

# Mundaka

## Third Muṇḍaka Section 1

Introducing this section, Śaṅkara says, Brahman, the subject matter of *parā-vidyā*, was clearly presented by the first two *Muṇḍakas*. It was shown that by the knowledge of Brahman the knot of ignorance that is the cause of *samsāra* is totally resolved. For the benefit of those who are not ready for this knowledge, meditation on Om was pointed out through the imagery of a bow and arrow. It is not *antaraṅga-sādhana*, an internal means. It is not adequate, however, to prepare one for this knowledge. Some *bahiraṅga-sādhana*, external means are also necessary. One must live a religious life following ethical values. Religion goes along with a spiritual life.

So, the third and final *Muṇḍaka* is going to talk about the need for values like speaking truth and a disciplined life, so that one's interaction with the external world is proper.<sup>122</sup> These secondary means are helpful to prepare the mind for gaining the knowledge, just as a pot maker needs the help of secondary means like the wheel and the stick.

Another topic of the third *Muṇḍaka* will be ascertaining the nature of Brahman through of different method. The *vastu* is talked about repeatedly through different methods because it is something very difficult to comprehend<sup>123</sup> and one needs to have extensive exposure. Therefore, śruti does this repetition so that the *vastu* is understood through one method or the other. The first mantra is in the form of a *sūtra*, an aphorism, which is going to be elaborately commented upon by the succeeding mantras.

The *śāstra* reveals that all that is here is Brahman. The jagat is Brahman, and the *jīva* who also is looking at the jagat is also Brahman. If both the known and the knower are Brahman, then we have an entirely different type of teaching.<sup>124</sup> Until this knowledge becomes clear, the existence of the *jīva* as a separate entity cannot be dismissed. According to the *śāstra*, the individual is subject to *punya-pāpa*, experience of pleasant and unpleasant situations. In other words, he is a *samsārin*. Some people, therefore, say that the *jīva* should become the *ātman*, which is free from *punya-pāpa*. It is not possible. If the *jīva* has to become that *ātman*, it has to give up the *jīvatvam*, individuality. If *jīvatvam* is real, the *jīva* cannot give it up. So, there is no becoming here, and the *jīva* that one talks about is nothing but *Īśvara*. If one knows *ātman* as Brahman, then one is *Īśvara*; if one does not know, one is a *samsārin*.

There is a very beautiful imagery of two birds presented here. They are perched on a tree, which is another imagery used to explain *samsāra*. *Samsāra* is compared to a tree because it is something that can be felled, which again has the capacity to sustain itself. Even through the trunk goes, still the tree continues because of adventitious roots. One's individuality, through identification with one's own body, is like a tree it can be felled for good, and it can also perpetuate itself. If one body goes, another body will be waiting for the *jīva*. To put an end to this, one has to cut asunder this tree of *samsāra*. The means of felling this *samsāra* is given here.

On this tree of *samsāra*, two birds are perched. One bird flutters around gathering fruits. It gathers *karma-phala* and enjoys it. It is a doer as well as an enjoyer. It is the *jīva* bird. The other bird just witnesses this bird. It blesses this bird by lighting up all its experiences and providing the infrastructure for it to go around and do whatever it wants. It lends its existence and awareness to this bird. That bird is Īśvara. Because the *jīva* bird cannot do anything without the presence of the other bird, it comes back to the tree again. The fluttering bird has to recognize, 'I am in reality the watching bird.' Then it fells the tree of *samsāra* and becomes free from sorrow.

Similarly, two entities are present in this body. One seems to do varieties of things and gather *karma-phala* that is not always enjoyable. Sometimes it is bitter, sometimes sweet and sometimes even rotten, like the bad peanut that spoils the whole day. The other seems to be enjoying without doing anything.

Now, the *śāstra* tells us, if one wants to get rid of *samsāra* and become free, one need not give up this body. Without journeying from this body and without going to heaven, one can still be free. One has to know that one is, in reality, the one who enjoys without doing anything. The non-difference between *jīva* and Īśvara was already shown in the previous section. Here, the *śāstra* presents this imagery only to point out that one need not leave the body in order to gain *mokṣa*. One non-dual *ātman* is presented here as two birds, one watching and the other knocking around, to account for the *jīva* and his release from *jīvatma* by knowledge.

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122 अथ इमानीं तत्सहकारीणि सत्यादि-साधनानि वक्तव्यानीति तदर्थम् उत्तर-ग्रन्थारम्भः ।( मुण्डक भाष्यम् )

123 प्राधान्येन तत्त्व-निर्धारणं च प्राकारान्तरेण क्रि यते अत्यन्त-दुरवगाह्यत्वात् कृतमपि ।( मुण्डक भाष्यम् )

124 Refer to the commentary on *mantra* 2.1.1

To be continue.....

#### Swami Satswarupananda's shifting

Please note that Swami Satswarupananda – who is at present stationed in Pune, will shift permanently from 16<sup>th</sup> July 2017 to Swami Dayananda Ashram, Arsha Vidya Peetam, Purani Jhadi , Muni ki reti, Rishikesh 249 137, Uttarkhand.

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Please do not send mail to Pune from 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017.