



## **THE CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD**

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### **SANATKUMARA'S INSTRUCTIONS ON BHUMA-VIDYA**

In the course of the study of the Panchagni-Vidya in the first chapter, we have discovered that life is ultimately all sorrow on account of one being subjected to the process of transmigration. It is a fact that there are higher pressures exerted upon the individual and that these pressures compel one to be driven along the course of creativity. As long as the cause of this pressure is not realised as identical with one's own Self, one is not going to attain ultimate freedom from *samsara*, the cycle of metempsychosis. This cause for ultimate freedom is the Self of all, the realisation of which bestows true freedom. And that Self is the Universal Reality. This has been told to us in the subsequent section dealing with the Vaisvanara-Vidya in the same chapter. Then in the second chapter which corresponds to the sixth chapter of the Upanishad, the subject has been continued in a different fashion altogether. There it has been explained through various analogies, comparisons and illustrations as to how there can be only one Being and that every detail in creation is only a form taken by this one Being in the process of creation, so that there is really only one Being and not two, and that Being is the Self, the Atman.

Now, we are moving towards the seventh chapter of the Upanishad, which is a very prominent one because it expounds the magnificent doctrine of the Bhuma, the Absolute, the plenum of Being, the fullness of Reality, and this is done in a Socratic manner, gradually taking the mind of the student from the lowest reality conceivable to the highest, stage by stage, indicating thereby that nothing is lost when the Absolute is realised. When God is attained, nothing of the world is lost, just as when we catch the original we cannot be said to have lost the shadow. Everything is gained in a supersensible manner. The shadow may be said to be a part of the original. It is included in the original. All the lesser degrees of Reality are only forms of Its manifestation. Every name and form in this creation is a lesser degree of manifestation of the Reality. The lower degree is not excluded from the higher degree, as the higher includes the lower, and the highest is everything and is all-inclusive. This is the subject of this chapter which begins

with the great sage Narada approaching the master Sanatkumara for spiritual instructions and spiritual solace.

Narada was not only learned in all the arts and sciences, but was himself a great saint and a sage. There was practically nothing that he did not know. He is renowned in all the epics and the Puranas as a unique personality in many ways. He could travel throughout this earth, the atmosphere and the heavens and talk to the gods personally. He had, therefore, a free passport, as it were, to move through every realm and every plane of Being. Such was his capacity, such was his greatness, and such was his knowledge and power. Such a renowned person now comes as a disciple, a student, to the son of Brahma, Sanatkumara; he pleads his ignorance, and expresses his grief over the fact that he knows so many things but does not have peace of mind in spite of all this knowledge. There is something missing in spite of every kind of learning of which he is a master and in which he has specialised. “Great Sir, teach me. I have come to you as a humble student.” This is how Narada, a master, a sage himself, approaches the divine teacher Sanatkumara.

### NAME

*Adhihi, bhagavah, iti, hopasasada sanatkumararam naradah,  
tam hovaca: yad-vettha tena mopasida, tatas-ta urdhvam  
vaksyamiti, sa hovaca.*

*Rgvedam, bhagavah, adhyemi, yajurvedam, samavedam,  
atharvedam caturtham, itihasa-puranam pancamam, vedanam  
vedam, pitryam, rasim, daivam, nidhim, vakovakyam, ekayanam,  
devavidyam, brahma-vidyam, bhuta-vidyam, ksatra-vidyam,  
naksatra-vidyam, sarpadevajana-vidyam, etat, bhagavah  
adhyemi.*

Narada approaches Sanatkumara and says: “Great Sir, master, divine sage, here I am at your feet. Teach me.” It was a very simple request. “Teach me.” “What should I teach you? What is your difficulty? You are yourself a very learned person. Let me know what you already know. And if there is anything left, I shall tell you that. What is the education that you have already acquired? Tell me that. Then I will speak to you—*Yad-vetta tena mopasida, tatasta urdhvam vaksyamiti.*” This is the reply of Sanatkumara to Narada.

