



THE CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE NATURE OF THE SELF

THE UNIVERSAL SELF WITHIN THE HEART AND IN THE WORLD

*Harih Om. atha yad-idam asmin brahma-pure daharam
pundarikam vesma, daharo'smin antarakasah, tasmin yad-antah,
tad-anvestavyam, tad-vava vijijnasitavyam.*

We now commence the eighth and the last chapter of the Chhandogya Upanishad. In our own self, in the deepest recess of our own heart, there is a great secret. This is the subject of this chapter. We carry within our own self a great mystery. No one can be a greater mystery than our own Self. Everything else is capable of definition and understanding, but one's own Self is the greatest enigma in the whole world. Everything can be investigated into, but not one's own Self, because it is a great secret by itself. It is not an open box where we can pick out whatever we like merely by sense perception. It is a tremendous mystery which hides, within its own bosom, the miracles of the whole creation. Such is the heart of man which is the pivot of every kind of activity, whether internal or external.

The great teacher of this section of the Upanishad tells us that there is the city of Brahman, the Absolute, in our own Self. A very small lotus-like abode exists in our own heart, and in this little abode, there is a little space which shines by its own light. What is there in that space? To know this is our duty. It is our duty to understand what is inside this little space in our own heart, which is inside the city of Brahman, which is very small and looks like a lotus. This is the city of God. Some people may ask, "What is inside this? What is this great secret you are speaking about?" The answer is being given in the following *mantras*.

*Tam ced-bruyuh, yad-idam asmin brahma-pure daharam
pundarikam vesma, daharo'smin antarakasah, kim tadatra
vidyate yad-anvestayam, yad-vava vijijnasitavyam iti.*

Sa bruyat, yavan va ayam akasah, tavan eso'ntarhrdaya akasah

*ubhe asmin dyava-prthivi antar-eva samahite, ubhav-agnis'ca
vayus-ca surya-candramasav-ubhau, vidyun-naksatrani yac-
casyehasti yac-ca nasti sarvam tadasmin samahitam iti.*

“You ask me what is inside this little space. I tell you that everything is inside here,” says the teacher. It is like a speck of sunlight. Though it may look like a speck, it contains constitutionally everything that is in the orb of the sun. Similarly, that which is in this little space can magnify itself to any extent. It is an emblem of the cosmic secret. Whatever is the extent of this vast space that is outside, that is the extent of this little space in our own heart also. So, one should not be under the impression that it is little in an arithmetical sense. It is little in a different sense altogether. It is not physically small. It is not a little handful of space. It is really as expansive and as extensive as this universal ether that we see outside. The whole of the heaven and the whole earth can be found inside this little space. The principles of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—and whatever you see outside, is all present here in this little ether. The sun and the moon and also the stars can be seen inside this very heart of ours. They have a corresponding emissary planted in our own heart. We need not look up to the sun outside. He is inside our heart and he shines in the same way as he is seen outside in outer space. Even the lightning and the thunder that are seen outside are taking place inside our heart. Everything that happens in any manner, even the littlest thing, takes place here inside. Whatever we see in the outside world and whatever we cannot see in the outside world—all those things are inside our heart.

Well, the heart inside seems to be a greater mystery than the outer world. Whatever we cannot see in the whole world also is here, says the Upanishad. Why is it that we cannot see everything in the outer world, and why should everything be inside our own heart? Because our heart, which we call the selfhood of our being, is the true representative of the ultimate Reality. The outer world cannot be regarded as such a representative. The externality that is characteristic of the outer world prevents it from revealing everything that is in the Supreme Being, whereas one of the aspects of the Supreme Being, which is subjectivity, is present in us. Externality is not a characteristic of God. Ultimately, He is subjectivity, and that aspect is present in us, although the outer aspects are not. Hence, while the incapacity of probing into the subjectivity of the external universe prevents us from knowing everything in the universe, there is a possibility of diving into our own Self and knowing all things at one stroke.

As a matter of fact, all investigation in the field spiritual is internal and not external, because when a thing is externalised it is divested of the divine content. It thereby gets partially abstracted. What we call the outer world is only that aspect of Reality which can be comprehended by the senses. Whatever the senses are incapable of grasping cannot be contained in the external world. Only a little bit of the total value of the ultimate truth can be taken out by the vessels of the senses, more than that they cannot contain. What is sensed by the senses in the form of sensation is not the whole reality. They can take up only what they can contain and what they are able to cognise. It is the five elemental features of the external manifestation that the senses can present to us in experience. But, there

are other aspects which they cannot contain within themselves and about which they cannot, therefore, give any kind of information.

