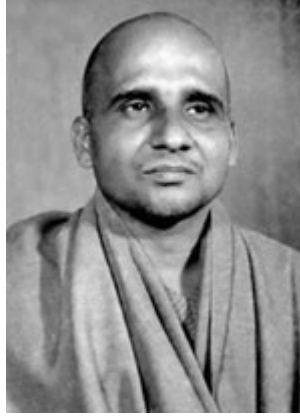




THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

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CHAPTER V

First Brahmana (contd.)

This instruction which was communicated to the *Devas*, *Manushyas* and *Asuras* - gods, men and demons - by the single letter *Da* repeated three times, meaning *Damyata*, *Datta*, *Dayadhvam* - be self-controlled, be charitable and be compassionate is applicable to all mankind. This is like a thunder of teaching. *Stanayitnuh*: A 'roaring sound'. This message of Prajapati is not merely an ancient one; it is an eternal one. This is what the Upanishad tries to make out because it was not intended for only a particular time in creation, but is a teaching for everyone. *Evaisa daivs vag anuvadati stanayitnuhda, da, da iti, damyata, datta, dayadhvam iti, tad etat trayam sikset, damam, danam, dayam*: 'This is a Divine teaching, a supernatural message'. *Daivi vag anuvadati*: Like a thunder coming from the clouds in the sky. Like the thunder-clap you hear during the monsoon, this thunder-clap of message comes from God Himself, as it were, in the form of a mere sound 'Da' repeated several times. In fact all instruction is comprehended in this teaching. That is why so much importance has been given to it in the Upanishad.

Let us study further the three difficulties mentioned earlier which have to be overcome before one realises the aim of one's perfection. The difficulties are the limitations of one's own personality. There are a variety of limitations and many permutations and combinations of these. But they all fall broadly into three major groups. The urge of the mind to go towards objects - this is one difficulty. The mind is always so engrossed in things that it cannot find time to think of itself. The mind has no time to think of itself. All its time is taken away by objects.

This is a great problem before us. There is not one who can escape this difficulty. We always think of something or the other, but never our own thought. Thought is always directed towards something else. This urge of the mind towards an object outside is prevented from working havoc by the practice of self-restraint. Self-restraint is nothing but the withdrawal of the mind from its impetuous movement towards objects outside. The mind runs towards external things for reasons multifarious.

It is not for a single reason that the mind goes towards objects. It has different reasons at different times, and different objects call for its attention under different circumstances. So the urge of the mind, the impulse of the mind, the force of the mind towards external objects, the inclination of the individual towards anything that is outside, like the inclination of the river towards the ocean, is a problem and that too a very serious one. Because of this externalising impulse of the mind, the attempt at universalisation miserably fails. When there is an urge for externalisation, how can there be universalisation! The universal impulse is the outcome of a sublimation of the other impulses whether they be outgoing or ingoing. So the outgoing impulse of the mind which is called desire in ordinary language is a psychological urge felt from within for external things. It need not necessarily be an unholy desire, it can also be a so-called holy desire; it can be anything for the matter of that; it can be very pious in its intention; very religious in its motive, but it is all the same an externalised urge and it can be a counterblast to your aspiration for the universal. As unholy things bind, so holy things can also bind if they are not in consonance with the ultimate aspiration for Universal Being. This powerful expression of finitude of our nature known as desire can be held in check by self-restraint as indicated by the teaching *Dama* implied in the first 'Da.'

The second difficulty with us is the desire to appropriate things. Greed is ingrained in everyone's mind. It is not merely the trader, the miser, or the shopkeeper who is greedy. Greed can take a very subtle form. A desire to keep everything is a form of greed. 'It is a very beautiful thing made in Bavaria, I would like to have it'. 'Why do you like it?' Well, it is a tendency. Anything you see anywhere, you want to appropriate and keep, not that they are necessary. So greed is a kind of urge of the mind towards appropriation of things which are not really necessary for the maintenance of one's life. If they are absolutely essential for the maintenance of your psycho-physical existence, they are permissible as necessary evils at least. But if they are not necessary for your existence and you can exist even without them and comfortably too from the point of your ultimate aim of life, then of course it would not be at all permissible to keep them. So greed is another expression of our finitude. This we have seen is to be kept in check by practice of charity.

