



## THE CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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This *vidya* contains the art of adjusting the mind inwardly as well as outwardly in the beginning by alternate processes, and then finally grasping the comprehensiveness of Brahman, the Reality in its simultaneously dual aspect of universality and individuality.

*Adau brahmaham-asmyityanubhava udite khalvidam brahma pascad*, is a passage from Acharya Sankara's 'Satasloki' wherein he makes a reference to this *vidya*. He mentions how the consciousness rises gradually from the level of individual perspective to the universal one. It is not easy to understand the meaning of what Acharya Sankara is saying here, because of the fact that we cannot distinguish between our personality or individuality and the Atman, to which reference is being made. We always mix up the two. The Atman is myself and we know very well what we understand by the word 'myself'. It is an inveterate habit of the mind to think in terms of the body. So whatever be the thing that is associated with individuality is at once identified in meditation. The kernel that is within us, the essence that we are, is to be separated from the body that we appear to be, in this technique of meditation. In the beginning, there is consciousness that one's own self is all. Now this is not merely a statement that is to be studied grammatically or linguistically, but is a matter of experience. One's location in all things in addition to one's own body becomes a revealed truth in the advanced stages of this meditation. There are some examples to show how this happens.

It is something like the space within a vessel realising that it is everywhere. Just compare yourself to a little space that is contained in a small glass tumbler which has got obsessed with a notion that it is inside the glass tumbler only and that what is outside as space is not itself, but an object of itself, something external to itself. It has to elevate itself to the awareness of the non-distinguishability between itself and the external space. That is the real meaning perhaps of what is in the mind of Acharya Sankara. I am the all—the space within the vessel realises that it is all-space. It does not mean that it has become all-space by any effort of its imagination or activity. It is just a rising to the awareness that the wall around it, namely, the tumbler or the glass, is not going to limit its all-pervasive nature.

Then the realisation comes—*khalvidam brahma paschat*. It is not merely the ‘I’ that has become all, but every one is the same all. The Self that is in me is not in me only. The assertion “*Aham brahmasmi*—I am Brahman” can be made by each centre of individuality in a similar manner. This is a larger realisation, says Sankara. It is a rise from the limitation of one’s individuality up to the cosmic Reality of one’s essence, with a simultaneous awareness of the identity of every self, the so-called multiplicity of selves, with this single Self. So it is the total of all the selves in an indistinguishable mass rising to a single comprehension of the great Absolute Brahman. This is the actual inner import of the meditation which is called Sandilya-Vidya.

## **SAMVARGA-VIDYA**

Samvarga-Vidya is the *vidya* that was taught by the sage Raikva and is contained in Chapter Four, Sections 1 to 3 of the Upanishad. It is the nature of the subject that is indicated by the word *samvarga*, which is actually the process of absorption. The knowledge of the all-absorbing one is the actual meaning of Samvarga-Vidya. We are introduced into that which is all-absorbing. What is that? How is it taught? Let us see. The story is like this:

*Om. Janasrutir-ha pautrayanah sraddhadeyo bahudayi  
bahupakya asa, sa ha sarvata avasathan mapayan-cakre, sarvata  
eve me (annam) atsyantiti.*

There was a king called Janasruti who was supposed to be the great-grandson of the emperor perhaps called Janasruta. This Janasruti was a reputed ruler who was well known for his immense charity. He was a great giver and had immense faith in the act of giving. And he used to give in plenty. He was very happy that he was in a position to give much in charity. What is more, he gave with great respect. His kitchen was always active. He used to have a lot of food cooked in his kitchen so that he might give it free to people. Such a king was he. He had built several rest houses everywhere. He must have been a very good man to do so much charity. He maintained not only rest houses, but also *choultries*, inns, etc., built everywhere with the feeling that people would come and stay there and eat food in his name. “They will eat my food,” he used to say with great exaltation. Such a great king was, according to this Upanishad, not merely famous in the social or political sense, but also was an advanced soul inwardly. He was a highly religious person and spiritually well trained due to the purity of his mind, the goodness of his heart, and the great charities that he was doing. Thus, he was an exceptionally great person outwardly as well as inwardly.

