

“Om Sri Lakshmi Narashimhan Nahama”

Mundaka Upanishad

*Om! O gods, may we hear auspicious words with the ears;
While engaged in sacrifices,
May we see auspicious things with the eyes;
While praising the gods with steady limbs,
May we enjoy a life that is beneficial to the gods.
May Indra of ancient fame be auspicious to us;
May the supremely rich (or all-knowing) Pusa (god of the earth)
Be propitious to us;
May Garuda, the destroyer of evil,
Be well disposed towards us;
May Brihaspati ensure our welfare.
Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!*

Chapter 1

I-i-1: Om ! Brahma, the creator of the Universe and the protector of the world, was the first among the gods to manifest Himself. To His eldest son Atharva He imparted that knowledge of Brahman that is the basis of all knowledge.

I-i-2: The Knowledge of Brahman that Brahma imparted to Atharva, Atharva transmitted to Angir in days of yore. He (Angir) passed it on to Satyavaha of the line of Bharadvaja. He of the line of Bharadvaja handed down to Angiras this knowledge that had been received in succession from the higher by the lower ones.

I-i-3: Saunaka, well known as a great householder, having approached Angiras duly, asked, ‘O adorable sir, (which is that thing) which having been known, all this becomes known ?’

I-i-4: To him he said, “There are two kinds of knowledge to be acquired – the higher and the lower”; this is what, as tradition runs, the knowers of the import of the Vedas say.’

I-i-5: Of these, the lower comprises the Rig-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sama-Veda, Atharva-Veda, the science of pronunciation etc., the code of rituals, grammar, etymology, metre and astrology. Then there is the higher (knowledge) by which is attained that Imperishable.

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I-i-6: (By the higher knowledge) the wise realize everywhere that which cannot be perceived and grasped, which is without source, features, eyes, and ears, which has neither hands nor feet, which is eternal, multiformed, all-pervasive, extremely subtle, and undiminishing and which is the source of all.

I-i-7: As a spider spreads out and withdraws (its thread), as on the earth grow the herbs (and trees), and as from a living man issues out hair (on the head and body), so out of the Imperishable does the Universe emerge here (in this phenomenal creation).

I-i-8: Through knowledge Brahman increases in size. From that is born food (the Unmanifested). From food evolves Prana (Hiranyagarbha); (thence the cosmic) mind; (thence) the five elements; (thence) the worlds; (thence) the immortality that is in karmas.

I-i-9: From Him, who is omniscient in general and all-knowing in detail and whose austerity is constituted by knowledge, evolve this (derivative) Brahman, name, colour and food.

I-ii-1: That thing that is such, is true.

The karmas that the wise discovered in the mantras are accomplished variously (in the context of the sacrifice) where the three Vedic duties get united. You perform them for ever with desire for the true results. This is your path leading to the fruits of karma acquired by yourselves.

I-ii-2: When, the fire being set ablaze, the flame shoots up, one should offer the oblations into that part that is in between the right and the left.

I-ii-3: It (i.e. the Agnihotra) destroys the seven worlds of that man whose Agnihotra (sacrifice) is without Darsa and Purnamasa (rites), devoid of Chaturmasya, bereft of Agrayana, unblest with guests, goes unperformed, is unaccompanied by Vaisvadeva (rite) and is performed perfunctorily.

I-ii-4: Kali, Karali, Manojava and Sulohita and that which is Sudhumravarna, as also Sphulingini, and the shining Visvaruchi – these are the seven flaming tongues.

I-ii-5: These oblations turn into the rays of the sun and taking him up they lead him, who performs the rites in these shining flames at the proper time, to where the single lord of the gods presides over all.

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I-ii-6: Saying, ‘Come, come’, uttering pleasing words such as, ‘This is your well-earned, virtuous path which leads to heaven’, and offering him adoration, the scintillating oblations carry the sacrificer along the rays of the sun.