Then we have a very peculiar trait in us of finding pleasure in the sorrow of others. It looks strange. How can one find pleasure in the grief of another? But this trait is present in every person. This is the cruel element in us, the demon

working within us. The *Asura* is right here within us, not only in the nether regions. He is not in the army of Ravana or Hiranyakashipu merely. Any tendency in us to see others punished; put behind bars; hung up with chains or sent to the gaol; any tendency in us to see the subdual of others, our vindictive attitude, the attitude of reaping vengeance, whatever be the reason behind it; whatever be the justification behind it, is the *Asura* element within us. If you can be happy when others are made unhappy, you are a demon. You are not even a human being. This feeling has to be checked by practice of mercy. These are the three terrible traits within us - the general impetuous urge of the mind to go to any external object especially when it is an object of what you call enjoyment or pleasure, the tendency of the mind to appropriate things more and more, and the tendency of the mind to see the grief of another, sadistic instinct is the word that is used in psychoanalysis, which is the *Asura* instinct. How can you have an aspiration for the Universal when there is the presence of even one of these? All of them are never absent at any time! Sometimes one is predominantly present, sometimes two, sometimes all the three, but never are all of them absent! Impossible! So comes the importance of this great teaching - *Dama*, *Dana* and *Daya* for the subdual of the urges of personality, for the purpose of the fructification of the aspiration for the Supreme Universal. *Damyata*, *datta*, *dayadhvam iti, tad etat trayam 'sikset*: These are the three types of advice that we have to imbibe, take in and learn from elders. These three instructions, self-restraint, charity and mercy are the three great virtues everyone has to acquire!

Now, as we have observed earlier, the fifth chapter of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad abounds in certain meditations, not the type of meditations which we have already studied in the first, second, third and fourth chapters, but another type altogether which we may call symbolic meditations. You can take a particular object, external or internal or a particular concept or idea as representing the great object of your spiritual aspiration. That can be considered as a fit instrument for your meditation. How can you meditate on Brahman? You have not seen Brahman, therefore you cannot think of Brahman and therefore you cannot meditate on Brahman. Hence, the scriptures, especially the Upanishads, give us certain hints as to how we can raise the status of our thoughts from the lower to the higher, gradually by *Upasana* and symbolic meditation. The secret of meditation is one-pointedness. This is an essential feature that we have to remember. Ultimately and finally it matters little as to what is the object upon which we are meditating. What is important is how we are meditating, what is our attitude towards the object of meditation and what are the thoughts that come to the mind during the time of meditation. What you are concentrating upon is secondary, ultimately, because everything and anything in this world can become a symbol for meditation. Just as by touching any branch of a tree, you can go to the trunk of the tree, just as by rowing along any river in the world, you can reach the ocean, just as any road can take you finally to Delhi because they are all interconnected, likewise any object can take you to the Absolute, because any object in the world is but a part of the cosmic body. If you touch one finger of the body you have touched the body as a matter of fact, and

you can reach upto any other part of the body and even the whole body by merely grasping this little part. So the purpose is to hold on to the concept of the whole of which the symbol forms a part. Your intention is not to cling merely to the part or to the symbol. Just as when you take a boat in the Ganga and your intention is to reach Ganga Sagar in the Bay of Bengal and then from the Bay of Bengal to go to the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, you do not want to merely rest here in this very area, so you go further and further, rowing down and ultimately reach the Ocean, even so when you contemplate an object of meditation, the purpose is not to cling to the finitude or the shape of that object, but to convert it into a symbol or a pathway leading to that whole of which it is an integral part and to which it points; of which it is a symbol. From this point of view, anything that is dear to you as a philosophical concept or a religious ideal can be taken as an object of meditation. This is called the *Ishta* in ordinary parlance. The *Ishta* is that which is dear to your heart, not in a sensuous sense but in a religious and spiritual sense. It is that which you regard as fit enough to attract your attention entirely for the purpose of spiritual illumination and experience.

Some such symbols for meditation are mentioned in the following sections. The symbols mentioned here are not usual ones. They are very uncommon. They are not things which you have heard of in any book, neither are they easy of concentration because they are the ideas of ancient Masters who lived thousands of years ago and whose vision of things was a little different from the vision of things we have in the 20th century. So, while it may be a little difficult for us to sum up all the ideas that they have expressed through these passages due to our modernised way of thinking, yet if we deeply ponder over the significance and the important spirit behind the teaching, we will find that any of these can be a fit symbol or aid for meditation to anyone of us.

