



THE CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

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The fact of the organic connection of the individual with the Vaishvanara implies that there are cosmical aspects operating even in the individual, just as everything that is in the ocean is also in the wave, notwithstanding the difference between the crest called the wave and the body which is the ocean. The essential harmony between the individual and the Universal becomes patent when a spiritual investigation is conducted into the essence of the structure of both the individual and the cosmic. So, the meditation by the individual on the cosmic, or the Vaishvanara, means the establishment of an inner coordination and the effectuation of the qualitative non-difference between the meditating principle and the object that is meditated upon. If every function that is going on in the individual is ultimately inseparable from the nature and operation of the Universal, meditation is just the awareness of this fact. There is nothing more to be done in meditation than to raise the consciousness to the fact of this inseparability between cosmic functions and individual functions. Such simple acts as eating, drinking, breathing and working become universally significant. They are not private deeds or individual affairs as they are taken to be. The Upanishad, here, takes us above the ordinary concept of human action and the nature of the individual and abolishes the absurd notion that we entertain usually, namely, that there are such things as individuals, ultimately. The meditation that is prescribed here is of various kinds. One of the specific methods mentioned is that there should be an invocation of universal significance, even during the performance of individual actions.

The specific action that is taken up for discussion here is, what is called in the language of the sacred lore, *Prana-agnihotra*, or the sacrificial offering to the Universal Fire. The food that we take every day is a holy oblation to the All-pervading Vital Fire. This meditation is *Prana-agnihotra*. *Agnihotra* is the consecrated offering into the sacred Fire. Ritualistically or exoterically conceived, this means the daily performance of the *yajna*, or sacrifice, by a householder. The Upanishad makes out that this *agnihotra* is perpetually taking place in our own bodies, of which we have to be conscious in our meditation. The external sacrifice ceases to be external any more. Viewing everything from the point of view of the All-inclusive Vaishvanara, the externality of an action ceases forever. *There is no*

such thing as external action, because everything that we regard as external is internal to the Vaishvanara. Hence, even the outward sacrifice, the speech that we utter and the work that we do, etc., outwardly, in the world, cease to be a personal or social affair. They become a spiritual worship, a divine contemplation. The three fires which the householders exoterically worship in their houses are called *garhapatya*, *anvaharyapachana* and *ahavaniya*. These three sacrifices are internally constituted in the individual, in the act of this meditation. The Upanishad tells us that we have to perform a contemplative sacrifice construing the external ritual as an activity that is going on within ourselves. These fires are within the body of the *Virat*, the Vaishvanara Himself. And, inasmuch as we are inseparable from Vaishvanara, these fires are inside our own Self. So, when we offer food into the mouth, it is not an animal act that we are performing for the satisfaction of the bodily organism, but an ultimate impulse that is arising from the Universal Reality. Hunger is not merely a function of the stomach. It is not the alimentary canal functioning in the body merely. It is something wider than what we are, indicating that we are related to something vaster than what we seem to be from our points of view. In religious language, in scriptural parlance, Vaishvanara is the word used to describe the Ultimate Reality, and also for the fire that digests food. The internal fire that is responsible for the conversion of food into chyle etc., that which is responsible for the absorption of the elements of diet into our system, this inward heat is Vaishvanara. It is not the physical body alone that is working in digestion, because the physical body is visible even in a corpse but there is no such heat there. What has happened to the heat? That heat is not the heat of the physical fire; it is not the heat of any conglomeration of chemical elements in the body. The Upanishad identifies this heat, which is the living force in us, with the Ultimate Reality, called here Vaishvanara, or the Universal Fire, which consumes everything. The five *pranas* are the external agents of the performance of any action. They are the ambassadors, as it were, of the Ultimate Being. The food that we eat is digested by the action of the *pranas*. We have five *pranas*, and so, when taking food, religious people utter *mantras* saying, “This is to the *prana*, this is to the *apana*,” etc. This is not merely a ritual unconsciously performed as a routine, but a religious worship. It is a meditation, and we are supposed to be conscious of what we are doing when we consume food. The process of *Prana-agnihotra* mentioned here is the act of introducing a universal significance into what are apparently individual functions.

