



## **THE CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD**

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The illustrations provided by the sage Uddalaka make out that object forms are inseparable from concepts in the mind. If they had not been organically involved in the mind of the perceiver, they would be objectively existent and could be physically sensed by the organs of perception.

Now, in this analogy of the pot, an effect of a substance, namely, clay—the pot—when properly analysed is known to contain no element apart from the clay in spite of the fact that people go around saying that there is a pot. It is very strange indeed that there is no pot there and yet we say that there is a pot. Are we under an illusion? Is it true that every human being is equally misconceived in the perception of things? Or do we give names to things for the sake of convenience in social life? Now, mere practical utilitarian convenience cannot be regarded as an objective reality. If we give names to things only to distinguish their form, one from the other, for the purpose of practical life in the world, that would not sanction a philosophical or even a scientific existence to the counterparts of these names. We must accept that we are only giving names for the purpose of our notional convenience in work-a-day life, and that there are no corresponding objects. If this is a fact, diversities cease to be at one stroke. It will imply that all the varieties that you see in this world are mere nomenclature. They are a jumble of ideas expressed in language, the ideas having got concretised into apparent realities, as if they are really there and are trying to pounce upon us like hobgoblins.

The variety of things, the diversity of objects and the multitudinousness that this world is apparently, is not really there. If it is true that a substance, when converted into a shape or a form called the effect, does not introduce into the effect anything new other than what was contained in itself alone; if clay is there in the pot and nothing else is there in the pot, it would be pointless to call that shape as a pot. We have unnecessarily created trouble by calling a particular form of clay by another name. We can call the same mass of clay by a third or a fourth name like tumbler, plate and so on. So we have created a variety in our minds while variety is not really there.

This is the philosophical conclusion that automatically follows on a careful investigation into the nature of the creation of variety in respect of the effects that are manufactured out of causes while the causes are uniform in their nature, ultimately. This is the outcome of the analysis of what Uddalaka mentioned in very plain, simple language to the boy Svetaketu.

As is the case with clay in its relation to the effects produced out of it, so is the case with everything else in this world out of which effects are produced, whatever the causes may be,—iron, gold, wood or anything for the matter of that. The boy could not understand the significance of this teaching. Well, it is very clear. We do understand what they say, but it is terrifying. It seems to shake the very foundation of our belief in the world, and it appears that we cannot exist at all, if this is the truth. “My Gurus did not appear to have understood all these things. They never taught me these things,” says the boy to the father.

*Na vai nunam bhagavantas ta etad avedisuh, yadd hy etad  
avedisyan, katham me navaksyn-iti bhagavans tv eva me  
tad bravitv iti; tatha, saumya, iti hovaca.*

“If they had known this, why should they have not told this to me? I have never heard these things up to this time. I have studied the four Vedas, I have studied the Shastras, but nothing of this kind was heard from any quarter. What is this? Will you kindly explain, holy father?” He is now also the Guru of Svetaketu. The father says, “Well, listen. I shall explain to you what all this mystery is about.”

### **THE PRIMACY OF BEING**

There was one Being alone in the beginning. It is not true that there is a variety of beings.

*Sad eva, saumya, idam agra asid ekam evadvitiam, tadd  
haika ahuh, asad evedam agra asid ekam evadvitiam,  
tasmad asatah saj jayata.*

“My dear boy, there was only a single Reality existing in the beginning. The so-called variety was not there. It was one; it was without a second. There was nothing outside it; nothing external to it, to compete with it, to equal it or to be different from it. There is no conceivable reality in this world of this nature. Whatever be the stretch of your imagination, you cannot conceive of something outside which nothing is. At least space would be there, time would be there, something would be there. But even space and time are objects, externals, effects that came afterwards in the process of creation. And, therefore, they too are negated in the case of this reality. That alone was. There was absolutely no differentiation whatsoever, originally. There was neither external differentiation nor internal variety. In scriptural language, there was neither *sajatiya bheda*, nor was there *vijatiya bheda*, nor *svagata bheda*.”

