



THE CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

PART-III

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Narada's discipleship under Master Sanatkumara is described in the seventh chapter of the Chhandogya Upanishad. It begins with a proclamation that learning and proficiency in the arts and the sciences are not adequate to the purpose, since one can be restless and lack peace of mind in spite of this proficiency in the secular sciences and the arts. The reason is simple—knowledge is bifurcated from its content in the usual sciences and the branches of learning. The content is outside; and knowledge is a theoretical structural pattern of the intellect, which corresponds to the content like a mould, which corresponds to the material that is poured into it—but the material is different from the mould. This was the fate of Narada, a great man indeed—a celestial—but he accepted that he had no peace of mind, for he had no knowledge of the Atman.

The Atman is the content of knowledge. Here, when the Atman becomes the object of knowledge, it becomes inseparable from knowledge. This is the great subject to which Narada had to be introduced, gradually. It is a very difficult thing indeed to understand how knowledge can become one with its own object. In the ordinary parlance, in a world with the different branches of learning, the object is different from the knowledge. We have only information about the objects outside, but the knowledge does not become one with the object.

Atman is the Self of all beings. Because of the fact that it is the Self of all beings, it is the Self of even knowledge, and so it cannot stand outside knowledge. But this is a terrible feat for the intellect to comprehend, and therefore the mind of the student has to be taken gradually from acceptable degrees of reality to more and more comprehensive ones, very carefully, without missing a single step in the ladder of the process of ascent. This is exactly what was the method adopted by the Sage Sanatkumara. "Whatever you've learnt is only a name." This was the final decision or dictum placed before Narada by Sanatkumara. Name in the sense that it is a linguistic information, an intellectual knowledge, a theoretical comprehension, but it is bereft of its content. Yet it has a value of its own since it

has some sort of correspondence, as has been already pointed out, with its content.

It is not organically one with its object, yet it bears some sort of a correspondence, and this is the help that even 'name' can give to us, and so our learnings are not absolutely useless, though they are not adequate to the ultimate purpose. They are useful in the sense that they give a point of understanding, they become pointers on the way, like lamps on the street which cannot walk with us but can tell us where the way is. Such was the essential significance of the *nama* or the name, which was of course far removed from the highest content of knowledge, yet very necessary at the initial step.

From this stage, the mind of Narada is taken gradually to the higher faculties and the realities. The senses are, to a large extent, internal to the objects of our ordinary learning because they influence the very fact of our knowledge to a large extent, on account of their influence even upon the mind and the intellect. And higher than the senses is the mind, with all its functions of thinking, feeling, willing etc. It is very well known that the mind is the controller and the synthesiser of the faculties of senses. Higher than the mind is the intellect with its tremendous capacity of rationalisation, decision, and determination.

Now here comes a crucial point where the highest faculty available to us, the faculty of understanding, leaves us in a very hopeless predicament. We still remain individuals, isolated from the world outside. So while we rise higher and higher, internally through the faculties with which we are endowed—from the senses to the mind, from the mind to the intellect—we are now to take a jump across the ocean, as Hanuman is supposed to have done on earlier days, and grasp the object of knowledge with which we have to get affiliated in a vital sense. So from the faculties—mind, intellect etc.—we are taken to the objective side of nature, the elements—earth, water, fire, air, ether—from which we are apparently separated, external to which we are here, as individuals, over which we have no control. The five elements are superior to us in every way. But this has happened on account of the segregation of our being from the being of the elements.

This is a methodology adopted even in the Bhagavadgita—there is an ascent individually up to the sixth chapter. Then there is a sudden jump from the individual to the universal, a subject which is explained in the next six chapters, and then the integration. Some such method seems to have been adopted here also by Sanatkumara in his instruction to Narada. From the integration of the personality there is a leap from the individual to the universal elements, and then a further rising up through the degrees of universal consciousness. Though the common phraseology of the Vedanta—*Virat*, *Hiranyagarbha*, *Ishvara*, *Brahman*, etc.—are not to be found in these sections of the Upanishad, we can read the meanings into these descriptions given by the implications thereof. And if we go deep into the significance of the teachings, we would realise that we are pointed upwards, gradually, even in the universal level, until the consciousness is taken to the level of an all-comprehensiveness of its own existence, which is designated in the Upanishads as '*Bhuma*' or the fullness of being.