The three fires are inside the Universal Being, Vaishvanara. And, again, to repeat, this threefold fire is in us as inseparable from the Vaishvanara. So, when we take a morsel of food what are we to contemplate?

THE FIVE PRANAS

PRANA

The five *pranas* are like the five tongues of a flaming fire. It is one single force that is working as five different vital energies. So, each tongue of the fire, each flame, is satisfied by the offering of a particular oblation, as it is done in the

external sacrifice. *Pranaya svaha*, is the invocation, which means to say, “May the *prana* be satisfied.” This is to be inwardly recited while eating the first morsel. Here, it is not merely an utterance that is emphasised, but an inward feeling in the real meditation. As every river is connected to the ocean, every *prana* is connected to the Cosmic Force. Thus, through the *prana*, we touch the cosmic border and invoke the Universal Being. In this meditation there is an attempt at universal satisfaction, and not merely some individual’s pleasure, in the acts of eating, drinking, etc. When the *prana* is satisfied, the Upanishad says, due to an inward connection, the eyes are satisfied. We feel happy. When we eat food and have a square meal, we feel a satisfaction opening up from the eyes. When the *prana* is satisfied, the eyes are satisfied. When the eyes are satisfied, the Sun is satisfied, because he is the deity of the eyes. When the Sun is satisfied, the whole atmosphere is satisfied, because he is the presiding deity of the entire atmosphere. If the atmosphere is satisfied, whatever is the support of both the atmosphere and the Sun, is also satisfied, i.e., heaven itself is satisfied, even with the little act of taking food that we perform in a meditative fashion. Then what happens? Then, immediately, there is a reaction produced from the sources which we touch by this act of meditation. The reaction comes in the form of a vibration of happiness, the glow, as it were, from the different quarters of heaven. And, if the quarters of heaven are happy, the winds are happy, the Sun is happy, the whole atmosphere is happy, we are happy, with wealth, lustre, glory, plenty and power, because Vaishvanara is satisfied.

VYANA

So is the case with every other morsel that we eat. The second morsel that we take in should be for the satisfaction of *vyana*, the other aspect of energy: *Vyanaya svaha*, “May *vyana*, the all-pervading force within me be satisfied,” *vyana* which is responsible for the movement of the blood-stream in the canals, etc. Thus, should one meditate with the next morsel of food. There are internal connections mentioned here, again, mystically. The ears are satisfied when the *vyana* is satisfied. If the ears are satisfied, everything that is around us in the form of the directions from which sounds come and impinge upon the ears is also satisfied, right up to the moon. Then, as a result, the whole atmosphere and all the directions are satisfied, and then all the causes thereof are also satisfied at once. When the causes are satisfied, the meditator is filled with plenty, prosperity, power and glory, because Vaishvanara is satisfied.

APANA

Then the third morsel should be taken for the satisfaction of the *apana*: *Apanaya svaha*. When the *apana* is satisfied, speech is satisfied. When speech is satisfied, fire is satisfied, which is the superintending principle over speech. When fire is satisfied, that which is the source of fire, from which fire arises, the very earth is satisfied. If the earth is satisfied, we are also automatically satisfied. The meditator is filled with plenty and glory, because Vaishvanara is satisfied.

SAMANA

The fourth offering, or the morsel, that we take, should be for the satisfaction of *samana*: *Samanaya svaha*. When the *samana* is satisfied, the mind is satisfied. The *samana* is the central operating force, and that immediately acts upon the mind. When the mind is satisfied, everything that is connected with the mind, the rain-god and the heavens, are satisfied. When the rain-god is satisfied, the lightnings are also satisfied, higher than the realm of the fall of rain. When the lightnings are satisfied, all things that are the support of all these phenomena are satisfied. Then the meditator is also satisfied and filled with power, plenty and glory, because Vaishvanara is satisfied.

