

Hinduism

Lesson 5

The Hindu scriptures called the Upanishads. These explore the idea that everything is connected to Brahman - the divine essence of everything, including humans.

Upanishad means sitting near and it refers to the lessons given by a guru to his disciples who sit at his feet.

These scriptures tell a story of a student who did not learn as much as he should.

The stories of Svetaketu

Svetaketu had been away to be educated and when he came home, his father, a wise man, was horrified to see how conceited (proud) his son had become. Svetaketu thought he knew everything but when his father asked about the essence of everything (Brahman) Svetaketu could not answer.



His father called for a glass. He told his son how Brahman is in, through and seen in every part of everything. '*Tat tvam asi*' – "You are that too" he said. Svetaketu had to realise that Brahman is in him too – in fact, this is his real self

(the *atman*).

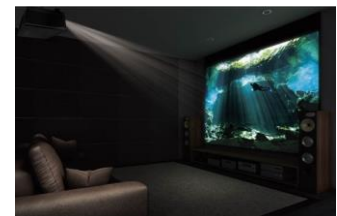
The father then asked his son to cut open a fig. "What is inside?" His father asked him. "And what is inside a seed?" Svetaketu could see nothing. His father said that from this nothingness a great tree has grown. That nothingness, the mystery that lies at the heart of all life is Brahman, the invisible bit that is in, through and seen in everything.



Lastly his father asked for a pot of honey. "Many parts of creation combine to make honey – flowers, bees, humans – and its sweetness becomes part of us too" his father told him. "This reflects how all things are joined together as part of Brahman, the interlocking network of all life."



Vivekananda, a Hindu teacher, said the universe was a projection of God or Brahman. Think about how the light of a projector comes out from one point and produces an image for all to see. The image is not the original thing, but a reflection of it.



Activity:

Explain the story of Svetaketu.

You can write it, draw it or explain it in any way you like.

What do the stories of Svetaketu teach Hindu children about God?