



Muṇḍakopaniṣad



(continued from the last issue)

We are all indeed Brahmaji's sons and daughters. He is the father of the universe which is why there is no orphan at all in the world. If Ísvara is recognized, then there is no orphan at all. If he is not recognised, then everybody is an orphan. He is called pitāmahā, the grandfather. Because we have a father, we call him grandfather. Otherwise we have to say, great great great...grandfather. We drop the word 'great' and say grandfather. He taught this brahma-vidhyā to Atharva.

Here, Atharva is specifically mentioned as his son, revealing that he received the most desirable from his father. A father is not going to teach his son something that is false. He is also not going to keep something with himself out of jealousy or insecurity. Perhaps some gurus will not teach their own disciples completely because they do not want them to become equal to or bigger than them. Suppose a music teacher has good knowledge of music, but hisdisciple has a better voice. If the teacher is insecure, the disciple will always get a little less from his teacher. Even in dance it is the same. The disciple has a better body and is more appreciated, but then, the teacher knows more about dance. She may not teach everything, so that she continues to be the best.

The gurus who keep knowledge to themselvesbecome brahma-rākṣasās, a class of ghosts, after their death. Among the ghosts also there are varieties. When the ghost comes to possess a person, we can find out what kind of a ghost it is. Brahma-rākṣasā is a person who learnt a vidhyā, but did not teach another person completely. After leaving the body, it is believed that the teacher will hover around, haunt places in the form of a ghost. Although this is purely a belief, nonetheless, it drives home the value for sharing what one knows.

Brahmaji taught his son completely without holding back anything. He gave away everything that is necessary. What the son got is said to be complete. In the Taittiriyoṇiṣad, Bhṛagu, son of Varuṇa, approached his father for his vidhyā. In Chāndogyoṇiṣad, Śvetaketu learnt brahma-vidhyā from his father, Uddālakā. From this we understand that the vidhyā that is given is the most desirable and complete.

The word prāha does not merely mean taught. It means Brahmaji taught until Atharva understood. Only then can Atharva give this knowledge fully to another person. If he had not understood, then by the time the knowledge comes down through ten mouths, it will be different. It is something like the hillthat you described ended up as a molehill! The first person understood what you said as a hill. He talked to another person who tookit as a big rock. He related it as such to another person. That person understood it as a small stone. The last person understood it as a molehill. If the student does not get

the vidyā as fully as it was taught, then the vidyā will fritter away. It is not so here. The paramparā has always been maintained. The students received the knowledge in the same form as it was taught. So, Brahmaji taught until it was understood.

Sarvavidhyā pratiṣṭhām : that which is the basis for all forms of knowledge. It is an adjective for the word brahmavidhyā. Brahmavidhyā is the most exalted, important and significant among all forms of knowledge. It is, therefore, called Sarvavidhyā pratiṣṭhā. It is distinct from all the other vidyā. How can you say it is the most exalted? If you love any given vidyā you can claim that to be the most exalted. For a crow its baby must be the most handsome. This vidyā is exalted because by gaining this knowledge every other knowledge is as well gained¹ With reference to any other discipline of knowledge the situation is different. If you know medicine, you know only medicine, but you need to consult a lawyer now and then for your legal problems. If you are a lawyer you have to seek a doctor for your health problems. This is the nature of any empirical knowledge. Brahma-Vidyā does not alter this situation, but it frees one from the notion 'I am ignorant'.

In any other vidhyā the more you know, the more you realise all that you do not know. Previously you did not know, but you did not know that you did not know. Now you know how much you do not know. In brahma-vidyā alone the subject matter is understood totally, because it is of the whole, of the total. The whole has no parts and therefore it is not possible that you know one part and not know the other part. If you take roses, you know this is a white rose and the other is red. But you do not know why one is white and the other is red. You do not know why one is big and the other is small. You do not know why there is a difference in their smell. You have to do research for ten generations to find some provisional answers to such questions. In any subject matter, both 'you know' and 'you do not know' situations are there. But this is the only subject matter in which there is knowledge without ignorance, because it is a partless whole. It is also the most exalted among all forms of knowledge because all other disciplines of knowledge are helpful in gaining this knowledge.

Śaṅkara gives another meaning that it is pratiṣṭhā, the basis for all other vidhyās. Have their basis in Brahma-vidyā². Brahma-vidhyā is as good as Brahman; it cannot be other than Brahman. Any knowledge is as true as the vastu, the object. Here the vastu is Brahman. Any knowledge is possible because of brahma-caitanya, consciousness. Without consciousness knowledge is not possible at all. So, all other vidyās have their basis in brahma-vidhyā.

Even though every form of knowledge is sacred, this particular vidhyā is the most sacred for reasons the śāstrā will further unfold later. Brahmaji taught this to Atharva. Atharva became the sampradāya kartṛ. From Atharva onwards sampradāya begins. So, in this particular section, Atharva started teaching.

To be continued..

¹ सर्व-विद्या-वेद्यं वा वस्त्वनयैव गिज्ञायते इति - मुण्डक भाष्यम्

² सर्व-विद्याभिव्यक्ति-हेतुत्वात् सर्व-विद्याश्रयमित्यर्थः - मुण्डक भाष्यम्