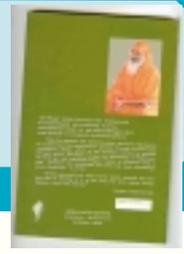


Muṇḍakopaniṣad



Introduction

(continued from last issue)

What one wants is really not 'a thing', but freedom. Freedom is not 'a thing' just as happiness is not a thing. Freedom is not available as an object somewhere that one can go and buy or claim. Freedom is located exactly where bondage is. Bondage is definitely not in my nose or eyes. The nose is limited. The eyes are limited. But the nose itself does not have a sense of limitation or a complex. The eyes have no complex. The bondage lies in the conclusion 'I am not good', 'I am not significant', 'I am wanting' and so on. I do not want to be that wanting insignificant person. The sense of bondage is centred on 'I'. The freedom from this sense does not lie outside the place where this sense is. One cannot, therefore, pick up freedom by going to a place, like one goes to Nepal and picks up śāligrāma, a type of stone, from River Gaṇḍaki. The one who considers that to be freedom is a bound person. He continues to be bound. If the sense of bondage is centered on 'I', then the freedom also is centered on 'I'. 'I am bound' is only a notion because I do not feel bound in sleep. In a moment of happiness also I do not see myself as 'I am bound'. So, there must be a way out.

If the gain of 'what is not yet gained' is not going to make me free, then one thing is left out. My helplessness is not that bad, really

speaking. I do not see all the doors closed against me. I still find one door open. It can perhaps be the 'gain of what is already gained'. In that case there is self-disowning. Therefore, I need to know myself.

Is there anything like the gain of what is already gained? What is already accomplished can also be accomplished if the accomplished is not known as such. But here the pursuit is entirely different; it is one of knowing, for which you require a pramāṇa, a means of knowledge.

All the means of knowledge at our disposal like senses and mind are good enough for throwing light upon everything else. But they cannot objectify the ātma and know it as pūrṇam brahma. In fact Brahman is not sitting upon ātman. Brahman is ātman. How are you going to know it? It is purely a recognition, in the form of a vṛtti, cognition, born of a means of knowledge. The means of knowledge that gives rise to this recognition 'I am pūrṇam brahma' are the upaniṣads. One of them is Muṇḍakopaniṣad.

The word upaniṣad is derived from the root 'sad'¹ whose meanings are given by Pāṇini² as 'to disintegrate', 'to destroy' and 'to reach'. The root has two prefixes here, 'upa' and 'ni'. Both of them together indicate

brahma vidyā, knowledge of Brahman. Upa means near. What is the nearest is what is sought after by the seeker. The seeker's svarūpa, the ātman is identical with what is sought, that is, Brahman. Ātman is not even the nearest; it is oneself. There cannot be any distance between you and ātman. By the prefix 'upa', ātman is implied here. About this ātman, there is ignorance and confusion. The prefix 'ni' stands for very well ascertained knowledge. 'Upa' and 'ni' together refer to brahma vidyā, knowledge of ātman being Brahman, which leaves nothing to be desired. It is a knowledge that is free from doubt, vagueness and error.

What does that brahma-vidyā do? It wears out the whole host of *anarthas*, undesirable things. The various limitations that the life of becoming, called *samsāra*, is subject to are called *anarthas*. This knowledge disintegrates them. Will they stage a comeback? No. Brahma-vidyā destroys the cause of the *samsāra* that is ignorance. There is no chance for it to come back. Knowledge may destroy ignorance that is the root cause for the *samsāra*, but what is the positive gain in this? Positively this knowledge makes one recognise that one is *pūrṇam brahma*. The word 'upaniṣad' thus, not only refers to *brahma vidyā* but also points out the result of that *vidyā*, and so it is complete in itself³. It tells 'what it is' and also 'what it does'.

The word 'upaniṣad' also refers to the text. When brahma-vidyā, the subject matter is called upaniṣad, how can the book also be called upaniṣad?. Between the upaniṣad, the book, and the subject matter there is *sambanda*, revealer-revealed relationship. The book is the revealer of the subject matter that is not available for any other *pramāṇa*, and that subject matter is what is revealed by the book. Therefore, the book is also called the upaniṣad like a book on Indian history. A book is called 'Indian History' because the subject matter in the book is Indian history.

Now, what is the subject matter of this upaniṣad? Brahman that is unknown is the subject matter. Brahman is already free, being *pūrṇa*. Because one does not know ātman to be identical with Brahman, one has bondage. The *prayojana*⁴, result, that one accomplishes by gaining the knowledge of the subject matter of upaniṣad is *mokṣa*.

Between the knowledge and *mokṣa* there is *sādhana-sādhya-sambandha*⁵. Knowledge is the *sādhana*, the means and *mokṣa* is the *sādhya*, the end. The end is not the subject matter. Nobody is interested in brahma-vidyā. People are interested in becoming free from sorrow. Knowledge of Brahman is not the *puruṣārtha*, the end that one seeks. *Mokṣa*, freedom from sorrow is the *puruṣārtha*. That is the result of this knowledge. That is not achieved by any

¹ षट् विशरण-गति-अवसादनेषु इति धातुपाठः ।

² उप-नि-पूर्वस्य सदेः कर्त्तरि क्विबिति क्विप् प्रत्ययान्तरस्य एवमर्थस्मरणात् । (उपोद्धात भाष्यम्)

स्वरूप आत्मन् आत्मन् सम्सार पूर्ण

य इमां ब्रह्म-विध्याम् उपयन्त्यात्मभावेन श्रद्धा-भक्ति-पुरस्सराः सन्तः तेषां गर्भ-जन्मजरारोगाद्यनर्थ-पूर्णं निशातयति परं व ब्रह्म गमयत्यविद्यादि-संसार-कारणं च अत्यन्तम् अवसादयति विनाशयतीत्युपनिषत् । उपोद्धात भाष्यम्

¹ प्रयोजनं चासकृद् ब्रवीति ब्रह्म वद् ब्रह्मैव भवति ३-२-९ इति परामृताः परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे ३।२।६ इति च उपोद्धात भाष्यम्

² प्रयोजनेन तु विध्यायाः साध्य-साधन-लक्षण-सम्बन्धम् उत्तरत्र वक्ष्यति भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिः (२।२।८) इत्यादिना । (उपोद्धात भाष्यम्)

other means. The two sambandhas—one between the text and the knowledge and the other between the knowledge and the result—make it very clear that one should take to knowledge for gaining mokṣa, and for gaining knowledge one should study the text.

Who is to study? One who is interested has to study. There are two types of interested people: the one who is curiously interested and the other seriously interested. An adhikārin, qualified person, is the one who is seriously interested. He is the one who is able to discern the limitations of all other pursuits and who has recognized that the conclusion 'I am limited' may be wrong and has to be corrected by knowing. Further,

one must have a certain maturity and proper attitude towards the upaniṣads and the teacher who teaches it. They form an inner disposition necessary for the mind to gain the knowledge. Lastly, one should have a very clear desire for freedom. This four-fold factor—subject matter, result, connection and the disposition of a qualified person—is called anubandha catuṣṭaya. It makes a given subject matter worth pursuing. Even though any upaniṣad is part of a given Veda, it can be independently studied inasmuch as it fulfils the four-fold requirement of the anubandha catuṣṭaya. So, the Muṇḍakopaniṣad also becomes a subject of study.

To be continued...

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