*Atha ha hamsa nisayam atipetuh, taddhaivam hamso hamsam  
abhyuvada, ho ho’yi bhallaksa, bhallaksa, janasruteh  
pautrayanasya samam diva jyotir-atatam, tanma prasanksis-tat-  
tva ma pradhaksir-iti.*

The story tells us that perhaps on a hot summer night the king was sleeping on the terrace of his palace. He was lying on his couch and some swans were flying across the sky. One of the birds which was behind called to the one that was flying in front, “Oh, stupid one! Do not be careless.” It used the word *bhallaksa*. They

say *bhallaksa* means wide open-eyed, well-seeing. It is an ironical way of saying that you do not see things properly. “You have got big eyes, you can see well, but you are not seeing that some danger is ahead of you. Do not rush like this. There is the great king Janasruti just below you. His effulgence is rising to the skies and his glory is reaching up to the heavens, as it were. Do not cross this effulgence lest you should be burnt by this glory of his. He is such a great man and you are crossing him. Do not go carelessly with your eyes closed.” This was what the bird behind told the one that was flying in front.

*Tam u haparah pratyuvaca kam vara enam etat santam  
sayugvanam iva raikvam attheti. yo nu katham sayugva raikva  
iti.*

But, that other one which was told like this retorted back: “You are referring to some Janasruti whose effulgence is rising up, which I should not cross! Who is this Janasruti? What sort of man is this that you are speaking of, as if he is as great as Raikva with the cart? You speak as if this man is so great that his effulgence is going to the sky and I shall be burnt by the greatness and glory of this man. Who is this gentleman? What is he in comparison with that Raikva with the cart?”

This was the conversation that went on between the two birds that were flying above. The king heard how he was referred to by the two birds, the one praising him and the other saying that he did not deserve the praise because there was someone who was greater than him.

*Yatha krtaya vijitayadhareyah samyanti, evam enam sarvam  
tad-abhisameti, yat kinca prajah sadhu kurvanti, yastad-veda yat  
sa veda, sa mayaitad-ukta iti.*

In the play of dice, there are numbers marked on each face of the dice, number 1 in one face, number 2 in another, number 3 in the third, and number 4 in the fourth one. Now in this play of dice whoever casts the highest throw is called *krita*. He wins all the other ones. Four includes three, two and one. So he who has won the fourth throw has automatically won the other three also. He need not go on winning the other three one by one. The other three are automatically included in the fourth one which he has won.

In a similar manner, all the virtues that people do anywhere in this world are included in the virtue of this great person called Raikva. His virtue is like an ocean which swallows up all the dribbles, rivulets and rivers of the little virtues that other people do anywhere. So one can imagine what sort of person he must be. His goodness, greatness, virtue, righteousness is like an ocean which swallows all the other virtues of anybody, anywhere in this world.

We have got four ages called *krita*, *treta*, *dvapara* and *kali*. According to the traditional calculation of the calendar, *kali-yuga*—this present age in which we are living, sometimes called the iron age—is supposed to extend for 432,000 years. That is the duration of *kali-yuga*. Twice the duration of *kali-yuga* is the duration of *dvapara-yuga*. Thrice the duration is *treta-yuga*, and four times the duration is *krita-yuga*, which is the longest in duration. Its extent is such that it

includes all the other *yugas* in it. So, in comparison with these four ages *krita*, *treta*, *dvapara* and *kali*, the dice numbers in the dice play also are called by the names *krita*, *treta*, *dvapara*, and *kali*. This is only by way of example.

The point that is made out here is that Raikva was a very great person and Janasruti, the king, was nowhere before him. He was nobody compared to that great man. This was a pointed insult to the king no doubt, who was hearing it. He was all along feeling very happy and legitimately proud that he was doing his best in giving charity and leading a good life. But he was encountered with this very unpleasant conversation that went on in the sky between the birds. So he passed a restless night thinking over this matter as to what sort of person Raikva would be, where he was, and whether he could see him. “What is the use of my charity, what is the use of my virtues, if all this that I do is nothing in comparison with others who are still greater than me?”—thus Janasruti was thinking in his mind.

