



मुण्डकोपनिषद् Muṇḍakopaniṣad Mantra 1.2.8



अविध्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः
स्वयं धीराः पण्डितं मन्यमानाः ।
जहृदृन्मन्यमानाः परियन्ति मूढाः
अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥ १।२।८ ॥
avidhyāyāmantare vartamānāḥ
svayaṁ dhīrāḥ paṇḍitaṁ manyamānāḥ ।
jañaghanyamānāḥ pariyanti mūḍhāḥ
andhenaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ ॥ 1|2|8||

avidhyāyām – in ignorance and error; antare – in the middle; vartamānāḥ – remaining; svayaṁ – themselves; dhīrāḥ – learned; paṇḍitaṁ – knowers of self; manyamānāḥ – thinking; mūḍhāḥ – deluded; jañaghanyamānāḥ – being afflicted constantly; pariyanti – wander endlessly; yathā – like; andhāḥ – the blind ones, nīyamānā – being led; andhena – by the blind; eva – alone.

‘Steeped in ignorance and error, and thining themselves to be learned and knowers of the self, these deluded people are constantly afflicted and they wander endlessly, like the blind being led by the blind.’

The relative position of karma-phala is shown here. First we have to understand karma that is opposed to dhrama. Action not in keeping with dharma produces a result that is undesirable for the one who performs the karma. One does not see the pāpa produced by the karma; it is invisible, but it is translated into an unpleasant situation and the person is not going to like it. We do not say it is ‘undesirable’ only in the vision of the śāstra, but in one’s own view also it is undesirable. Any unpleasant situation is the result of pāpa karma. On the other hand, a karma that is done on the basis of dharma definitely brings to the person a result that is desirable. Only when one compares this ‘desirable’ result with mokṣa, where there is total freedom, then one will find that this ‘desirable result also is not that desirable. So, the criticism of karma must be understood in the proper light.

Here, the śāstra is talking about mokṣa. It cannot accept the karma-phala as desirable; otherwise, there will be no pravṛtti for mokṣa. The result of mokṣa is based on viveka, and vairāgya born of viveka. The viveka is to see the result in the form of heaven and so on as anitya, transient, like one's salary. One's monthly salary is not nitya, eternal. Similarly, any karma-phala is anitya. One's own body is a karma-phala, so it is anitya. Just as this body is anitya, even another body that one may have in any other loka also is anitya. This is the viveka, which should create vairāgya, dispassion in the person. This dispassion is not born of any denial of frustration; it is born of viveka. To make sure one has the viveka, the śāstra spends a lot of time discussing the limitations of karma-phala. A number of mantras in this upaniṣad talk about only the limitations of karma-phala. That helps one develop viveka, which gives rise to dispassion. Here the one who does not have this viveka is further discussed.

Avidhyāyāmantare vartamānāḥ : those who are steeped in ignorance. They live in avidhyā, they pitch their tent in avidhyā. Śaṅkara uses the word 'avidhyā' for both ignorance as well as its effect, error. Ignorance is about the truth of ātman. They do not recognize the ātman to be akartṛ, non-doer and abhokṛ. Non-enjoyer. The ignorance results in the conclusions: "I am kartṛ, the author of action; I am bhokṛ, subject to the results of action; I am therefore a saṁsārin, subject to birth and death and so on." These conclusions are the errors committed against oneself, the ātman. The ignorant ones are committing the errors all the time. Once the ātman is taken to be kartṛ, they have to be busy in order to accomplish various ends.

Since the word 'avidyā' is used in the sense of both the cause and the effect, it has caused some confusion in the minds of people. Therefore, some people say there is no avidhyā, ignorance, there is only error. This is not true. There is no error without a topic. Error is always about a topic, a topic about which one has confusion, a topic that one is not totally aware of. If one is totally aware of it, then one has knowledge and there would be no error. If one were totally ignorant, then also, there would be no error because one would not know the object at all. Therefore, error is possible only when one knows and does not know also. One cognises the existence of an object, but does not know what the object is.

