

Mundaka

Second Muṇḍaka

Section 2

In the previous section, the nature of akṣara-puruṣa, the subject matter of parā-vidyā, was unfolded. The akṣara-puruṣa is not an object of one's perception; it is the self-effulgent subject. Yet, the status of the world of names and forms including the body, mind and senses has not been explicitly mentioned. All of them are form that akṣara-puruṣa alone, and hence, non-separate from it. When the caitanya manifests in the mind, it becomes the subject due to its identification with the mind and the physical body. From the standpoint of caitanya ātman, all that is here, the knower-known-knowledge, is myself alone. Therefore, anything that 'exists' and anything that becomes 'known,' is not separate from the caitanya ātman.

Everything has its being in caitanya ātman alone. This was well brought out in the previous section through the adhyāropa-apavāda-prakriyā, methodology of attributing and negating. First, the nature of puruṣa was revealed. Then, it was shown that from that puruṣa alone everything came, and finally it was negated by revealing that everything is puruṣa. It is the teaching method of Vedānta.

We understand the puruṣa in a two-fold way---- one is the puruṣa in its essential nature, and the other is puruṣa in various forms of expression. Unless one recognises the puruṣa as free from any form, one cannot appreciate the fact that everything is from puruṣa, and therefore, everything is puruṣa. If that puruṣa has a form, then it becomes one of the things in the world. It is formless and at the same time, all forms.

This revelation is a very important part of the teaching. It is formless not because it gives up its form, but because it is vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa, the unchanging material cause. This formless puruṣa has to be recognised in all situations. The subject matter being very subtle and difficult to appreciate, we have one more section here unfolding the above vision through different words.

Mantra 1

आविः सन्निहितं गुहाचरं नाम
महत्पदमत्रैतत् समर्पितम् ।
एजत्प्राणन्निमिषच्च यदेतज्जानथ सदसद्वरेण्यं
परं विज्ञानाद्यद्वरिष्ठं प्रजानाम् ॥ २ ॥ २ ॥ १ ॥

āviḥ sannihitaṁ guhācaram nāma
mahatpadamatraitat samarpitam.
ejatprāṇannimiṣacca yadetajjānatha sadasadvareṇyam
param vijñānādyadvariṣṭham prajānām. (2.2.1)

āviḥ - self-shining; sannihitaṁ - very near;
guhācaram - manifests always in the buddhi;
nāma - well known; mahatpadam - the most exalted;
ejat - moves; prāṇat - is alive; ca - and;
nimīṣat - that closes (and opens) the eyes;
yad etat - all these; atra - here; samarpitam - are placed;
sad-asat - with form and without form;
variṣṭham - free from all limitations;
vareṇyam - the most worshipful; yat - which;
vijñānāt - from perception and inference; param - beyond;
prajānām - of all beings; jānatha - may you know;
etat - this

Brahman is self-shining, very near and always manifests in the buddhi. It is the most exalted goal. (Anything) which moves, is alive, that closes and opens eyes--- all these here are placed in this Brahman. It is with and without form, free from any limitation and most worshipful. It is beyond the perception and inference of all beings. May you know this Brahman.

Āviḥ⁵⁵ - self-shining. The word 'āviḥ' is an avyaya, an indeclinable word, derived from the root 'av' which is used in the sense of blessing, protecting or sustaining everything. Generally, it joins the roots such as 'as, to be' and 'kṛ to do'. Then, one gets words such as āvirbhūta, manifest, and āviṣkṛta, unfolded. The teaching of the first Muṇḍaka begins with the word 'adreṣyam,' the second one with 'divyaḥ' and here with 'āviḥ.' All the three words talk about the same caitanya ātman. The teaching is for revealing that ātman as Brahman alone.

Sannihitam: very near. It is not away from one, it is very close. In fact, Brahman is to be gained as ātman. Brahman is the invariable consciousness that shines in the form of the experiencer⁵⁶ of sound, form, colour, taste, thought and so on. Anything one hears, sees, tastes or experiences is this ātman. It is closely present as the 'I-thought' and 'this-thought.' The caitanya is manifest as 'is' in the cognition, 'this is a tree.' In the cognition, 'I see the tree,' caitanya is manifest as 'I' and as the form of a tree. In the absence of any perception, it remains as pure caitanya.

Guhācaram : ⁵⁷ that which always manifests in one's buddhi. Guhā literally means cave, but here it does not have that meaning. Here guhā refers to the buddhi.

Atman 'as though' moves in the buddhi in keeping with the changing thoughts. It manifests itself in and through all experiences such as seeing, hearing, and so on. It is the invariable consciousness in all the variable experiences. Without this invariable consciousness, no perception or thinking of any kind is possible. The word 'nāma' means that which is very well known, as the self-evident Brahman.

Mahat-padam: limitless abode of everything. Mahat generally means that which is big, but here it means that which is the most exalted. Anything, big or small, is a concept of awareness. The biggest and the smallest also are within awareness, so there is nothing bigger than this. It has no particular size. It is padam, the abode of everything.⁵⁸ It is the basis, the truth of all things, like even the clay which is the being of all the pots. All three states of experience- waking, dream, and deep sleep--- have their being in this; so too, the knower, known and knowledge.

How do you say this is mahatpadam? Because, atra etat samarpitam: all that is here is placed in this Brahman. Being born of Brahman, naturally everything is supported by it, like pots born of clay are supported by the clay. The word 'atra' refers to Brahman, the cause equated to 'āvih sannihitam' that refers to the self-evident self. Brahman is directly identified here as the ātman, and therefore, it is a mahā-vākya.

⁵⁵ आविः (आ अच् इस्) प्राकाश्ये(स्वरादिः)।

⁵⁶ वागाद्युपाधिभिः शब्दादीन् उपलभमानवदवभासते । दर्शन-श्रवण-मनन- विज्ञानाद्युपाधि-धर्मैः आविर्भूतं संलक्ष्यते हृदि सर्व-प्राणिनाम् । (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

⁵⁷ गुहाचरं नाम गुहायां (हृदि) चरतीति दर्शन-श्रवणादि-प्रकारैः गुहाचरमिति प्रख्यातम् । (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

⁵⁸ पदं पद्यते सर्वेण इति सर्वपदार्थास्पदत्वात् । (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

to be continued.....