

# Mundakopanishad

## Mantra 3.1.9

There are some inhibiting factors to the knowledge of the self. Your daily experience of pleasure and pain inhibit the knowledge gained by the *śāstra*. Even though you do not have doubt about the vision of the *śāstra*, experientially you seem to be different from what you have come to know about the self. *Nididhyāsana*, contemplation, is, therefore, advised by the *śāstra* to eliminate the *viparīta-bhāvanā*.

There is a common notion that *ātman* is beyond the mind. There is no instrument available to see what is beyond the mind. You therefore conclude that *ātman* is to be experienced. The next *mantra* negates this idea, and also, points out where the *ātman* is to be recognized, as well as how it is to be recognized. Every *mantra* of the *upaniṣad* in this section is complete by itself, because each reveals what is to be known. In addition, each one of them has something special to contribute.

एषोऽणुरात्मा चेतसा वेदितव्यः  
यस्मिन् प्राणः पञ्चधा संविवेश ।  
प्राणैश्चित्तं सर्वमोतं प्रजानां  
यस्मिन् विशुद्धे विभवत्येष आत्मा ॥३.१.९॥

*eṣo'ṅurātmā cetasā veditavyaḥ*  
*yasmin prāṇaḥ pañcadhā sanviveśa.*  
*prāṇaiścittaṁ sarvamoṭaṁ prajānāṁ*  
*yasmin viśuddhe vibhavatyēṣa ātmā . (3.1.9)*

*eṣaḥ* -- this; *aṅuḥ* -- subtle; *ātmā* -- the self;  
*veditavyaḥ* -- has to be understood; *cetasā* -- by the mind;  
*yasmin* -- in which; *prāṇaḥ* -- *prāṇa*;  
*sanviveśa* -- has entered; *pañcadhā* -- in a five-fold way;  
*sarvam* -- the entire; *cittaṁ* -- the mind;  
*prajānām* -- of the people; *prāṇaiḥ* -- along with the sense organs;  
*otaṁ* -- is pervaded; *yasmin* -- in which;  
*viśuddhe* -- pure; *eṣaḥ* -- this;  
*ātmā* -- self; *vibhavati* -- reveals itself

This subtle self has to be understood by the mind alone that is located in that (body) wherein the *prāṇa* has entered in a five-fold way. The entire mind of the people, along with their sense organs, is pervaded by consciousness. When this (mind) is rendered pure, the self reveals itself.

*Eṣaḥ ātmā aṇuḥ cetasā veditavyaḥ* : the *ātman* under discussion is very subtle and it is to be recognised by the mind. The word '*aṇuḥ*' means very subtle. It is not an object for you to recognise; it is the subject, the content of everything, of every concept. It has to be known by the mind. It is not an object of thought, and at the same time, it has to be known only by the mind. The *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* says, "By the mind alone it should be known."<sup>174</sup> So the mind has a role in gaining this knowledge.

Only *Īśvara* does not require a mind for knowing, because the *māyā-upādhi* makes him omniscient. That is the beauty. If he needs a mind then he will not be all-knowledge. The *jīva*, however, needs an appropriate means of knowledge. Eyes are required to know colour and shape, but the mind has got to be behind the eyes. The mind has to be behind all the senses for a relevant thought form to take place, in keeping with the object perceived. If the object seen is a pot, the thought will take the form of the pot. The whole environment that is sighted, including the position and place of the pot, becomes a thought. It is not that the pot is known as suspended in the air. You always see an object along with the environment. In the wake of the thought, the covering, the remoteness of the pot is negated. You cannot then say, "I am ignorant of the pot." The assumption of a *vṛtti*, thought, in the form of the object like 'pot thought,' is the first operation in any knowing activity; that removes the remoteness of the object. The second operation is the recognition of the object of the *vṛtti*, which is in the form of 'I know this pot.' The first operation is technically called *vṛtti-vyāpti* where the mind assumes the form of the object. The second operation is called *phala-vyāpti*, where the result of operating the *pramāṇa* namely knowledge, is gained. The result belongs to the knower. This two-fold operation is involved in every form of empirical knowledge.

With reference to the knowledge of *ātman*, the second operation is not required. From the teaching you understand that the entire *jagat* including your body-mind-sense complex is non-separate from *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is then understood as non-separate from you, the consciousness. In this knowledge the unknown-ness of *Īśvara* goes away. Consciousness is recognised through a *vṛtti* as the truth of the subject, the object and the connection between the two. In fact consciousness itself is called *akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti*, a thought free from divisions. All the words used to reveal this identity disappear. The *vṛtti* that removes the ignorance goes away. That *vṛtti* does not objectify the *ātman*, and does not have to objectify the *ātman* because *ātman* is self-revealing. The self-revealing, divisionless consciousness is you and it is everything. This recognition is the result of the operation of the words of Vedānta. The result of operation that belongs to the knower is not relevant here, because the knower is resolved in the wake of knowledge. Therefore we say, "It is beyond mind." The status of being a knower is a *vṛtti* that belongs to the mind, necessarily, and it is part of *Īśvara*'s creation.

Whenever we say, "It is beyond mind," it means it is not an object of thought. It does not mean that the mind is not necessary. Mind is the only instrument with which you can know. Therefore, the *śruti* says, *cetasā veditavyaḥ*, by the mind alone it should be known. For the ignorance to go, the *vṛtti-jñāna* opposed to ignorance is necessary. It means you need to employ your mind; you have to expose the mind to the *pramāṇa*. Only then does the knowledge takes place. Knowledge does not take place in any other manner.