UDANA

Then, the fifth offering is for the satisfaction of *udana*: *Udanaya svaha*. When *udana* is satisfied, the tactile sense is satisfied. Thereby, its deity, Air, is satisfied. When Air is satisfied, its abode, Sky (Space) is satisfied. When this satisfaction is effected, everything in Air and Space also is satisfied. Then the meditator, with plenty of everything, is satisfied, because Vaishvanara is satisfied. Then nothing remains unsatisfied, because everything is comprehended here.

Thus, the Upanishad point of view is that a rightly conducted human activity, such as the one in the form of the intake of food, with a meditation on the universal implication of one's existence, will touch the corners of creation. And, the satisfaction of the individual, the performer of meditation of this kind, the performer of the Vaishvanara-Agnihotra-Vidya, shall be for the blessedness of all mankind, nay, the whole creation. That is why there is the tradition that the satisfaction that we bring to a person endowed with such knowledge is inclusive of the other lower satisfactions. This is the tradition behind the feeding of learned people, spiritual adepts, etc.; because they are not regarded as human beings in the ordinary sense. They are not consuming food merely for the satisfaction of their bodies. There is a satisfaction implied of other aspects, also, with which they are internally connected due to their knowledge, due to their life, due to their meditation. The man of meditation in this way thinks all things at one stroke of the effort of consciousness. Hence, everything is satisfied by his actions. Thus, there is this technique of *Prana-agnihotra* prescribed in this Upanishad in the case of a person who is a meditator on the Vaishvanara. The *Prana-agnihotra* is a religious performance of the one who practices the Vaishvanara-Vidya, one who meditates on the Cosmic Being.

THE NEED FOR KNOWLEDGE IS STRESSED

There are people who perform sacrifices without this knowledge of the Vaishvanara. There are people who take food without knowing this spiritual implication of *agnihotra*. They are pouring oblations on ashes who perform the *agnihotra* sacrifice without the knowledge of its universal import. Where knowledge is absent, action cannot produce any beneficial result. So, there is no use merely performing *havanas*, *yajnas*, etc. without this vital knowledge. They will not produce the expected result. And so is the case with any kind of selfish action originating from one's own personality for the satisfaction of oneself alone.

This will lead to bondage, because ignorance of one's inward connection with higher sources is a danger to oneself, and they will react upon the individual for this ignorance. This reaction is called *karma*, the reaction of action. What binds us in the form of *apurvu*, or *karma*, is the reaction produced by the universal, of which we are ignorant and which we ignore in our daily activities, as if it does not exist at all.

But if one performs any sacrifice, such as the *agnihotra* mentioned, with this knowledge, then, whatever one does is a universal action. It is for the good of everyone. And everyone's action becomes that person's action, just as the movement of any wave anywhere in the ocean is the ocean itself working. It is not somebody else working somewhere, hundreds of miles away. Anyone's action becomes my action; anyone's experience is my experience; and anyone's benefit is my benefit, if I am commensurate in inward being with the being of other people. This is the ultimate consequence of meditation on the Vaishvanara. That person, who thus meditates, ceases to be an individual for all practical purposes. Though he may appear to be an individual for a mere onlooker, inwardly he is not a person. And it is so because his feelings, his thoughts, his volitions, his consciousness,—all these are tuned up to Reality of a transcendental nature, which are merely personal forms from the point of view for an outward look, but a universal inwardness from his own point of view. Therefore, his actions are the actions of everyone. They are universal performances. Whatever he does is offered to all the worlds, all persons, all beings, simultaneously.

