' 'They do not,' replied Yājñavalkya. 'They accumulate within this very body, causing it to swell up and to become bloated. So a dead man lies bloated.'

<sup>12</sup> 'Yājñavalkya,' Ārtaḥhāga said again, 'tell me—when a man dies, what is it that does not leave him?' 'His name,' replied Yājñavalkya. 'A name is without limit, and the All-gods are without limit. Limitless also is the world he wins by it.'

<sup>13</sup> 'Yājñavalkya,' Ārtaḥhāga said again, 'tell me—when a man

2 Then Jāratkāra Ārtaḥhāga began to question him. 'Yājñavalkya,' he said, 'tell me—how many graspers are

has died, and his speech disappears into fire, his breath into the wind, his sight into the sun, his mind into the moon, his hearing into the quarters, his physical body into the earth, his self (*ātman*) into space, the hair of his body into plants, the hair of his head into trees, and his blood and semen into water—what then happens to that person?” Yājñavalkya replied: “My friend, we cannot talk about this in public. Take my hand, Ārtabhāga; let’s go and discuss this in private.”

So they left and talked about it. And what did they talk about?—they talked about nothing but action. And what did they praise?—they praised nothing but action. Yājñavalkya told him: “A man turns into something good by good action and into something bad by bad action.”

Thereupon, Jāratkāra Ārtabhāga fell silent.

3 Then Bhujyu Lāhyāyani began to question him. “Yājñavalkya,” he said, “once, while we were itinerant students travelling around in the land of the Madras, we visited the home of Patañcala Kāpya. He had a daughter possessed by a Gandharva. We asked him who he was, and the Gandharva said that he was Sudhanvan Āṅgīrasa. In the course of asking him about the ends of the worlds, we enquired: “Where in the world are the Pārikṣitas?” I put the same question to you, Yājñavalkya—where are the Pārikṣitas?”

2 Yājñavalkya replied: “He no doubt told you, “They have gone to the place where those who offer horse sacrifices go.”

“But where do those who offer horse sacrifices go?”

“The visible world is as wide as the distance the sun’s chariot travels in thirty-two days. The earth is twice as wide as the visible world and surrounds it on all sides, while the ocean is twice as wide as the earth and surrounds it on all sides. Now, there is a gap as fine as a razor’s edge or a gnat’s wing. Taking the form of a bird, Indra handed the Pārikṣitas to the wind. The wind placed them within itself and carried them to the place where those who had offered horse sacrifices were.”—What that Gandharva praised in that manner was clearly the wind. Both individual things and the totality of all things, therefore, are just the wind. Whosoever knows this averts repeated death.”

Thereupon, Bhujyu Lāhyāyani fell silent.

4 Then Uṣasta Cākṛāyaṇa began to question him. “Yājñavalkya,” he said, “explain to me the *brahman* that is plain and not cryptic, the self (*ātman*) that is within all.”

“The self within all is this self of yours.”

“Which one is the self within all, Yājñavalkya?”

“Who breathes out with the out-breath—he is the self of yours that is within all. Who breathes in with the in-breath—he is the self of yours that is within all. Who breathes across with the inter-breath—he is the self of yours that is within all. Who breathes up with the up-breath—he is the self of yours that is within all. The self within all is this self of yours.”

2 Uṣasta Cākṛāyaṇa retorted: “That’s a fine explanation! It’s like saying “This is a cow and that is a horse!” Come on, give me a real explanation of the *brahman* that is plain and not cryptic, of the self that is within all.”

“The self within all is this self of yours.”

“Which one is the self within all, Yājñavalkya?”

“You can’t see the seer who does the seeing; you can’t hear the hearer who does the hearing; you can’t think of the thinker who does the thinking; and you can’t perceive the perceiver who does the perceiving. The self within all is this self of yours. All else besides this is grief!”

Thereupon, Uṣasta Cākṛāyaṇa fell silent.

