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Taittiriyaopanishad [Upanishad Vahini]

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TAITTIRIYOPANISHAD

Brahma Vidya is the specific theme of this Upanishad. It has three sections: Siksha Valli, Ananda Valli or Brahma Valli, and Bhrgu Valli. The latter two sections are very important for those seeking Brahma Jnana. In the Siksha Valli, certain methods to overcome the obstacles placed in men's way by *Devas* and Rishis and to acquire one-pointedness in mental exertions are detailed. This Valli has twelve *Anuvakas*, or Sections. In the other two Vallis, the same Instruction, the *Vaaruni Vidya*, is given, which leads to Liberation and so they are practically the same; for convenience of study, it is dealt with in two Sections, that is all.

In the Siksha Valli, subjects like *Samhitha* which are not antagonistic to Karma, and like Upasana which are associated with Karma are dealt with. These lead to

Swarajya (Self rule). But, by just these, the complete destruction of Samsara or flux will not be accomplished. Upasana exists along with desire. So, like Karma, even Upasana cannot bring about Liberation. All this flux, this Samsara, is due to Ajnana. Bondage is the result. So, when the Ajnana is destroyed, then the bonds loosen and Liberation is attained. Ajnana is there, persisting, through natural causes. It is just like the delusion that it is your train that is moving, when the truth is your train is stationary and the train on the adjacent rails is moving! Watch your train only and you know the truth. Watch the other train, and you are deceived. There is no use seeking to know the cause of this delusion. Seek how to escape from it. This Ajnana, which is the seed out of which Samsara sprouts, can be destroyed only by Brahma Jnana. There is no other method.

All that is caused, everything that is a result, is short-lived. This is evident from the Sastras as well as experience and reason. The Sastras speak of aspirants who discarded even higher regions like Heaven, which are attainable by persons who perform the prescribed rites; for, Liberation is beyond the reach of those who dwell therein. Heaven and Hell are results of actions. They are created objects, and so they cannot be eternal. They are conditioned by birth, growth, decay and death. They do not exist from the very beginning. They were made. Before that act, they were not. That which once was not and later will not be is as good as “not” even in

the present. The fruit of Karma shares this quality and so, it cannot grant eternal joy.

No effort can result in the creation of Akasa now. Nothing can produce anew what already exists. Moksha exists and is there self-evident. It cannot be produced anew by any Karma. The moment the Ajnana which hides it from experience disappears, that moment you are liberated and you know your Reality. You are free from bondage. Prior to that moment, you were free, but you imagined you were bound and you behaved as if you were bound. How then are you to get rid of this idea that you are bound? By listening to the teachings of the Vedas with faith therein. Then only can Ajnana perish. That is the task which the Brahma Valli has placed before itself, in this Upanishad.

It is in the nature of things that ignorance prompts men to crave for plentiful fruits through the performance of actions. Then they become despondent that they only bind them more and do not help to make them free. That craving for fruit, is hard to shove off, though this fearful flux of growth and decay makes them shiver in dread.

In this Upanishad, the three words, Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantham—are meaningfully affixed to Brahman, to explain its characteristics. They are three distinct words, signifying qualities, seeking to mark out the One from the rest, the One Brahman from other types

of Brahman which have not these traits. That is to say, Brahman is not to be confused with anything that is not Sathyam, Jnanam and Anantham. All that are limited by time, space and objectivity are *jada* (inert), material apparently different from Brahman. The characteristics of Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantham, help to differentiate and distinguish from kindred and similar phenomena the real Brahman. Whichever *rupam* a thing is determined to have, if that *rupa* is unchanged, then it is referred to as Sathyam. If that *rupa* undergoes change, then it is Asathyam. Modification is the sign of untruth. Absence of modification is the sign of Truth.

Brahman is Sathyam, that is to say, it has no modifications. It is *nithyam*, it is unaffected by time. All that is not Brahman—that is, Jagath, is subject to change. All objects are subject to the triple process of the intellect: known, the knower and knowledge. Hence, the intellect or Buddhi is spoken of as a *guha* or cave, where the threefold process resides.

In the Taittiriya Brahmana as well as in this Upanishad, Dharma too is treated elaborately. It has three forms: Kamya, Naimittika, and Nithya. The Sastras seldom command that Karma has to be pursued. There is no need to do so for Karma comes naturally to man. Kama (desire) is the prompter of such Karma and man gets various fruits thereby. The Sastras teach only the

ways of directing this natural activity to ensure desirable objects.