This is the secret, as the Upanishad puts it. This heart is a great secret, and by an introversion of Consciousness into its depths, it would be possible to plumb the mysteries of the whole cosmos. The reason is that the tentacles of all planes of being are centred in one's heart. It is as though this heart is the centre of a universal circle. The radii of this circle converge into this little centre of Consciousness which we vaguely call the subject of perception.

It has been explained in the earlier chapters, especially in the third chapter, that the Absolute is universal in its nature. It is not merely an individual subject. But, this is a very hard thing for the mind to comprehend. One's mind can never know what universality is and, therefore, any amount of instruction given to it from this point of view would naturally go over one's head. We are told that the present chapter is especially intended for those who are unable to grasp the implications of the just-preceding chapter, which is concerned more with the universal aspect of the Absolute. But when this chapter confines itself to the heart of the individual, it does not limit itself to the body of the individual. For, the heart which we are speaking of is not the physical heart. It is not your heart or my heart, not that which is in this bodily encasement. It is a symbol used for the centre of pure subjectivity in us and, therefore, the heart means the consciousness which is apparently located within the walls of the body, but which can never be restrained or limited on account of its super-physical nature. Physical encasements cannot limit it in any manner whatsoever. We will gradually be taken to the point where the 'little thing' that we speak of at present as being in our own heart is found to be the same as the 'universal thing' that has been discussed in the third chapter. The two are one. Whatever is there is also here.

*Tam ced-bruyuh, asmimsced-idam brahma-pure sarvam,
samahitam sarvani ca bhutani sarve ca kamah yadaitaj-jara
vapnoti pradhvamsate va, kim tato'tisisyata iti.*

The teacher tells that inside the heart is all the mystery of things. Every object of one's desire is inside one's heart. It is not outside. Whatever one longs for is contained within oneself. A question is raised here from the point of view of a student: "When the body gets old and is finally overcome by death, what happens to this heart that you are speaking of? Does it also disappear with death? How can that which is capable of destruction by death contain the mysteries of creation?" This doubt is immediately removed in the following *mantras*.

*Sa bruyat; nasya jarayaitaj-jiryati, na vадhenasya hanyate. Etat
satyam brahma-puram asmin kamah samahitah. Esa
atmapahatapapma vijaro vimrtyur-visoko vijighatso'pipasah,
satya-kamah, satya-samkalpah. Yatha hy-eveha praja
anvavisanti yathanusasanam, yam yam antam abhikama
bhavanti yam janapadam, yam ksetra-bhagam, tam tam
evopajivanti.*

This heart that the Upanishad is speaking of does not get old when the body gets old. It is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. It is the city of the gods. How can it be destroyed? It can never be destroyed, for it is not a city of brick and mortar. It is not like a city that is built by man. It is the eternal abode of the eternal objective of eternal aspiration. The objects of one's desire or aspiration are contained here and they shall be available for experience, the moment they are invoked in the proper manner. This little thing that we call the heart is nothing that is mortal or physical. It is the Atman. What we call the Atman is the same as what we refer to here as the heart. It is free from every kind of affliction or sorrow or limitation. It is unaging, for it has no age. It is the timeless Being and, therefore, it has no destruction. It sees no death. It sees no sorrow. It is self-existent by its own pristine magnificence. It has no hunger and It has no thirst. It asks for nothing, for It is self-sufficient in Its own Self. Whatever It wills is capable of being materialised at one stroke. This is the will that is pure in character, uncontaminated by any kind of falsehood which is of the nature of externality. The nearer we go to this 'heart', the more is the strength of our will and the more is our capacity to manifest it and materialise it in our practical life.

The more the limited will of the individual human being is drawn out from this centre of the heart, the more does it get diluted by contamination with the evil of externality. The more it gets contaminated by association with the externals, the more is the impossibility of achieving success in this world, and the greater is the difficulty of contacting the objects of one's desires.

But the more we go deeper and inward into our own Self, the greater is strength of our will and the greater the possibility of achieving success in obtaining anything that we want. This is the meaning of *satyakama*, *satya samkalpa*. When our consciousness, will and thought-functions are rooted in Truth, they should materialise themselves at once in the forms they are expected.

