



मुण्डकोपनिषद् Muṇḍakopaniṣad



Mantra 1.2.12 (contd. From last issue)

There is a lot of confusion about what really gives mokṣa. One person says, “Why do you look into the books? It is intellectual knowledge; you have to experience the self. Look into yourself, dive deep within for self-realization”, This is due to not knowing what a pramāṇa is.

One goes in for the knowledge to get mokṣa. The connection between knowledge and mokṣa must be very clear. Knowledge of Brahman is the subject matter of the śāstra, which confers upon you the mokṣa. Therefore, knowledge is the means for mokṣa. Between the knowledge and mokṣa, there is sādhana sādhyā sambandha, the connection of means and end. Knowledge becomes sādhana and mokṣa becomes sādhyā. In the wake of the former, the latter happens automatically. If this connection is not clear, then all the confusions like theory and practice arise. The connection will not be clear if one is not an adhikārin for this knowledge. Adhikārin here is the one who has viveka-vairāgya and who knows exactly what he wants.

To gain the knowledge one has to study the śāstra. There is no other way to gain the knowledge because between the śāstra and the knowledge there is pratipādaka-pratipādhyā-sambandha, revealer-revealed connection. The book reveals the subject matter. Mokṣa is connected to knowledge and knowledge is connected to śāstra. The śāstra in the form of words is the means of knowledge that gives direct knowledge of ātman being Brahman.

Now let us understand what is the means of knowledge. A pramāṇa is defined¹ as that which produces fruitful knowledge (phalavadarthabodhaka), which is not gained by any another means of knowledge (anadhigata), and which is not subject to negation (abādhita). If what one looks upon as knowledge today is negated tomorrow, then, it is not abādhita jñānam. Abādhita jñānam is that that which cannot be contradicted at all. Then, the knowledge should not be something gained by another means of knowledge. We are talking about śruti as a means of knowledge. So, it should produce a knowledge that is not gained by perception, inference or presumption. They are inappropriate for gaining the knowledge of the self. They are meant for things I can objectify. To know the knower one has no means of knowledge. It is the subject matter of a means of knowledge that has to come from outside. That subject matter is in the śruti.

Śruti is called apauruṣeya, not revealed by a given person. A question may arise: Śruti is after all words, and the words come from a person. Then how can one say it apauruṣeya?

¹ अनधिगताबाधित-फलवदर्थबोधकं प्रमाणम् ।

Here we have to have śraddhā. One has to call off the reasoning for the time being and look upon the words of the śāstra with śraddhā. The Veda has a subject matter which not within the scope of means of knowledge we have. The Veda is not scientific. Unless it is non-scientific it is not Veda. Non-scientific does not mean illogical. If it says things illogical we do not accept it. If it says things that are above logic, but are not illogical, we accept that.

If the Veda makes some statements which my perception and inference can verify, then those statements are called anuvādās, restatements alone. They are not revealing statements. The anuvāda is from the ṛṣi's own mind, his observation at his time. It is a personal concept of the ṛṣi that came along with the original subject matter of the Veda. What is revealed by the Veda is anadhigata. Therefore, one can never prove the Veda as wrong. If one can prove it wrong, then what is proved wrong is not the subject matter of the Veda. That is a very crucial thing.

With reference to the rituals, the subject matter of the Veda is anadhigata. That is all right, but what about ātman? It is not anadhigata, it is adhigata, known, because ātman is self-evident. It does not require a pramāṇa. Yes; it is true. Ātman is known in general. Being self-evident, self-existent, it is understood as 'I am'. To reveal the existence of the ātman, the Veda is not the pramāṇa. Neither perception nor inference is pramāṇa either. Because of whose existence alone the perception and inference are possible, that self does not require any pramāṇa at all to reveal it. But that self is 'jagat kāraṇam brahma'-for this you have no means of knowledge. With what means of knowledge will I look at myself? Diving deep within does not help either, because we are trying to find out 'who the diver is', not what the diver finds inside.

The nature of the self is the subject matter of Vedānta, the end portion of Veda, which is also called upaniṣad. But there is no rule that it is always at the end of the Veda; Īśāvasyopaniṣad is within the saṃhitā. Generally, in every Veda, upaniṣad is at the end. Whether it is karma- kāṇḍa or Vedānta, both are anadhigata, not being available for other means of knowledge. But there is one difference. Vedānta is a means of knowledge² for ātman that is siddha- viṣaya, an already accomplished thing. In the karma- kāṇḍa everything is sādhyā, to be accomplished. There, the means are to be adopted to accomplish the end. Vedānta, however, reveals myself as Brahman—'I am' there, but not known as Brahman. There is no other way of knowing that, except for it to be revealed from an outside source. So in Vedānta, śraddhā is to be maintained only till the knowledge takes place. The result is verifiable right now here. But in karma- kāṇḍa, one has to maintain śraddhā all the way. Sometimes one can verify the result here itself, but that verification is not conclusive. A man performed a ritual to get rains. Still he has a problem—whether the ritual brought the rains or was it just a coincidence? There, one really has to have śraddhā. But in Vedānta, śraddhā is required only up to knowing. Because it says, "You are Brahman" and you see that fact, it cannot be contradicted at all. That is abhādhitā jñāna. What should one do to gain this knowledge?

To be continued.....

² स्वतः सिद्धस्य ज्ञापकं प्रमाणम् ।