Third Brahmana

BRAHMAN AS THE HEART

1. esa praja-patir yad hrdayam, etad brahma, etad sarvam, tad etat try-aksaram; hr-da-yam iti. hr ity ekam aksaram; abhiharanty asmai svas canye ca, ya evam veda; da ity ekam aksaram, dadatyasmai svas canye ca ya evam veda; yam, ity ekam aksaram; eti svargam lokam ya evam veda.

'This heart within us is God Himself', thus begins this passage. *Esa praja-patir yad hrdayam*. Of all things inside us, the most inscrutable is the heart. It cannot be understood easily. The word used here in Sanskrit is *Hrdaya*, a word with three letters, *hr*, *da* and *ya* representing together the word heart. The heart is one thing for the physician, the doctor, the biologist or the biochemist. For him, the heart is that particular organic part of the body which pumps blood and supplies energy to the lungs and to the different parts of the body. This is what is called the heart in ordinary language, but it is another thing when used in a

symbolic sense e.g. ‘I cannot understand your heart’; ‘yes, I understand your heart’. When we use such expressions as these, we do not mean the physicist’s or the biochemist’s or the physician’s heart. We mean the feelings within, the deepest motives within, the intentions inside and the spirit of the person. So, the Upanishad especially takes the spirit into consideration when it defines *Hrdaya* or heart as the essence of a person.

The heart is an object for meditation. By understanding the heart you can understand everything because it is in the heart you are located, you are seated, you are rooted. Your heart is you. What your heart is, that is your being. Even in ordinary life we seem to appreciate this point of view. Your heart is superior to every other faculty of yours. Even the ratiocinating faculty can be subordinated to the feelings of the heart. The heart has its reasons as they say, which reason cannot tell. It can overwhelm even a rational conclusion. You cannot accept rational conclusions which are opposed to the feelings of the heart, to the conscience. The conscience is the heart which is the touchstone of Reality and which is the Union Jack or national flag of the government of God. Here you have the symbolic representation of the Absolute, embedded in your own being, it being situated in your own heart. Our heart speaks the language of God, and so, what the heart speaks can be regarded as an indication from the above. Here in this verse the literal meaning of the very word *Hrdaya* is taken as a symbol for meditation. *Hr-da-yam iti hr ity ekam aksaram*: The first letter of the word *Hrdaya* is *Hr*, a Sanskrit letter. Now the teacher of the Upanishad tells us that you can meditate on the import of this single letter *Hr*. Do not go to the entire meaning of the word *Hrdaya*, or heart, here *Hr*, the first letter is itself sufficient. What does it mean? How do you contemplate on the import of the first letter *Hr*? *Hr ity ekam aksaram*: ‘*Hr* is one letter’. *Abhiharanty asmai suds canye ca, ya evam veda*: *Hr* means draw. That is the grammatical root meaning of the word *Hr*. Drawing, to attract, to pull towards oneself, to compel everything to gravitate towards oneself, to bring everything under one’s control, to subjugate everything, to superintend over all things and to be overlord of everything - all these meanings are comprehended in the root meaning of the letter *Hr*. When you contemplate the heart, bring to your mind the meaning of the very first letter of the word *Hrdaya*, that which draws everything towards itself. And, what is the conclusion? What is the result that follows by this protracted meditation? *Abhiharanty asmai*: ‘Everyone gravitates towards that person’. Like the gravitational pull of the sun exerted upon all the planets that move in their own orbit and revolve round the sun, so all creatures will rotate, revolve and gravitate around you if you contemplate, the capacity that one has, to draw everything towards oneself, as the Supreme subject. *Abhiharanty asmai svas canya ca*: ‘Everything comes to you’ means - whatever belongs to you, and whatever does not belong to you also comes to you. People pay tribute to you, not merely people who love you. ‘Even those who are not your friends’, even those with whom you are not personality related, even they shall pay homage to you. They shall also pay tribute to you. They shall accept the supremacy of your being. *Svas canye ca abhiharanty asmai*: This is the grand result that is proclaimed by mere

meditation on the implication of the root meaning of the letter *Hr* 'to draw'. Think! I shall also pull the cosmos towards myself, as the Supreme Consciousness, which is the Subject of all objects.