The case of such persons whose will is not so rooted in truth is like the case of those who are subject to domination by other rulers. They are like subjects in this world who are ruled by kings and administrative chiefs. The subjects are completely under the control of the chiefs or rulers, because the country or kingdom belongs to them. The people in a country are under the thumb of the rulers. Whatever is the ordinance passed by these rulers, that these subjects obey. Whatever people wish to have, they have to obtain from these rulers, not otherwise. Whatever little piece of land is allotted to them by the administrative chiefs, whatever is granted to them in any manner whatsoever, on that alone they have to depend. This means that the sustenance of these people who are subject to domination by others is dependent on factors external to themselves. The actions such people perform in this world for the purpose of living a happy life are conditioned by the existence of external factors. They are not unconditioned. Therefore, there is a limit for the achievements of these people. Whenever a need is felt for being subjected to others' rule, the actions one performs naturally will be subjected to the conditions laid down by those external rulers. So, they are not really independent. Their will also cannot exceed the limit of the ordinances of these rulers. This is the case with every person in this world in every respect. This analogy given here is only to explain the predicament of people in general. The

rulers or the administrators or the chiefs mentioned here are factors other than one's own Self. They may be natural forces, or they may be gods in the heavens, or they may be any blessed thing in the whole creation compelling you to act according to a particular law or rule. This fate befalls one on account of one's will and action being restricted by the operation of laws which are outside.

This sort of action brings about a reaction. And this we call the law of *karma* which is binding in its nature, causing reincarnation and the resultant suffering. All this is due to the impact of laws operating outside oneself and compelling one to obey their dictates. So, the more is one's dependence on external factors, the greater is the nemesis of action. And the greater the independence one has, the less is this nemesis or reaction produced by actions. Hence, every action performed by every individual is capable of producing only transient results. Our actions in this world cannot give us immortal happiness. We cannot have absolute freedom by anything that we perform in this world, because this world is conditioned and it works on conditioned laws. It conditions the individual who is a content of itself, causing everything to be limited from inside as well as from outside. It is something like the freedom that we give to cows or cattle in general when we tether them to a peg by a rope. They have some freedom but it is limited to the extent of the length of the rope. Likewise, there seems to be some kind of freedom, given to us on account of the adjustment that we perform between ourselves and the external atmosphere. But to that extent of the adjustment alone are we free. Beyond that we are not. Thus, we are introduced to the fact of the limitation of human nature in those who are divested of this knowledge of the Atman and who consider themselves merely biological units and not spiritual centres.

Tad yatheha karma-jito lokah ksiyate, evam evamutra punya-jito lokah ksiyate. Tad-ya ihatmanam ananuidya vrajnty-etams-ca satyan kaman, tesam sarvesu lokesu-akamacaro bhavati. Atha ya ihatmanam anuidya vrajnaty-etams-ca satyan kaman, tesam sarvesu lokesu kamacaro bhavati.

Our bank balance is not to be infinite. We know it very well. Our salary also is not to be unending. It will have an end one day. The more we work, the more salary we get. But our salary depends upon the work that we do, the extent of the work that we do, the length of time for which we perform our work, etc. Anything that we achieve in any manner whatsoever visibly in this world is subject to limitation. Our actions bring about conditions which give us conditioned happiness. We cannot be always happy merely because we live in this world. The conditions under which we are subjected by the laws of this world, the laws of action and reaction and many other factors, compel us to have only limited happiness, and even that we will find to be an apparent happiness if only we conduct a true investigation into its character.

As is the case with actions performed which produce transient results in this world, so is the case with those actions, even virtuous ones which are supposed to produce beneficial results in the other world. They too are transient in their character. Just as secular actions produce limited results in the secular world, so

do religious acts and virtuous deeds produce limited results in the other world. Even if we perform a wealth of virtuous acts in this world and after death reach shining regions of paradise, they will yield only limited experiences, because, after all, all these experiences are action-born. Whether an action is virtuous or vicious is not the question here. The question is whether it is an action or not. Because it is an action, naturally it is conditioned by the factors which rule over every type of action. Therefore, limited results alone follow all actions. Nothing is unlimited if it is produced by action. Sorrows are limited and pleasures too are limited here. Pleasures of the other worlds also are limited. So, everything that we get is limited ultimately. Nothing unending can result from actions which have an end one day or the other.