Narada wanted to know what this ‘fullness’ is. Even before he asked the question, the answer was given: “Where you see, hear, think or understand nothing outside you, nothing else external to you, that is the *Bhuma*. Wherever there is an empirical perception and an empirical cognition of externals, that is a finitude of experience.” We are all in a finite world. So as our experience is finite, our achievement in this finite world would also be finite. Whatever is finite cannot contain the infinite within it. *Yo vai bhuma tad-amrtam, atha yadalpam tan-martyam*—It is perishable, that which is finite; the imperishable is the Infinite. This is a transcendent, philosophical doctrine, which in its transcendence engulfs within itself the entire creation—a great achievement of the Upanishadic Seers indeed where in a so-called soaring into the highest reaches of experience, they absorbed into their experience everything that is even the lowest. The *adhidaiva*, *adhibhuta* and *adhyatma* come together in a fraternal embrace and they no more stand isolated, one from the other. The universal, the external and the internal are not separate; they are three facets of the experience of a single reality. This is the *Bhuma* into which the great Narada’s mind is introduced by the still greater master, Sanatkumara.

Once this knowledge is gained, one becomes a master of oneself, one attains to *atmaswarajya*. The real freedom is the freedom of the Self—that is the meaning of *atmaswarajya*. It is the state of self-emperorship, a ruling over one’s own Self. The greatest achievement and the greatest victory is the achievement and the victory over one’s own Self, because all victory pales and vanishes into nothing before this victory of Self, the reason being simple. The Self is the determining and conditioning rule of everything that is experienced externally or objectively. Here is a mastery over the conditioning factor itself, which is ordinarily impossible. One cannot rule the ruler himself, but this is what is actually to be done. The ruler is the Self and that Self is to be ruled now, and that achievement is *atmaswarajya*. One who has attained to this experience, one who has reached this mastery is a master of all beings, all creation. *Tesam saravesu lokesu-akamacaro*—He has free access to every realm of being, because the Self over which he has gained mastery is the Self of all the cosmos. To such a person, everything arises from the Self. One need not ask for things, beg from people or expect anything from outside. Everything arises from one’s own Self. You do not go to a shop to purchase things—your shop is inside your own Self and everything rises there. You have only to think it and it is there. It does not come from outside. It is capable of rising from its bottom-most being, which is the Self of all things. Most incomprehensible achievement, again.

This achievement is not an ordinary one; it is an extraordinary feat of consciousness, the attainment of the *Bhuma* or the Supreme Perfection. Not ordinary mortals can practise this Yoga of the *Bhuma*. It requires tremendous discipline, which is simply pointed out in the few words of the Upanishad as *aharasuddhau* and *sattvasuddhih*: The purification of the diet of the senses, the mind and the intellect. The purification of everything that is received by us from the environment and that which is purified, is nothing but that which is conducive to the attainment of the Absolute. Someone asked me today, “What is pure and what is good?” Well, the pure and the good are that which is in

conformity of the law of the Absolute, whereas that which is dissonant from the law of the Absolute is not the pure and not the good. So this is a general definition, but it has to be applied to particular cases with great caution. All the knots of the heart, the knots of ignorance, the ties that bind us to the earth, get broken by the efflorescence of consciousness into this great comprehension of the *Bhuma*, the Absolute. This is the great instruction, this is the great initiation, this is the great knowledge and wisdom given by master Sanatkumara, the sage, to Narada, who implored him for this initiation. So, this is the subject of the seventh chapter of the Chhandogya Upanishad.

The eighth chapter is very interesting, with its kaleidoscopic subjects comprehending many things—all very interesting things indeed. It is interesting in the sense that it starts at the very beginning itself with a very startling statement—that the outside is also in the inside. The space outside is inseparable from the space inside. The *akasa* outside is the same as the *akasa* within. Whatever is in the space outside in the world, is also in the space within—the thunder and the lightening and the rain and the sun and the moon and whatnot. All these things that we see outside are inside us in a microscopic, microform which is indistinguishable. The *pindanda* or the subjective individual is a specimen of the cosmos; it is a cross-section of the universe. Everything is inside this individual—every atom of creation contains the whole cosmos.

