



Muṇḍakopaniṣad Mantrā 6



One may raise a doubt here as follows: ‘The words of the Vedas are said to be aparā vidhyā. One studies the Vedas and gains the knowledge of the words of Vedas. Suppose one also gains the knowledge of the meaning of the words of karma khāṇḍa and learns how to do various rituals like agnihotra, will that knowledge be called parā vidhyā? No. That is also aparā vidhyā only, because that knowledge depends on performance of rituals in order to get the results. There is no theory and practice here. Theory is speculation. We have to drop this word ‘theory’. I use my will to gain the knowledge with reference to the performance of various rituals. Then I can use my will either to perform the rituals or not. Even if there is a command to perform a ritual, if I am not interested in the result promised by the śasra, I may not do it. Therefore, the results promised by the karma khāṇḍa of the Vedas, are connected to performance and not mere study. This is similar to the knowledge of how to cook. Mere knowledge of the cookbook is not enough. You have to put the knowledge into use by cooking. In karma khāṇḍa, you have to know and do.

However, with reference to parā vidhyā, the whole pursuit comes to an end at the same time as the knowledge takes place¹. Mokṣa is gained at the time when clear knowledge takes place while listening to the śasra. So, the words of the upaniṣads do give rise to the knowledge of Brahman, which is called mokṣa. The teacher presents in the next mantra the definition of that akṣaram brhma. While doing so, he takes care of one more thing.

The śruti says, “Everything that is here is Brahman”². That means there are two things: Brahman is one thing, everything else is another. If ‘everything else’ is equated with Brahman, why should we present ‘everything else’ as a second thing? Brahman is one without a second, it is satyam jñānm anantam. That teaching is enough. But ‘everything else’ is presented here because there is a connection between Brahman and everything else. Everything else is Brahman, but Brahman is not any of them. Brahman does not undergo any change to become this world. Brahman is available as it is. Nothing else, however, is available without being Brahman. Then we can say that knowing this Brahman, everything is as well known. Then only the statement, ‘knowing

¹ यथा विधि - विषये कर्त्राध्यनेक कारकोपसंहार द्वारेण वाक्यार्थ ज्ञान कालादन्यत्र अनुष्ठेयः अर्थोऽस्ति अग्निहोत्रादि लक्षणः। न नथेह परविध्या विषये। वाक्यार्थ ज्ञान समकाले एव तु पर्यवसितो भवति। केवल शब्द प्रकाशितार्थ ज्ञान मात्र निष्ठा व्यतिरिक्ताभावात्। मुण्डक भाष्यम्

² ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदम् - (मुण्डकोपनिषत् 2.2.12) - सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म (छान्दोग्योपनिषत् . - 3.14.1).

³ अद्रेश्यम् अदृश्यम् सर्वेषा बुद्धीन्द्रियाणां अगम्यमित्येतत्। दृशेर्वहिः प्रवृत्तस्य पञ्चेन्द्रिय द्वारकत्वात्। (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

⁴ अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथारसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च। (कठोपनिषत् 1,3,15)

which everything is known' can be fulfilled. Therefore, we have to do two things—unfold Brahman in its true nature and reveal that there is nothing other than Brahman. Hence, Brahman is briefly presented here as everything. It will be expanded later.

यत्तदद्रेश्यमग्राह्यमगोत्रमवर्णम्
अचक्षुः श्रोत्रं तदपाणिपादम् ।
नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मं
तदव्यायं यद्भूतयोनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीराः ॥ १।१।६ ॥
yattadreśyamagrāhyamagotramavarṇam
acakṣuḥśrotram tadapāṇipādam ।
nityam vibhum sarvagatam susūkṣmaṁ
tadavyāyam yadbhūtayoniṁ paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ ॥ 1|1|6||

tat - that; yat - which; adreśyam - is not the object of sense perception; agrāhyam - not an object of organs of action; agotram - unborn; avarṇam - without any attributes; acakṣuḥśrotram - not eyes or ears (not a sense organ); tad - that; apāṇipādām - which has no hands or legs (not an organ of action); nityam - eternal; vibhum - which becomes many; sarvagatam - all pervasive; susūkṣmaṁ - the most subtle; tat - that; avyayam - free from decline and disappearance; yat - which; bhūtayonim - cause of all beings; dhīrāḥ - those who are qualified; paripaśyanti - see very clearly.