We cannot have freedom absolute, because of the absence of the knowledge of the Atman. Even those people who are well-to-do in this world, who are regarded as great by people in this world, but who do not know the nature of this Atman, go like animals. Just as animals die, those people also die, and the fate of those people ultimately is like that of the animals, for however great their category be, they are bereft of true Knowledge. The real nature of oneself is the nature of one's own Atman. The point made out here is that if we cannot understand our own Self, how can we understand anybody else? We have not known the Reality that is inside us. Then how can we know what is really outside in the world? Those people who are ignorant enough not to know even their own internal nature go to worlds which produce limited results, and they have absolutely no freedom. Just as we have no freedom in this world, because there is a ruling law operating external to us, so is the case with people who go to the other worlds. There, too, they have no freedom. If some law operates here, in this world, some other law operates in the other worlds also. Just as we are subjected to rules here, we will be subjected to rules in the other worlds also. Everywhere we will be subjects and not kings or masters. Merely because we have a little bit of freedom to enjoy the objects of senses, it does not mean that we are completely free. It is like the freedom of cattle to eat grass and chew cud. It is not real freedom. This is the fate of those who do not know the truth. The reason is simple. They cannot exercise their will to the furthest limit on account of these limitations.

But the blessedness of people who know what this Atman is, is grand indeed. Those who depart from this world having realised what the Atman is, their jurisdiction is infinite. They are not limited by laws outside. They are themselves lawmakers. Their will is the universal law. There is a unity between their will and the law that works outside. In the case of ordinary individuals, the difficulty arises on account of the conflict between external law and internal law. Why are we limited in this world? Because our will does not coincide with the will of the universe. We have got a way of thinking which is not necessarily in consonance with the law of the whole universe. The will of the individual is not the will of the Creator. That is the reason why there is bondage. But the more one goes into the depths of one's Being, the more does one approximate the identity of one's self with the law that is operating outside. The question of outside and inside will not appear when there is harmony of the two. We talk of inside and outside as long as we think independently through a physical body, as long as we are individual

subjects thinking of external objects. But when we are knowers of the Atman, as the Upanishad puts it, we also know what the ultimate Reality is. Then the law of the outside world becomes the law of the inside world. The law of the Atman is the law of the universe. Therefore, there is absolute freedom for those who are knowers of this great secret. Whatever they will, it expresses itself in experience at once. There is no gap of time between the manifestation of their will and its materialisation. It is not that they think something today and it materialises tomorrow. It instantaneously manifests itself. This is the case of the blessed souls who have known the Atman.

The objects of desire appear to be outside us, which is the reason why we take time to realise our objectives. There is a distance in space and in time between ourselves as centres of volition and the objects outside. Therefore, naturally there is delay in time. The time taken by us in the realisation of our objectives is due to the existence of space which looks very vast outside and which looks very puny inside. The other reason is that we have no control over the objects of our desires. Our desires are not truth-filled, not *satyakamas*. They are artificially projected by conditions which are not entirely in consonance with the law of truth. Therefore, it is difficult for us to fulfil all our desires. The desire becomes difficult of fulfilment on account of its dissonance or disharmony with the nature of truth. Truth alone triumphs, as we know, and nothing else will triumph in this world. And if the will or the desire of a person is filled with untruth, which means to say it has certain characteristics that cannot be corroborated by the nature of truth, to that extent it shall not succeed. But to the extent it is in harmony with the nature of truth, to that extent it succeeds. The externality of the object is, therefore, one of the impediments to the manifestation of the object in the fulfilment of a desire. The whole point seems to be that the object outside is as much an individual with its own status as the willing subject. Therefore, there is no easy access to the location of the object by the subject. The object is not subservient to the subject. It is not a vassal or a subordinate of the subject in any manner whatsoever. Any one person is not a subordinate of another person. Both are on par with each other. So is the case with every object in this world. Just as I am the subject, the other so-called object is the subject from its own standpoint. So, to will in such a manner as to control the object, and convert it into a subordinate of one's self, is not an easy affair. As long as we are content to remain physical bodies, individual persons, isolated physically from physical objects outside under the impression they are absolutely disconnected from us, as long as we are conditioned by these false notions in us, so long we cannot fulfil our desires. But, the fulfilment immediately comes once we realise our affinity with the objects.

It is not true, as the mind falsely thinks, that the objects are disconnected from the subjects. The more the intensity of the feeling of identity with one's body, the greater is the difficulty in the achievement of any objective in this world, because the objectives get more and more cut off from oneself. The more the intensity of the feeling of one's body and isolation from others, the more is one's feeling of segregation from other things and the greater is the difficulty in one's achieving anything in this world. The more we cut off connections from other things, the

more are we intensifying our personality consciousness. The more we think we are independent bodily, the more is the difficulty for us in this world, because the more is the reaction produced by other persons and things in this world in a similar manner. The greater the affirmation of our body consciousness, the greater is our segregation from other beings in this world, and greater is the reaction produced by them who will also assert themselves in a similar manner to us. If I am different from you, then likewise you are different from me. So, here is the psychology behind the secret of unfulfilment of desires by those who are intensely body-conscious and selfish in their nature, egoistic in their motives and incapable of knowing the inward connections between themselves and other things of this world.