Narada says: “Great master, I have studied the Rigveda. I am proficient in it. I have studied the Yajurveda. I am a master of it. I am an expert in the Samaveda. I know the Atharvaveda. I am a master of the epics and the Puranas and I know everything about grammar. Nothing is unknown to me. I know mathematics, I know augury, I know the science of treasures and I am an expert in logic. I know ethics and politics, I know astrology and astronomy, I know the six auxiliary limbs of the Vedas, I know physical science, and I know music, art and dancing. There is nothing practically through the course of which I have not passed. This is what I have learnt, my dear master. So, I have answered your question of what I have already studied.” He has a degree in every science and every art. So here is the list of all the certificates that Narada has. This is what he has studied. “All this

is only name,” says Sanatkumara. “All this knowledge is nothing. That is why you have no peace.” He puts dust over everything.

*So’ham, bhagavah, mantra-vid-evasmi na’tma-vit; srutum hyeva me bhagavad-drsebhayah, tarati sokam, atmavid-iti; so’ham bhagavah, socami, tam ma, bhagavan, sokasya param tarayatviti; tam hovaca yad-vai kincaitad adhyagisthah, namaivaitat.*

Narada says: “Yes, these are only words, really speaking. These are only nomenclatures. This is only a catalogue or list of the branches of learning that I have studied. I have heard from other people that a person who knows the Self crosses over sorrow. What is this Self? I am in sorrow. I am in a state of grief in spite of all this learning that I have. I have come to you, great master, with a request to take me beyond the ocean of sorrow. I am in internal suffering which has not been relieved by my learning and knowledge. *So’ham, bhagavah, mantra-vid-evasmi na’tma-vit*—I have a lot of information about every art and every science. I do not know the real substance of these arts and sciences. The name is known, but the content is not known to me.”

Everything that is an indicator has an indicated. Every name has a form corresponding to it. If we utter a particular name corresponding to an object, we immediately have an idea of that object. But we do not possess that object merely because we have an idea of that object. So is the case with all this learning. It is only an idea about certain things, but the things themselves are beyond one’s control. We can have an idea of the inner structure of the sun, the solar system, but we cannot have any sway over the sun or any control over the sun because of that knowledge alone. We may have information about every blessed thing in the world. This is only an ideological knowledge of the contents of everything in this world. But by such knowledge they do not come under our control. They are not our property. They cannot be said to help us in any manner whatsoever. So, this is the position of the theoretical learning of Narada. And so is the case with any kind of theoretical learning. It has no connection with the Reality, with the fact as such, with that indicated by the name. So, Narada is a knower of the *mantras*, the names, the ideas. He has an intellectual knowledge, theoretical information. He is an expert in understanding the nature of things, but the Self of these things is beyond him. He has not known the Self of these things.

Narada says: “*Srutam hyeva me bhagavad-drsebhayah tarati sokam atma-vit*—even from people like you, I have heard once that if one knows the Self of a thing, he would be free from sorrow. *Soham bhagavah sochami*— here I am a specimen of sorrow seated before you. *Tam ma, bhagavan, sokasya param tarayatv-iti*—I have no other resort except you, O great master. Take me across this sea of sorrow.”

Sanatkumara replies: “There is a great point in whatever you have learnt, no doubt, but this knowledge has not helped you for the simple reason that nothing can help you unless it is a part of your Being, unless it is a part of your Self. Nothing that is outside you can be of any help to you. Anything that is extraneous to your Self is not going to free you from sorrow. The source of your sorrow is

what is outside you and that is an external self for you. It is not the Primary Self. Thus, the knowledge that you have about these things which you have mentioned just now is not the knowledge of the Self of these things, but the knowledge of the names of these things, the nomenclature of these things, and you have an idea of all these things. This is what they call theoretical knowledge of the things in the world. But what is the good of it? So, my dear Narada, all this is name only: these are words, all this is language, this is theory, this is information, nothing more than this. As a matter of fact, what you enumerated just now, Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda, Itihasas, Puranas, this science, that science, this art, that art;—all this is nothing but words and words. They seem to tell you a lot, but they cannot ultimately help you unless you enter into their Being, unless you become their Self.”

*Nama va rg-vedo yajur-vedah pitryo-rasir-daivo, nidhir  
vakovakyam, ekayanam, deva-vidya, brahma-vidya, bhuta-  
vidya, ksatra-vidya, naksatra-vidya, sarpa-deva-jana-vidya,  
namaivaitat, namopassveti.*

Sanatkumara continues: “Now, well, I will tell you once again that this is only theory, and therefore, it is not of much consequence in your life, but it has an importance in that it is the beginning of knowledge. Therefore, meditate on ‘name’.”

