

VAJRA-SŪCIKA UPANIṢAD

(of the Sāma Veda)

The Doctrine of the Diamond Needle

*vajra-sūcika pravakṣyāmi jñānam ajñāna-bhedanam |
dūṣaṇā jñāna-hīnā bhūṣaṇā jñāna-cakṣuṣām || 1 ||*

1. I shall teach the *Vajra-suchi* — the ‘diamond needle’ doctrine which destroys ignorance, condemns those who are devoid of the knowledge (of Brahman) and exalts those endowed with enlightenment.

*brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya-vaiśya-śūdrā iti catvāro varṇaḥ | teṣāṃ varṇānām brahmaṇa eva
pradhāna iti veda-vacanānurūpam smṛtibhir-apy-uktam || 2 ||*

2. Brahmin Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra are the four classes (castes). That the Brahmin is the chief among these classes is in accord with the Vedic texts and is affirmed by the Smrtis.

*tatra codyam asti | ko vā brāhmaṇo nāma? | kim jīvaḥ | kī deha | kī jātiḥ | kī jñānam |
kī karma | kī dharmika iti || 3 ||*

In this connection there is a point worthy of investigation. Who is, verily, a Brahmin? Is he the individual self? Is he the body? Is he of the class based on birth? Is he the [possessor of] knowledge? Is he the [performer of] deeds (previous, present or prospective)? Is he the performer of the rites?

*tatra prathamo jīvo brāhmaṇa iti cet tan na | atītānāgatāneka-dehānām jīvasyaika
rūpatvāt | akasyāpi karma vaśād aneka-deha-sambhavāt | sarva-śarīrāṇām jīvasyaika
rūpatvāc ca | tasmāna jīvo brāhmaṇa iti || 4 ||*

Of these, is the Jiva or the individual self the Brahmin? No, it is not so; for the Jiva is one and the same in the innumerable previous and future bodies. Since the Jiva is the same in all the various bodies obtained through (past) karma, and in all these bodies the form of the Jiva is one and the same. Therefore the Jiva is not the Brahmin.

*tarhi deho brāhmaṇa iti cet tan na | ācaṇḍālādi padantānām manuṣyāṇām pañca-
bhautikatvena dehasaīkarūpatvāt | jarā-maraṇa-dharmādharma-samya darśanāt |
brāhmaṇas śveta-varṇaḥ | kṣatriyo rakta-varṇaḥ | vaiśya pīta-varṇaḥ | śūdraḥ kṛṣṇa
varṇa iti niyamābhāvāt | pitrādi dahane putrādīnām brahma hatyādi doṣa-
sambhavācca | tasmān na deho brāhmaṇa iti || 5 ||*

Then is the body the Brahmin? No, it is not so, because the body which is composed of the five elements, is the same in all classes of human beings down to the chandalas (outcastes), etc. And it is also observed that old age and death, virtue [dharma] and vice [adharma] are found to be common to all human beings. There is also no absolute distinction (in the complexion of the four classes) that the Brahmin is of the white complexion, that the Kshatriya is of the red complexion, that the Vaishya is of the tawny complexion, that the Sudra is of the dark complexion. [If the body

is the brahmin] the sons and other kinsmen would becoming guilty of the murder of a Brahmin and other (sins) on cremating the bodies of their fathers and other kinsmen. Therefore the body is not the Brahmin.

tarhi jāti brāhmaṇa iti cet tan na | tatra jātyantara jantuṣvaneka jāti sambhavā maharṣayo bahavas santi | ṛṣyaśṛṅgo mṛgayāh | kauśika kuśāt | jāmbuko jambukāt | vālmīko vālmikāt | vyāsaḥ kaivarta-kanyāyām | śaśapṛṣṭhāt gautamaḥ | vasiṣṭha ūrvaśyām | agastya kalaśe jāta iti śātatvāt | eteṣāṃ jātyā vināpya agre jñāna pratipāditā ṛṣayo bahavas santi | tasmān na jātir brāhmaṇa iti || 6 ||

Then is it birth that makes a Brahmin? No, it is not so, for many great rishis have sprung from other castes and orders of creation. We have heard that Rishyasṛnga was born of a deer, Kaushika of Kusha grass, Jambuka from a jackal, Valmiki from an ant-hill, Vyasa from a fisher girl, Gautama from the back of a hare, Vasistha from Urvashi (the celestial nymph), Agastya from an earthen jar. Among these, many rishis outside of the caste-system have been accounted as the foremost among the teachers of the Divine Wisdom. Therefore birth does not (make) a Brahmin.