The knowledge of the Atman that is referred to here is nothing but the knowledge of the deepest secret of the connection of the subject with the object. If that is known, the externality of the object falls away, the difference between the subject and the object ceases, and there results a true union of the two. That is called the true fulfilment of all desires. This, therefore, is the great truth proclaimed by the Upanishadic master. He who knows the Atman gets all desires fulfilled at once and the other people who know not the Atman are subject to the rule of law. The whole world is ours if we are able to establish an inward contact with the world. But nothing will be ours, we will be forlorn, deserted wanderers in this world, if we think that we are mere bodies unconnected with others.

Now comes a beautiful series of proclamations or exclamations made by the Upanishad in the following section, telling us what the power of the will of a person who has Self-realisation is, and what capacity that person has got. Nothing is impossible for that person.

DIFFERENT HIGHER WORLDS

*Sa yadi pitr-loka-kamo bhavati, samkalpad-evasya pitarah
samuttisthanti, tena pitr-lokena sampanno mahiyate.*

If he wants to see someone, say a forefather in the other world, he can see him at once. There is no such thing as 'other world' for that person who has realised the Atman. Just as this world is not, the other world also is not. There is only one thing, which is commensurate with his own Being. We can see our own fingers even though they are a little distant from our eyes, say two feet away. This distance does not prevent us from seeing them. Distance is ruled out here on account of the identity of the object with our own Self. The forefathers in the other heavens also can be seen at once the moment his will projects itself in that fashion.

*Atha yadi matr-loka-kamo bhavati, samkalpad-evasya matarah
samuttisthanti, tena matr-lokena sampanno mahiyate.*

*Atha yadi bhratr-loka-kamo bhavati, samkalpad-evasya
bhratarah samuttisthanti, tena bhratr-lokena sampanno
mahiyate.*

*Atha yadi svsr-loka-kamo bhavati, samkalpad-evasya svasarah
samuttisthanti, tena svsr-lokena sampanno mahiyate.*

Atha yadi sakhi-loka-kamo bhavati, samkalpad-evasya sakhayah samuttisthanti, tena sakhi-lokena sampanno mahiyate.

Atha yadi gandha-malya-loka-kamo bhavati samkalpad-evasya gandhamalye samuttisthatah, tena gandhamalya-lokena sampanno mahiyate.

Atha yadi anna-pana-loka-kamo bhavati, samkalpad-evasyanna-pane samuttisthatah, tena anna-papa-lokena sampanno mahiyate.

Atha yadi gita-vadita-loka-kamo bhavati, samkalpad-evasya gita vadite samuttisthatah, tena gita-vadita-lokena sampanno mahiyate.

Atha yadi stri-loka-kamo bhavati, samkalpad-evasya striyah samuttisthanti, tena stri-lokena sampanno mahiyate.

Yam yam antam abhikamo bhavati, yam kamam kama-yate, so'sya samkalpad-eva samuttishati, tena sampanno mahiyate.

It is a long list which I need not translate. It means to say that everything that we can think of,—relatives, friends, fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, good things, great things, pleasant things, objects of desire present in this world or in the other world—whatever they be, they do not take time to manifest themselves if the will is exercised in the proper manner. What is the proper manner? The will has to be in tune with the law of the Atman. This is the only condition. It must be a universal wish coming from every corner of the world enfolding within itself every object. Then there will be an instantaneous manifestation of all things to the satisfaction of the universal will of this Self-realised sage. Whatever be his wish, that shall take place, but his wish will not contradict universality, because the wish itself is universal.

All these desires in our hearts are really distorted forms of the manifestation of consciousness in some way or the other. It is the great universal Being seeking expression in various types of experiences in this world. All thoughts, all desires, all aspirations, whatever be the functions of the psyche, are movements of consciousness towards Self-realisation. It is the search of the Self for the Self in the world outside. But there is some defect in the movement of consciousness when it gets lodged in the body of an individual and imagines that it is somehow or other limited to the extent of that body alone. This feeling, falsely introduced somehow or other in respect of the association of consciousness with the body, is called *anrita*, falsehood. When falsehood gets mixed up with truth, which means to say, the body idea and the externality idea get mixed up with the true Consciousness that we are, then it becomes difficult for us to achieve anything in this world. The more we free ourselves from the notion of the consciousness getting identified with the body and externality, the more is our capacity to exert our will in the proper way and fulfil our desires.