*Tadu ha janasrutih pautrayana upasusrava, sa ha sanjihana eva ksattaram uvaca, angare ha sa-yugvanam iva raikvam attheti, yo nu katham sa-yugva raikva iti.*

*Yatha krtaya vijitayadhareyah samyanti, evam enam sarvam tad-abhisameti, yat kinca prajah sadhu kurvanti, yas-tadveda yat sa veda, sa mayaitad ukta iti.*

Kings wake up in the morning hearing the sounds of beautiful music and bards singing their glory. Janasruti when he woke up in the morning heard his glories being sung in his palace. On this particular morning he was not pleased. He was grieved, very unhappy, indeed. “What is the use of this praise?” thought he. He called his attendant, *ksatta*, and asked, “Do you praise me in the same way as one praises Raikva with the cart?” The idea was that the attendant should go and find out where that man was, and tell him that the king wanted him. That attendant asked, “Master, who is this Raikva? You ask me to go and search for him?” In a mood of irritation, as it were, the king simply repeated the very words he heard from the bird. “Just as the fourth cast in the dice includes every other cast, all the virtues of people are included in the virtues of this person. Whatever anybody knows, he also knows and what he knows, that only others also know. This is the greatness of Raikva. There is nothing which he does not know, and no one can know what he does not know. Such a person you find out.” Well, very astounding indeed! The *ksatta*, the attendant, went in search of Raikva in all the cities and in all important places.

*Sa ha ksattanvisya navidam iti pratyeyaya, tam hovaca yatrare brahmanasyanvesana tad-enam arccheti.*

He could not find a man of that kind anywhere. Raikva with a cart could not be discovered. So he came back to the king and said, “I cannot find him.” The king said: “You search for such great people in cities and marketplaces? You should go to such places where great men live. Such men as Raikva will not live in cities. Go to solitary places, temples, river banks and such other sacred spots—isolated, sequestered regions. There alone such great people stay. Where knowers of Brahman would live, you know very well. Go there and search.”

*So'dhastac-chakatasya pamanam kasamanam upopavivesa, tam habhyuvada, tvam nu bagavah sa-yugva raikva iti; aham hyare iti ha pratijajne; sa ha ksatta, avidam iti pratyeyaya.*

So this attendant went and after much searching found, in some corner of some village, one poor man sitting under a cart, scratching himself as if he had no other work to do, with no one around him, looking very strange indeed. Such a grotesque-looking person this attendant saw. He suspected this must be Raikva, as he was sitting near a cart. It was difficult to make out the connection between him and the cart. Might be that was his only property. There are some people who move about with carts. They have no other property except a cart. Or, it might be by chance that he was sitting near a cart, but there must be some connection between him and the cart. Otherwise he would not be referred to as 'Raikva with the cart'. So naturally the attendant concluded that it belonged to him, and he was the person whom he was searching for.

Humbly and reverentially this attendant sat near the gentleman and asked him, "Are you Raikva with the cart?" "Yes fellow, I am that," he said in a very callous and careless manner.

So the attendant came back and told the king, "I have found him. He is in a corner of that village." The attendant might have told the name of that particular village.

*Tad u ha janasrutih parutrayanah sat-satavni gavam niskam asvatari-ratham tad-adaya praticakrame, tam habhyuvada.*

*Raikvemani sat satani gavam, ayam nisko'yam asvatarirathah, anu ma etam bhagavo devatam sadhi, yam devatam upassa iti.*

The king was very happy. He collected a lot of wealth and reverentially went to this great man sitting under a cart, scratching the eruptions on his skin. He took with him six hundred cows, a gold necklace, and a chariot driven by mules. He addressed Raikva: "O Great One, here are six hundred cows, here is a gold necklace, here is a chariot driven with mules. Please accept these things and initiate me into the meditation on the deity whose worship you are performing, and on whom you are meditating. I want to be initiated into the great *vidya* which you possess, knowledge of that deity whom you have known." The great man was not pleased. He did not accept those gifts, nor was he prepared to give any initiation.

*Tam u ha parah pratyuvaca, aha haretva, sudra, tavaiva saha gobhir-astv-iti; tad-u ha punar-eva janasrutih pautrayanah sahasram gavam niskam asvatari-ratham duhitaram tad-adaya praticakrame.*

"O Sudra, take back all these things, useless man," he said, as if he was not at all interested in them. "Get away from here. Take your cows, your chariot and gold necklace. Do not talk to me." This was what he said.

