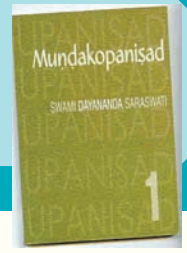


Muṇḍakopaniṣad



If Brahman became many and continued to remain, but was separated from all the created things and beings, then also the opening statement is untenable. Again, if Brahman becomes many, like rice becoming many by taking various forms such as rice sticks and so on, then it is inert. It also becomes dual. But Brahman is taught as jñānam brahma¹, so it definitely cannot be inert. Since Brahman is a conscious entity, it amounts to saying that the cetana-brahman has become this manifold world.

The only option open to us is: everything here is Brahman and that Brahman is available for my knowledge as the only reality. Brahman happens to be satya and everything else is an effect of that Brahman, and hence mithyā. Therefore, it is possible to gain all knowledge by knowing one thing, Brahman. It is like knowing the world of pots by knowing its vcause, that is, clay.

The pot is something different from the original form of the clay, in a way. But then, the clay has no particular form. It can be in any form, including a pot form. Therefore, the pot form is but clay form. And pot form is not just a form. It is a form that has a certain meaning, a certain purpose, and therefore, is a deliberate creation.

Now, if the pot is something that is a deliberate creation, then there is some knowledge involved, like what is a pot. The word 'pot' has its own meaning. Between the word 'pot' and its meaning there is a certain relationship which is always there. Once you know the pot, the word 'pot' and its meaning cannot be separated. For the word 'pot' there is an object 'pot'. In that word is locked the knowledge of the pot, and that object is always going to be referred to by that word. There is a permanent relationship between abhidhāna, a word, and abhidheya, the object indicated by that word. The moment I utter the word 'pot', the one who knows that word is able to recognise the object. The one who does not know can be taught – 'This is pot'. Thereafter, wherever he sees a pot, he is going to recognise, 'This is a pot'. This relationship between the word and its meaning is something constant. Therefore, communication is possible.

¹ Taittiriyaopaniṣad 2.1

The clay, retaining its nature, has deliberately assumed the form of pot to serve a purpose. In this creation there is a certain knowledge of pot involved, and an act of creation involved. This pot is a creation from clay, and for that creation we have to find a cause which is 'more than what we see'. Clay is 'what we see' in a clay pot. But the clay itself is not the pot. Nor can clay itself become the pot. Being a deliberate creation, there is something 'more than what you see' here. That 'more than what you see', makes you always wonder, who can be the maker of this pot? The knowledge and skill involved here do not belong to the clay. Clay is inert. It cannot make itself into a meaningful pot, big or small. That 'more than what you see' in this creation is the jñāna, the knowledge and śakti, skill. Both of them are required in any creation. One who sees that is called a vivekin. Only a human being can see that. A cow cannot. A cow is not able to see 'more than what meets the eyes'. Therefore, we cannot make this too simplistic.

There must be a maker because of whose knowledge and skill alone, whose efforts alone, a pot can come into existence. There must be a nimitta kāraṇa, an efficient cause. We now have two different causes for the pot. One is the clay, the other is the pot-maker. A pot is not a complex creation. If the creation is a clock, you are able to see how complex a thing it is. It has got to be an effect, and it is an effect in which there is definitely 'more than what you see'. It is intelligently put together.

The expression 'intelligently put together' implies the knowledge and skill necessary for that production. They have to abide in a conscious being. The cause is not inert material here. A clay head cannot think about creating a clock. The clock is a cetana kārya, born of conscious activity. Therefore, there must be a cetana vastu, conscious entity as the cause. The bhūta yoni, cause of all things is the cetana vastu. Consciousness, and it is vibhu, pervading all effects. Vibhu is the upādāna kāraṇa, material cause, like clay that has become many in the form of pots, lids and so on. The word bhūta yoni can be taken as nimitta kāraṇa, the efficient cause where knowledge and skill abide. Thus vibhu indicates the cause that has become 'many', and bhūta yoni indicates the cause that has made the 'many'. These two causes are discussed here in this mantra.

That which has made this manifold jagat is one form of cause, and that which has become the jagat is another. Generally these two causes are located in two places. One is a cetana, conscious, and the other is acetana, inert. The conscious being is the pot-maker, and clay is inert. Using the inert clay, the pot-maker

makes the pot. In the hands of the pot-maker, the inert clay is shaped into many forms.

When we look into this jagat, naturally we are trying to find out the ultimate cause. As a human being you see more than what the eyes can see. The eyes see only a tree, but you see everything that the tree has, the scheme of every part in the tree, the purpose that each one serves, and so on. The roots, the trunk, the bark, the foliage, the flower, the seed – every one of them is important, everything has got its place. This is 'seeing more than what the eyes can see'. This becomes the basis for research and speculation.