These are the stock words in Vedanta philosophy which make out that differences of three kinds are observed in this world, which are not there in Reality. There can be internal variety or difference, like the difference observed among the branches of a tree. The tree is one but the branches are many. Even so, there is

internal differentiation or variety in a single body. The right hand will be different from the left hand, one finger is different from another finger, one part of the body is different from another part of the body. This is *svagata bheda*—difference within one's own self, one's own body. Though the object is single and is a unity in itself, yet there is an internal variety of this nature. There was no such variety in the Absolute Being, originally. There is also another kind of -difference that we observe in this world. One human being is different from another human being. Though everyone is a human being, human beings are different from each other. One cow is different from another cow. This is *sajatiya bheda*, or difference in a single species or a category of the same kind. Even that kind of difference was not there. *Vijatiya bheda* is the third kind of difference. A tree is different from a stone, a man is different from an animal. This is the difference of different kinds of species. That also was not there.

So the absolute reality was completely free from all these three possible differences. It was a tremendous unity inconceivable to the human mind.

*Kutas tu khalu, saumya, evam syat, iti hovaca, katham, asatah saj jayeteti, sat tu eva, saumya, idam agra asid ekam evadvitiyam.*

There are some people who think that, originally, *Non-Being* was,—not *Being*, but *Non-Being*. *Non-Being* is sometimes regarded as an origin of things under peculiar conditions. How is it possible that *Being* can come from *Non-Being*? Has anyone seen such a phenomenon? Something can produce something; how can nothing produce something? We have never heard of such a possibility. So Uddalaka says: “My dear boy, though it is true that there are people who hold the doctrine that *Non-Being* was, originally, and *Being* proceeded out of *Non-Being* as an effect, this is not a practicability. It is inconceivable. *Non-Being* cannot be the cause of *Being*. Nor can we say that *Being* is the cause of *Being*. It is a tautology of expression. ‘A is the cause of A’—you cannot say that. It is a meaningless way of speaking. If *Being* is not the cause of *Being*, then what is the cause of *Being*? *Non-Being*? Not possible! *Non-Being* cannot be the cause of *Being*. *Being* also is not the cause of *Being*. Then what is the cause of *Being*? No cause. There cannot be a cause for *Being*. So it must be a causeless *Being*. If it has a cause, we must explain what that cause could be, and the cause should be either *Being* or *Non-Being*. There cannot be a third thing. *Being* cannot be the cause of *Being*; *Non-Being* also cannot be the cause of *Being*, so there is no cause for *Being*. It is causeless existence. It is useless and pointless to say that *Non-Being* can be the origin, in any manner whatsoever, of *Being*. *Kutas tu khalu, saumya, evam syat, iti hovaca*: How is it possible? It is an aged doctrine, a humorous saying indeed, to hold that something can come out of nothing. *Katham, asatah saj jayeteti*: How can *Being* come from *Non-Being*? *Sat tu eva, saumya, idam agra asid*: Now please listen to my conclusion. I hold that *Being* alone was, and not *Non-Being*. *Ekam evadvitiyam*: So I repeat what I have told you already. *Being* alone was. Now, it is non-dual *Being*. It is not like my ‘being’ or your ‘being’ or ‘being’ of this or that. It is not an individual ‘being’. It is not a particularised ‘being’. It is not something connected with any object. It is *Being* as such, inconceivable, because it is not an object. The mind can think what is outside it. It

cannot think anything else. But Being cannot be something outside the mind, because the mind also is rooted in Being. Therefore, it is not a subject for comprehension by the senses or conception by the mind. It is not an object of any kind, either physical or conceptual; that means to say, it cannot be investigated scientifically nor argued about philosophically. What sort of thing is it, then? Well, if it could be understood so easily, then you would be blessed. But it cannot be understood like that, because, who can understand That which is the preconception of even the very act of understanding itself. Even the mind cannot move unless Being is there at its background. So it is a presupposition of even the faculties of understanding and thinking. Thus, there is no such thing as understanding it, thinking it, sensing it, conceiving it, describing it, explaining it or arguing about it.”

Now *This* is, to put it plainly, the origin of everything. The commentators on this Upanishad go into vast details of the method of the effect coming from the cause and how creation was originally effected by this Supreme Being. According to the various schools of thought to which people belong or commentators belong, there are various types of *vadas* or philosophical arguments explaining the relationship between the cause and the effect. The crux of philosophical argument is the cause and effect relationship. It is the difference in the conception of cause and effect relationship that makes the difference in the schools of philosophy. How the cause is related to the effect, and vice versa, is very difficult to understand. Has the effect come from the cause, is it something different from the cause, or is it not different from the cause? You cannot easily answer these questions, because if the effect is different from the cause, it is not an effect of that cause. You have already assumed that it is different. Then why do you say that it is an effect of that cause? Naturally it is the same as the cause. So either way you are caught. You cannot say that it is different from the cause; you cannot say that it is the same as the cause. If there is no distinction between the cause and the effect, why should there be two languages or two words used for designating these two items? Where are the two items at all? Or if there is a continuity, a process as people make out sometimes, connecting the cause with the effect, we have to explain what this process is. The process must be either a movement of the cause into its own self or it must be the movement of something else. If it is something else, then again it is not the cause. The same difficulty arises. If it is the same as the cause, there is no such thing as the effect. So you are caught up in a great quandary. You have to say that there is no such thing as an effect. But if there is no such thing as an effect, how comes the creation? If creation has to be explained, the nature of an effect has to be explained; but you cannot understand what an effect is. And therefore you cannot understand what creation is.