Though mere information is not of any ultimate utility in one’s practical life, it is not without some utility, because learning begins with gathering of information. The idea of an object precedes the real knowledge of the object. Unless we have some concept of the object, how can we approach the object at all? The concept by itself is not the substance, no doubt, but we have to approach the substance through the concept, through the idea. Practice comes after theory. If we have not theoretical knowledge of a thing, we will have no scientific background of any particular art or science. Then we cannot master that thing, the art or science. The technological application of the knowledge is subsequent to the mastery of the theory of it, as is the case with every science, every art, every branch of learning. So, when Sanatkumara says that it is all ‘name’ only in one way, what he means is that it is not of ultimate value, which is the reason why Narada is not really happy. But yet it has a meaning, because it is the initial step in the process of the ascent of the soul to the Supreme Reality.

From the lowest degree of manifestation, one has to gradually ascend step by step, from the first to the second and then to the third, the fourth, and so on. What appears to us at the very outset in this physical life of ours is that objects are outside us, that the world is external to us. And we have therefore only information by way of nomenclature about these things. This is the first stage towards the knowledge of the things. When we wish to gain knowledge of any object, the first thing that we do is to gain information about that object. We get a descriptive knowledge of that object. This is what is meant here when Sanatkumara says that all Narada has learnt is only ‘name’. The name of an object includes every kind of information about the object. Thus, says Sanatkumara to Narada: “You, first of all, assure yourself that you have a complete knowledge of

objects insofar as their name goes. Though beyond that you cannot go, at least within that realm, be a master. You must have a correct descriptive knowledge of these things.”

Now, the whole principle of the ascent of the soul to higher stages of realisation is that unless that law operating in the lower realm is fully fulfilled, the higher cannot be reached. When we say that the lower is inadequate, we do not mean that it is bereft of all reality. It has an element of truth in it. And, every degree of reality is meaningful to the extent of the law operating within it. We have to master it, not by excluding it or disregarding it, but by having a thorough knowledge of it, to the extent it goes, by obeying the laws of that particular realm in which we find ourselves at any given moment of time. We cannot close our eyes to the action and reaction produced by the operation of the laws in a particular realm or degree of reality. We should not invoke the laws of a higher realm when we are involved in a lower realm of existence.

This is the mistake that many people make even in the practice of spiritual life. They suddenly think that they are God-men or that they are about to jump into the ocean of God-consciousness and drink the nectar of ambrosia. They are caught hold of by their very legs through the laws that operate in the physical world. Knowledge does not mean ignorance of any particular aspect of experience. It is a total comprehension of fact as such. Even bondage has to be known in its true structure. When we are bound, we must know why we are bound. That is real knowledge. You cannot say, “Well, I am not concerned with the stages of bondage, I am concerned with freedom.” What is freedom? It is knowledge of the causative factors behind bondage. The cure of an illness begins with the knowledge of the causative factors of illness behind it, knowledge of the aetiology, pathology, diagnosis, etc., of the whole suffering of the patient, and then only the medicine comes. So, it is necessary to know where we are placed. We should not have any kind of misgivings about where we are actually situated. Are we in the physical world, or are we in the social atmosphere of people? Where are we caught up? We are caught up in an intricate network of life which reveals itself in various degrees of experience.

Now, each degree has to be paid its due. As they say, we must pay the devil its due. Though it is a devil, it does not matter; the due has to be paid. Then only we can be free from its clutches. The devil here is nothing but the law that operates in a particular realm. The world of externality, objectivity, is the realm in which we live, and therefore, we can go only to the extent of the law that operates in this world. The lowest degree of knowledge, as has been pointed out, is informative knowledge of objects. If there is a mountain in front of you, a mile away from you, you cannot have any knowledge about it except that it is of such-and-such dimension and is located at such a distance, etc. So, Sanatkumara points out that to the extent name goes, to the extent theoretical learning goes, to that extent we should be masters. Whatever be the degree of reality in which we are, we should be masters of that. “When you go to Rome, be a Roman”—this is a very good adage which means to say that we must be friendly with the atmosphere in which we are, whatever the atmosphere be, and we must be in harmony with the law

operating there. Then we become a master of that atmosphere; otherwise, we will come to loggerheads with the external environment.

