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UPANISHAD VAHINI

Man is essentially Divine. However, he believes himself to be an individual, limited and temporary, because he is entangled in the characteristics of the Five Elements, namely, sound, touch, form, taste and smell. This error brings about joy and grief, good and bad, birth and death. To escape from this association with the elements, to rid oneself of the pulls of their characteristics, is the sign of Liberation, called in Sanskrit as *Kaivalya, Moksha* or *Mukthi*. Names may change, but the achievement is the same.

While entangled in the five elements, man is attracted, distracted or disappointed by them. All this causes distress. Wealth, possessions—vehicles, buildings—all these are transmutations of the elements. Man craves for them. When he loses them or fails to get hem, he spurns them.

Let us take the Five Elements, one by one. The living being has the first one, the Earth, as its base. Water, the second, is the basis for the earth. Water is produced from Fire. The third element, Fire itself emanating from Wind, the fourth. Wind or *Vayu* arises from Ether, or *Akasa*. Akasa emerges from the Primal Nature and the Primal Nature is but the manifestation of one aspect of the majesty of God, or the Supreme Sovereign *Atma*, the *Paramatma*.

Seeking to reach that Paramatma, the source and core of the Universe, the Individual or *Jivi*, who has entangled himself in the elements, has to overcome, by discrimination and steady practice of detachment, the bonds one by one. Such a person is a *Sadhaka*. He who wins in this struggle is the *Jivanmuktha*. "Liberated even while alive."

For the process of such discrimination and for the visualisation of one's innate reality, one has to study the *Upanishads*. They are collectively called *Vedanta*. They form the *Jnana Kanda* of the Vedas, the section that deals with the Higher Wisdom. Liberation from the consequences of Ignorance can be secured only by Knowledge, or *Jnana*. The Upanishads themselves declare, "*Jnaanaad eve thu kaivalyam*"; "By Knowledge alone can freedom be won."

The Vedas are reputed to be "three sectioned." "*Kandathrayathmakam*"; the three sections being Jnana, *Upasana* and *Karma.* These three are found in the Upanishads too. They provided the basis for the *Adwaitha*, *Visishtadwaitha* and the *Dwaitha* systems of Philosophy too.

The name Upanishad denotes the study and practice of the innate truth: the name, *Brahma Vidya*, denotes the supremacy of spiritual contemplation. The name, *Yogasastra,* denotes the mental churning that brings success. What is the fundamental activity which is required of man? What is the basic thing to be known? It is only one's basic reality. The Upanishads describe the various stages and the various modes of this search for realising this.

The name is full of significance. *Upa* means the process of studying with *Nishta* or steadfastness. *Shad* means the attainment of the Ultimate Reality. The name Upa-ni-shad arose for these reasons. The Upanishads teach not only the principles of *Atma Vidya*. They instruct the practical means of realisation also. They point out not only the duties and obligations one has to bear, but also the actions to be done and those to be avoided.

The Gita is but the essence of the Upanishads. Arjuna acquired, by the lessons of the Gita, the fruit of listening to the Upanishads. In the Upanishads, the

statement, "*Thath-thwam-asi*," "That thou art," is found. In the Gita, Krishna says to Arjuna, "I am Arjuna among the Pandavas," that is to say. "I and You are the same." This is the same as saying "Thou art That," that Jiva and Easwara (God) are the same.

So, whether it is the Gita or the Upanishads, the teaching is Non-duality, not Duality or qualified Monism. The human eye cannot delve into the microcosm or the macrocosm. It cannot read the mystery of the virus or the atom or the stellar universe. Therefore, scientists supplement the eye with the telescope and the microscope. Similarly, sages are able to experience Divinity through the eye of knowledge, gained by following the *Dharma* of moral conduct and spiritual discipline. When the human eye stands in need of an extraneous instrument to observe even the insignificant worm and virus, how can man refuse to go through the process of *manthra* when he desires to see the omnipresent transcendent Principle? It is very hard to acquire the eye of wisdom. Concentration is essential for this. And for concentration to develop and stabilise itself, three things are very important: purity of consciousness, moral awareness and spiritual discrimination. These qualifications are difficult of attainment, to ordinary folk.

Man is endowed with the special instrument of discrimination, of judgement, of analysis and synthesis, which among all animals he alone possesses. He has to develop this and utilise it to the best purpose. Through this instrument he can realise the Immanent Divinity.

