

Mundakopanishad

Mantra 4

नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः
न च प्रमादात् तपसो वाप्यलिङ्गात् ।
एतैरुपायैर्यतते यस्तु विद्वान् ।
तस्यैष आत्मा विशते ब्रह्मधाम ॥३.२.४ ॥

nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ
na ca pramādāt tapaso vāpyaliṅgāt.
etairupāyairyatate yastu vidvān
tasyaiṣa ātmā viśate brahmadhāma. (3.2.4)

ayam-- this; *ātmā*-- self; *na labhyaḥ* -- is not gained;
balahīnena -- by one who does not have strength; *ca* -- and;
na pramādāt -- not by indifference; *vā* -- or;
api -- even; *aliṅgāt* -- without renunciation;
tapasaḥ -- by pursuit of knowledge;
tu -- whereas; *etaiḥ* -- by these; *upāyaiḥ* -- means;
yaḥ -- who; *vidvān* -- a discriminative seeker;
yatate -- makes effort; *tasya* -- of that person; *eṣaḥ* -- this;
ātmā -- self; *brahma-dhāma*-- the abode of Brahman;
viśate -- enters

This self is neither gained by one who does not have strength, nor by indifference, nor by pursuit of knowledge without renunciation. Whereas, the self of a person who is discriminative and who makes effort by these means enters the abode of Brahman.

Choosing *ātman* is the first qualification to gain *mokṣa*. The second qualification is mentioned in this *mantra*. Having that qualification, one recognises oneself to be Brahman. The qualification is in the form of putting forth adequate effort to gain knowledge, along with the means such as inner strength and so on mentioned here.

Nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ: the *ātman* under discussion is not gained by one who has no strength.²⁰⁰ For such a person *ātman* is not available for knowledge. Here *bala* is definitely not physical strength, or any other source of external strength such as money, manpower or support system. One cannot also say that *ātman* cannot be accomplished by one who has all of them because what is at stake here is knowledge. The *bala* here is inner strength. It is either born of knowledge or it is strength gathered for the sake of knowledge through serving the teacher, listening to scriptures, and acquiring virtues like mastery of the ways of the mind.

The knowledge that one gains with the help of *śruti* is inhibited with doubts, speculations and emotional problems in the case of many people, and it has to be completely released from these fetters. An uninhibited knowledge produces the strength by which one gains the *ātman*. The strength of knowledge is unshakeable. Fire is hot and if the whole humanity were to stand up against this fact and say that fire is cold, one will proclaim, "Let the whole humanity say otherwise, I know that fire is hot."

A weak person easily comes under the hold of a stronger person. If one is economically weak, her will come under the hold of a rich person. Here the weakness is that one comes under the hold of *rāga-dveṣa*. When the *rāga-dveṣa* holds a person hostage, he becomes a weakling. He is not available for listening to the scriptures in order to know. Getting the better of *rāga-dveṣa* is called inner strength. For this one requires *karma-yoga*. The *Bhagavad Gītā* elaborately deals with *karma-yoga* that has been suggestively mentioned in the *upaniṣad*. The self is not gained by a *balahīna*, one who has not lived a life of *karma-yoga*.

Na ca pramādāt: not by indifference or lack of alertness. The *ātman* is not gained by *pramāda*. The word '*pramāda*' is commonly found in many Indian languages. It generally has a negative connotation except in Tamil. Any omission, indifference or slothfulness is *pramāda*. Anything that stands between oneself and what one wants to achieve is *pramāda*. So one should not be negligent in doing what is to be done for gaining this knowledge. One has to lead an alert life.

Śaṅkara gives the meaning of the word '*pramāda*' as lack of *vairāgya*, *dispassion*,²⁰¹ which is contextual. *Vairāgya* is the disposition of the person who does not bother about anything else but one's chosen pursuit to know the self. It keeps the mind with what one wants. Desire for *ātman* is unlike any other desire. Any other desire is accommodative. One can have a desire for electronics as well as a desire for a good car. Both desires are not opposed to each other. They are all desires for *anātman*. Here, the desire for *ātman* cannot join other desires. Objects of other desires do not belong to the same order of reality as the *ātman*; they are *mithyā* name and form, while *ātman* is *satya*. One has to desire only for *ātman*. Then, even if other desires arise, there is no commitment in any of them.

One is working to gain the knowledge of the infinite. It is not knowledge of something, but knowledge of oneself that includes everything. It is a different type of knowledge. One should be able to hold that knowledge, and for that one requires certain preparation. Any knowledge requires preparedness. One plus one is equal to two is a problem for a two-year-old child. Preparedness and knowledge go together. That preparedness will bring in knowledge. One cannot be indifferent to the means mentioned here that gives the preparedness.

The third means is *tapah*. A committed pursuit, religious or spiritual, is *tapas*. It is always for accomplishing higher purpose. Nothing else attracts a person who has the commitment to accomplish a given thing. That commitment is complete, not lukewarm. To gain Brahman, which is everything, one has to give up everything else.

It is said,²⁰² 'Sacrifice one person if it will save the whole family, sacrifice one family if it will save the whole community and sacrifice one community if it will save the county.' One has to sacrifice everything to gain the *ātman* that is limitless. Whatever one sacrifices becomes oneself, so nothing is really sacrificed in the end. Here, inquiry into the words of Vedanta is *tapas*. It is in the form of doing *śravaṇa-manana* and *nididhyāsana*.