The other letter is *Da*. In the word *Hr-da-ya*, '*Da* is the second letter'. *Dadatyasmai svas canye ca ya evam veda*: 'Everyone shall give to you' rather than take anything from you, which means to say, everything shall become obedient to you, everything shall become subservient to you. *Da* connotes the meaning, 'to give' in Sanskrit. So the meaning of this root syllable here, the etymological significance of the letter becomes the object of meditation, and when you contemplate thus as the centre of a force that receives everything towards itself as an ocean that receives all rivers into itself, 'such contemplation brings the result of complete acquisition. Everything shall come to you'.

Yam, iti ekam aksaram; iti svargam lokam ya evam veda: The third letter is *Ya* of *Hr-da-ya*. In Sanskrit *Ya* means 'to go'. You go to the highest heaven by contemplation on the meaning of the letter *Ya* of the word *Hridaya*. So contemplate not merely the light in the heart or the consciousness in the heart or the ether in the heart, but the linguistic significance of the very word *Hridaya* also. Even this can be a symbol. If you cannot go deep into philosophical and mystical techniques of contemplation on the heart, can you not at least understand this much, a mere linguistic meaning, a grammatical connotation, a literal significance of the word *Hridaya*? This too, can take you to a great glorious achievement.

Fourth Brahmana

BRAHMAN AS THE TRUE OR THE REAL

1. *tad vai tat, etad eva tad asa, satyam eva. sa yo haitan mahad yaksam prathamajam veda; satyam brahmeti, jayatimaml lokan. jita in nv asav asat, ya evam etan mahad yaksam prathamajam veda; satyam brahmeti. satyam hy eva brahma.*

This is another symbol for meditation. Meditate on that Being as truth 'the true'. That alone can be true and nothing else can be true. Regard the Ultimate Being, or Reality, as true for That alone was. *Tad vai tat, etad eva tat asa*: The word *Tat* is repeated three times here. 'That, That alone that existed, and what existed was true'. 'This is the most adorable of all beings' - *mahad yaksam*. *Yaksam* means adorable, worthy of worship and veneration. Great venerable Being is *Mahad Yaksam*. It is the first of all existences, 'the primeval Reality' - *Prathamajam*. Nothing existed prior to it. A thing that can be absorbed into its cause cannot be called ultimately true because it is an effect of some other cause. The true is that which can maintain its status for all times. There is nothing in this world that can maintain such a status. Everything changes. Everything

transforms itself into something else because everything is an effect of some other cause. Comes a time when the effect will go back in to the cause. In as much as everything in the world seems to modify itself into something else, it is apparent that the whole world is an effect and not a cause by itself. Therefore the world cannot be regarded as true. The evolutionary process will reveal that nothing anywhere in the process of evolution can be regarded as true, because when A is absorbed by B, B can be absorbed by C, C can be absorbed by D and so on and so forth. There is a chain action of one thing absorbing another. There must be an end for this somewhere. A small stream goes to a rivulet and the rivulet enters the river and the river goes to the ocean, but the ocean does not go anywhere. It is self-contained, self-sufficient, self-complete. So likewise everything goes to something else. Everything hangs on something else, everything tends to something else in the evolutionary process, but there is a stage where everything stops. The end of evolution is reached. That cannot be called an effect of anything because it is not modified into something else. It exists in its own status. It is precise Existence, and therefore That is, what is true.

That Being is true. Contemplate thus. *Prathamajam* - 'the original Being'; *Satyam Brahma* - 'truth is Brahman'. If this can be conceived, it will be an adequate symbol for meditation. *Satyam brahmeti jayatimaml lokan*: 'Just as truth succeeds everywhere, he succeeds everywhere who meditates thus'. Everywhere, wherever you touch you will have success. There can be no suffering, no defeat, no withdrawal, no setback. Everywhere you shall win victory provided you are able to contemplate the Supreme Brahman as truth, because truth triumphs and you shall also triumph wherever you go, wherever you are, whatever you do. *Jayatimamal lokan*: 'The whole world, you conquer', says the Upanishad, because of this contemplation on truth as the Absolute. *Jita in nv asav asat*: 'You cannot have any opponent afterwards. Nobody can oppose you. Nobody can oppose truth'. If you contemplate truth as Brahman you become an embodiment of truth. None can then oppose you, for no one can oppose truth. You will have no enemies afterwards. There can be no adversary. The adversary becomes a non-existent something. *Asat* he becomes, because you contemplate *Sat*. No *Asat* can stand before *Sat*. So, inasmuch as you contemplate *Sat* as *Brahman*, *Asat* cannot be before you. So everyone who is an object, who is in the position of an external ceases to be before you. You conquer everything. There cannot be any adversary or enemy or opponent before you, afterwards. *Jita in nv asav asat, ya evam etan mahad yaksam prathamajam veda*: 'Who conquers all things?' 'He who contemplates truth as Brahman as the most adorable all-Being, most venerable, most desirable, the origin of all things, the cause of all causes into which everything returns in the end. One who knows this truth as Brahman becomes truth veritably' - *Brahmeti. Prathamajam veda; satyam brahmeti. satyam hi eva Brahma*: 'What else can be Brahman but true?' How can you define it in any other way except that it is true? The highest characterisation of Brahman would be that it is true, and truth is God. While someone may deny that God exists, none can deny that truth exists. And when you say that truth is God, no one has anything to say to it. Such a contemplation would lead to the success