Instead, man pesters himself and others with the question: Where does God reside? If He is real, why is He not seen? Hearing such queries, one feels like pitying the poor questioners. For, they are announcing their own foolishness. They are like the dullards who aspire for university degrees, without taking pains even to learn the alphabet. They aspire to realise God without putting themselves to the trouble of the *Sadhana* (spiritual discipline) required. People who have no moral strength and purity, talk of God and His existence and decry efforts to see Him. Such people have no right to be heard. Spiritual Sadhana is based on the holy Sastras. They cannot be mastered in a trice. They cannot be followed through talk. Their message is summed up in the Upanishads; hence, they are revered as authoritative. They are not the products of human intelligence. They are the whisperings of God to man. They are parts of the eternal Vedas. The Vedas shine gloriously through all their parts. The Upanishads are authentic and authoritative, as they share the glory of the Vedas. They are 1180 in number; but through the centuries, many of them disappeared from human memory and only 108 have

now survived. Of these 10 have attained great popularity, as a result of the depth and value of their contents.

The sage Vyasa classified the Upanishads and allotted them among the four Vedas. The Rig Veda has twenty-one branches and each branch has one Upanishad allotted to it. The Yajur Veda has 109 branches and 109 Upanishads. The Atharvana Veda has fifty branches and fifty Upanishads were its share. The Sama Veda has a thousand branches and the balance, namely, 1000 Upanishads were its share. Thus, the 1180 Upanishads were assigned by Vyasa to the Four Vedas.

Sankaracharya raised the status of ten among the Upanishads by selecting them for writing his commentaries, and so they became specially important. Humanity stands to gain or fall by these ten. All who are seeking human welfare and progress are now apprehending whether even these ten will be forgotten, for neglecting them will usher in moral and spiritual disaster. There is no reason, however, for such fears. The Vedas can never be harmed. Pundits and those with faith should resolve to present before humanity these ten Upanishads at least. They are Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Thaithiriya, Aithareya, Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka.

The remaining ninety-eight are Brahma, Kaivalya, Svethasva, Jabali, Hamsa, Garbha, Aruni, Paramahamsa,

Amrith-anada, Narayani, Amrithabindu, Atharvasikha, Atharvasira, Kasithara, Mathrayani, Nrisimhatapani, Brahmajabala, Maithreya, Kalagnirudra, Sulabha, Manthrika, Kshithi, Niralamba, Sarvahara, Vajrasuchika, Subharahasya, Thejobindu, Nadabindu, Dhyanabindu, Brahma Vidya, Atmabodhaka, Yoga, Thathwa, Narada-parivrajaka, Brahmana, Sita, Yogachudaamani, Nirvaana, Mandala, Dakshinamurthi, Skandaa, Sarabha, Adwaitha, Thaaraka, Mahanarayana, Sowbhagya-lakshmi, Saraswathirahasya, Mukthika, Bhavaricha, Rama-thapana, Ramarahasya, Mudgali, Vasudeva, Pingala, Sandilya, Mahabhikshuka, Yogasiksha, Sanyasa, Thuriyathitha, Parmaparivrajaka, Narasimha, Aksha-malika, Annapoorna, Ekakshara, Akshika, Adhathya, Surya, Kundisakhya, Aatma, Savithri, Parabrahma, Pasupatha, Thripurathapana, Avadhootha, Thripura, Devi, Bhavana, Katha, Yogakundali, Rudrahrdaya, Rudraksha, Bhasma, Darsana, Ganapathi, Thahasata, Mahavakya, Panchabrahma, Gopalathapani, Pranagnihothra, Garuda, Krishna, Datthatreya, Varahaa, Yajnavalkya, Sathyaayana, Avyektha, Hayagriva, and Kalisantharna.

The Upanishads have also inspired other works on Geography, Astronomy, Astrology, Economics and Political Theory, as well as the eighteen Puranas comprising Skanda, Siva, Garuda and others. The Vedas and the Upanishads are the very foundation for Sanathana Dharma.

There is one interesting feature to be noted. This religion has no one Founder as the others have. That invisible unknown founder is God, the source of all wisdom. He is the Prophet of this Sanathana Dharma. He is the Founder. His Grace and His Inspiration manifested through the pure Sages and they became the spokesmen of this Dharma. When the moral purity of men degenerates, God is taking form as grace and inspiration in sages and teachers. He has also spoken through the Upanishads the *Sathya-Jnana,* the Wisdom concerning the Reality.