I-ii-7: Since these eighteen constituents of a sacrifice, on whom the inferior karma has been said to rest, are perishable because of their fragility, therefore those ignorant people who get elated with the idea ‘This is (the cause of) bliss’, undergo old age and death over again.

I-ii-8: Remaining within the fold of ignorance and thinking, ‘We are ourselves wise and learned’, the fools, while being buffeted very much, ramble about like the blind led by the blind alone.

I-ii-9: Continuing diversely in the midst of ignorance, the unenlightened take airs by thinking, ‘We have attained the goal.’ Since the men, engaged in karma, do not understand (the truth) under the influence of attachment, thereby they become afflicted with sorrow and are deprived of heaven on the exhaustion of the results of karma.

I-ii-10: The deluded fools, believing the rites inculcated by the Vedas and the Smritis to be the highest, do not understand the other thing (that leads to) liberation. They, having enjoyed (the fruits of actions) in the abode of pleasure on the heights of heaven, enter this world or an inferior one.

I-ii-11: Those who live in the forest, while begging for alms – viz. those (forest-dwellers and hermits) who resort to the duties of their respective stages of life as well as to meditation – and the learned (householders) who have their senses under control – (they) after becoming freed from dirt, go by the path of the sun to where lives that Purusha, immortal and undecaying by nature.

I-ii-12: A Brahmana should resort to renunciation after examining the worlds acquired through karma, with the help of this maxim: ‘There is nothing (here) that is not the result of karma; so what is the need of (performing) karma?’ For knowing that Reality he should go, with sacrificial faggots in hand, only to a teacher versed in the Vedas and absorbed in Brahman.

I-ii-13: To him who has approached duly, whose heart is calm and whose outer organs are under control, that man of enlightenment should adequately impart that knowledge of Brahman by which one realizes the true and imperishable Purusha.

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Chapter 2**

II-i-1: That thing that is such, is true.

As from a fire fully ablaze, fly off sparks in their thousands that are akin to the fire, similarly O good-looking one, from the Imperishable originate different kinds of creatures and into It again they merge.

II-i-2: The Purusha is transcendental, since He is formless. And since He is coextensive with all that is external and internal and since He is birthless, therefore He is without vital force and without mind; He is pure and superior to the (other) superior imperishable (Maya).

II-i-3: From Him originates the vital force as well as the mind, all the senses, space, air, fire, water, and earth that supports everything.

II-i-4: The indwelling Self of all is surely He of whom the heaven is the head, the moon and sun are the two eyes, the directions are the two ears, the revealed Vedas are the speech, air is the vital force, the whole Universe is the heart, and (It is He) from whose two feet emerged the earth.

II-i-5: From Him emerges the fire (i.e. heaven) of which the fuel is the sun. From the moon emerges cloud, and (from cloud) the herbs and corns on the earth. A man sheds the semen into a woman. From the Purusha have originated many creatures.

II-i-6: From Him (emerge) the Rik, Sama and Yajur mantras, initiation, all the sacrifices – whether with or without the sacrificial stake – offerings to Brahmanas, the year, the sacrificer, and the worlds where the moon sacrifices (all) and where the sun (shines).

II-i-7: And from Him duly emerged the gods in various groups, the Sadhyas, human beings, beasts, birds, life, rice and barley, as well as austerity, faith, truth, continence and dutifulness.

II-i-8: From Him emerge the seven sense-organs, the seven flames, the seven kinds of fuel, the seven oblations, and these seven seats where move the sense-organs that sleep in the cavity, (and) have been deposited (by God) in groups of seven.

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II-i-9: From Him emerge all the oceans and all the mountains. From Him flow out the rivers of various forms. And from Him issue all the corns as well as the juice, by virtue of which the internal self verily exists in the midst of the elements.

II-i-10: The Purusha alone is all this – (comprising) karma and knowledge. He who knows this supreme, immortal Brahman, existing in the heart, destroys here the knot of ignorance, O good-looking one !