When we look into this human body, it is so complex. Each limb has its own place in the scheme of things. There are certain things that keep certain changes dormant, that maintain the system without any change. This is a homeostasis, keeping things exactly the same. Temperature is maintained in the same form, at 37 degree C, water is maintained in the same form at a fixed volume, the salts are maintained in the same form in a fixed ratio, and each factor helps the other. We have an airconditioning system in the human body. It is an amazing system. The body temperature is always maintained at 37 deg. C. If it increases even slightly, immediately there is great activity inside the body to bring that temperature down. This capacity is not an ordinary thing. This homeostatic system implies so much knowledge. Even to keep one room at the same temperature all the time, you require a thermostat system. This whole thing is too mind-boggling, and therefore, so much jñāna, knowledge, is involved.

There is knowledge in the creation. It is not chaotic and therefore, you can know it. If a system is chaotic, then you cannot understand it. There is such a thing as anatomy, pathology, physiology, biology and so on—all these are possible because there is so much knowledge manifest in the various life forms. So, the human mind that is able to see all these things is going to imagine a cause, and that cause is, cetana. Since we are talking about not one body or one thing, but about all that is here, therefore you can stretch your thinking further to infer that cetana to be all-knowledge and almighty, whom we call God. But we keep him safely away. We always see the material cause as different from the efficient cause in the world. Therefore, this jagat is going to be looked at as a piece of art or work done by God who is not available anywhere here. He has initiated the whole thing and has kept it going.

He is looked upon as another conscious being, who handles this almighty work. Therefore, two hands are not enough. So, in our images of this God, we add two more hands. We imagine him to be possessed of four hands or a thousand hands, and so on. We stretch our imagination to give him a special body with some special power and knowledge, and keep him somewhere beyond the world, because locally we do not see him; We call that place heaven and give it different names such as Vaikuṅṭha, Kailāsa, and so on. Each one has his or her own image of heaven. In keeping with this belief he or she can claim that God is not in others' concept of heaven, but in his or her heaven alone. There is nothing to prove that anyone's claim is true. Anything can be accepted as a revelation as long as it is beyond reason. If one's thinking is against reason, then definitely it is wishful thinking.

Let us look at what the upaniṣad has to say about God whom we call Īśvara. What it has to say is also revelation. But it is a revelation that has a sampradāya, a tradition of handing down that revelation, and further, what is revealed is sensible. Anyone can initiate a sampradāya. That does not mean it becomes a tradition making sense. What is said and maintained by this sampradāya makes sense.

Here the opening statement is: 'What is that, knowing which everything is as well known'. If the two causes discussed above are separate, then by knowing one thing, you are not going to know the other. Here, however, knowing one thing, you know everything. That means that one thing must be everything. Thus both the causes must be one and the same. The words bhūta yoni and vibhu reveal Brahman to be the material as well as the efficient cause.

If that Brahman is to be known, what is its lakṣaṇa? The upaniṣad gives lakṣaṇa as adreśyam, agrāhyam, acakṣuśrotram, apāṇipādam, and so on. From this it is very clear that Brahman is talked about only as ātman, which is conscious. If Brahman being the cause is negated through the cause-effect analysis, what remains is Brahman as caitanya, pure consciousness. That caitanya is the material cause for the world, so that alone has become 'as though' many.

Dhīrāḥ paripaśyanti: those people who are qualified and who have this knowledge recognise Brahman as themselves alone. They see very clearly that Brahman does not exist in any other way except as the self. The

self is self-revealing, and everything else is revealed. Therefore, for the wise person there is no ignorance about the self being Brahman.

For gaining this knowledge a two-fold preparation is required. One requirement is cognitive skill, and the other is maturity. One who has this two-fold preparation is also called dhīra. A dhīra is a complete person. For him, the 'child' within is integrated with the 'adult'. Such a person is compassionate. Compassion stands for all the qualities like dispassion, non-hurting etc. I use the word 'compassion' because that is what I appreciate in sannyāsa. Sannyāsa is meant for the pursuit of mokṣa. So ahimsā, non hurting, and bhūta dayā, compassion, which are emphasised when you take to the life of sannyāsa, are to be understood as the prime qualification for gaining this knowledge. They are two sides of the same coin. Ahimsā is expressed in the form of compassion. So, compassion characterises the humaneness of the person. To be a human being is to enjoy humaneness. If you have that completely, then you are a complete human being. Any other qualification that the śāstra talks about amounts only to cognitive skill and maturity. A dhīra has these two qualifications. Naturally, when he is taught by the śāstra, he sees what is taught. Brahman is not something that cannot be recognised, something totally unknowable. When the mantra describes Brahman as adreśya, agrāhya, and so on, it looks as though it is not available for knowing. But it is not so. Brahman is available for knowing because it happens to be you. Therefore, the wise people clearly see.

Now the words vibhu and bhūta yoni can be analysed further. Vibhu means that which becomes many. Becoming many can occur in many ways. How Brahman has become many has to be understood. Everyone is born single. By the time this man leaves this world he has quite a few people around him. He is the cause for all of them. This is one way of becoming many. But afterwards he is gone. Similarly, did Brahman become many and disappear. Is Brahman bhūta yoni in this way? If it is so, the opening statement 'by knowing which, everything is as well known' will become untenable. By understanding the man who multiplied himself into many, I am not going to understand all his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren! Similarly, if Brahman has become many, then one has to understand everything to understand Brahman. Every object in the creation is going to be something unique, so it is neither humanly possible nor celestially possible to understand the entire jagat.