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Mandukyopanishd [Upanishad Vahini]

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MANDUKYOPANISHAD

This Upanishad is the kernel of Vedantha. It is the most profound among all the Upanishads. It is also the chief, having the distinction of being recommended as, by itself, enough to lead man to salvation. It is very brief, consisting of just a dozen manthras! They are divided into four sections, Agama, Vaithathya, Adwaitha and Alathasanthi. In the Agamaprakarana, the secret doctrine of Pranava which is the key of self-realisation is expounded. In the second Prakarana, the doctrine of Dualism, the great obstacle to liberation is discussed and rebutted. In the third, the Adwaitha or non-dual Unity is propounded. The last Prakarana describes certain mutually contradictory Non-Vedic doctrines and rejects them.

No sound is beyond the ken of Om; they are all permutations and products of Om. Brahman too is Om,

identified by It and with It. The Brahman, which is beyond Vision, is manifest for the vision as Atma.

The distinctions of *Viswa*, *Taijasa* and *Prajna* are but appearances imposed on the Atma. That is to say the Atma continues the same, unaffected by the waking, the dreaming and the deep-sleep stages of man's existence. This Atma and the Atma which one refers to as 'I' are both the same. The 'I' or the Atma swims like a fish in the river, paying no regard to this bank or that, though the waters are limited and guided by them. In deep sleep, all the *vasanas* or impulses are suspended and though they still persist, they are not manifest or active. In dream, man follows the impulses and wins satisfaction in the process. All the manifold pulls and attractions of the sensory world, which impel man towards the objects around him, are born during the waking and the dream stages. The mind is full of agitations and these are the fertile fields where the *vasanas* grow, multiply and strike root. As a matter of fact, it is the agitating mind that causes Creation, that is behind all *Srishti* (creation).

There is however a Fourth stage, distinct from these three: it is named *Thuriya*! This stage cannot be described by words or even imagined by the mind, for it is beyond both *Buddhi* and *Manas*. The experience is inadequately described as *Santham*, *Sivam*, *Adwaitam*; that is all. It is Peace. It is Grace. It is Oneness. The mental agitations

are stilled and so there is no more mind. It is the conquest of the mind, its negation, the *Amanaska* stage. What a victory it is! For, in deep sleep the Mind is latent. In dream, the Mind is restless with agitations. In the waking stage, it is active and motivating. In all the three stages, Truth remains unknown. The objective world is but a delusion of the agitated mind, the superimposition on the rope of a non-existent snake. The world is not born, nor does it die. It is born when you are ignorant. It dies when you become wise.

The AUM of the Omkara, representing the Viswa, Taijasa and Prajna aspects of the waking, dreaming and deep sleep stages of existence, have each a particular role in Sadhana. Upasana which A emphasises more, makes one realise all desires. If U is concentrated upon, then Jnana increases and if M is specially dwelt upon in the Upasana, the final merging of the Soul in the Supreme is effected. The Upasaka of Pranava will also earn the knowledge of the Truth of the world and Creation. The Upasaka, therefore, of the Pranava draws unto himself the reverence of all.

The A U and M proceed from one to the other in the Pranava and finally merge in an *Amanthra*, a letterless resonance which thins out into silence. That is the symbol of the Santham, the Sivam and the Adwaitham, the

merging of the individualised soul in the Universal, after the shedding of the limiting particulars of name and form. This is not all. The Karikas 24-29 of this Upanishad praise Pranava as the cause of Creation. It is extolled as quenching all grief. Why? He who ruminates on the Om, ever aware of its significance, can steadily move on to an Awareness of the Real behind all this unreal Appearance, of the *Paramatmathatwa* Itself.

In the first section, the Adwaithic uniqueness of the Atma is established in a general way. In the second, as has been said, the positing of two entities, God and the World, is shown as empty and evanescent. In the section called specifically Adwaitha, the doctrine is established by arguments and affirmations. At first, the world was latent and unmanifest; Brahma is Himself an effect; and so, reflection on the effect will not lead man to the source of all things. The Brahma revealed in this Upanishad is not the Effect. It is the Primal Cause. It is not born, nor limited. It is not broken into all this many.

The Atma is like Akasa or Ether, all-pervasive. It may seem enclosed in certain limits, like a pot or a room and may be spoken of as so individualised. But in that limitation, there is no truth. The body too is like the pot, which limits the sky enclosed in it, for all appearances. There is no innate distinction between the sky in the pot and the sky outside. Take away the limiting factor, and

they are One. When the body is destroyed, the Jivi merges with the Universal or the Paramatman. It is the limitation that appears to qualify the Atma, otherwise it is the Paramatma itself. The Jivi can never be considered a limb or an *avayava*, an adaptation or *Vikara* of the Paramatma.