II-ii-1: (It is) effulgent, near at hand, and well known as moving in the heart, and (It is) the great goal. On It are fixed all these that move, breathe, and wink or do not wink. Know this One which comprises the gross and the subtle, which is beyond the ordinary knowledge of creatures, and which is the most desirable and the highest of all.

II-ii-2: That which is bright and is subtler than the subtle, and that on which are fixed all the worlds as well as the dwellers of the worlds, is this immutable Brahman; It is this vital force; It, again, is speech and mind. This Entity, that is such, is true. It is immortal. It is to be penetrated, O good-looking one, shoot (at It).

II-ii-3: Taking hold of the bow, the great weapon familiar in the Upanishads, one should fix on it an arrow sharpened with meditation. Drawing the string, O good-looking one, hit that very target that is the Imperishable, with the mind absorbed in Its thought.

II-ii-4: Om is the bow; the soul is the arrow; and Brahman is called its target. It is to be hit by an unerring man. One should become one with It just like an arrow.

II-ii-5: Know that Self alone that is one without a second, on which are strung heaven, the earth and the inter-space, the mind and the vital forces together with all the other organs; and give up all other talks. This is the bridge leading to immortality.

II-ii-6: Within that (heart) in which are fixed the nerves like the spokes on the hub of a chariot wheel, moves this aforesaid Self by becoming multiformed. Meditate on the Self thus with the help of Om. May you be free from hindrances in going to the other shore beyond darkness.

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II-ii-7: That Self which is omniscient in general and all-knowing in detail and which has such glory in this world – that Self, which is of this kind – is seated in the space within the luminous city of Brahman.

It is conditioned by the mind, It is the carrier of the vital forces and the body, It is seated in food by placing the intellect (in the cavity of the heart). Through their knowledge, the discriminating people realize that Self as existing in Its fullness everywhere – the Self that shines surpassingly as blissfulness and immortality.

II-ii-8: When that Self, which is both the high and the low, is realized, the knot of the heart gets united, all doubts become solved, and all one's actions become dissipated.

II-ii-9: In the supreme, bright sheath is Brahman, free from taints and without parts. It is pure, and is the Light of lights. It is that which the knowers of the Self realize.

II-ii-10: There the sun does not shine, nor the moon or the stars; nor do these flashes of lightning shine there. How can this fire do so ? Everything shines according as He does so; by His light all this shines diversely.

II-ii-11: All this that is in front is but Brahman, the immortal. Brahman is at the back, as also on the right and the left. It is extended above and below, too. This world is nothing but Brahman, the highest.

Chapter 3

III-i-1: Two birds that are ever associated and have similar names, cling to the same tree. Of these, one eats the fruit of divergent tastes, and the other looks on without eating.

III-i-2: On the same tree, the individual soul remains drowned (i.e. stuck), as it were; and so it moans, being worried by its impotence. When it sees thus the other, the adored Lord, and His glory, then it becomes liberated from sorrow.

III-i-3: When the seer sees the Purusha – the golden-hued, creator, lord, and the source of the inferior Brahman – then the illumined one completely shakes off both merit and demerit, becomes taintless, and attains absolute equality.

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III-i-4: This one is verily the Vital Force which shines divergently through all beings. Knowing this, the illumined man has no (further) occasion to go beyond anything in his talk. He disports in the Self, delights in the Self, and is engrossed in (spiritual) effort. This one is the chief among the knowers of Brahman.

III-i-5: The bright and pure Self within the body, that the monks with (habitual effort and) attenuated blemishes see, is attainable verily through truth, concentration, complete knowledge, and continence, practised constantly.

III-i-6: Truth alone wins, and not untruth. By truth is laid the path called Devayana, by which the desireless seers ascend to where exists the supreme treasure attainable through truth.