So, *namopassva*—the first stage of meditation—is mentioned here, which is ideological. It is conceptual. We may call it theoretical. It is the operation of the mind in respect of an object. The object is not under one's control. It is far away. We have only a thought of the object. But, that is enough for the time being, because we are in that level only.

So, we should meditate on the name. Every stage of meditation or transcendence mentioned here is a stage of the identification of the self with that particular degree of reality. This is very important to remember. We will be taken gradually from stage to stage. When we are taken to a higher stage, what is implied is that the lower stage has already become a part of our own self in deep meditation and experience. It does not remain any more an object outside. When we have become that in self-absorption, then only we can be given access to the realm of a higher degree of reality. "So, now as the first step, *namopassva*, this is what you can do, Narada," says Sanatkumara. We should complete the process of absorbing the contents of our knowledge, to the extent they can go in this world, by deep meditation. This is conceptual meditation.

*Sa yo nama brahmeti upaste yavan-namno gatam, tatrasya yatha  
kamacaro bhavati yo nama brahmetyupaste'sti, bhagavah,  
namno bhuya iti; namno vava bhuyo'stiti, tan-me bhagavan  
bravitviti.*

Whoever contemplates 'name' as Brahman, which means to say, whoever regards the object of meditation as absolute, gains whatever that object includes within its gamut. The principle of meditation is this: whatever the object of your meditation be, that has to be taken as absolute. There should not be anything external to it, because if the mind conceives something higher than that particular object, then that higher thing becomes the object of meditation. The point is that the object that you have chosen for your meditation should be the last point of the reach of your mind, beyond which it cannot go. Then it becomes the absolute. So this absolute is only a name that we give to the best possible reach of the mind in any level or degree of experience. 'Name is Brahman'—this means name is the absolute, inasmuch as we are in a realm of names only. Why should we not take the higher degree as the absolute, and not the lower one? Because the higher one cannot be the content of the mind in its present state. Suppose we are asked to meditate on the heavenly regions. We cannot, because we do not know what it means. The heavenly regions are beyond the reach of the mind. We will only superimpose physical pictures of our imagination on paradise, *Brahma-loka*, etc. This is not what is intended. We must limit ourselves to the extent of our knowledge, and complete the meditation regarding that particular object as absolute in itself. So, Narada was asked to take 'name' as the absolute. The result of this meditation on name is that to the extent name goes—to the extent of the reach of the mind theoretically, conceptually—to that extent, the meditator will be free.

We know very well that there are learned people in this world, very educated people, masters of science, etc. They have freedom within that realm, but not beyond that. To the extent their knowledge can go, to the extent of the applicability of their learning, there is freedom for them. But where their knowledge is not applicable, there is no freedom for them. So it depends upon the realm in which one finds oneself. If one is in an academic realm, the academic knowledge helps. But, it will not help when one is in the middle of a river or the ocean where another kind of knowledge is necessary. It will not help when one is threatened with some kind of catastrophe in life where again another kind of knowledge is necessary. So the knowledge that one gains is helpful to a person within the limit of the operation of that knowledge, within the realm in which it works, and to the extent of the operation of the law pertaining to that branch of learning.

Whoever meditates thus on 'name' as Brahman has freedom in this manner, to that extent of, and in that particular realm of, the name only. Narada asks: "Is there not anything more than this?" "Yes, there is something more than this," replies Sanatkumara. "What is that something which is more than the name?" again asks Narada.