The birth and death of the Jivi, his wanderings in space and from one Loka to another, are all unreal. It is appearance, not reality. Go deeply into the matter and you will find that Dwaitha is not opposed to Adwaitha. The opposition is between various Dwaithic religions and schools of thought. For the Adwaithin, all is Parabrahman and so he knows no opposition. For the Dwaithin, there is always the atmosphere of attachment and pride and hate. For where there are two there is always fear and attachment and all the consequent passions. Adwaitha is the Highest Truth; Dwaitha is a certain mental attitude. So, dualism can move you only so long as the mind is active. In sleep or in *Samaadhi*, there is no cognition of "Two." When Avidya prevails, difference is rampant. When Vidya is established, Union is experienced. So, there is no opposition or quarrel between Dwaitha and Adwaitha. The rope is the Cause of all the Illusion and Delusion. Brahman is the Cause of all this Illusion and Delusion connoted by the word, World, or Jagath.

It is not correct to say that the Paramatma is born as Jagath, for, how can one's essential quality, the

Swabhava be changed? Manifoldness is not the characteristic of Paramatmathatwa. The Sruthis declare this in many contexts. Why, they even condemn those who see It as many. The Witness of all the phases of the mind, of even its annihilation, can never be known by the Mind. That witness alone is eternal, unaffected by Time and Space. That is the *Atmachaitanyam*, the *Sathyam* (real). The rest is all unreal.

Turn the mind away from the sensory world through the practice of discrimination and non-attachment. Then, you attain the *Amanobhava*, the no-mind experience. Well, you have to remember another thing: trying to control the mind without a clear understanding of the nature of the sensory world is a vain valueless effort, the attachment will not end, the agitation will not cease so easily.

They will sprout at the first chance. What has to be done is to develop the inertness of the mind during the deep sleep stage into a stage of permanent ineffectiveness. When the conviction that all sensory experiences are unreal is well and truly stabilised, the mind will no longer function as a distracting agency. It will lie powerless, as a defunct limb. However hungry a man may be, he will not certainly crave for excreta, will he?

To know that the Atma, which is the goal of realisation, is devoid of sleep, birth, name, form

and so on, that It is eternally Self-effulgent, *Nithyaswayamprakasa*, to know this is to transcend all Vikaras or agitations of the Mind. Attempting to curb the mind without the aid of discrimination, or to make known to man the unreality of *Vishaya* objects is like the attempt to empty the ocean by means of a blade of grass, foolish and fruitless. Be firmly fixed in the conviction that the world is a myth and then, you can aspire for *Prasanthi* and *Abhaya*, Peace and Fearlessness.

As the motivating force behind every birth or product, there should be a purpose, either Sath (existence) or Asath (non-existent, unreal) or Sath-asath, isn't it? What exactly is the transformation that happens? The cause or *Karana* undergoes a change or vikara and gets transformed into the *karya* (effect, deed). Well, Sath has no Vikara and so no birth is possible from Sath. Asath is void and nothing can emanate from it. Sath and Asath are inconceivable together. Therefore, logically, nothing can be born or produced. *Karana* cannot become *karya*.

When you remember fire, you do not feel the heat. It is only when you hold it in your hand that you experience the heat. So too, all objects are different from Jnana about them. Knowledge is one thing, actual experience is another. Moreover, the search for the First Cause is an endless adventure. For, even in the complete absence of the snake, one sees it in the rope. It is all a figment of the imagination.

In dreams, with nothing concrete, all the joy and sorrow of manifoldness are undergone. For the machinations and inferences of the mind, no basis or explanation is needed. Irresponsible inferences about the unreal world will pester the mind so long as the illumination of Truth is absent. Claspings delusion is the fate of those who are steeped in Avidya or Ajnana.

This Upanishad has declared in unambiguous terms that the Sath can never be the Cause for the karya viz. Asath. The external world is created by our own chiththa (mind), like smoke emanating from a burning scent-stick. Everything is appearance, an *Adhyasa* (superimposing one thing upon another), an *Abhasa*, something mistaken to be there, but really, non-existent. The atmosphere of Ajnana is the fertile field for their birth and multiplication. Samsara, which has the dual characteristic of evolution, of origin and ruin, is the fruit of this mistake.

Since Paramatma is *Sarvaatmaswarupa* (embodiment of all Atmas), there is no possibility of Cause-Effect or Wish-Fulfilment or Purpose-Product appearing in it. For him who has had the Vision of Atma, all is Atma. The maya-infected seed will sprout into a maya-infected tree. Both are false and fleeting. So too, the birth and death of the Jivi are both false. They are mere words, signifying nothing. The things seen in dreams are not distinct from the dreamer, are they? They may appear as different and as outside the dreamer, but really,

they are part of the dreamer, arising out of his own consciousness. He who is the witness has no beginning or end. He is not bound by duties or obligations, right or wrong. To know this, and to get firm in that knowledge, is to attain liberation from the shackles. It is the quivering of the Chiththa that causes things to originate. *Chiththa-spandana* is the cause of *Uthpaththi*.