



THE CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

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THE SPACE WITHIN THE HEART

The capacity to fulfil a desire is actually the power of the vision to find out where the object of desire is and what connection the object has with one's own self. The lack of this vision in respect of the object of desire is the impediment which acts as an obstacle to the fulfilment of the desire. Desires are really the visions of consciousness which act in different ways, in different levels of experience. When, due to the locking up of consciousness in a particular level of experience, it cannot visualise what is outside it or beyond it, then it becomes difficult for it to come in contact with the objects of its desires.

*Ta ime satyah kamah anrtapidhanah, tesam satyanam satam
anrtam apidhanam, yo yo hy-asyetah praiti, na tam iha
darsanaya labhate.*

The words *satya* and *anrita* literally mean truth and untruth. Truth is the capacity to visualise things as they are in themselves, and untruth is that which obstructs this vision. Things as they are in themselves are not vitally disconnected from one another. There is really no distance between one object and another object. If distance does not exist, the difficulty in contacting objects should not arise. But the distance does exist for a particular type of consciousness which has limited itself and which therefore thinks that it is different from that which the whole universe is capable of in its completeness. This is the reason why those who are not in this physical world cannot be seen by people living in this physical world, and why the former cannot be contacted by the latter. There is no communicating medium between this world of experience and the other world of experience. There is, really speaking, no such thing as this world and the other world. There are not many worlds, there is only one vast continuum of experience. The distinction of this world from the next world and many other worlds arises on account of the varying densities of consciousness which appear to cause different levels of experience.

We cannot actually establish a conscious communication between dream and waking, for instance, notwithstanding the fact that there is no real gulf physically speaking between waking and dream experiences. There is absolutely no distinction, if you seriously investigate into the structure of dream as well as of waking. Yet they appear to be so different that one who is awake cannot have entry into the dream world, nor can one who is dreaming have entry into the waking world. It is the distinction of the capacities of certain levels of consciousness which is the reason behind the distinctions made between the two different worlds, viz., the dream and the waking worlds. Worlds are fields of experiences and experiences vary in their intensities corresponding to the particular level in which one finds oneself at any time. Corresponding to the correlative objective world in which one finds oneself, there is the possibility or impossibility of knowing what is beyond the ken of the physical senses. People who are dead are not really dead. They are in some other level of experience. They are in a different realm, in a different density of consciousness. Those in that particular density cannot contact those in another density.

Now, another startling remark is made here by the Upanishad when it says that all these people who have passed on from this world, those who are born and those who are not yet born, those who have come and those who have gone to other worlds are in our own hearts. They are not outside somewhere. We carry them in our own hearts, in the ether of our consciousness. It has been said earlier that whatever is outside is also inside. So whatever is in the various levels, in the various *lokas* or realms of being, in the so-called external universe, is present in our own hearts. They can be invoked from within our own selves by the strength of the mind. This cannot be done ordinarily on account of the untruth of bodily attachment and externality-consciousness interfering with the truth of the universality of experience. The great obstacle to the perception of the things that are there in the whole universe is the locking up of consciousness in a particular body. It is imprisoned in a particular individuality, *jivatva*, and it cannot think more than what is finite and limited. This is the untruth referred to here. It is something that is not really there, but which one experiences by habit and by repeated application of oneself to that type of experience which falsely goes by the name of reality to the exclusion of every other possibility of experience. Thus, those people who have passed away cannot be seen, and those who are not born also cannot be seen. But those who are not born also still exist somewhere in the world. We say this with reference to a distance that appears to exist between ourselves and those unborn ones, as if they are outside us. The question of outsideness just does not arise in a world of a continuum of consciousness. But still it appears to interfere with our experience on account of body consciousness, individuality and egoism.

Atha ye casyeha jiva ye ca preta yac-canyad-icchan na labhate, sarvam tad atra gatva vindate, atra hi asyaite satyah kamah anrtapidhanah, tad-yathapi hiranya-nidhim nihitam aksetrajna uparyupari sancaranto na vindeyuh, evam evamah sarvah praja ahar ahar gacchantya etam brahmalokam na vivdanti, anrtena hi pratyudhah.