All our sins are burnt and get reduced to ashes in a second, even as a tiny dry twig, or a piece of cotton, gets burnt when it is thrown into a flaming fire, if this meditation is practised. All the sins of the past, of lives and lives, get burnt, even as mountains of straw can be burnt by the striking of a single matchstick. Though it is a mountain, it is after all dry straw. It cannot stand the fire of the powers generated in this manner, because no action is an individual action now. How can there be sin when there is neither virtue nor the other side of it? No merit or demerit accrues from the action of such a person, no consequences follow, no result is evoked by these actions. The result of an action is the reaction set up by the action. And reactions are set up on account of nonconformity with the operation of supernatural laws. But, in this case, here, such nonconformity does not arise. One is always in conformity with the existence of every force in the world. No reactions are set up by any of his performance; and, so, there is no merit or demerit in his case, no sin exists for him, no virtue also exists in the case of this person who is a constant meditator on the Vaishvanara, a performer of *Prana-agnihotra*, in this manner. He may throw a little piece of bread to a dog, and it shall be offered to the Universal Reality at once, when he has this consciousness of the Vaishvanara in him. He may throw a little remnant of his food to an outcaste, and it shall be offered into the Universal Reality forthwith. He may offer anything, even to the lowest of beings, it shall be consumed immediately by the Universal Reality, because of his identification with the All-Pervading Self, and, consequently, with that being, that person, that dog, that animal, that creature, whatever it is. Whatever he does anywhere is known to the Vaishvanara. Whatever he offers anywhere is offered to the Vaishvanara. He may

offer anything to anyone, it will reach the Vaishvanara, because of his Self-identification with That Great Being. In this connection there is this saying, declares the Upanishad: "As hungry children sit round their mother, craving for food, so do all beings eagerly await the performance of the *Prana-agnihotra* by this sage who is universally conscious and exists as All-Being." Everyone loves such a person; every insect, every cat and dog will show regard to such a one. The whole universe will love him, who is tuned up in this manner, in perpetual meditation with the Vaishvanara. And everyone will be happy if he eats food, because his food is the food of all. His satisfaction is the satisfaction of all. And as is the mother to children, so is this person a sustainer of everybody in the world. His very existence is a blessing, his very being is an action, even as it is the case with God Himself.

Thus does this highly mystical discourse make out that the highest meditation is communion with the Vaishvanara. And if this is to be practiced by anyone, there would be nothing impossible for that person. And if this meditation can be practised effectively, there is nothing else for one to do in this world, because here is the final thing that one would be expected to do in life. This is the last *dharma*, or duty, on our part; this is the highest service one can perform. It is, thus, that this *vidya* transcends every other law, rule, or duty in this world. This is the Vaishvanara-Vidya propounded in the Chhandogya Upanishad.

CONCLUSION

This is the secret of the knowledge of the Universal Being, designated as Vaishvanara. Its simple form of understanding is a transference of human attributes to the Divine Existence, and vice versa. In this meditation, one contemplates the Cosmos as one's body. Just as, for example, when one contemplates one's individual body, one simultaneously becomes conscious of the right eye, the left eye, the right hand, the left hand, the right leg, the left leg, the head, the heart, the stomach, and all the limbs of the body at one and the same time, and one does not regard the different limbs of the body as distinguished from one another in any manner, all limbs being only apparently different, but really connected to a single personality. So, in this meditation, the consciousness is to be transferred to the Universal Being. Instead of one contemplating oneself as the individual body, one contemplates oneself as the Universal Body. Instead of the right eye, there is the sun. Instead of the left eye, there is the moon. Instead of the feet there is the earth. Instead of the head, there is the heaven, and so on. The limbs of the Cosmic Person are identified with the cosmic elements, and vice versa, so that there is nothing in the Cosmos which does not form an organic part of the body of the *Virat*, or Vaishvanara. When you see the vast world before you, you behold a part of your own body. When you look at the sun, you behold your own eye. When you look above into the heavens, you are seeing your own head. When you see all people moving about, you behold the various parts of your own personality. The vast wind is your breath. All your actions are cosmic movements. Anything that moves, does so on account of your movement. Your breath is the Cosmic Vital Force. Your intelligence is the Cosmic Intelligence. Your existence is Cosmic Existence. Your happiness is Cosmic Bliss.