We can find the whole tree in a seed. Likewise is the entire universe contained in a little atomic structure—why not the individual that we are? Everything is within us, but this ‘within’ is a difficult thing to comprehend. We can never, with a stretch of imagination, understand what this ‘within’ means. The Upanishad is never tired of insisting upon this withinness of consciousness—the internality of experience, a term which can be easily misconstrued on account of the habituation of our mind to understand internality in a physical sense. We always understand the internal to be that which is inside a room, within the four walls, contained within the limits of some physical substance. But this is a spiritual, mystical, metaphysical inwardness which is not easy to understand. However much we think, we cannot know what ‘within’ means. We always say, “The Atman is inside me”. Well, we say this in the same sense as we say a person is inside a room. It is not like that. It is an inwardness of consciousness in a philosophical, metaphysical, spiritual sense. It is called ‘inner’ because of the ‘selfhood’ of all beings, which it is. The Atman is the inner reality of all things. It is impossible to explain what the Atman is, what inwardness means, what the Self means. It requires a tremendous purification of the mind even to grasp the meaning of these terms. It is not a spatial enclosure that is indicated by the term ‘inwardness’, or the internal *akasa* here. It is a supreme subjectivity of consciousness, incapable of externality of any kind—that is the internal *akasa*, *yaddhaar-akasa*. Everything is contained here—the past, the present and the future. We can see the Mahabharata battle, the war of Napoleon, and all the ancient phenomena of nebular dust coming together into the formation of this physical universe—all taking place inside our own heart. And the spaceless and timeless reality that it is, it can reveal anything at any time—the past, the present as well as future.

Everything is within us, but we cannot know this on account of *anrita* covering *satya*, as the Upanishad puts it. Falsehood is covering the reality of truth—this is the reason we cannot understand how it is possible for everything to be contained within one's own self. The falsehood is nothing but the activity of the senses and the mind in the wake of the senses. The externality, the attraction, the connection of the senses with objects, the urge of the personality to move outside—this is the *anrita*. It is *anrita*, it is false, it is untrue, it is not real because it is not in consonance with the nature of the Atman. It is an Indivisible Universality. That is the Atman, and therefore any kind of movement outside in an apparent spatial and temporal context would not be in conformity with the nature of the Atman. Therefore, it is called *anrita*—it is false. But we are wedded to this kind of activity of the mind and the senses in terms of the outside objects which are in space and in time; therefore we cannot know what this Atman is, which is not in space and not in time. But once we grasp this subtlety, once we know what this Atman is, we become the Atman: *Brahmavid brahmaivai hovati*—to know the Atman is to be the Atman. It is not knowing something as we know objects.

The effect or the consequence of this realisation of the Atman is tremendous. All wishes are fulfilled at one stroke. This is the Upanishad's proclamation. Very solacing indeed—no desire remains there unfulfilled afterwards. Whatever we think, whatever we feel, whatever we will by our volition, everything manifests itself instantaneously because of the *satya sankalpa* of the Atman, because of its freedom or *anrita* from falsehood of sensory activity.

We are deceived by the senses and made to move along a wrong track by the mind and the intellect. When we extricate ourselves from the clutches of the intellect and the mind and the senses, we stand on the footstool of the Atman and behold the vista of eternity. Everything arises to such a person at once—that is the result that follows from such a realisation. The Atman is a bridge, as it were—it is a connecting link between the eternal and the temporal, it is in the world transcendent, and it is also in the world here. The immanent and the transcendent are identical. It is that which by its symmetry of being, acts as the law of this creation. The great regularity that we see in the manifestation of the world, the systematic way in which the world is working, the methodology that is followed by the planets and the solar system, all nature in its completeness—all this is due to the symmetrical being of the Atman. This is the connecting link between one and the other, and its very 'Being' is the manifestation of its law—such is the Atman. It is a great terror individually—an uplift of thunderbolt, as the Upanishad itself puts it. It does not command by word of mouth, it does not order as a boss does—it merely is, like the sun shining in the distant sky. The sun does not speak, and without the sun speaking or saying anything, the planets revolve and around the sun in a very methodical manner, in a very precise, mathematical fashion. Some such way is the working of the Atman. Indeed, perhaps, its existence is the supreme symmetry of creation.

The Upanishad leaves us here and takes us to another subject, namely the relationship between the individual and the Universal, by way of an explanation of the nervous centres or the *nadis* in our personality. These *nadis* are very subtle nerve currents, not necessarily physical, though they also have their physical

counterparts. They are astral, very subtle indeed, and their in relationship to the outer world, particularly, they are influenced by the sun's rays, says the Upanishad. The various colours apparently visible in the contents of these nerve currents are due to their being influenced by the rays of the sun. The sun's rays are never sleeping—they are always vigilant, they are active throughout the day and night, and they impinge upon the personality of an individual. They enter into the individual, they influence the nerves, and go back once again to the sun, thus establishing a living connection between the sun and the individual. At the time of death, the soul is supposed to move at once through the rays of the sun; not the soul of every person, but the soul of one who has this knowledge mentioned. Then there is the rising of the spirit through the central nerve current called the *sushumna*, the *brahma nadi* passing through the crown of the head, and then the soul reaches the abode of the sun, who is regarded as a passage to the eternal abode of Brahma, or *Brahma-loka*.