The word 'sudra' mentioned here has been a target of great discussion in the Brahmasutras as to whether Sudras can be initiated into Brahma-Vidya. This is

one of the points discussed in the *sutras* of Badarayana and much has been made of it by commentators. Sudra means a low caste belonging to the fourth category of the social order. Can such a person be initiated into Brahma-Vidya? Here is a context where the word 'sudra' occurs, and afterwards the person is initiated also. Well, the argument is very long and prolonged and it is not of much use to us to go into the intricacies. But the interpreters make out that 'sudra' does not mean a low-caste man, in this context. One who is sunk in grief is called a 'sudra'. This is the etymological meaning drawn out from the word 'sudra'. He was in great grief because he found that there was a person greater than him and his knowledge was very little compared to the knowledge of the other one. So he was sorrow-stricken and he rushed immediately in the direction in which he could get this knowledge. He was a king and a Kshatriya. How could you call him a Sudra? So 'sudra' here does not mean a low caste man of the fourth order, but is only a symbolic, metaphorical way of referring to that person, indicating that he came in sorrow, in search of knowledge. This point is irrelevant to our subject, but anyway I made mention of it because it has been discussed in great detail in the Brahmasutras.

The king was grief-stricken. He went again with a larger quantity of wealth. This time he came with new things. He came with one thousand cows instead of the previous six hundred, the gold necklace, the chariot driven with mules, and he brought his daughter also to be offered to Raikva.

There is something between the lines which the Upanishad is silent about. There is a sudden shift of emphasis to the main question, from the descriptions of the king coming to the great man with all these offerings. Raikva felt that there was some sincerity in the king and that he had done something which ordinarily a person would not do. He was trying to offer his daughter to him. No ordinary man would do that. So there must be some tremendous sincerity in this person. He had come here a second time. If he was not sincere, he would have got fed up and gone back. He was not like the rich man who went to Jesus Christ and who was asked to sell everything he had and come back, but never did come back, because he did not want to sell everything. Janasruti was a person who was very particular about the knowledge which he wanted to gain. So he made a proposal to offer that which ordinarily one would not offer. This was an occasion for Raikva to recognise the sincerity of this person.

*Tam habhyuvada, raikvedam sahasram gavam ayam nisko'yam  
asvatari-rathah, iym jayayam gramo yasmin-nasse anveva ma  
bhagavah sadhiti.*

"I have brought all these things. Will you kindly initiate me into the great deity on whom you are meditating, due to which you are so great that your glory is spreading to all the corners of the world? Will you kindly give this knowledge to me?" This was the prayer of the king.

There was another greater man than this king Janasruti and that was Janaka, who offered even himself as a servant to the great sage Yajnavalkya who initiated him into Brahma-Vidya. He offered the whole kingdom to the sage and he said, "Here I am as your slave." Such were our great kings in this country, who valued

the wisdom of Reality much more than temporal wealth, renown, and greatness in this world. To that category belonged Janasruti also.

*Tasya ha mukham upodgrhnan-nuvaca ajaharemah sudra  
anenaiva mukhenalapayisyatha iti, te haite raikvaparna nama  
mahavrsesu yatrasma uvasa tasmai hovaca.*

“With all this that you have brought before me as the means, you want me to speak! Well, I shall speak, recognising your honesty and sincerity of purpose,” said Raikva. The king was highly pleased at this condescending attitude of the great master and he gave him a set of villages in charity. The king said: “O great one, this village, in which you are seated here, is yours. I give it as a gift.”

It appears he gave several villages. Those villages are called Raikva-parna, after the name of this great man, Raikva, in the country of Mahavrisa. So Raikva became rich in one moment with land, gold, attendants, and whatnot. The king also became richer by becoming the disciple of the great Raikva. Now the initiation was given by Raikva, the great master to the disciple, King Janasruti, into the mystery of meditation on the all-absorbing Being. Because of the character of all-absorption, this great Being on which Raikva was meditating is called *Samvarga*. It is a peculiar Upanishadic term which implies the absorbent into which everything enters, that which sucks everything into itself. That is *Samvarga*. There is a great ‘wind’ that blows everything into itself. Into that Raikva initiated the king. This is not the ordinary wind that blows here. It is not an ill wind that does good to no one, but it is a tremendous ‘wind’, a symbolic term used in respect of the great Reality on which Raikva was meditating. His meditation was on that which withdraws everything into itself, which blows over everything, and absorbs everything into itself. Raikva then spoke of this great knowledge to Janasruti.

*Vayur-vava samvargah, yada va agnir-udvayati, vayum  
evapyeti, yada suryo’stam eti vayum evapyeti, yada candro’stam  
eti vayum evapyeti.*

Raikva said: “There is this great cosmic air or wind which is an absorbent of everything. Everything is absorbed into it, everything rises from it, everything is maintained in it, and everything goes back into it. When the fire subsides, it goes into it. It is absorbed into this great wind that absorbs everything into itself. It is on this *Vayu*, the great deity, that I am meditating.”