Creation does not consist merely of the few parts that are mentioned in the Upanishad, as limbs of the Vaishvanara, by way of illustration. There are many other things which may come to our minds when we contemplate. We can start our meditation with any set of forms that may occur to our minds. We may be sitting in our rooms, and the first things that attract our attention may be the objects spread out in the rooms. When we identify these objects with our body, we will find that there are also objects outside these rooms. And, likewise, we can slowly expand our consciousness to the whole earth, and, then, beyond the earth, to the solar and stellar regions, so that we reach as far as our minds can reach. Whatever our mind can think, becomes an object for the mind; and that object, again, should become a part of the meditator's body, cosmically. And, the moment the object that is conceived by the mind is identified with the Cosmic Body, the object ceases to agitate the mind any more, because that object is not any more outside; it becomes a part of the body of the meditator. When an object becomes a part of our own body, it no more annoys us because it is not an object at all. It is a subject. The object has become the Cosmic Subject, in the Vaishvanara meditation.

The *vidya* has its origin, actually, in the Rig-Veda, in a famous *sukta*, or hymn, called the Purusha-Sukta. The Purusha-Sukta of the Rig-Veda commences by saying that all the heads, all the eyes, and all the feet that we see in this world are the heads, eyes, and feet of the *Virat-Purusha*, or the Cosmic Being. With one head, the *Virat* nods in silence; with another face He smiles; with a third one He frowns; in one form, He sits; in another form, He moves; in one form, He is near; in another form, He is distant. So, all the forms, whatever they be, and all the movements and actions, processes and relations, become parts of the Cosmic Body, with which the Consciousness should be identified simultaneously. When you think, you think all things at the same time, in all the ten directions, nay, in every way.

The Chhandogya Upanishad concludes this *vidya* by saying that one who meditates in this manner on the Universal Personality of Oneself as the Vaishvanara, becomes the Source of sustenance for all beings. Just as children sit round their mother, hungry, and asking for food, all beings in creation shall sit round this *Person*, craving for his blessings; and just as food consumed by this body sustains all the limbs of the body at once, this *meditator*, if he consumes food, shall immediately communicate his blessings to the whole Cosmos, for his Being is, verily, All-Being.

We may recall to our memory the famous story of Sri Krishna taking a particle of food from the hands of Draupadi, in the Kamyaka forest, when she called to Him for help, and with this little grain that He partook of, the whole universe was filled, and all people were satisfied, because Krishna stood there tuned up with the Universal *Virat*. So is also the case with any person who is in a position to meditate on the *Virat*, and assumes the position of the *Virat*. The whole Universe shall become friendly with this *Person*; all existence shall ask for sustenance and blessing from this Universal Being. This meditator is no more a human being; he is, veritably, God Himself. The meditator on Vaishvanara is in communion with the universe, with the very Self of all beings, attuned to the Supreme Being.

A question arises here: how could all creation be satisfied if just one person takes food? This is not possible unless there is only one Self everywhere. If my self and your self and the self of different persons and things are different, one from the other, it is not possible that the satisfaction of one self can be the satisfaction of another self. If there can be a single satisfaction for the whole universe, there should be only one Self in the whole universe, not many selves, 'I', 'you', 'he', etc. Is it true, there is only one Self in the whole universe or are there many selves? How are we to understand this doctrine that there is only a single Self, and whoever is attuned to this single Self is the Self of all? So, whatever that person does is the action of everybody. But, how are we to make out this truth that there is only one Self? To elucidate this point the next chapter is taken up which goes further into the subject of the Vaishvanara Himself, and analyses in detail the constituents of the universe and the individual, expatiates the fact that there cannot be many realities, many subjects, or many selves. There is one Self. Everywhere, wherever you go, whatever you touch is an encounter of yours in respect of a single Reality. Whatever the experience, you are travelling within the body of that single Self. Anything that you do is known to that Self; it has connection with that Self, so that every Self is one's self. Towards this subject the sixth chapter of the Upanishad is carried, and the chapter commences with an anecdote, a story, an occurrence, a description of a conversation between father and son, Uddalaka Aruni and his student, his son, Svetaketu.

