



Muṇḍakopaniṣad Mantrā 6



(continued from the last issue)

Nityam: it is eternal. It is not bound by time. The word 'agotram' negates a beginning for Brahman. Here the word 'nityam' negates the end. Brahman is free from beginning and end.

Vibhum: it becomes many. All the descriptions given so far may give rise to a doubt that Brahman may be śūnya, non-existence. Śūnya is also nitya. The non-existence of a vandhyaputra¹ is nitya. He was absent before, he is absent now and will ever be absent. Brahman is not śūnya because the śruti says it is vibhu² that which becomes many. Śūnya will not become many. This Brahman is many. It becomes 'as though' many, because it is in the form of the entire cosmos without undergoing any change. Later the teacher will explain why Brahman is vibhu. Being bhūta yoni, the cause of everything, it is vibhu. Because it has become many without undergoing any change, it is nitya and at the same time vibhu.

Sarva gatam: it is all-pervasive. It has no location, like space. Space has no location; the very concept of location comes along with space itself. Everything is located in space. Space is 'located', that is, it exists, only in awareness, but awareness is not located in space. This is the all-pervasive nature of Brahman. This all-pervasiveness is something different from the all-pervasiveness of the space that pervades everything. In our understanding of space as all-pervasive, there are different things, and all of them are pervaded by space. That is how we understand all-pervasiveness. Here, it is the all-pervasiveness of the cause of everything. A given cause pervades its effect, the effect being non-separate from the cause. Being the cause of everything, Brahman pervades everything, and therefore, it is sarva-gatam. Otherwise the śruti need not mention separately sarva gatam. The word 'vibhum' will cover that idea. Here, being all, it is all-pervasive. Vibhutva is the cause for all-pervasiveness.

Susūkṣmam: it is the most subtle. If Brahman is all-pervasive, why I do not see it? When we say Brahman is all-pervasive, the seer is also pervaded by it. If it excludes the seer, then you can see the all-pervasive, but it includes the seer, the knower too. How then, are you going to look at all-pervasiveness? The

¹ Son of a mother who has never given birth to a child.

² विविधं ब्रह्मादि स्थावरान्त प्राणिभेदैर्भवतीति विभुम्। मुण्डक भाष्यम्

only way to understand the all-pervasive nature of Brahman is to recognise it as the invariable in the knower, known and knowledge. All-pervasiveness is not available for any other form of understanding. Everything has to be understood as it is, in the way that is appropriate for what it is. If we try to see all-pervasive Brahman, it shows the inappropriateness of our search. The on-looker, the one who is looking for Brahman is Brahman and Brahman pervades him. The all-pervasive Brahman minus me is not all-pervasive at all. Though Brahman is all-pervasive, it is *susūkṣma*, the most subtle, in the sense that it is not available for objectification.

Moreover, Brahman is subtle because it has no attributes. Space is objectified even though it is subtle. That which is not available for objectification at all is *susūkṣma*. Because Brahman is all-pervasive and has no *guṇa*, attribute,³ it is extremely subtle.

Tad avyayam :⁴ it is free from decline and disappearance. Brahman neither exhausts itself and disappears, nor declines and disappears. It remains the same. Only then can we understand Brahman as it is. It is not that once upon a time there was Brahman, and then it becomes the world. Some people say that an *aṁśa*, one part of Brahman is the world and three fourth is elsewhere. That is not true. Brahman is *avyaya*, not subject to any decline. Being *avyaya* it has no *avayava*, parts/limbs.⁵ It was already said that Brahman has no limbs or parts⁶. If it is eyes and ears, then being sense organs, Brahman will be subject to *vyaya*, decline. Brahman has neither parts nor has any part of it undergone any change to become the world. The *śruti* says: without being born it is born in many ways.⁷

Bhūta yonim : it is the cause of all the *bhūtās*, elements and elementals. *Yoni* means cause. The earth is the cause for all the plants and trees that are born of it. It is also the cause for anything that moves and does not move. Things born of earth are non-separate from the earth. Your physical body, made up of minerals and so on, is earth alone. So too, Brahman is the cause of everything, including all the gross and subtle worlds. *Bhūtās* are the five elements, space, air, fire, water, earth. Elementals include the components of your gross and subtle bodies.

³ शब्दादि स्थूलत्व कारण रहितत्वात्। शब्दादयो ह्याकाश वायव्यादीनामुत्तरोत्तरं स्थूलत्व कारणानि। तदभावात् सुसूक्ष्मम् - मुण्डक भाष्यम्

⁴ न व्येतीति अव्ययम्। मुण्डक भाष्यम्

¹ न ह्यनङ्गस्य स्वाङ्गापफ्रय लक्षणो व्ययः सम्भवति शरीरस्येव - मुण्डक भाष्यम्

² Vide *acakṣuḥ-śrotram tad apāni-pādam* (1|1|6)

³ अजायमानो बहुधा विजायते। तैत्तिरीयारण्यक ३।१३।३।

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 gainin this knowledge a two-fold preparation is required. One requirement is cognitive skill, and the other is maturity. One who has this two-fold preparatoion 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 dispassioin, 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, grandchildre n and great grandchildren! Similarly, if Brahman has become many, then one has to understand everything to understand Bfrahman. Every object in the creation is going to be something unique, so it is neither humanly possible nor celestially possible to understgand the entire jagat.