That ignorance leads to error. Without ignorance there cannot be error at all. Again, this ignorance is not jñānābhāva, absence of knowledge. It is opposed to knowledge. Being opposed to knowledge it is bhāva rūpa, existent. It has got its existence as long as it is there, because it can cover. Not only can it cover, it can also cause an error. Abhāva, absence, cannot cause anything; only bhāva can cause something. Error is born of existent ajñāna alone. Ignorance is in the form of some existence, or there is existence for ignorance.

Svayaṁ dhīrāḥ paṇḍitaṁ manyamānāḥ : they think they have got knowledge and scholarship. Everyone is subject to avidyā until one gets knowledge. One can be ignorant. That is not a problem, if one is open to knowledge. But being ignorant, one should not take oneself to be enlightened. These people call themselves dhīrāḥ, wise. One can be wise, either by knowledge or by calling oneself wise, without having the knowledge. Here, these ignorant ones consider themselves wise. There is a certain certitude in their knowledge.

According to Śaṅkara there are people who think they are people who think they are vidita veditavyaḥ, they know everything that is to be known, and so they are great scholars. They know karma to be the means for achieving various ends. So, they are very sure that certain types of karma will result in mokṣa also. Some of them have analysed the śāstra. But they have come to wrong conclusions.

Paṇḍita is one who knows the self. Without gaining knowledge, if one concludes, "I am a Paṇḍita, I have understood the entire śāstra, and I know exactly what is mokṣa and the karma that is the means for mokṣa", then there is a problem. It is exactly like the problem of a theologian. A theologian is a committed believer with reference to non-verifiable topics like heaven and so on. That heaven exists is a non-verifiable belief. One can accept it as a belief, but he has made certain conclusions about heaven that are illogical. The conclusion that heaven is eternal is illogical. A theologian does not see the illogicality of his own belief. That is the problem.

Jaṅghanyamānāḥ¹ pariyaṅti mūḍhāḥ: these deluded ones constantly get affected by old age, disease and so on and wander endlessly. By the time they think they have accomplished some end, they lose it. Pariyaṅti, they

¹ जङ्घन्यमानाः जरा-रोगाद्यनेकानर्थव्राथैः हन्यमानाः भृशं पीड्यमानाः। मुण्डक भाष्यम्

become wanderers from one end to another end. There is a prodigality about them. They accomplish one end thinking that this is the ultimate, but then they move to another end. Whether they want to move or not, the fleeing karma-phala will push them from one end to another end. In this life itself they wander from one end to another.

Extending it to life after death, they keep moving from one body to another body. They take various bodies because karmas are many and varied and they have to be fulfilled. One set of karma requires the body of a pig. That is the particular type of karma where one has to eat all through the day. For that the mouth should be small, and the whole body should be the stomach. Pig is the right upādhi for that. In between they go to heaven or hell for a short visit and again come back to one of the bodies here.

They do not know their delusion and become leaders. They appoint themselves as religious preachers. They are the ones who are involved in religious conversion and so on. They become leaders because of their conviction. Anybody who has a delusion, but does not know that he has a delusion becomes a very popular leader. Because there is some kind of conviction in them, they will have followers. One can have the wildest philosophy but if one keeps it up there will be followers.

Recently one gentleman came to me and gave me a small booklet, 'Kṛṣṇa Guru Dharma'. He said, "Lord Kṛṣṇa has come in this kali-yuga as Kṛṣṇa Guru". Kṛṣṇa Guru preaches that the people who do not recognise him as guru are adharmic people and they have to be destroyed. This is how they start a cult. If somebody thinks that the name of the Lord will take him to mokṣa that is fine. Let that name do whatever magic it has to do. Anybody can say anything; there will always be people to listen to him or her. If one says something repeatedly, then people start believing that. Soon they will become followers. This is what is said here, andha paramparā, blind lineage. There is a paramparā because there is a disciple. They say, "This is our sampradāya, tradition", but it has the support neither śruti nor logic. This use of sampradāya is fraudulent. It is the worst thing happening in the country.

To be continued....