PRELIMINARY

Aum, svetaketur ha'runeya asa, tam ha pitovaca: svetaketo, vasa brahmacaryam, na vai, saumya, asmat-kulino' nanucya brahma-bandhuriva bhavatiti.

There was a great sage called Uddalaka, the son of Aruni. He had only one boy, his son by name Svetaketu. For some reason or the other the father was not in a position to school him, teach him personally or give him instruction. The boy was loitering, running about here and there with children of the neighbourhood, and never knew what study was; what learning was; what education was. The father, one day, called the boy and said: "My dear son, in our family nobody is a Brahmin merely by name. He has to be worth his name, which means to say that he has to be filled with the real knowledge of the Brahmin, and we should not call ourselves so, merely by name in the social sense. You are here a relative of a great man; you need to be a great person. You should not just be in a position to say, "I am the friend of so-and-so, I am the son of such-and-such a father." You should also be equal inside. So, you must go to a *gurukula* and study, and then come back." *Aum svetaketur ha'runeya asa, tam ha pitovaca: svetaketo, vasa brahmacaryam:* "Be a student." Here, *brahmacharya* means the role of a student in a *gurukula*. *Na vai, saumya, asmat-kulino' nanucya brahma-bandhur iva bhavatiti.*

Sa ha dvadasa-varsa upetya caturvimsati varsah sarvan vedan adhitya mahamana anucana-mani stabdha evaya, tam ha pitovaca, svetaketo, yan nu saumya idam mahamana anucanamani stabdho' si uta tam adesam apraksyah.

The boy was sent. The boy went to a *gurukula* for study and he underwent the whole course of education. He was twelve years old when he went from the house of the father. When he returned after education he was twenty-four years old. So, he studied for twelve years. He studied all the Vedas, all the Shastras, all the scriptures, and there was practically nothing religious which he had not learnt. Now, this learning had some other effect also, that of swelling up the head of this boy with an immense pride. He began to feel that nobody was equal to him in learning; that he knew all things, was almost omniscient. So, when he came, at the age of twenty-four, to the father at home, he would not speak because of the learning that was in his head. He was very dignified looking and sat without uttering a word even to the father. He started behaving very conceitedly. He did not utter one word because of the so-called depth of his knowledge. The father observed what had happened to his son. He does not speak; he sits arrogantly; he is very proud; he is puffed up with learning and he thinks he knows everything. It is very strange indeed. So, having observed this, the father calls the boy one day and says: “You don’t speak, you seem to be very learned and you put up a very arrogant appearance; I can’t understand what it means. Have you learnt everything from your Guru, which makes you feel that you know everything and are now so full of pride? Do you know everything, have you studied everything?”

*Yenasrutam srutam bhavati, amatam matam, avijnatam
vijnatam iti: katham nu, bhagavah, sa adeso bhavatiti.*

“Do you know *That*, by knowing which, everything is known? Do you know *That*, by which the unheard becomes heard, the unthought becomes thought?” *Yenasrutam srutam bhavati, amatam matam, avijnatam vijnatam iti:* “Has your Guru, or the preceptor from whom you have studied the four Vedas, taught you these secrets by which things which are not heard of, are heard, things which cannot be thought of, are thought of, that which cannot be understood, is understood? There is something by knowing which everything can be known. Have you heard of this? Have your teachers imparted this knowledge to you?” Very strange indeed! The boy had never heard of such things—how can an unheard thing, be heard; an unthought thing, be thought; an understood thing, be understood? This is not in the Vedas or the Shastras; nowhere is anything mentioned of it. *Katham nu, bhagavah, sa adeso bhavatiti:* The boy says: “What is this? I do not know. I have never been taught this thing.” He is humbled a little bit. So, there is something he does not know. “If you have never heard of a thing, how can you hear of it? If you can never think of a thing, how can you think of it? And if it cannot be understood at all, how can it be understood?” “But there is a way,” says the father. “There is a way by which you can execute this feat of knowing everything, even if it cannot be known normally. Supersensory things can be known and everything can be known by the knowledge of a single thing.” The father puts this question to the boy, but the boy knows nothing about this. “How is it possible?” the boy queries the father. “What is the meaning of this question? How is it possible for one to know, in this manner?” “Well; I give you an example of how it is possible.” Without going into the details of the subject, the father gives only an example, an analogy of how such a thing is possible.