'Brahman is that which is not the object of sense perception or organs of action, which is unborn, which does not have any attributes, which does not have eyes and ears nor hands and legs, which is eternal, which becomes many (manifold creation), which is all-pervasive, the most subtle, that which is free from decline and disappearance, which is the cause of all beings and which the qualified people see very clearly'.

The wise people, the qualified people, see this Brahman very clearly. What is this Brahman?

Adreśyam: it is not an object of senses. Brahman, that is the subject matter of parā vidhyā, is not an object of your perception. The word dṛśya is used in the śāstra to indicate any sensorily perceived object. So, it means an object seen by the eyes or an object heard by the ears and so on. Adreśyam³ is that which is not an object of sensory perception. In Kathopaniṣad⁴ the same thing is said, "It is not sound, it is not touch, it is not form...." It is not an object of the sense organs because it is the subject. Here we are negating the whole world as non-brahman. But the world entirely depends upon the existence of Brahman, like the pot that is dependent on clay. Clay, however, is not dependent upon pot for its existence. Brahman is not dependent upon anything, but everything depends upon Brhaman.

Agrāhyam⁵ : it is not an object oi organs of action like hands and legs. Feet cannot reach it, that is, it is not located in a place. It is not available for hands to grasp, that is, it is not an object. It is not a place or an object that you can handle. You cannot

⁵ कर्मैन्द्रियाविषयमित्येतत् । (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

shake hands with Brahman. Pāṇigrahaṇam⁶ is not possible with Brahman. You cannot pick up Brahman by the karmendriyās, organs of action. Brahman is not this world. So, the word agrāhyam is just an expression to negate the entire world.

Agotram: it does not have a gotra, lineage. Brahman is neither a gotra nor has a gotra. So, one should not search for the gotra of Brahman. You stop there. Somewhere you draw the line. Brahman is not born, so it has no gotra. Therefore, it is agotra, unborn.

Avarṇam⁷: it is free from varṇa. Varṇa is that by which objects are described. That is why a colour is called varṇa in Sanskrit. Varṇa distinguishes one object from another object, like a blue flower from a red flower and so on. Brahman has no colour. It is not red, black, green or blue. It is colourless. In other words, it is not an object, a substantive enjoying a colour. Avarṇa can also be taken to mean it has no size. The colour stands for size also. Therefore, neither it is small, nor it is big. So, it has no particular form. That which does not have the attributes of a substantive is avarṇa. If Brahman has attributes of its own, then it will become one more object in the world. Because it has no attribute, Brahman is not an object born in the world. It is not a sense object, nor it is an object of the organs of action.

Varṇa also can be taken as a group like brāhmaṇa, a brahmin or kṣatriya, a warrior. Brahmaji is considered as an exalted brāhmaṇa, but not Brahman. Brahman is not a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya or śūdra. Brahman is not a member of any of these groups. If Brahman is not the object of senses and object of organs of action, then perhaps Brahman is a sense organ or organ of action. The teacher negates that now, by saying acakṣuḥśrotram, not eyes or ears. These are the organs of perception. Brahman is not a means of knowing. It is not an object of senses nor is it sense organ that objectify the objects. Further it is apāṇi pādām, that which has no hands and legs or that which is neither hand nor leg.

The negation is thorough here. It is not a sense object, nor is it a sense-organ. Neither is it a means of knowing nor a means of doing. The organ represent the entire sūkṣma-śarīra, subtle body. Therefore, Brahman is not prāṇa, apana, vyāna, udāna and samāna, which are also the constituents of the sūkṣma-śarīra. It is not the mind or the intellect or both. So, it is not the attributes of your antaḥkaraṇa, mind. These few simple words in the mantra negate everything as not Brahman. Even the knower and the doer are gone, knowing and doing is gone; the whole jagat is gone.

Why does the śāstra describe Brahman through negation? This is because the sense organs and their attributes are taken to be the self. The self happens to be Brahman. Hence, the śāstra negates everything that one takes oneself to be.

To be continued...

⁶ It means marriage. Literal meaning is holding the hand.

⁷ वर्णयन्ते इति वर्णाः। द्रव्य-धर्माः स्थूलत्वादयः शुक्लत्वादयो वा। अविध्यमाना वर्णा यस्य तदवर्णम् - मुन्दक भाष्यम्