If only one were to dive into the ocean of one's own heart, one would see there everything that one cannot even dream of in one's mind. All those who have died since ages, millions and millions of years ago, and all those who have not yet come into being at all but are to manifest themselves now or in the ages to come—all these forms are capable of being perceived in one's own heart. But in this world this is not experienced, because this is a world of physicality and intense bodily awareness. On account of this, everything seems to be scattered hither and thither, as if one thing has no connection with the other thing, while really in the heart of all things can be discovered the treasure of the whole universe wherein you find the entire population of the cosmos right from the time of creation till the time of dissolution.

An example is given here to illustrate this. It is something like people walking over a treasure and not knowing that there is a treasure underground, says the Upanishad. Someone might have buried some treasure-trove under the earth and many people may be walking over it without knowing that a big treasure is underneath. Similar is the case with us who carry treasures in our own hearts. In our own selves, all these are contained. But we cannot have entry into them on account of the absence of the awareness of the fact that they are there. The consciousness of this fact is repelled by the very existence of interest in something else. We stumble upon the treasure every day. We fall upon Truth and contact everything, everywhere, in all our experiences—past, present and future—throughout the various incarnations we take, but we cannot know that we are coming in contact with it, just as subtle, etheric waves and light waves may be passing through this very hall in which we are seated but we cannot know that they are passing. These waves are of high frequency. Neither that which is too low in frequency nor that which is very high can be comprehended by us who can experience only a particular range of frequency. Thus it is that we ourselves do not know what we contain in ourselves.

It is impossible to know this great treasure by a projection of the mind outwardly, because it is seated within the heart of things. It is not external. As a matter of fact, it is the search we make externally that is the obstacle in knowing that which is within one's own self. Things do not exist as externals. They are not exclusive. In fact, everything is inclusive. The knowledge of this internal connection is denied by the very desire to see things externally. Thus we see that the contradiction that arises on account of the desire which projects itself through the senses in respect of externality of things prevents the knowledge of things as they really are.

*Sa va esa atma hr̥di, tasyaitad-eva niruktam hr̥dy-ayam iti,
tasmad-hr̥dayam, ahar ahar va evam-vit svargam lokam eti.*

There is a peculiar etymological derivation of the meaning of the word *hr̥idaya*, which usually means heart. The Upanishads are very fond of these kinds of etymological extractions of meanings for certain words giving the significance of the words. As I said, *hr̥idaya* means heart. It is a Sanskrit word and the Upanishad now explains why the heart is called *hr̥idaya*. "Here inside is He." This means to say, Truth is inside you; it is the abode of that which *is*, and

therefore, it is called *hridaya*. One who knows that one's heart is the abode of Truth attains to the highest heavens in experience. Our day-to-day experiences are not merely empirical or secular, as we normally dub them. There are no secular experiences or worldly experiences or physical experiences. They are only names that we give to the one experience of Truth. And these names are given only for the purpose of convenience in language to distinguish one type from another in our empirical dealings. In fact they are all one mass of experience, like a single body of an ocean of waters with different sizes and forms of waves. In every experience we can plumb into the depths of Truth, even as in every wave we can have water. With every perception we perceive That only. In every kind of cognition there is a cognition of Reality. But unfortunately we mistake the Being for objects on account of the habit of the mind to define things in different ways.

Atha ya esa samprasado'smac-charirat samutthaya param jyotir-upasampadya svena rupenabhinispadyate, esa atmeti hovaca, etadamrtam abhayam, etad-brahmeti, tasya ha va etasya brahmano nama satyam iti.

When a person rises above body consciousness, there is a serenity of experience. It is as if he is free from a drug effect into which he has entered and to which he has been subjected for long. Consciousness gets muddled on account of the influence of an external toxic matter due to which there is no proper thinking and understanding. As this toxic effect subsides, there arises serenity, tranquility and composure of experience. He feels as if something new has come into his life. He wakes up as if there is a new daylight before him. This is *samprasada*, the composure of consciousness which arises on account of the freedom of consciousness from bodily shackles. The moment this consciousness is freed from bodily attachment it rises upwards, as it were, like a flame of brilliance. It is the supreme luminosity. It is light by its own right, a light that does not require another light to illumine itself, *paramjyoti*. When one attains to this supreme luminosity which is one's own real nature, one is established in one's self. Then one is in one's true form. As we wake up from dream and recognise our true nature as being different from what we felt ourselves to be in dream, so does one recover one's real nature and shake off the old notions of connections with bodies, one differing from the other. One state of consciousness imagines that it is an animal, another state of consciousness imagines that it is a human being, and so on and so forth. Various states identify themselves with various forms of experience which are called the bodies. They may be animals or human beings or celestials. Whatever they are, those forms are cast off on account of Consciousness extracting itself from those shackles and it stands by itself as a liberated being. This is the Atman. The real Atman is that which is free from entanglement in any kind of form. This is the Immortal. It is the disidentification with the body that is the cause of immortality. This is what we call Brahman, the Absolute, ultimately the universal nature of this Atman. What we call Truth, about which we have been speaking up to this time, is Brahman Itself. We may call It the Atman or Brahman. It makes no difference. This is the Truth, because That alone is, That which is in all the three periods of time. That knows no distinction of the passage of time. That is perpetually what It is without