*Yatha, saumya, ekena mrt-pindena sarvam mrnmayam
vijnatam syat vacarambhanam vikaro nama-dheyam,
mrttikety eva satyam.*

“If you know what earth is made of, you also know at the same time what anything that is made of earth also is made of, because all the articles that are manufactured out of earth are constituted of earth essentially. So, I give you an example of how many things can be known by the knowledge of one thing. Pot, tumbler, plate, etc., and various articles of this kind manufactured out of clay are clay only, in reality. So, if you know what clay is, you know what a clay tumbler is, a clay plate is, a clay glass is, etc. Do you understand what I say? Yes! Because they are only shapes taken by that substance called clay. And, what you mean by an earthen pot is only a name that you have given to a shape taken by the earth.”

*Yatha, saumya, ekena loha-manina sarvam lohamayam
vijnatam syat, vacarambhanom vikaro nama-dheyam
lohamity eva satyam.*

*Yatha, saumya, ekena nakha-nikrntanena sarvam
karsnayasam vijnatam syat, vacarambhanam vikaro
namadheyam krsnayasam ity eva satyam, evam, saumya,
sa adeso bhavatiti.*

“So is the case with certain other things. You take a nugget of gold, and you know a nugget of gold can be cast into various shapes of ornaments. It can be a necklace; it can be a ring; it can be anything. Now, if you know what gold is really, what gold is made of essentially, you will also know what a gold necklace is made of, what a gold ring is made of, etc., because the gold ring, gold necklace and the like are gold only in their essence. These are only shapes, forms taken by the essence which is the substance, gold.

“If you take a pair of scissors, for instance, made of iron, you know what it is made of. It is made of iron. Then you would also know what anything else made of iron is. It may be a hammer; it may be a nail; it may be an axe; it does not matter what it is, all these things are the shapes taken by the same iron which is in the pair of scissors.

“Now, this earthen pot is a very strange thing, altogether. The earthen pot is a name that you have given to a shape taken by the earth. There is no such thing as a pot, really speaking. You touch a pot and tell me whether you are touching a pot or are touching clay. What are you touching? You cannot say what you are touching. You will say, ‘Well; it is difficult for me to say if I am touching the pot or have touched the clay.’ You are touching the clay and you say you are touching the pot. The pot is in your head; it is not outside. What is there is really the clay. Your conception, your thought is that the substance is clay only. The interference of space and time in the substance called earth is responsible for this peculiar shape that it has taken. So, the pot made of earth is only a name, a sound merely. You are only uttering some words indicating a shape taken by the earth which is its substance. So, what do you mean by the shape taken by the earth? What is shape? You cannot understand what shape also is. The shape also is earth itself.

You are interfering with the substance called the earth by your notional interpretation of its connection with space and time. So, the earthen pot is nothing but a conceptual interpretation that you are introducing into the substance that is called clay. There is no such thing as pot; it does not exist. Yet, you have coined two words. On one side there is the word called clay, on the other side there is the word called pot. Now, you have got two names indicating one and the same thing. Now, why should you have two names if the substance is only one? *Yatha, saumya, ekena mrt-pindena sarvam mrnmayam vijnatam syat vacarambhanam vikaro namadheyam, mrttikety eva satyam*: You are under an illusion of perception. You are confounded in your notion of the substance. There is a mistake that you commit in your interpretation of reality when you say, 'There is a pot.' The pot does not exist; what exists there is only the clay. And what you call the pot is only a concept in your mind. So is the case with everything else in this world," says Uddalaka Aruneya to his son Svetaketu.