

CHAPTER VI

The Story of Shvetaketu

1.1 Shvetaketu was Uddalaka's son.

When he was twelve, his father said to him:

"It is time for you to find a teacher,

Dear one, for no one in our family

Is a stranger to the spiritual life."

1.2 So Shvetaketu went to a teacher

And studied all the Vedas for twelve years.

At the end of this time he returned home,
Proud of his intellectual knowledge.

"You seem to be proud of all this learning,"
Said Uddalaka. "But did you ask
Your teacher for that spiritual wisdom
^{1.3} Which enables you to hear the unheard,
Think the unthought, and know the unknown?"

"What is that wisdom, Father?" asked the son.

Uddalaka said to Shvetaketu:

^{1.4} "As by knowing one lump of clay, dear one,
We come to know all things made out of clay
That they differ only in name and form,
While the stuff of which all are made is clay;
^{1.5} As by knowing one gold nugget, dear one,
We come to know all things made out of gold:
That they differ only in name and form,
While the stuff of which all are made is gold;
^{1.6} As by knowing one tool of iron, dear one,
We come to know all things made out of iron:
That they differ only in name and form,
While the stuff of which all are made is iron –
So through that spiritual wisdom, dear one,
We come to know that all of life is one."

1.7 "My teachers must not have known this wisdom,"
Said Shvetaketu, "for if they had known,
How could they have failed to teach it to me? Please
instruct me in this wisdom, Father."

"Yes, dear one, I will," replied his father.

2.2 "In the beginning was only Being,
One without a second.

2.3 Out of himself he brought forth the cosmos
And entered into everything in it.
There is nothing that does not come from him.
Of everything he is the inmost Self.
He is the truth; he is the Self supreme.
You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that."

"Please, Father, tell me more about this Self."

"Yes, dear one, I will," Uddalaka said.

8.1 "Let us start with sleep. What happens in it?
When one is absorbed in dreamless sleep,
He is one with the Self, though he knows it not.
We say he sleeps, but he sleeps in the Self.

8.2 As a tethered bird grows tired of flying
About in vain to find a place of rest
And settles down at last on its own perch,
So the mind, tired of wandering about

Hither and thither, settles down at last
In the Self, dear one, to which it is bound.

8.4 All creatures, dear one, have their source in him.
He is their home; he is their strength.”

8.6 “When a person departs from this world, dear one,
His speech merges in mind, his mind in prana,
Prana in fire, and fire in pure Being.

8.7 There is nothing that does not come from him.
Of everything he is the inmost Self.
He is the truth; he is the Self supreme.
You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that.”

“Please tell me, Father, more about this Self?”

“Yes, dear one, I will,” Uddalaka said.

9.1 “As bees suck nectar from many a flower
And make their honey one, **9.2** so that no drop
Can say, “I am from this flower or that,”
All creatures, though one, know not they are that One.

9.3 There is nothing that does not come from him.
Of everything he is the inmost Self.
He is the truth; he is the Self supreme.
You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that.”

“Please, Father, tell me more about this Self?”

“Yes, dear one, I will,” Uddalaka said.

10.1 "As the rivers flowing east and west
Merge in the sea and become one with it,
Forgetting they were ever separate rivers,
10.2 So do all creatures lose their separateness
When they merge at last into pure Being.
10.3 There is nothing that does not come from him.
Of everything he is the inmost Self.
He is the truth; he is the Self supreme.
You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that."

"Please, Father, tell me more about this Self."

"Yes, dear one, I will," Uddalaka said.

11.1 "Strike at the root of a tree; it would bleed
But still live. Strike at the trunk; it would bleed
But still live. Strike again at the top;
It would bleed but still live. The Self as life
Supports the tree, which stands firm and enjoys
The nourishment it receives.

11.2 If the Self leaves one branch, that branch withers.
If it leaves a second, that too withers.
If it leaves a third, that again withers.
Let it leave the whole tree, the whole tree dies.

11.3 Just so, dear one, when death comes and the Self
Departs from the body, the body dies.
But the Self dies not."

“There is nothing that does not come from him.
Of everything he is the inmost Self.
He is the truth; he is the Self supreme.
You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that.”

“Please, Father, tell me more about this Self.”

“Yes, dear one, I will,” Uddalaka said.

^{12.1} “Bring me a fruit from the *nyagrodha* tree.”

“Here it is, sir.”

“Break it. What do you see?”

“These seeds, Father, all exceedingly small.”

“Break one. What do you see?”

“Nothing at all.”

^{12.2} “That hidden essence you do not see, dear one,
From that a whole *nyagrodha* tree will grow.

^{12.3} There is nothing that does not come from him.
Of everything he is the inmost Self.
He is the truth; he is the Self supreme.
You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that.”

“Please, Father, tell me more about this Self.”

“Yes, dear one, I will,” Uddalaka said.

^{13.1} “Place this salt in water and bring it here

Tomorrow morning." The boy did.

"Where is that salt?" his father asked.

"I do not see it."

13.2 "Sip here. How does it taste?"

"Salty, Father."

"And here? And there?"

"I taste salt everywhere."

"It *is* everywhere, though we see it not.

Just so, dear one, the Self is everywhere,

Within all things, although we see him not.

13.3 There is nothing that does not come from him.

Of everything he is the inmost Self.

He is the truth; he is the Self supreme.

You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that."

"Please, Father, tell me more about this Self."

"Yes, dear one, I will," Uddalaka said.

14.1 "As a man from Gandhara, blindfolded,
Led away and left in a lonely place,
Turns to the east and west and north and south
And shouts, 'I am left here and cannot see!'

14.2 Until one removes his blindfold and says,

'There lies Gandhara; follow that path,'
 And thus informed, able to see for himself,
 The man inquires from village to village
 And reaches his homeland at last – just so,
 My son, one who finds an illumined teacher
 Attains to spiritual wisdom in the Self.

14.3 There is nothing that does not come from him.
 Of everything he is the inmost Self.
 He is the truth; he is the Self supreme.
 You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that."

"Please, Father, tell me more about this Self."

"Yes, dear one, I will," Uddalaka said.

15.1 "When a man is dying, his family
 All gather round and ask, 'Do you know me?
 Do you know me?' And so long as his speech
 Has not merged in mind, his mind in prana,
 Prana in fire, and fire in pure Being,

15.2 He knows them all. But there is no more knowing
 When speech merges in mind, mind in prana,
 Prana in fire, and fire in pure Being,

15.3 There is nothing that does not come from him.
 Of everything he is the inmost Self.
 He is the truth; he is the Self supreme.
 You are that, Shvetaketu; you are that."

^{16.3} Then Shvetaketu understood this teaching;
Truly he understood it all.

CHAPTER VII

Narada's Education

^{1.1} Narada approached the sage Sanatkumara and said,
"Please teach me, Venerable One."

"Tell me what you know," replied the sage, "and then I
will teach you what is beyond that."

^{1.2} "I know the four Vedas — Rig, Yajur, Sama, Atharva
— and the epics, called the fifth. I have studied
grammar, rituals, mathematics, astronomy, logic,
economics, physics, psychology, the fine arts, and
even snake-charming.^{1.3} But all this knowledge has
not helped me to know the Self. I have heard from
spiritual teachers like you that one who realizes the
Self goes beyond sorrow. I am lost in sorrow. Please
teach me how to go beyond."

"Whatever you know is just words," said Sanatkumara,
"names of finite phenomena.^{23.1} It is the Infinite that
is the source of abiding joy because it is not subject to
change. Therefore seek to know the Infinite."

"I seek to know the Infinite, Venerable One."