This is the extent to which philosophy can go when it stretches its arguments to the logical limits. But philosophers do not argue merely to get defeated. The purpose is to find a solution. It may be that you face a wall in front of you whenever you argue into the depths of an object. But a solution has to be found for the appearance of this enigma of creation, or in principle the appearance of an effect from a cause. Solutions cannot be found easily, and inasmuch as intellectually or logically a satisfactory explanation cannot be found for

explaining the relationship between the cause and the effect, there are thinkers who hold that the doctrine of creation is not an explanation or a narration of a historical event that took place sometime. It is not that somebody did something once upon a time and something happened and we are talking of it today. Creation does not mean that. Especially, people like Sankara hold this view that creation is a necessary assumption on the part of the individual for the purpose of the ascent of the individual to the Absolute. It may be there or it may not be there; that is not the point. But it has to be accepted as being there. As we have observed some time back, certain assumptions are not objectively existent like an 'x' in an equation. It does not really exist; it has no meaning. Yet it has a tremendous meaning, you know very well, as it solves the problem. When it solves the problem, it extinguishes itself automatically. It itself is not there. So there can be a so-called non-existent thing assumed to be really there and capable of solving a very serious problem, and having solved the problem, itself getting withdrawn automatically.

The purpose of teaching of the Upanishad is something quite different from giving a story or telling you a tale of what happened once upon a time. This is a very important point emphasised again and again by Sankaracharya in his commentary. That is, we are not understanding the implication behind the teachings of the Upanishad. They are not grandmothers telling us stories. You can understand very well that a phenomenon cannot be explained unless certain assumptions are already made, which are acceptable to the present condition of the human mind. There is no use arguing about whether creation exists or not. It is taken for granted that it exists, because we see the world. No one doubts the existence of the world. So you have to take a stand which is acceptable from the point of view of the immediate reality for seeing. And Uddalaka followed this technique of teaching like a good psychologist. The question is not whether creation exists or not, or how it came. That is not the argument, because there is no use speaking about a concept in the mind which cannot be practically demonstrated from the point of view of the present degree of reality which the student holds. It is taken for granted that the effect is the worldly creation that took place. I shall take you to a further point later on, from this assumption, further to something quite different from what you expected. From the acceptance of the fact that creation is, it is there of course, the mind is taken gradually to the point where it understands that there is no such thing as creation. But it cannot be accepted in the beginning itself. It has to be concluded later on by a gradual ascent of thought through a calculation of logic, step by step, without missing a single link in a chain of arguments, and this chain of argument is followed up in a very interesting manner by Uddalaka.

There was creation. Let us take it for granted. Therefore, there must be a Creator. How can there be creation without a Creator? The Creator was the Absolute Being. This is what I posit as the Ultimate Reality. And what would be the process of creation and the cause for creation? The intention of the Creator is the cause of creation. The will of the artist is the cause of the manufacture of the effect or the product in the form of sculpture, architectural piece, painting, etc. The intention,

the will, the original meditation or *tapas*, as sometimes it is called, of the Supreme Being is the cause of creation. It willed.

*Tad aiksata, bahu syam prajayeyeti, tat tejo srjata: tat tejo aiksata, bahu syam prajayeyeti, tad aposrjata, tasmad yatra kva ca socati svedate va purusah tejasa eva tad adhy apo jayante.*