distinction either in space or in time. That is the Atman, and that is what we call Brahman.

Tani ha va etani triny-akasarani satiyam iti, tad-yat sattad-amrtam, atha yat-ti tan-martyam, atha yad-yam tenobhe yacchati yad-anenobhe yacchati tasmad-yam, ahar-ahar-va evam vit svargam lokam eti.

Again here we have the usual symbolic meaning of the word *satyam*, etymologically derived. What is *satyam*? *Satyam* is, says the Upanishad, a word which can be dissected into three syllables—*sa*, *ti*, and *yam*—and from the point of view of this interpretation of the Upanishad, *sa*, the first letter, stands for what is immortal; the second one *ti* stands for what is mortal, and *yam*, the third one, is that which holds the two together. The mortal and the immortal are both comprehended in something which is different from the mortal and the immortal, which means to say that as the *antaryamin*, or the indwelling principle, this Supreme Reality, holds together in itself both the subject and the object, consciousness and matter. What we call immortal is consciousness and what we call mortal is matter. Both these are held together in this Universal Being. It is something transcendent to our concepts of mortality and immortality. Even the word ‘immortal’ is relative in its significance, because to say that something is immortal or deathless would be to relate it to a phenomenon called mortal or death. When death is not there, deathlessness also is not there. Hence, these two concepts are connected with the two aspects of experience, the subjective side known as consciousness and the objective side known as matter. The whole world of experience constituted of these two aspects, subjective and objective, are brought together into a single comprehension in the supremacy of the Absolute. This is the significance of the word *satyam*, says the Upanishad. One who knows this secret reaches the highest heavens of experience even in the little daily perceptions which one passes through or undergoes. In all our daily experiences, we have the experience of this *satyam*, Truth only, in various forms, various ways and various circumstances.

LIFE BEYOND

Atha ya atma sa setur-vidhrtir-esam lokanam asambhedaya naitam setum ahoratre taratah, na jara na mrtyurna soko na sukrtam, na duskrtam, sarve papmano'to nivartante, apahatapapma hy-esa brahma-lokah.

It is this Atman which holds together in a state of harmony the various worlds in the cosmos, so that they may not create chaos. The various elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether, the different worlds, the realms of being, as we call them—all these are held in position on account of the law of the Atman. The law ordains that what passes for a particular form should maintain that form until the duration of time prescribed for it is exhausted by it in experience. If this Atman were not to exert its law by its very presence, there would have been no system or order or method of any kind. What we call system or method, symmetry or systematic action, internally or externally, is due to the presence of this all-

comprehending Being, the Atman. The integration that we feel in our own body, in our minds and the orderliness that we see in nature outside, all these are due to the presence of the Atman. Else there would be confusion everywhere. Anything could be anything. Anything could happen at any time in any manner, without any kind of relevance whatsoever. But this does not happen. There is a cause and effect relationship between one experience and another. There is a relationship vitally established between various things in this world, on account of the symmetrical balancing character of the consciousness of the Atman.

This bridge, as it were, which is the Atman that connects one world with another world, is also like an embankment over which days and nights cannot pass, which means to say that time cannot touch this realm. Days and nights represent the time factor. There is no time here. When you cross this bridge which connects the world of ordinary experience with the realm of pure Being, there is a transcendence of time. This Upanishad says that in the Atman there is no contact with anything that is phenomenal. Anything that you call temporal cannot touch this Being. Neither old age, nor death, nor sorrow can touch it. Actions of any kind cannot touch it, whether they be virtues or vices. Neither good nor bad, nothing that we regard as valuable here, no kind of regulation of this world can have any validity in that realm of Supreme Integrality. Every evil turns back after having touched this embankment. This supreme world we call Brahman is untouched by evil of every kind. Evil is nothing but the consciousness of body and consciousness of objects. This type of consciousness cannot be there. So it is free from every kind of contamination.