5 Then Kahola Kauṣītakeya began to question him. “Yājñavalkya,” he said, “explain to me the *brahman* that is plain and not cryptic, the self that is within all.”

“The self within all is this self of yours.”

“Which one is the self within all, Yājñavalkya?”

“He is the one who is beyond hunger and thirst, sorrow and delusion, old age and death. It is when they come to know this self that Brahmins give up the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, and the desire for worlds, and undertake the mendicant life. The desire for sons, after all, is the same as the desire for wealth, and the desire for wealth is the same as the desire for worlds—both are simply desires. Therefore, a Brahmin should stop being a pundit and try to live like a child. When he has stopped living like a child or a pundit, he becomes a sage. And when he has stopped living like a sage or the way he was before he became a sage, he becomes a

Brahmin. He remains just such a Brahmin, no matter how he may live. All besides this is grief.<sup>2</sup>

Thereupon, Kahola Kauṣītakeya fell silent.

6 Then Gārgī Vācaknavī began to question him. ‘Yājñavalkya,’ she said, ‘tell me—since this whole world is woven back and forth on water, on what, then, is water woven back and forth?’

‘On air, Gārgī.’

‘On what, then, is air woven back and forth?’

‘On the worlds of the intermediate region, Gārgī.’

‘On what, then, are the worlds of the intermediate region woven back and forth?’

‘On the worlds of the Gandharvas, Gārgī.’

‘On what, then, are the worlds of the Gandharvas woven back and forth?’

‘On the worlds of the sun, Gārgī.’

‘On what, then, are the worlds of the sun woven back and forth?’

‘On the worlds of the moon, Gārgī.’

‘On what, then, are the worlds of the moon woven back and forth?’

‘On the worlds of the stars, Gārgī.’

‘On what, then, are the worlds of the stars woven back and forth?’

‘On the worlds of the gods, Gārgī.’

‘On what, then, are the worlds of the gods woven back and forth?’

‘On the worlds of Indra, Gārgī.’

‘On what, then, are the worlds of Indra woven back and forth?’

‘On the worlds of Prajāpati, Gārgī.’

‘On what, then, are the worlds of Prajāpati woven back and forth?’

‘On the worlds of *brahman*, Gārgī.’

‘On what, then, are the worlds of *brahman* woven back and forth?’

At this point Yājñavalkya told her: ‘Don’t ask too many questions, Gārgī, or your head will shatter apart! You are asking too many questions about a deity about whom one

should not ask too many questions. So, Gārgī, don’t ask too many questions!’

Thereupon, Gārgī Vācaknavī fell silent.

7 Then Uddālaka Āruṇi began to question him. ‘Yājñavalkya,’ he said, ‘once we were living in the land of the Madras learning about the sacrifice in the house of Patañcala Kāpya. He had a wife possessed by a Gandharva. We asked him who he was, and the Gandharva said that he was Kabandha Ātharvaṇa. He then asked Patañcala Kāpya and the students there who were learning about the sacrifice: “Tell me, Kāpya—do you know the string on which this world and the next, as well as all beings, are strung together?” “That, my lord, I do not know,” replied Patañcala Kāpya. He then asked Patañcala Kāpya and the students there who were learning about the sacrifice: “Tell me, Kāpya—do you know the inner controller of this world and the next, as well as of all beings, who controls them from within?” “That, my lord, I do not know,” replied Patañcala Kāpya. He then told Patañcala Kāpya and the students there who were learning about the sacrifice: “Clearly, Kāpya, if a man knows what that string is and who that inner controller is—he knows *brahman*; he knows the worlds; he knows the gods; he knows the Vedas; he knows the spirits; he knows the self; he knows all.” That’s what he told them.

‘And I know it. So, if you drive away the cows meant for the Brahmins, Yājñavalkya, without knowing what that string is and who that inner controller is, your head will shatter apart!’

‘Gautama, I do know what that string is and who that inner controller is.’

‘Of course, anyone can say, “I know! I know!” Tell us what precisely you know.’