“May I see the drama of my own manifestation.” This is the Will, and it alienated itself into an effect, like the pot being created out of clay. So, an interesting assumption is already made that the effect is not really substantially different from the cause. Just as pot is not different from clay essentially, the effect in the form of this creation and every stage in the process of creation is not different in essence from the cause which is pure Being. And according to the doctrine of this particular teaching in the Chhandogya Upanishad, the original creation, the first creation, was of *agni* (fire)—*tat teja aiksata*—and at every stage of the argument Uddalaka refers to this effect as God or deity, *devata*. They are not material objects. The fire or the water or the earth that we will be speaking of are not material things. *Devata* is the word used to designate these items. They are, in essence, identical with the Supreme Being Himself. So how can you not identify their importance with the importance of the Supreme Being Himself? *Teja aiksata*: There is a chain action taking place in creation. The Supreme Being, whom you may tentatively call A, willed, “May I become B.” Now, the original will of A charged into the being of B has a tremendous effect upon B. The creative will of A works through B. It again willed, “May I become C.” C willed, “May I become D.” So there is a downward descent into greater and greater forms of particularisation and diversification until the largest considerable diversity in the form of this world is here before us. The Supreme Being or *Sat*, the pure Being willed, “May I be another.” It then became the Fire Principle operating universally everywhere. That, in turn willed, and It became the Water Principle operating everywhere—*tat teja aiksata, bahu syam prajayeyeti, tad apo’srjata*. The waters congealed into solid objects and became the Earth Principle, not necessarily this little globe of the earth but anything that is of earth anywhere or anything physical in its nature. *Tasmad yatra kva ca socati svedate va purusah tejasa eva tad adhy apo jayante*. “Whenever there is heat felt in the body there is an expression of liquidity like perspiration,” says the Upanishad. Heat in the form of fever or for any other reason whatsoever is seen to produce an effect in the form of water oozing out. The example given here is, that when you are grieved or when you are perspiring, you feel that the heat generated within yourself either due to sorrow or due to fatigue becomes the cause of the water of perspiration. By this, the connection between fire and water is explained. From water comes earth.

*Ta apa aikaanta, bahvyah syama, prajayemahiti, ta annam,, asrjanta, tasmad yatra kva ca varsati, tad eva bhuyistham annam bhavati, adbhya eva tad adhy annadyam jayate.*

Water produced food—*anna*. In the language of the Upanishad, food means matter. Anything physical or material is called food. Ultimately, anything that is external to consciousness is food. An object of thought is food. That is food which comes out of the condensation of the water principle. Now, these elements mentioned here,—fire, water and earth,—are what are usually called the subtle elements. They are the pure principles of creation. Later on they get mixed in certain proportions for the manifestation of grosser elements, namely, the fire and the water and the earth that we see with our eyes. So, what the Upanishad speaks of here as fire, water and earth are not the physical fire, water and earth that we see. They are the super-physical elements called *tanmatras*. These *tanmatras* are mixed or blended in certain proportions. For the purpose of the expression of the physical fire, three elements have to be joined in a certain proportion. This is called *trivritkarana* in Sanskrit. *Trivritkarana* is the threefold mixing of the original principles, *tanmatras*, namely, fire, water and earth, in such a way that a particular element contains half of itself and one-fourth of the other two. So you have got in every element an element of every other element also. Pure elements are never available in this world. They are all a mixture of the original three. This is called *trivritkarana*—triplication—the mixing of three attributes, three substances, in certain proportions. When there is water in plenty, there is food also in plenty. This is what the Upanishad tells us in this connection. *Tasmad yatra kva ca varsati, tad eva bhuyistham annam, bhavati, abdhya eva tad adhy annadyam jayate*: Everything is produced out of these elements. All the variety in this world, whatever be the number and the quality of the variety in this world, all this is an expression of these three elements, just as we are told that every colour is but a mixture in some proportion by permutation and combination of the three essential colours. There are only three colours, only three substances, ultimately. Everything else is constituted in some way or the other in some proportion of these three elements alone. Every form of creation is a manifestation thereof. What are these creations? Let us see. Apart from the triplicated gross elements, fire, water and earth, which we may call inorganic existence in our language, there are organic bodies also.

### THREEFOLD DEVELOPMENT

*Tesam khalv esam bhutanam triny eva bijani bhavanti, andajam, jivajam, udbhijam iti.*

The organic bodies also have originated on account of the mixture of these three elements only. There are various types of organisms. Those which sprout up from the earth, like the plant, the tree, the vegetables, etc., are called *udbhijja*. That is one kind of organic creation—the vegetable kingdom. There are other beings that come out bursting through the egg, not like plants coming from the earth, but egg-born beings. This is another type of organic beings; they are called *andaja*. There are others that come out of the womb of the mother; they are called *jivaja* or *jarayuja*. There is a fourth type which is called *svedaja*, coming out of dirt, dust, sweat, etc. All these varieties of organic creation are also made possible on account of the substance of their bodies being provided by these three original elements only. The entry of consciousness in varying proportions and intensity

into these bodies is responsible for the variety of these organic bodies. They are different from one another on account of the different intensity of consciousness present there. The lesser the degree of the manifestation of consciousness in a particular body, the less is the capacity of the organism in every respect. The more the intensity, of course, the greater is the capacity.