### SPEECH

*Vag-vava namno bhuyasi, vag-va rg-vedam vijnapayati, yajurvedam, sama-vedam, atharvanam caturtham, itihasa-puranam pancamam, vedanam vedam, pitryam, rasim, daivam nidhim, vakovakyam, ekayanam, deva-vidyam, brahma-vidyam, bhuta-vidyam, ksatra-vidyam, nakshatra-vidyam, sarpa-devajana-vidyam, divam ca prthivim ca vayum cakasm capas-ca tejas-ca devamsca manusyams-ca pasums-ca vayamsi ca trna vanaspatin-svapadani akita-patanga-pipilakam dharmam cadharmam ca satyam canrtam ca sadhu casadhu ca hrdayajnam cahridayajnam ca; yad-vai van nabhavisyat na dharmo nadharmo vyajnapayisyat, na satyam nanrtam na sadhu na'sadhu na hrdayajno na'hrdayajna vag-evaitat sarvam vijnapayati, vacam upassveti.*

That which causes the expression of the name is greater than the name. Linguistic designation or definition in respect of an object has at its background the science of speech. This is what they call the science of linguistics. The general nomenclature or the groups of names in respect of objects are all particularised, applied forms of an inner science which is linguistics, which is the principle of speech itself. Speech is a verbal expression of force that is generated in one's own self. In occult circles, we are told that behind the verbal expression or the utterance of speech, there are subtler operations taking place inside the body and these stages of inner working are called in the language of those occult sciences, *para*, *pasyanti*, *madhyama* and *vaikhari*. *Vaikhari* is the outer-most expression. The audible expression of speech is called *vaikhari*. This is what we call name, when it is identified with particular objects. But the inner aspect of it is the

principle of speech, *para-vak*. So, the very scientific principle that is behind the utterance of names, speech, as it is by itself, is higher than name. So Narada is told that speech is higher than 'name'. All that one learns, all the Vedas and all these sciences, everything has speech as its background. Because of the principle of speech that is there at the back of the expressions of this theoretical learning, this learning has become possible. Thus, speech may be said to be the cause for name. The cause is superior to the effect. Everything conceivable is ultimately included in the expression of language. Not only these sciences and arts, but also all the elements, the earth and heavens, all these are also known only by name, and therefore, by speech.

Sanatkumara has given a list of every conceivable thing in this world,—all the objects of sense, the five elements, all the living beings in every kind of species, everything that you can conceptually know, pleasure and pain, knowable and unknowable, righteousness and unrighteousness, virtue and vice, good and bad, this, that and what not, every blessed thing in this world. All these are objects of knowledge, about which Narada has plenty of information and whose names he is acquainted with. Speech is superior to all this because it is the causative factor behind the names of these objects. So, if one has a complete knowledge of the principle of speech, the science of speech itself, then one will know about all languages, and therefore, of every science that is expressed in language. Whoever meditates on speech as the absolute gains everything that is possible within the limits of speech.

*Sa yo vacam brahmeti upaste, yavad-vaco gatam tatrasya yatha  
kamacaro bhavati, yo vacam brahmety-upaste; asti, bhagavah,  
vaco bhuya iti, vaco vava bhuyo'stiti, tan-me, bhagavan,  
bravitviti.*

One is free to the extent of one's knowledge. So, knowledge is power. This is a great conclusion that we can draw from these descriptions of the nature of knowledge. Wherever there is real knowledge, there is also power to the extent of the operation of that knowledge. And knowledge becomes power only to the extent of the applicability of that knowledge in respect of the object to which it pertains. If a particular knowledge is not applicable, it is not power. It will be only theoretical learning. So Narada is told, "To the extent of the operation of the principle of speech, you are free; meditate upon speech as the Absolute, because beyond that your mind cannot go."

"But is there anything beyond speech?" asks Narada. "Yes, there is something beyond that," replies Sanatkumara. "If it is so, please instruct me on it," is the next prayer of Narada.

The principle of speech, or whatever blessed thing there can be as the precedent of the expression of language—all that is controlled by the mind. Without the functioning of the mind, there would neither be expression of speech, nor any language, nor definition, nor learning. So naturally, mind is superior to speech, and speech is superior to name. The mind is the cause of all these expressions.