III-i-7: It is great and self-effulgent; and Its form is unthinkable. It is subtler than the subtle. It shines diversely. It is farther away than the far-off, and It is near at hand in this body. Among sentient beings It is (perceived as) seated in this very body, in the cavity of the heart.

III-i-8: It is not comprehended through the eye, nor through speech, nor through the other senses; nor is It attained through austerity or karma. Since one becomes purified in mind through the favourableness of the intellect, therefore can one see that indivisible Self through meditation.

III-i-9: Within (the heart in) the body, where the vital force has entered in five forms, is this subtle Self to be realized through that intelligence by which is pervaded the entire mind as well as the motor and sensory organs of all creatures. And It is to be known in the mind, which having become purified, this Self reveals Itself distinctly.

III-i-10: The man of pure mind wins those worlds which he mentally wishes for and those enjoyable things which he covets. Therefore one, desirous of prosperity, should adore the knower of the Self.

III-ii-1: He knows this supreme abode, this Brahman, in which is placed the Universe and which shines holy. Those wise ones indeed, who having become desireless, worship this (enlightened) person, transcend this human seed.

III-ii-2: He who covets the desirable things, while brooding (on the virtues), is born amidst those very surroundings along with the desires. But for one who has got his wishes fulfilled and who is Self-poised, all the longings vanish even here.

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III-ii-3: This Self is not attained through study, nor through the intellect, nor through much hearing. The very Self which this one (i.e. the aspirant) seeks is attainable through that fact of seeking; this Self of his reveals Its own nature.

III-ii-4: This Self is not attained by one devoid of strength, nor through delusion, nor through knowledge unassociated with monasticism. But the Self of that knower, who strives through these means, enters into the abode that is Brahman.

III-ii-5: Having attained this, the seers become contented with their knowledge, established in the Self, freed from attachment, and composed. Having realized the all-pervasive One everywhere, these discriminating people, ever merged in contemplation, enter into the All.

III-ii-6: Those to whom the entity presented by the Vedantic knowledge has become fully ascertained, who are assiduous and have become pure in mind through the Yoga of monasticism – all of them, at the supreme moment of final departure, become identified with the supreme Immortality in the worlds that are Brahman, and they become freed on every side.

III-ii-7: To their sources repair the fifteen constituents (of the body) and to their respective gods go all the gods (of the senses). The karmas and the soul appearing like the intellect, all become unified with the supreme Undecaying.

III-ii-8: As rivers, flowing down, become indistinguishable on reaching the sea by giving up their names and forms, so also the illumined soul, having become freed from name and form, reaches the self-effulgent Purusha that is higher than the higher (Maya).

III-ii-9: Anyone who knows that supreme Brahman becomes Brahman indeed. In his line is not born anyone who does not know Brahman. He overcomes grief, and rises above aberrations; and becoming freed from the knots of the heart, he attains immortality.

III-ii-10: This (rule) has been revealed by the mantra (which runs thus): ‘To them alone should one expound this knowledge of b who are engaged in the practice of disciplines, versed in the Vedas, and indeed devoted to Brahman, who personally sacrifice to the fire called Ekarsi with faith, and by whom has been duly accomplished the vow of holding fire on the head.’

III-ii-11: The seer Angiras spoke of this Truth in the days of yore. One that has not fulfilled the vow does not read this. Salutation to the great seers. Salutation to the great seers.

“Om Sri Lakshmi Narashimhan Nahama”

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*Om! O gods, may we hear auspicious words with the ears;
While engaged in sacrifices,
May we see auspicious things with the eyes;
While praising the gods with steady limbs,
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May Indra of ancient fame be auspicious to us;
May the supremely rich (or all-knowing) Pusa (god of the earth)
Be propitious to us;
May Garuda, the destroyer of evil,
Be well disposed towards us;
May Brihaspati ensure our welfare.
Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!*

Here ends the Mundakopanishad, included in the Atharva-Veda.

Reference

Swami Gambhirananda. Advaita Ashram, Kolkatta. “Mundaka Upanishad.”