When you blow a lamp, where does the flame go? No one knows where it goes. That it is not the ordinary wind which is spoken of here, is clear from the fact that Raikva refers to it as an absorbent of even the sun himself. The sun cannot be absorbed by the ordinary wind. He says even the sun is absorbed when he moves in any particular direction, or sets. His rising in one place is equal to setting in another place. So the point is: what is it that makes the universe rotate or revolve in this manner? It is here referred to as cosmic ‘wind’ that blows in particular directions, compelling the planets, the stars and the sun to direct their courses in a given manner. Due to the fear of this Being, they are moving in a symmetrical fashion. The planets move around the sun, the sun is rushing towards the Milky

Way, and so on and so forth. This is what we hear even in our modern scientific parlance. The fire burns due to fear of It and the rain falls due to fear of It. The sun also shines due to fear of this all-absorbent Air. Death performs its duty due to fear of It. This is the controlling central government, as it were, which is the object of meditation. The sun sets into It. If the sun and the moon rise and set and move in their orbits and maintain their position in a perfect manner, it is all due to this great Being, the absorbent of everything which, by its very existence, controls the movements of all things.

*Yadapa ucchusyanti, vayum-evapiyanti, vayur-hyevaitan sarvan samvrnkte, ity-adhidaivatam.*

When the water dries up, it goes there. It is this Being which absorbs the water into itself and makes water vanish into nothing, as it were. From the objective universal side, this is how the great deity, the cosmic air which blows everything into itself, is described.

Now from the internal microcosmic side also, it is being described.

*Athadhyatam prano vava samvargah, sa yada svapiti pranam eva vag-apyeti, pranam caksuh pranam srotram pranam manah prano hyevaitan sarvan samvrnkte iti.*

Just as in the universal it is called air which absorbs everything into itself and dries up every effect into itself as the cause, so in the individual also it works in a similar manner, and it is called *prana*. When you go to sleep the mind is withdrawn by the action of the *prana*. The *prana* draws the mind into itself. The speech and the senses are all drawn into it. Every organ, whether it is eye, or ear, or any other which operates in the waking condition, is also withdrawn. All these are regulated by this Supreme Principle which works as *prana* inside. It controls everything and draws everything into itself. So it works outside and also inside. It is the *brahmanda* and the *pindanda*. It is the macrocosm and also the microcosm.

*Tau va etau dvau samvargau, vayur-eva devesu, pranah pranesu.*

These are the two great absorbents in the whole cosmos. Inwardly it is the *prana* that works as the absorbent of all effects into itself, and outwardly it is air, the cosmic *prana*, the *sutratman*, *hiranyagarbha* which absorbs everything into itself. These two have to be brought together in conjunction in this meditation, as is the case with the Sandilya-Vidya to which we have made reference earlier. The inward and outward have to come together in meditation and be envisaged as one single Reality. Among the gods it is *Vayu* and among the senses and the internal functionaries it is the *prana*. This is the initiation.

The initiation is now over and Janasruti must have understood the import of it, as we are told nothing further as to what happened to him later on.

In ancient times, initiations into mysteries of this kind were not regarded as mere teachings in the ordinary sense. One would be surprised in modern times at the very easy way in which the Supreme Knowledge was communicated to people by the great masters through such simple instructions as this. Even if we hear these



things one thousand times, we are not going to be benefited by it. The point is, how it is taught, who teaches, and to whom it is taught. What is taught of course we know very well. But the other factors should not be ignored. The receptive capacity of the disciple, the intellectual calibre that is behind it, the need felt for this knowledge by the individual concerned, and the circumstances which govern the entire process of initiation are more important factors than a mere parrot-like repetition of the words. Initiation is not mere utterance of words. It is a communication of an energy, a force. It is the will of the Guru, as it were, entering into the will of the disciple, where both have to be on the same level. Otherwise, there cannot be initiation. This is a short initiation, the meaning of which cannot be clear outwardly by mere reading the words thereof. But, it is a fund of wisdom taking the mind deep into the mysteries of creation and the Reality as such, into which the great Raikva, the so-called poor man, initiated the great King Janasruti Pautrayana, about which another story is mentioned here which we shall now take up.