*Tasmad-va etam setum tirtvandhah san anandho bhavati,
viddhah san aviddho bhavati, upatapi san anupatapi bhavati,
tasmadva etam setum tirtvapi naktam ahar-evabhinishpadyate,
sakrdvibhato hy-evaisa brahma-lokah.*

Even a blind one becomes free from the evil of blindness the moment he crosses this bridge which is called the Atman. Wounded ones are no more wounded there. People who are distressed are no more distressed there. And grieved ones have no grief there. Even night looks like day there. Night does not exist there. Because time does not exist, night and day cannot exist. Eternal light is this Brahman. It is eternal, perpetual, unending Self-luminosity. This is *Brahma-loka*. Here, *Brahma-loka* does not mean some world or realm comparable with the one in which we are living. *Brahmaiva loko brahma-lokah*—Brahman, the Absolute Itself, is called the world of Brahman. It is a symbolic way of representing its own Being as the totality of experience. The field of experience is called *loka*.

*Tad-ya evaitam brahma-lokam brahmacaryena-nuvindanti
tesam evaisa brahma-lokah, tesam sarvesu lokesu kamacaro
bhavati.*

Freedom untrammelled is the blessing of those who have reached this realm of Brahman through practice of continence, and no limit can be there either to their powers or to their capacities to visualise things, or to their knowledge, or even to

their own existence. It is limitlessness from every side, as the concluding portions of the third chapter have already told us.

IMPORTANCE OF BRAHMACHARYA

Now, the means to the realisation of this great Truth is emphasised in the present section. The word used for this means is *brahmacharya*. The character of Brahman is *brahmacharya*. The conduct of Brahman is what we call *brahmacharya*. *Charya* is conduct. The meaning of the word Brahman, of course, we know very well. The conduct of Brahman is *brahmacharya*. To live as Brahman would be *brahmacharya*. How Brahman is, in that way one should be. It is very difficult to conceive this. It is a total abstraction of the senses in a sublimation of consciousness which recognises itself alone, to the exclusion of everything else. This is the only practice which one has to endeavour for. By the practice of this, one would have performed every other duty in this world, because every other duty is a tendency towards the fulfilment of this duty. This is what the Upanishad tells us in the following passages.

*Atha yad-yajna ity-acaksate brahmacharyam eva tat,
brahmacharyena hy-eva yo jnata tam vindate atha yad istam ity-
acaksate brahmacharyam eva tat, brahmacharyena hy-
evestvatmanam anuvindate.*

What we call sacrifice, a holy performance, worship, all this is equivalent to the practice of continence, because continence brings all those results which any kind of sacrifice would bring to the performer of the sacrifice. The knower of Truth, through the practice of self-control, attains those benefits which accrue by the performance of a sacrifice. What we call the sacrificial performance from the point of view of Vedic injunctions is also equivalent to the practice of self-control, *brahmacharya*, continence by which one attains to every benefit which would otherwise come as a result of the performance of Vedic rituals.

*Atha yat sattrayanam ity-acaksate brahmacharyam eva tat,
brahmacharyena hy-eva sata atmanas-tranam vindate. atha yan-
maunam ity-acaksate brahmacharyam eva tat, brahmacharyena
hy-evatmanam anuvidya manute.*

Satrayana is again a session for sacrifices. *Sattra* is a *yajna*, a sacrifice, and a session for the performance of these sacrifices is *satrayana*. It is a great ritual enjoined in the Vedas. But, this ritual called *satrayana* is equivalent to the practice of continence, self-control. *Satrayana* is the word used to designate this particular sacrifice, and here the Upanishad gives a peculiar etymological resemblance of the result that follows by the practice of continence to the meaning of the word *satrayana*. *Sath atmanastranam vindate satrayana* is the way in which we split the word *satrayana*. *Sat* is Being, *trayana* is the way of freedom or attainment of the benefits of protection in every way. One protects one's self, frees oneself by contact with true Being. This protection or freedom which one gains through contact with Being is also achieved by the practice of self-restraint, *brahmacharya*. So it is equivalent to *satrayana*, the performance of the Vedic sacrifice. What we call observance of silence, not speaking, *maunam*,

is the same as *brahmacharya*, because that again is the silence of all the senses, on account of the contact of the Atman which is the Supreme Silence. One understands things correctly and enters into a natural state of psychic silence by the acquisition of the knowledge that automatically follows the practice of self-control.