The word '*liṅga*' implies an exclusive pursuit. *Liṅga* is common parlance means an indication. It is a symbol²⁰³ by which one is able to understand something else. The 'major term' of western logic is called *liṅga* in Indian logic. *Liṅga* is the *hetu*, the reason based on which one makes an inference. If one sees the marks of a huge tyre on the sand, then one can infer that a tractor must have passed that way. The *liṅga* is the tyre marks in this inference. In logic, the *liṅga* is anything that helps one arrive at an inferential conclusion. The *śivaliṅga* that stands for Lord Śiva is the *liṅga* by which one recognises Īśvara as everything. If the whole cosmos, known and unknown, is collapsed and shaped into a form, it will be the form of *liṅga* and it is the form for Īśvara. Īśvara cannot have a form of his own. If he had his own form, then he would be only that *liṅga* form. If he has no particular form, all forms are his forms and it becomes a form symbolising the total. It is not the formless that is worshipped. It is the total form that is worshipped.

The word '*liṅga*' in the present context means the symbol of renunciation. The ochre-robe that one wears, the water-pot and the stick that one carries are the *liṅgas*, indications, of renunciation. The *upaniṣad* says, *aliṅgāt tapasaḥ na labhyaḥ*, the self is not gained by knowledge that is not accompanied by renunciation. It means the pursuit of *ātman* cannot be out of curiosity. One may be curious to know what a renunciate is aiming for and doing. One may take to this pursuit so that one is able to talk on *Bhagavad Gītā*. All these things do not work. The heart and soul should be together in gaining this knowledge. It is the *liṅga* of *sannyāsa* if the doership is still there. Nor one has to wear the ochre-robe to listen to Vedanta and then remove it! Mere *tapas* not accompanied by a total commitment will not be successful. The word '*api*' is very important. It should go along with *aliṅga*.

When a person takes *sannyāsa*, *vairāgya* is visible in his lifestyle. He boldly declares to the world that he is not interested in any pursuit in which the majority is interested, and he is a non-competitor in the society. His mind is sane because he does not think about tomorrow; he relaxes with what is going on. He is not a hobo that one sees in the American society who drops out because he cannot handle going to work daily, relating to people or meeting society's expectations. A *sannyāsin*, like a hobo, does not have a family ties, does not have a bank account and does not go to work; but unlike a hobo he has grown out of other pursuits because of *viveka*. The *śāstra* and the *guru* confirm this. This *ātman* is not gained by knowledge which is not backed by *sannyāsa*.

Etaiḥ upāyaiḥ yaḥ yatate: one who puts forth effort along with these means. *Upāya* is the means and *upeya* is the end. Means are of two types, primary and secondary. *Tapas* with renunciation is the primary means, and everything else becomes a secondary means, Of the secondary means, inner strength and alertness are mentioned here. Without the secondary, the primary will not work; the secondary means have to support the primary. By these means one gains the knowledge of *ātman*.

Upāya is a comprehensive word. There is another word ' *sādhana* ' meaning 'a means' by which an end is accomplished. It is generally used in a primary sense, so one has to specifically mention if it is a secondary *sādhana*. Otherwise it will refer to the primary means. But the word *upāya* covers the need for primary as well as secondary means. It covers everything that is necessary. If one think *prāṇāyāma* is necessary, one can also include it as an *upāya*. A diet regimen is an *upāya*. Marriage, parentage and so on, if converted into *yoga*, are also *upāya*. *Upāya* is not something different from the usual pursuits of life, but all those pursuits can be converted into *upāya* through healthy attitudes and right commitment, and can be a means for self-growth.

Yatate means strives. A *yati* is one who makes efforts. To be successful, the effort must be appropriate and adequate. There is a method in every effort; even opening the door is an *upāya*. Whether it is lock and key system or an electronics card, one applies the appropriate method and only then the door opens. *Upāya* means a proper method that helps one accomplish the job easily, without tears, like resolving a knot. One has to pull the right end of the string. Otherwise, it will get more tightened. One requires a proper method. One cannot afford to be impatient or violent; one also cannot force one's will into gaining *mokṣa* there is no gate crashing to Brahman. One happens to be Brahman and one has to know this fact. One has to use the mind to know and not meddle with it. The mind has to be handled with great care and love. Otherwise it can take one for a ride and put one into trouble. It is also an *upāya*.

Here, the one who has chosen the *ātman*, and makes efforts adopting these means, is called a *vidvān* because he is definitely going to become a *vidvān*. Even a *vivekin* is called a *vidvān*. *Tasya eṣa ātmā brahma dhāma viśate*: for him the *ātman* enters the abode of Brahman. Previously he was seeking Brahman. Now he enters into Brahman. *Dhāma* is a destination, an abode where one relaxes. Every desirable destination can be called *dhāma*. The ultimate abode is a place where one goes and remains. Even if he comes back, it does not make any difference for him. That *dhāma* is Brahman, which is everything.

People are committed to action in the form of going places and entering worlds of experience. So, the *sāstra* talks in the language of our orientation, while mentioning the result. Brahman is a destination that is final. Unto that Brahman this person enters, but it is an 'as though' entry. One recognises the self as Brahman. The reaching, that is in terms of knowledge, is spoken of here as an entry. It is only to negate the idea of any other form of entry. It is not entry into *brahma-loka* etc., because all the *lokas* have their being in Brahman.

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200 बल-हीनेन बल-प्रहीणेन आत्म-निष्ठा-जनित-वीर्य-हीनेन । ( मुण्डक भाष्यम् )

201 नापि लौकिक-पुत्र-पश्चादि-विषय-सङ्ग-निमित्त-प्रमादात् । ( मुण्डक भाष्यम् )

202 *Mahābhārata Udyogaparva 37.17*

203 लिङ्ग्यते बुद्धयते अनेन इति लिङ्गम् ।

.....to be Continued