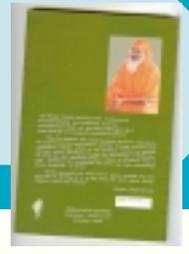




# Muṇḍakopaniṣad



## First Muṇḍaka Section 1

### Mantra 1

ब्रह्मा देवानां प्रथमः सम्बभूव  
विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता ।  
स ब्रह्मविद्याम् सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठाम्  
अथर्वाय ज्येष्ठपुत्राय प्राह ॥ १ । १ । १ ॥

brahmā devānām prathamah sambabhūva  
viśvasya karttā bhuvanasya goptā ।  
sa brahmavidhyām sarvavidhyāpratiṣṭhām  
atharvāya jyeṣṭhaputrāya prāha ॥ 11111॥

devānām – among the Gods; brahmā – Brahmaji; prathamah – first; sambabhūva – came into being; viśvasya – of the entire universe; karttā – creator; bhuvanasya – of the universe; goptā – protector; saḥ – he (Brahmaji); brahmavidhyām – knowledge of Brahman; sarvavidhyā-pratiṣṭhām – the most exalted among all forms of knowledge; atharvāya – to Atharva; jyeṣṭhaputrāya – his first son; prāha – taught.

‘Among the Gods, Brahmaji came into being first; He is the creator of the entire universe and also its protector. He taught the knowledge of Brahman, which is the most exalted among all forms of knowledge, to Atharva, his first son’.

The upaniṣad starts with the mention of Brahmaji who initiated the sampradāya. He is the first among *devas*, whom we worship. He was born before the creation and is foremost among the *devas*. By position also he is prathama, the foremost because he created everything. He is foremost by *guṇās*, qualities also. Generally by position one may be prathama, but by *guṇā* one may not be so. For instance, the father is prathama by position, but his son has a Ph.D.; he is prathama by education. But Brahmaji is prathama by qualities as well as by position. Īśvara alone assumes this particular form of a creator and he is called Brahmaji. Brahmaji has four heads, representing the four Vedas. Vedas stand for all knowledge. Brahmaji is presented here as the first-born to point out

that this knowledge comes from Īśvara. Brahmaji means Brahmā, not Brahman here.<sup>1</sup> Brahma can be Veda also. That is why we say Brahmaji, to refer to one of the trinity. In the Hindi language, 'ji' is added after the name to show respect to a person. We call the creator Brahmaji to distinguish him from Brahman, the reality.

Viśvasya karttā: He is the creator of the entire world and the revealer of the Veda also. Viśva<sup>2</sup> means that which you understand in the form of different pratyayas, different objects of knowledge. This is a tree, this is a star, this is the moon, this is a cloud; thus the world is recognised as objects of various cognitions.

Bhuvanasya goptā: He is the sustainer of the world. Not only is he the creator, but also the sustainer. Brahmaji himself is looked upon as protector. As the sustainer he is called Viṣṇu also. He is one Īśvara alone. Īśvara, the Lord viewed from different standpoints, is called by different names. Viewed from the creation standpoint he is called Brahmaji. From the standpoint of sustenance he is called Viṣṇu. From the standpoint of withdrawal he called Śiva or Rudrā. But a devotee of Viṣṇu sees the three as only Viṣṇu. Similarly, a devotee of Śiva sees all three as only Śiva. Brahmaji is generally not worshipped because we do not want to have punar-janma, rebirth. All three are one and the same. When you worship Viṣṇu, you are also worshipping Śiva and Brahmaji; when you worship Śiva, you are also worshipping Viṣṇu, you are also worshipping Śiva and Brahmaji; when you worship Śiva, you are also worshipping Viṣṇu and Brahmaji. Īśvara is complete. The whole jagat itself is non-separate from Īśvara. There is only 'one' Īśvara.

We cannot even use the word 'one'. One means one plus is possible. The word 'one' has no vyavasthā, determining factor or sum. There is one body, but there are two hands. There is one hand, but there are five fingers. There is one finger, but there are many cells. Therefore, this 'one' is purely to be understood in terms of its set. The set is what you refer to. There is one solar system, but it is understood in terms of the planets. The planets can be counted upto nine. Earth is one planet. It is to be understood in terms of the countries it has. India is one country and there are so many States in it. Rajasthan is one state and there are so many districts in it. Each member of the set becomes one. Each member is again divisible into many. Therefore, we do not say there is 'one' God. We say, ekameva advitīyam, one alone

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'Brahman' is neuter gender whereas Brahmā is masculine gender.

<sup>2</sup> विविध-प्रत्यय-गम्यं विश्वम्।

without a second. Advitiya means not two. Then one may think it is probably three. Therefore, we say it is eka, one. If we say it is one, then one may think that it belongs to a set. Two does not follow it.

The translation of the word 'advaita' is not monism. Modern scholars call this the monistic philosophy of Śaṅkara. It is neither monistic nor did Śaṅkara start it. Brahmaji taught it. It is not monism. It is not even non-dualism. There is no 'ism' here. 'Ism' means you have a contention. It belongs to somebody and you call it 'ism' so that you can dismiss it. This the old trick of calling someone a dog and hanging him afterwards. We are talking about the truth here. What is non-dual is non-dual. When a physicist says that matter is energy, there is an equation between the two. He does not introduce any 'ism' like spirit-matter non-dualism. He is talking about a fact, an equation. The statement 'tat tvam asi' is also an equation, absolute equation. You are predicated to Īśvara. That is not an ordinary equation.

Brahmaji is not one of the Gods. He is the first expression of Īśvara. Then there are other manifestations. Therefore, every expression in the creation, can be viewed as Īśvara's aspect. We can afford to have any number of Gods because we say there is only God. You can look at him from one phenomenon and call him Indra, from another phenomenon, he is Varuṇa, the deity of waters, he is Agni, the deity of fire, he is Vāyu, the deity of wind, and so on. Īśvara as Brahmaji is the creator as well as the sustainer, Viṣṇu. What did Brahmaji do?

Sa brahmavidhyām atharvāya jyeṣṭhaputrāya prāha : He taught the brahmavidyā<sup>3</sup> to his first son Atharva. From where does this brahmavidhyā come? Brahman cannot be figured out by any means of knowledge like perception and inference. It has to be revealed. The first revealer is Īśvara alone. The mantra reveals here how this Brahmaji alone is the source of knowledge. Not only he is the creator of this world, but he is also the revealer of the entire Veda. So, he is the revealer of brahmavidhyā also. He taught this to his first son, born of his saṅkalpa, thought. He is known as Atharva. That means Brahmaji has other sons also. His mānasa putrās, mind-born sons, are many. There are many cycles of creation. In one cycle of creation, the eldest son Brahmaji is Atharva.

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<sup>3</sup> Brahmaṇaḥ vidhyā brahma vidhyā. This is a tatpuruṣa compound of the sixth case. The sixth case in the word Brahmaṇaḥ is in the sense of objects of vidhyā (karmaṇi ṣaṣṭhi). It means the knowledge for which the subject matter is 'oneness of ātman and Brahman'.