Atha yad-anasakyanam ity-acaksate brahmacaryam eva tat, esa hy-atma na nasyati ym brahmacaryena-nuvindate, atha yad-aranyayanam ity-acaksate brahmacaryam eva tat. tad-arasca ha vai nyascar-navau brahmaloke tritiyasyam ito divi, tad-airammadiyam sarah, tad-asvatthah soma-savanah, tad-aparajita pur-brahmanah, prabhuvimitam hiranmayam.

Anasakyana is a vow of fasting. This vow of fasting which people engage themselves in is also equivalent to *brahmacharya*. Here again, an etymological semblance is introduced into the interpretation. Atman does not perish at any time. Therefore, this imperishable character of the Atman is comparable with the imperishable results that accrue to one by the practice of the religious vow of fasting. Whatever benefits accrue to a person by this vow come to him spontaneously by self-control. Forest dwelling which is the *vanaprastha* life, living in seclusion, etc., are all great vows and austerities, no doubt. But whatever one gains by these austerities, vows and practices, one gains merely by self-control, because it is the highest austerity and nothing can be comparable to it.

A person who transcends mortal experience and is blessed with an access into the realm of Brahma has to pass through various mystical experiences. Some of the words contained in the passage that we are discussing refer to certain subtle experiences in the higher realms of Being which a seeker would encounter on his ascent to Brahman, the Absolute. It is said here that there are two oceans in the realm of Brahman filled with nectar where the world this and world that both come together in a fraternal embrace. It is as if two oceans join together to form a single ocean. *Ara* and *Nya* are the two names given to these two different oceans. They exist beyond this world. They are in the third world altogether, not in the physical world, not in the atmospheric world or even the astral world, but in the spiritual world they are. There is another miraculous thing there which one can see after going there. There is a tank filled with exhilarating nectar which is the food of the gods and the food of those who have shed their physical bodies. It is immortal bliss that one would experience there. It does not mean that it is actually a physical food which one would taste through the tongue. As I mentioned, they are subtle references to mystical experiences of the soul, which are referred to here as contact with tons of nectar of exquisite sweetness. There is a tree there which yields all one asks for, which exudes nectar from its body. It is a huge peepul tree, very vast in its expanse from every pore of which nectar exudes. It is the *kalpavriksha*, as the Puranas call it, a tree that gives anything you ask. If you think something while sitting under it, it immediately materialises itself. That is called *kalpavriksha*. Such a kind of peepul is present there in this higher realm where nectarine immortality flows, as it were, from every side. This is the city of Brahman which cannot be entered by those whose minds are extrovert, whose senses seek sense objects outside. It is an invincible fortress of

Brahman. No one can conquer it, no one can pierce through it, no one can break through it, no one can touch it or contact it, because it is not a physical fort. It has very, very rarely been conquered by anyone. Those who have been wedded to world experience through the mind and the senses are unfit to contact or enter into this city. There is inside this city a hall which is called *prabhuvmitam*, built by Brahma himself, shining like gold, resplendent in every way, into which the soul is introduced. These experiences are also described in other Upanishads in different ways, all very mystical indeed, referring to different exhilarating experiences of consciousness through which we pass when we get separated from the body and come nearer and nearer to that which is more and more universal. Language fails here and words cannot express what all this really means. It is only an indication symbolically of miraculous experiences and wonders which we cannot dream of, through which we have to pass as a result of self-control and practice of meditation on Brahman.

Tad-ya evaitavaram ca nyam carnavau brahma-loke brahma-caryenanuvindanti, tesam evaisa brahma-lokah tesam sarvesu lokesu kamacaro bhavati.

Freedom untrammelled is our reward if we could practise this technique of meditation. We would be the possessors of all these treasures, the nectars and the trees exuding ambrosia, and the oceans of nectar, etc., referred to here. All these would be our possessions and we would be rejoicing in these experiences and be one with them provided that—a great condition is here—we are able to withdraw our senses and mind and centre our consciousness in that which we call Brahman. Then we are free and this freedom is what we call *moksha*, Liberation.