The Upanishad exhorts you not to swerve from duties of learning and teaching. “Swerve not from the true and the truth”, it says. “From the true, it will not do to swerve, nor from Dharma, nor from welfare and well-being, nor from duties to Devas and *Pitris*. Treat thy mother as God. What works are free from fault, they should be resorted to, not others....” This is what the Upanishad teaches.

Listening, rumination and concentration are the three steps in Realisation. Listening refers to Vedas, which have to be revered in faith and learnt by heart from a Guru. This confers the knowledge of the Unknowable. Manana or rumination is the Tapas taught in the Bhriguvali. By this process, the Brahma Atmaswarupa can be fixed in the mind. Concentration helps the development of single-minded attention on the Principle so installed. In the two Vallis, Brahma and Bhrigu, Brahma Vidya or the discipline which ensures the Realisation of Brahman is expounded. The Brahmapali teaches. The Bhriguvali proves by experience.

Bhrigu, the son of Varuna, tells him that Brahman is food, Prana, the senses, Manas, Vaak, etc. But since the son soon learns that these are not Brahman he declares that Brahman is that from which these are born and by

which they live and function. He first believed that Annam or food is Brahman since all beings exist on food, but later he feels that Brahman is much more inclusive. He asks for direct teaching of the Real, the Brahman.

Thereafter, he was told that Thapas is Brahman, for it is that by which Brahman the Reality is known. He discovered by Thapas that Vijnana is Brahman, for Vijnana is that in which creatures are born and it is that by which creatures live.

Thus it is announced that, of all disciplines and subjects of study, the Brahma Vidya is the most sacred, holy and esoteric. Annam is not to be decried. That should be the vow of the Wise. The vital airs are all Annam. The physical body is the gift of Annam. The Prana or vital airs have the body as the vehicle. So, Annam should not be slighted. That should be the resolution. The waters in conjunction with the fire in the stomach become food. In the water that comes down as rain the “fire” of lightning is inherent. So, whoever is established in the *Aapojoyothi* or the Splendour of water is aware of the Splendour of Annam and is persuaded to revere it. Annam is the Guru, for it leads you on to the knowledge of Brahman. It should not therefore be treated with disrespect. That must be observed just like a vow by the aspirant.

Since the physical body is the transformation of food, it has an *Annamaya Kosa* (food sheath). The vital

airs form another sheath, the *Pranamaya*. It weighs between good and bad, right and wrong in the sheath of mind, or *Manomaya Kosa*. When it fixes upon a step, with a purpose in view, it is the function of the *Vijnanamaya Kosa*. When the joy of achievement is tasted, it is the *Anandamaya Kosa* that functions.

To progress with the Brahmic outlook, that you are Brahman and not the body, etc., the *Pranamaya* is the first instrument. It is subtle and separate and different from the body. It is activated by *Vayu* and is saturated with it. It pervades and subsumes the entire *Annamaya Kosa*. You can say that the *Pranamaya* is the soul of the *Annamaya*, for it makes it function from head to foot. It cannot survive without the *Prana*. It is the motive force. It has five varieties: *Prana*, *Apana*, *Vyana*, *Udana* and *Samana*. By contemplating that the *Pranamaya* is the *Atma* of the *Annamaya*, the notion that the body is the Self will disappear. You rise from the gross to the subtle. *Prana* is like the molten metal in the crucible. By effort, the *Pranamaya Kosa* can be experienced.

Prana appears in the form of the breath. *Prana* activates the head, *Vyana* the right, *Udana* the left, *Samana* the central and *Apana* the lower parts of the body. The *Prana* moves from the heart through the nerves to the face, the nose, etc., and reaches the head. From there, it

motivates the various nerves flowing through the body under different names with distinct names and distinct functions. The Prana that functions round the navel is, for example, called Samaana.

For the Manomaya Kosa, the Yajur Veda is the head. The *Riks* form the right wing; Sama is the left wing, Brahmanas are the soul; the Atharvana Veda is the tail. The Manthras of the Yajur Veda are used very much in Yagas. With them, food is offered ceremonially in the sacrificial Fire. Hence, it is considered as the Head. The sound of Yajus produces modifications which are auspicious. That is the reason for the significance attached to the other Vedas also. Thus all manthras become the causes of mental modifications. These in turn illumine the splendour of the Atma. Thus the Vedas and the Mystery of their Syllables belong to the Science of the Atma itself. The Vedas become, therefore, eternally valuable and eternally existent. The Atharvana Veda treats of various rites to win relief from evil forces and ailments and so it is described as the tail.

The Kosa thus described merges in the Vijñanamaya and later into the Anandamaya and finally, the aspirant passes beyond even that, into the region of pure Sath.