tarhi jñānam brāhmaṇa iti cet tan na | kṣatriyādayo'hi paramārtha darśano'bhijñā bahavas santi | tasmān na jñānam brāhmaṇa iti || 7 ||

Then is it knowledge that makes a Brahmin? No, it is not so, because among Kshatriyas and others there are many who have attained cognition of divine truth. Therefore knowledge does not make a Brahmin.

tarhi karma brāhmaṇa iti cet tan na | sarveśāṃ prāṇinām prārabdha-sañcitāgāmi-karma-sadharmya-darśanāt | karmābhi-preritāḥ santo janāḥ kriyāḥ kurvanti | tasmān na karma brāhmaṇa iti || 8 ||

Then do actions (karma) make a Brahmin? No, it is not so, since the *prārabdha* karma which gives rise to the present birth, *sañchita* (accrued) karma, and *āgāmi* karma — commenced in the present lifetime which will fructify in a future embodiment is common to all humankind; and that people perform works impelled by their past karma. Therefore actions do not make a Brahmin.

tarhi dharmiko brāhmaṇa iti cet tan na | kṣatriyādayo hiraṇya-dātāro bahavas santi | tasmān na dhārmiko brāhmaṇa iti || 9 ||

Then does the performance of religious duties (dharma) make a Brahmin? No, it is not so; for there have been many Kshatriyas and others who have given away gold [in charity]. Therefore the performer of religious duties is not the Brahmin.

tarhi ko vā brāhmaṇo nāma? yaḥ kaścid ātmānam advitīyam jāti-guṇa-kriyā-hīnam ṣaḍūrmi -ṣaḍbhavetyādi-sarva-doṣa-rahitam | satya-jñānānandānanta svarūpam svayam nirvikalpam aśeṣa kalpādhāram aśeṣa bhūty-āntaryāmitvena vartamānam antar bahiścākāśavad anusyūtam akhaṇḍ-ānanda svabhāvam aprameyam anubhavaika vedyam aparokṣa-tayābhāsamānam karatalāmala kavat sāsāt aparokṣikṛtya kṛtārthatayā kāma rāgādi doṣa rahitaḥ śamādi-guṇa sampanno bhāva-mātsarya-tṛṣṇāśā-mohādi rahitaḥ dambh-āhākārādibhir asāpṛṣṭacetā vartate | evam ukta lakṣaṇo yaḥ sa eva brāhmaṇa iti śāti smṛti purāṇetihāsānām abhiprāyaḥ | anyathā brāhmaṇatva sidhir nāstyeva | saccidānandātmānam | advitīyam brahma bhāvayet | ātmānam advitīyam brahma bhāvayed ity upaniṣad || 11 ||

Then, who, verily is called a Brahmin? Whoever he may be — he who, has attained self-realization, and directly perceives the ātman like a myrobalan fruit in the palm of one's hand. [Realising that the ātman is] of the nature of Truth, Consciousness, Bliss and Eternity, without a second, devoid of distinctions of birth, attributes and action, devoid of all faults such as the six infirmities,¹ and the six states² and devoid of all changes. [The ātman] is the basis of endless determinations. [The ātman] is the indwelling spirit of all beings. [The ātman] pervades everything within and without like space. [The ātman] is of the nature of unlimited joy, indivisible, immeasurable, and is known only by direct cognition.

He who having attained self-realisation becomes rid of the faults of desire, attachment, etc., and is endowed with the six virtues.³ He who having overcome emotion, spite, greed, expectation, desire, delusion, etc., with the mind unaffected by pride, egoism and the like; he alone, who is possessed of these qualities is called a Brahmin. This is the view of the Vedic texts and tradition, ancient lore and history. The attainment of the status of a Brahmin is otherwise impossible. Meditate on the Self as Brahman who is Being, Consciousness and Bliss, without a second; meditate on the Self as Brahman who is Being, Consciousness and Bliss without a second. This is the Upanishad.

It is valuable to be mindful of the teaching of this Upanishad which repudiates the system that consecrates social inequalities and makes contingent differences into inviolable divisions.



¹ six infirmities: (1) old age, (2) sorrow, (3) delusion, (4) hunger (5) thirst and (6) death.

² six states: (1) birth, (2) being, (3) growth, (4) change, (5) deterioration and (6) perishing.

³ six virtues; (1) *Sama* — tranquility, (2) *dama*— self-control, (3) *uparati* — cessation of dependence upon rituals (or continence), (4) *titikṣa* — fortitude, (5) *samadhānam*— meditation, and (6) *sraddhā* — conviction.