## MIND

*Mono vava vaco bhuyah, yatha vai dve vamalake dve va kole  
dvau vaksau mistir-anubhavati, evam vacam ca nama ca  
mano'nu-bhavati, sa yada manasa manasyati, mantran-  
adhiyiyeti, athadhite, karmani kurviyati, atha kurute, putrams-ca  
pasumsceccheyeti, athecchate, imam ca lokam amum ceccheyeti,  
athecchate, mano-hy-atma, mano-hi loko mano hi brahma, mano  
upassveti.*

*Sa yo mano brahmetyupste yavan-manaso gatam tatrasya yatha  
kamacaro bhavati yo mano brahmetyupaste 'sti bhagavo manaso  
bhuya iti manaso vava bhuyo'stiti tanme bhagavan bravatviti.*

Beyond speech, and superior to speech, is the mind. Here is glorification of the functions of the mind, the capacity of the mind. Mind is superior, naturally, because unless the mind functions well, there would be no speech, no nomenclature and no learning. "Just as," says Sanatkumara, "two small fruits like mulberry or berry can be held together in the fist of the hand, just as the palm of one's hand folded contains within its fold two small fruits or objects, so does the mind contain within itself both speech and name." Speech and name are contained within the mind. This is the power of the mind. Whatever we do, we do only through the mind. We know it very well. We think first before we express ourselves in speech or utter a name. We think, "Let me do work," and then we start working. We think, "Let me have this, and let me have that," and then we put forth effort in that direction. We begin to perform various types of actions in this world, after thinking first. So, thinking is prior to every other deed or effort.

Mind is supreme in life. It is well known to every one of us. The mind is practically our own self. When we refer to ourselves usually, in practical life, we are referring to the mind only. "It is me," we say. What do we mean by "me"? We are referring to the mind, nothing more than that. And mind has assumed the selfhood, by superimposition of characters. Selfhood really does not belong to the mind. As the mirror shines in sunlight, so does the mind assume selfhood by the transference of the character of the Self into itself. So, for all practical purposes in life, mind is the self and it is the individuality within us. The mind is responsible for anything that we achieve in this world or in the other world, because what we call world is nothing but the field of experience. The range of our experience is the world in which we are living. And all the experiences of our life are nothing but the expression of the actions that we perform, behind which there is the mind that thinks. So, our world of experience is actually controlled and directed by the mind. Therefore we may say that, in a sense, mind is the world. "As the mind is yourself in this empirical realm, O Narada, meditate on mind as Brahman, the Absolute," says Sanatkumara.

Whatever the mind can think, that should be brought within the purview of the object of meditation. This is perhaps the last stage which ordinary people can reach in meditation. What can they do beyond the level of the thoughts of their mind? So, we should try to find out what are the possibilities of the mind, and

bring all of them together into a stage of harmony, in an artistic manner. The pattern of thought should be beautiful. It should be complete. This is the meaning of the term ‘absolute’ here. We have to remember this again. The absolute is the completeness of any particular concept, whatever the concept be. So here, we have to reach the ultimate point possible by the mind. The arrangement of the conceptual objects should be such that nothing should be left out of purview. The reason for the movement of the mind away from the object chosen for meditation is the presence of a subtle feeling within, that there is something outside the object—beyond it, above it, higher than it. The mind should include every blessed thing, so that there is no chance of the mind going away from the object. The mental object here is not any particular symbol of a physical object, but includes everything that the mind can think. This is the object of meditation instructed in this section.

“So, O Narada, here you are in the mental realm of meditation. Consider mind as all, and master it in such a way that it becomes one with your Being, and does not remain merely an external function of your outward living over which you have no control. It is yours. You are a master of your mind; it has become you,” says Sanatkumara.

This generally does not happen in practical life. Though we say that the mind is “me”, we are not masters of the mind. There are many occasions when it is revealed to us, to our surprise and sorrow, that the mind is not our self, though wrongly we do say, “my mind is me”. If mind is “me”, well, I should be a complete master of it. But it is not the case. As the wind blows, the mind goes in various directions, and we are drifted in the direction of the wind of the mind. So the mind acts as a master. It does not act as our own Self. So it is not true that the mind is the true Self. But it has to be absorbed into the Self in meditation in order that it gets controlled. Complete control of a particular thing is exercised only to the extent of the absorption of that particular thing into one’s own Self. Anything that is one with us is controlled by us, and of that we are masters. We are not masters of anything that is outside us. So, in the realm of the mind, we should be masters. We should control the mind completely and rule over it, by identification of our true Being with everything that the mind can think. This is one stage in the process of meditation.

“Revered Sir, is there anything greater than mind?”—asks Narada, and Sanatkumara replies, “Yes, surely there is will, *sankalpa*, which is greater than mind.”