2 Yājñavalkya told him: ‘Clearly, Gautama, that string is the wind. It is on the string of wind, Gautama, that this world and the next, as well as all beings, are strung together. That is why people say of a dead man, “His bodily parts have come unstrung”, for they are strung together, Gautama, on the string of wind.’

‘Quite right, Yājñavalkya. Now tell us who the inner controller is.’

3 ‘This self (*ātman*) of yours who is present within but is different from the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body is

the earth, and who controls the earth from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>4</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the waters, whom the waters do not know, whose body is the waters, and who controls the waters from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>5</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the fire, whom the fire does not know, whose body is the fire, and who controls the fire from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>6</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the intermediate region, whom the intermediate region does not know, whose body is the intermediate region, and who controls the intermediate region from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>7</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the wind, whom the wind does not know, whose body is the wind, and who controls the wind from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>8</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the sky, whom the sky does not know, whose body is the sky, and who controls the sky from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>9</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the sun, whom the sun does not know, whose body is the sun, and who controls the sun from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>10</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the quarters, whom the quarters do not know, whose body is the quarters, and who controls the quarters from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>11</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the moon and the stars, whom the moon and the stars do not know, whose body is the moon and the stars, and who controls the moon and the stars from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>12</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from space, whom space does not know, whose body is space, and who controls space from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>13</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from darkness, whom darkness does not know, whose body is darkness, and who controls darkness from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>14</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from light, whom light does not know, whose body is light, and who controls light from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.’

That was with respect to the divine sphere. <sup>15</sup> What follows is with respect to beings.

‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from all beings, whom all beings do not know, whose body is all beings, and who controls all beings from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.’

That was with respect to beings. <sup>16</sup> What follows is with respect to the body (*ātman*).

‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the breath, whom the breath does not know, whose body is the breath, and who controls the breath from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>17</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from speech, whom speech does not know, whose body is speech, and who controls speech from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>18</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from sight, whom sight does not know, whose body is sight, and who controls sight from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>19</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from hearing, whom hearing does not know, whose body is hearing, and who controls hearing from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>20</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body is the mind, and who controls the mind from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

<sup>21</sup> ‘This self of yours who is present within but is different from the skin, whom the skin does not know, whose body is the skin, and who controls the skin from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

22 'This self of yours who is present within but is different from perception, whom perception does not know, whose body is perception, and who controls perception from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

23 'This self of yours who is present within but is different from the semen, whom the semen does not know, whose body is the semen, and who controls the semen from within—he is the inner controller, the immortal.

'He sees, but he can't be seen; he hears, but he can't be heard; he thinks, but he can't be thought of; he perceives, but he can't be perceived. Besides him, there is no one who sees, no one who hears, no one who thinks, and no one who perceives. It is this self of yours who is the inner controller, the immortal. All besides this is grief.'

Thereupon, Uddālaka Āruṇi fell silent.

8 Then (Gārgī) Vācaknavī spoke. 'Distinguished Brahmins!' she said. 'I am going to ask this man two questions. If he can give me the answers to them, none of you will be able to defeat him in a theological debate.'

'Ask, Gārgī.'

2 She said: 'I rise to challenge you, Yājñavalkya, with two questions, much as a fierce warrior of Kāśī or Videha, stringing his unstrung bow and taking two deadly arrows in his hand, would rise to challenge an enemy. Give me the answers to them!'

'Ask, Gārgī.'

3 She said: 'The things above the sky, the things below the earth, and the things between the earth and the sky, as well as all those things people here refer to as past, present, and future—on what, Yājñavalkya, are all these woven back and forth?'

4 He replied: 'The things above the sky, the things below the earth, and the things between the earth and the sky, as well as all those things people here refer to as past, present, and future—on space, Gārgī, are all these woven back and forth.'

5 She responded: 'All honour to you, Yājñavalkya. You really cleared that up for me! Get ready for the second.'

'Ask, Gārgī.'

6 She said: 'The things above the sky, the things below the earth, and the things between the earth and the sky, as well as all those