Then comes the interesting conversation between Prajapati the Creator and the disciples—Indra and Virochana, whereby we are given a very interesting description of the states of consciousness, as we have it for example in the Mandukya Upanishad—waking, dreaming, sleep, and the super-conscious state of *turiya*. The waking consciousness, the dreaming state and the sleep condition are not to be taken literally on their surface value. They are only indicators of the presence of a Reality, but they themselves are not Reality. In our waking life, the Universal Reality acts, no doubt, through our sense organs. It is present in the dream state also, and it is present in the sleeping condition, but notwithstanding the fact that it is present, it cannot be discovered. We cannot know how the Atman is manifest here in this waking condition of ours, because of the externalising activity of the senses. The senses drag the consciousness of the individual to an object outside, and make us so much interested in an external something that we are likely to miss the presence of the immanent consciousness within us. When we look at an object through the eyes, it is the Atman that is operating through the eyes. But the pull of the senses in an external fashion is so vehement that we are dragged together with the current of this pull, and we are conscious only of this pull, not the substance that is behind the activity of being pulled. We lose consciousness of ourselves because of the pull exerted by the objects and the insistence of the senses to move towards the objects. We cannot know the Atman in the waking condition on account of the weddedness to external activity and getting identified with the activity of the senses. Nor can we know it in the dream condition, because whatever happens in the waking state happens in the dream state also, only in a different order of reality. There is the same space and time and objects, and the same difficulty that we have in the waking state. And the sleep condition, of course, is an oblivion, completely—we know nothing there. As consciousness is practically obliterated from experience, we are unable to take advantage of this state.

The Reality is *asarira*—it is beyond bodily individuality. There is an embodiment of some kind even in sleep, as there is embodiment in dream and in the waking state. There is a physical embodiment in waking, an astral or subtle one in dream and a casual one in deep sleep state—but they are all embodiments only. But,

Pure Consciousness, which is Reality, is disembodied. As long as one is embodied, one cannot be free from the experience of pleasure and pain due to the fact of coming in contact with the various objects of sense. *Asariram vava santam na priyapriye sprsatah*. The pleasure and the pain of life cannot affect the Atman which is transcendent, because there is no relativity of experience there in the Atman—it is a non-relative Absolute. When such knowledge arises, there is a sudden upsurge of consciousness from the bodily individuality. It rises from the waking, dream and sleep condition and stands in its own status, the Pristine Purity that it is—in its Absolute character. This is a transcendent state of the Atman.

Now the word ‘transcendent’ does not mean that it is cut off from the world of experience. Just as when we say that it is the fourth state of consciousness, we do not mean that there is no connection with the three states. It is present even in the three states. The Eternal is in the temporal, but it is involved in a particular manner in the temporal activities and it is engaged in a particular manner in the sleeping, dreaming and waking conditions. It is implied in its experiences, but it cannot be discovered directly on account of its association with the bodies—causal, subtle and the grossest. The transcendent state is therefore not literally transcendent in the sense of a rising above what is below, but it is a comprehensiveness of Reality. Due to the defect of language and the insufficiency of words, we use such terms as ‘transcendence’, etc. It is really not outside anything, nor is it inside anything. The question of outsideness and insideness does not arise here because it is not in space and not in time—such is the nature of the Atman.

This Great Being which is the Atman, the subject of this analysis made by Prajapati for the sake of initiating Indra and Virochana, is the great objective of all Upanishadic Teaching. The knowledge of the Atman is the subject of the Upanishads, and it is at once the knowledge of Brahman because of the fact that the Atman is the Atman of everyone—it is the Self of everything. Naturally it is all-pervading, it is All-Being. In its capacity as the internal being of every individual, it is sometimes called the Atman; but in its capacity of the All-Atman or the Self of every being, it is called Brahman, because it is all-inclusive. This is practically the conclusion of the eighth chapter. But, before coming to a close, the Upanishad makes a remark, casually, that whatever even the senses perceive is actually the Atman only. When the eyes see, when the ears hear, when the mind thinks, it is the Atman that is functioning. It is not the eyes that see or the ears that hear or the mind that thinks, because they are only instruments of the function of this internal reality which is the Atman. It is the Atman that beholds things in space, and it is the Atman that is beheld also by itself. In *Brahma-loka*, the faculty of perception is the mind only—not the senses—because there is a greater magnitude of interconnection and interrelatedness of perception in *Brahma-loka*. The originals of all things are in *Brahma-loka*; the reflections only are in this world. So there is an intuitive grasp of things at once by the faculty of ‘Being’ itself in *Brahma-loka*—this is a fact also made out in this section of the Upanishad.