of all enterprises in life because success is the prerogative of truthfulness, and when you are in consonance with the highest Reality which is truth, you shall meet success wherever you are and whatever you do. Thus is the symbolic meditation on truth as Brahman. Just as you had a symbolic meditation on *Hrdaya*, the heart as Brahman in its linguist connotation, here you have another meditation on truth as Brahman.

As we noted, contemplations of this kind are not easy. You have understood the meaning of these instructions but you cannot easily set your mind to the task of contemplation in this manner, because no one can whole-heartedly get oneself absorbed in a particular thought unless one is convinced that thought is the whole thought and not a partial thought. All failure in meditation is due to the incompetency of oneself in convincing one's own self that the thought of meditation is a complete one. You have always a subconscious doubt that it is only one of the thoughts among many other possible thoughts that you are entertaining in meditation. You may not logically argue out this kind of conclusion, but the subconscious mind pinches from inside. The unconscious revolts. It says, this is only one of the thoughts that is possible, why not have some other thoughts instead of this? So the meditation fails. If some other thoughts also are possible in addition to the thought that you are trying to entertain in meditation, and if any other thought can be equally good, as good as the one that you are thinking of, entertaining in meditation, why not go to the other thought? If that shop is as good as this, I can as well make purchases from the other shop. But if you know that this is the only shop where you can have everything and this is the shop where everything is available, then you need not go to the other shop. It is so hard to reconcile oneself to the feeling that the thought entertained in meditation is the whole thought.

We are psychologically poor and philosophically bankrupt, therefore meditation is hard. Hard task is meditation of course, because who can convince oneself that the thought in meditation is a comprehensive thought? Even if it is a thought of God, you will have a subconscious possibility, an alternative provided, to think of what is other than God. You cannot, at that time, argue that there is nothing other than God. The mind falls from its original conviction and philosophical conclusion that God is All. Though, the conclusion, the idea with which you started to contemplate was that God is All, and outside it nothing can be, something begins to crop up outside God when you start meditation. Then you think of the tree, you think of the dog, you think of the mountain, you think of the shop, you think of anything. Now, the idea that it is possible to have something other than or external to the Being of God is a frailty of meditative consciousness. It is a weakness in our thought. You are not upto the mark to meditate. It only means that. How did you convince yourself that God is All and now begin to say that there is something other than God, and let the mind go out? How can it go out when you have already satisfied yourself that it is the All on which you are contemplating? How can there be something more than the All, external to the All, other than the All? So, psychological weaknesses persist even

in advanced types of meditations. What I point out is that meditations are not easy. Though the understanding of these techniques may appear to be intelligible to you, the heart will revolt because of the old habit of thinking in terms of particulars, and the habit of mind to imagine, to entertain the notion that whatever be the characterisation of the All in your meditation, there is something outside the All. However illogical that concept is, it does persistently present itself in meditation, and bring you down to the level of the so-called other, which is a travesty in meditation and from which one has to guard oneself.

Philosophically, you have to be unshakable. No one should be able to shake your thoughts and conviction by any amount of logic. Your logic should be superior to every other logic in the world. Only then you can start meditating. If somebody tells you something else, your mind wonders, O, perhaps he is right! That means you have never understood anything. Why do you meditate? So, first of all, be sure that your logic is unshakable; that no other logic can shake your logic; you have understood all the aspects of logical thinking, and that you have come to a final unshakable conclusion. No question of the mind thinking something else as an alternative or a different possibility should then arise. With such conviction, meditation should commence and it shall surely reach the required result.