



Muṇḍakopaniṣad Mantrā 4



तस्मै स होवाच द्वे विध्ये वेदित्व्ये इति ह स्म ।
यद् ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति परा चैवापरा च११ ।४ ॥

tasmai sa hovāca dve vidhye veditvye iti ha sma ।
yad brahmavidō vadanti parā caivāparā ca||11|4||

tasmai – to him (Śaunaka); saḥ – he (Aṅgiras); uvāca – said; brahmvidāḥ – those who know Veda; vadanti – declare; iti – that; dve vidhye – there are two types of knowledge; ha sma – indeed; veditvye – to be gained; yad – which (are known as); parā ca eva – higher; aparā ca – and lower.

Aṅgiras and Śaunaka, ‘Those who know the Vedas say that there are indeed two types of knowledge to be gained, which are (known as) higher and lower’.

Here Śaunaka approached Aṅgiras and Aṅgiras begins the teaching. He has his own method of introducing the topic. Introduction is not of one type; there are many ways of introducing the sentence. It depends upon what the teacher wants to start with. Here he starts like this:

Dve vidhye veditvye iti ha sma yad brahmavidō vadanti: those who know the Veda say that there are two types of knowledge to be gained. Brahma here is Veda. Brahmavid means one who knows the entire Veda, including Vedānta. The particles ‘ha’ and ‘sma’ are used in the sense of ‘definitely’, ‘critically’.

Here the teacher, instead of directly answering the question and unfolding parā vidhyā, starts with the statement that one has to know aparā vidhyā also. This is because of an important rule that Sankara cites¹ here: a teacher has to first present all prevalent erroneous notions and negate them. Pakṣa is a contention. Pūrva pakṣa is a contention

¹ क्रमापेक्षत्वात् प्रतिवचनस्य ॥ । निराकृत्य हि पूर्वपक्षं पश्चात् सिद्धान्तो वक्तव्यो भवतीति न्यात् । - मुण्डक् भाष्यम्

presented as an objection to siddhānta, the right conclusion. Every teacher should follow this rule. Otherwise, there will always be vagueness in understanding. The more he is able to negate the wrong notions that are available, the closer he is to the truth. The whole process is the removal of various notions, because people have swallowed lots of beliefs. These things have to be negated. Then only one's mind will become ready to see the vastu is unfolded.

There are two types of knowledge that everyone has to know, one is parā vidhyā and the other is aparā vidhyā. This implies that every human being is born ignorant. Everyone must gain these two vidhyās. Even though there are two vidhyās to be gained, aparā vidhyā is later termed as avidyā. Parā vidhyā alone is vidyā, knowing which everything is as well known. The teacher places the parā vidyā first because it is the most exalted. Parā vidhyā is brahma-vidhyā.

Aparā vidhyā is something different from para vidyā. Na parā, aparā, that which is not aparā, that which is not parā is called aparā. Even though both of them are to be gained in terms of knowledge, there is a lot of difference between the two. Parā vidhyā is for mokṣa while the other is not. Parā vidhyā is not gained in the same form as aparā vidhyā. It talks about the infinite, and so the approach and the approacher to the parā vidhyā is also infinitely different. Aparā vidyā also has no limit, but one can gain that knowledge only in a reasonable measure. One does require only adequate knowledge of it. Parā vidhyā, on the other hand, is to be gained by everybody in full. It is a complete knowledge. It is only for the purpose of negation that aparā vidhyā is mentioned here.

Apara vidyā, though it is for negation, is as important as parā vidhyā because it is helpful for gaining parā vidhyā. Language is necessary. Rituals are necessary. They make a person fit to receive the parā vidhyā. Without language one cannot understand what is a pot, what is clay and so on. There is analysis and logic involved in the study because there is much wrong thinking in the erroneous conclusions. When wrong thinking is there, we have to right the wrong. Righting the wrong is to see the fallacies in our thinking. To see the fallacies in our thinking we require analysis and logic. We should learn to see what is proper and improper, what is logical and illogical. Therefore, aparā vidhyā is necessary.

To be continued...