Very interestingly and very pertinently we are told that we have to rise through various stages of life, the orders of one's life, for the purpose of the acquisition of this knowledge. We cannot get this knowledge by a sudden jump to the sky; a very cautious movement is called for. The wisdom of the student lies in the capacity to recognise in direct experience the state in which one actually is, and from that particular state, one should rise. This gradual rise of the aspiring spirit is done through the *asramas* or the stages of life as they are called: *brahmacharya*, *garhasthya*, *vanaprastha*, *sannyasa*. As we have noted earlier, it does not mean that only *sannyasa* is the spiritual apex of one's aspiration. Every stage of life is a necessary step in the ascent of the soul spiritually. The whole evolution of the universe is spiritual. There is no such thing as material evolution or mere biological evolution as people wrongly call it. It is spiritual in the sense that there is a single objective or aim behind every act of the individual and every stage of life through which one passes and every phase of the evolution of the world. We lose sight of the central aim and then we call it the physical, chemical and biological, etc. The central purpose is the recognition of the Selfhood of all beings in the Absolute, and for that purpose it is that everything is restless. If the planets move and sun shines and we breathe here and work hard every day, it is for this purpose—there is no other purpose in the whole of creation. And so, when these stages of life are consciously lived, they become spiritual *sadhana*. So the stages of *brahmacharya*, *garhasthya*, *vanaprastha*, *sannyasa*—they are all necessary stages of self-discipline and self-development, as is the case with an educational career or an university.

Every stage is important. We cannot say the lesser is unspiritual or non-educational. Likewise is the importance given to every step in the ascent of the soul, and the process of self-control is to be undergone to the extent possible, under given conditions of life, in every stage of being—its crowning edifice being reached in the stage of *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*, where the senses and the mind are withdrawn into the Self and this practice should continue till death. *Yavadaisham*—You should not be too eager to know the Atman. “I have meditated for three years and nothing comes.” Why should it come? It has its own way of working, and you know that maturity does not take place in one day. Everything has its own way; all the factors have to be considered. The whole universe acts in our spiritual practice. When we meditate, when we do spiritual *sadhana*, it is not only we who are doing it, but the whole world is collaborating with us. There is no such thing as individual *sadhana*—every *sadhana* is universal. If I meditate, my contact with the world is established at once; I set the whole world in vibration and everyone begins to feel what I am doing.

Thus it is that it is important to remember one's relation with things, with the whole creation, as it were, when one enters the path of *sadhana*. Nothing is unnecessary in this world; nothing is rubbish, and nothing is disconnected from spiritual practice. This is the background of this great injunction that we have to pass through the stages of life. First of all, as already pointed out through the stages of self-integration individually, then cosmically, then absolutely. Then we do not come back: *Na ca punnar avartate, na ca punnar avartate*. This again is a very difficult thing to understand. *Yad gattva naivartante na ca punar*

avartate, anavratti saddat, anvratti saddat. These are certain dominant ringing tones in some of the scriptures which meaning is difficult to understand. “You do not come back.” Even many sincere seekers do not understand the meaning of this declaration of the scripture, “I do not come back”. They feel a great sorrow that perhaps one has to think thrice before going there. Because, if one does not come back, what happens to the glorious values and magnificence of this world? This is a stupidity which does not leave us till the end. When we say “you do not come back”—to give you a gross example it is like telling a healthy man, “you do not fall sick again”. Would you like to be again sick? And will you be sorry if I tell you that you are healthy, you will never fall sick? Or when you wake up, I will tell you that once again you will not have this fantastic dream that you had earlier—a few tigers etc, in dream—you will not have such foolish dreams; you will be very happy in your waking consciousness.

“You will not come back” means that you will not have again this sorrow of the false life you are living now. The life that we live today is a false life; it is utterly disconnected from reality; it is a misery to the core. It is hell itself, if you actually understand what it is. This you will not get again. You will be absolutely free, you will be in the eternal daylight of the Absolute—*Takridivaa tohi brahma-loka*. This is the goal of life, this is the teaching of the Chhandogya Upanishad.

Harih Om Tat Sat