You may ask, "What about intuitive knowledge?" Intuition is not a *pramāṇa*. You cannot distinguish between wishful thinking and intuition. One person told me, "Swamiji, I had an intuition yesterday that you were calling me. So I am here." I had to reply him, "I am sorry, I did not call you. Not that you are not worthy of my thought, but I was too busy for the past six months. I did not have time to think about you." Intuition does not belong to any one of the six *pramāṇas*.

Further, *yasmin prāṇaḥ pañcadhā sariviveśa: Ātman* is to be known in this body in which the *prāṇa* has entered in a five-fold way. *Prāṇa* is the life force. The air obtaining outside becomes *prāṇa* when it is inhaled. That *prāṇa* again is *Īśvara*. It enters a body in a five-fold way doing five types of jobs such as respiration, evacuation, digestion and so on. The idea conveyed here is that *ātman* should be known when the *prāṇa* is active, when you are alive. You should not look forward to gaining *ātman* after death. After death two things are possible. You may not exist or you may be travelling. If the person does not exist, then there is no question of *mokṣa* for him or her. If the person travels, then the destination is going to be a temporary home. So *mokṣa* is to be gained right now. Since it is already gained, it is to be recognised in the *buddhi* where you gain the knowledge of any object.

The *śruti* also talks about other things such as heaven, life after death and so on. It talks about your psychological life too. Astrology also talks about an individual, what you have accomplished, what you are going to accomplish, what is possible for you to accomplish and so on. It tells only about the life you have been living. You can understand revelations of the *śruti* dealing with heaven etc., and relate with them. But here the *śruti* talks about the self that is already there, though not available for objectification. You have to bring an object of knowledge to your mind to know it. The pot that is outside is known when it is loaded in your mind. *Ātman*, however, is not available outside to get loaded in your mind for you to see. If *ātman*, is not an object of thought, how will you recognize *ātman*?

The *śruti* therefore says, *sarvaṁ cittam prāṇaiḥ otam*: the entire mind along with *prāṇa* is woven into *ātman*, pervaded by the *ātman*. Śaṅkara's example here is - like the milk pervaded by fat.<sup>175</sup> The fat is not on the top of the milk or at the bottom or on the sides. The whole milk is pervaded by fat. You cannot say, "I am only taking milk, I am not taking fat." Even though you are not taking fat you become fat. From that you understand that milk has fat. Similarly, the entire mind consisting of the knower-known- knowledge differences is pervaded by the *ātman*. Therefore, the mind is conscious.<sup>176</sup>

You should not look for consciousness beyond the mind. If you look beyond the mind, you will become mentally unbalanced. There is nothing beyond the mind; everything is within mind, including the concept of 'beyond'. The consciousness with reference to the locus of a concept is called the knower. It is conditioned by the status of being the subject. The same consciousness with respect to a given object or thought becomes object consciousness. It is conditioned by the status of being an object. Both the subject and the object are pervaded by one consciousness, in the sense, both are nothing but consciousness. Consciousness is neither subject nor object. It is the basis for the time and space framework in which the subject and object exist. What a wonder it is! The *ātman* is recognised in this manner.

You may ask a question, 'If both the subject and object are *ātman* why do I not recognise it?' Suppose you want to see Gangasagar. You can see it only by going there. Sitting in Rishikesh you cannot see Gangasagar. Rishikesh is far away from Gangasagar. You have to place yourself in a situation from where the object to be seen is available within the vicinity of your perception. Here the problem of placing yourself in the vicinity of *ātman* is not there because the object also is *ātman*. It is always available. How can you miss it?

Just because it is available, it does not necessarily mean you recognise it. There is something called ignorance which denies recognition. You may be standing right on a herb that is the cure for a disease you suffer from, yet you may be searching for it. One may pray to Lord Sun, "You are the Lord of all herbs. You fill up the earth along with the moon. Bless me with that herb that will cure my disease." You can miss the obvious due to ignorance. You do not recognise *ātman* because of ignorance. Because of ignorance you are born. You are born ignorant; born, you continue to be ignorant, and the ignorant is born again. Knowledge is never born. *Ātman* is never born. This is called knowledge.

Ignorance of *ātman* gives rise to other forms of impurities like *rāga-dveṣa*. When you are under the spell of *rāga-dveṣa* with respect to various objects, you are looking for a solution outside. Therefore, there is no way of solving the problem. If you neutralise the *rāga-dveṣa*, then you fall back upon yourself and the *śāstra* will help you to remove the ignorance. Therefore, it is said, *yasmin viśuddhe eṣa ātman vibhāvati*: when the mind is rendered pure, 'I' the *ātman* reveals itself as Brahman. It is the solution you are searching for. You are not looking for whether 'I am' or 'I am not'. You are looking for 'what I am'. You are the *ātman* which shines as the nature of the knower.

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174 मनसैवेदम् आसव्यम् । (कठोपनिषत् 2.1.11)

175 ओतं व्याप्तं क्षीरमिव स्नेहेन । काष्ठमिव अग्निना । ( मुण्डक भाष्यम् )

176 सर्वं हि प्रजानाम् अन्तःकरणं चेतनावत् प्रसिद्धं लोके । ( मुण्डक भाष्यम् )

to be continued.....