Now the Upanishad says: The Supreme Being willed through these manifested parts,—“May I reveal Myself in this multiform of creation.”

*Seyam devataiksata, hantaham imas tisro devata anena  
jivena tmana nupravisya nama-rupe vyakaravaniti.*

“May I enter into these three elements that I have created—fire, water and earth—and through them, may I become further manifold, by means of the triplication of these.”

*Tasam trivrtam trivrtam ekaikam karavaniti, seyam  
devatema tisro devata anenaiva jivera'tmanra'nupravisya  
nama-rupe vyakarot. Tasam trivrtam trivrtam ekaikam  
akarot.*

Name and form came into existence on account of this action of multiplication brought about by the triplication of the elements by the Will of the Supreme Being. So the whole world is nothing but *nama* and *rupa*, name and form. There is a particular shape and that is called a form and that has got a name also, by which you distinguish it from another. Minus name and minus the particular shape, what is that object? It does not exist. The three dimensions of an object, length, breadth and height, the weight and the features, which are sensible to the perceptive organs, are the constituents of the object, and if these sensations are not there, if the aspects of three dimensions are not there, there will be no objectivity at all. And, therefore, there will be no nomenclature of any kind. So there will be no name and form. Then, what is this world ultimately? It is a formation of a single substance which originally became threefold—fire, water and earth—and then divided itself into manifold forms, to which many names have been given. Thus, what is this universe of diversity before us? It is the one Being alone; except *That*, nothing is. It is said, “Being alone was.” Now we have to say, “Being alone is.” Even after creation, that Being alone is,—not that It was, only once upon a time, in ancient times and not now. Even now when there is the so-called creation or manufacture of the variety, It has not ceased to be. The variety is not really there, as the causative factors of this variety are also constituted of the substance of this Being alone. That which causes the difference of one thing from another is also that Being only, manifested in some other form. So how can there be difference? If the differentiating factor itself is a part of that which is differentiated, then there is no such thing as differentiation. So we have the world which is only notional, ultimately. It is in the mind. Well, you need not go further into this subject, as to where the mind is situated and whether the object is in your mind or my mind. That is another subject into which we shall enter later on. It is not anybody's mind. It is the consciousness that vibrates in some particular manner and makes it appear that there is something other than itself. The appearance of the multiplicity of the world is something like the



circular shape of the fire that you see in the vigorous movement of a firebrand. If you very vehemently circulate or turn round a torch, you will find that there is a circle of fire or light in front of you. There is no circle actually. It is only an optical illusion created before you on account of the intensive velocity of the movement of the torch. So a vibration of consciousness in a particular manner becomes cognisable as an object. The object is not there at all. Therefore, what you call creation is nothing but consciousness appearing in a particular manner due to a certain vibration, a particular density, a movement of it in a particular manner. So Being alone was and Being alone is, even now, in the form of this creation. Again we are brought back to the conclusion that there is no creation, and that it is Being only that *appears* as creation. However, it is not very clear, so the argument goes on further.

*Tasam trivrtam trivrtam ekaikam akarot, yatha tu khalu saumya, imas tisro devatas trivrt trivrt ekaika bhavati, tan me vijanihiti.*

“My dear boy,” says father to son, “listen to me further.”

*Yadagne rohitam rupam tejasas tadrupam yat cuklam tadapam yat krsnam tadannasya apagad agner agnitvam vacarambhanam vikaro namadheyam trini rupanityeva satyam.*

*Yad adityasya rohitam rupam tejasas tad rupam yat cuklam tadapam yat krsnam, tadannasya apagad adityasya adityatvam vacarambhanam vikaro namadheyam trini rupanityeva satyam.*

*Yat candramaso rohitam rupam tejasas tad rupam yat cuklam tadapam yat krsnam tad annasya apagad candrat candratvam vacarambhanam vikaro namadheyam trini rupani ityeva satyam.*

*Yad vidyuto rohitam rupam tejasas tad rupam, yat cuklam tad apam yat krsnam tad annasya apagad vidyuto vidyutvam vacarambhanam vikaro namadheyam, trini rupanityeva satyam.*