

Second Muṇḍaka

Section 1

(*Mantra 2..... continued*)

Why should one say, "This snake is a rope," and why not say, "This is a rope?" "What is rope?" if a person asks, one can show a rope and say, "This is a rope." If one sees a snake on a rope, then that person has to be told that 'this snake is rope.' If one looks at the *jagat* as something separate from Brahman, then the *śruti* is constrained to use words in *sāmānādhikaranyā* and say, "*idam sarvam brahma*, all this is Brahman." If one does not see the *jagat* as separate from Brahman, there is no need for this method of teaching.

There is another version of *bādhāyāṁ sāmānādhikaranyam* like in the sentence, 'this pot is clay.' Here the intention is to convey the truth of the pot as clay. The pot is understood as nothing but clay. In the wake of this recognition, the pot does not disappear. It continues to be there and recognised, even though it does not have any reality of its own. The sentence, 'all this is Brahman, is exactly like that. In the wake of knowledge of Brahman, '*idam sarvam*' does not go away; it refers to the *nāma-rūpā*, which is recognised as *mīthyā*, since its reality is Brahman.

In a sentence, generally, *sāmānādhikaranyā* is used only to relate words as adjective and substantive. Definitely the adjectives are used only to qualify a noun. If this is so, then why do we say, "This pot is clay," even though the clay does not have the attributes of a pot? This is to be said because one takes the pot to be real. What is there is only clay. Here, we give up the adjective-substantive relationship and bring in the *bādhāyāṁ sāmānādhikaranyam*. One is looking at oneself as separate from everything, and hence there is confusion. The *vastu* is not recognised. Therefore, in the sentence, '*idam sarvam brahma*' one has to go for *bādhāyāṁ sāmānādhikaranyam*.

In the sentence, 'all this is Brahman' the word 'all this' is not purely a subjective reality, like the snake seen on the rope. One sees the snake on the rope, and therefore it is there. But in the objective reality, 'the object is, and therefore one sees.' The object has a reality, has a colour which the eyes pick up. One cannot simply dismiss the eyes, the mind, the perception and the disciplines of knowledge and so on, as subjective. Whether one sees it or not, the object is there available for public appreciation. There are tall mountains, there are vast oceans, there are huge plants, there is an order in everything, there is success, there is failure, there is right, and there is wrong. How can one call all of them *mīthyā*? It is what really bothers many people. All these are *mīthyā* because they do not exist independent of *satya*.

The *jagat* that is *mithyā* is definitely not similar to rope-snake. It means ‘the *jagat* is not independent of its cause and hence it is Brahman.’ It is of a different order altogether. The means of knowledge and their operation also belong to the same order of *mithyā*. Even bondage and *mokṣa* belong to the same order. From the *mithyā* bondage alone one is released. But the release is *satya* because after the release what is there is *satya*. There is only one non-dual Brahman.

All the words of this *mantra* reveal the meaning of *mahā-vākyā*.²⁶ It is not that there are only four *mahā-vākyas*. Every *upaniṣad* has *mahā-vākyas*. Four *mahā-vākyas* have been chosen from the four *upaniṣads* belonging to four Vedas to prove that all the Vedas talk about the same thing. If there are only four *mahā-vākyas*, then those who study other *upaniṣads* have to come to these *upaniṣads*.

Those who talk of four *mahā-vākyas* also talk of some gradation in them. They say that *tattvamasi* is the *upadeśa-vākyā*. It teaches, ‘You are Brahman.’ The sentence, ‘*prajñānam brahma*, consciousness is Brahman’ is the *lakṣaṇa-vākyā*, a definition of Brahman. Then, ‘*ayam ātmā brahma*, this self is Brahman,’ is a *nididhyāsana-vākyā*, a contemplative sentence. The final one, ‘*aham brahmāsmi*, I am Brahman’ is an *anubhava-vākyā*, a sentence of experience. There is no gradation here, all the *vākyas* mean the same thing.

The words in these sentences have a *vācyārtha*, immediate meaning, and a *lakṣyārtha*, an implied meaning. *Prajñāna* means consciousness. That is Brahman means it is the cause of the world. It is Īśvara. How can *ātman*, the consciousness be Īśvara? Because the truth of both are one *caitanyaṁ brahma*. There is non-difference in the *lakṣyārtha*. Similarly, ‘*ayam ātmā*’ refers to the knower who is equated with Brahman, the cause of everything. There is difference in the *vācyārtha*, as the *jīva*, the knower, cannot be Īśvara. But the *svarūpa* of both is again one *caitanya*. That alone is the truth. So too, ‘I,’ the *jīva* am Brahman because both are *satyam*, *jñānam* and *anantam*. In the sentence, ‘you are that’ the word ‘that’ refers to Īśvara from whom everything has come. It is the immediate meaning of the word. No one can claim to be Īśvara. But if one knows the truth of Īśvara to be the truth of oneself, which is *saccidānanda*, then there is oneness. There is no difference at all whatsoever.

All the four *vākyas* talk about the same truth. The *tātparya*, purport, of all four Vedas is to reveal the identity of the *vastu* alone. This meaning of *mahā-vākyā* is there in every *upaniṣad*. Even the sentence ‘*akṣarāt parataḥ parah*’ is talking about the same thing.

²⁶ अखण्डार्थभवोधकभवाक्यम्, a sentence that reveals the oneness of the *jīva*, the individual, and Īśvara, the Lord.