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4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G8

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya
Kaivalya Upanishad
केवल्य उपनिषत्
Volume 1

यं ब्रह्मा वरुणेन्द्ररुद्रमरुतः स्तुन्वन्ति दिव्यैः स्तवैः
वेदैः साङ्गपदक्रमोपनिषदैः गायन्ति यं सामगाः
ध्यानावस्थित तद्गतेन मनसा पश्यन्ति यं योगिनः
यस्यान्तं न विदुः सुरासुरगणाः देवाय तस्मै नमः ॥
हरिः ॐ

केवल्य उपनिषत्

As indicated last time, we now commence our readings on a short Upanishad called **केवल्य उपनिषत्** from Atharva Veda, in lieu of the *necessary* contemplation on the content of the **ब्रह्मविद्या** knowledge to which we have been exposed in the current cycle of our scripture readings.

केवल्य means Absolute Oneness - The state of being **पूर्णम्** - The Whole. Thus **केवल्य** is simply another name for **मोक्ष** - The **परम पुरुषार्थ**, The Ultimate Goal of human existence, namely, gaining **परमात्मरूपम्** - Self Realization, Self-Recognition, as **ब्रह्मन्** Itself, as **परमेश्वर** Itself, as **परमात्मा** already in oneself.

As usual, the Upanishad opens with this familiar **शान्तिपाठ** - Peace Invocation, as follows:



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ॐ

भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः
भद्रं पश्येम अक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
स्थिरेः अङ्गोः तुष्टुवाँसस्तनूभिः
व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ॥

स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः
स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।
स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः
स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

We have already seen this शान्ति मन्त्र in मुण्डक उपनिषत् in detail. Briefly recalling, we do नमस्कार् to all our इष्ट देवताs - The Presiding Deities of all our organs of perception and action, and offer Them a prayer in these words:

देवाः - O! Gods

भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम - May we hear through our ears, those sounds and sanctifying words, which reveal, and help one to recognize आत्मा - The Self I in every self, including oneself, which revelation and recognition give one मोक्ष - Absolute Liberation from all limitations. May we become qualified to listen, understand, appreciate and grasp the content of the Upanishad words.

भद्रं पश्येम अक्षभिः यजत्राः - We being committed to the pursuit of Upanishad Knowledge, may we be able to see with our own eyes, with our own बुद्धि, what is भद्रं.



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May we be able to recognize परमेश्वर in everything in this creation, including our own selves, by our own eyes, by our own बुद्धि, through these Upanishad words.

स्थिरेः अङ्गोः तुष्टुवाँसः तनूभिः - Keeping the mind and बुद्धि free from restlessness and distractions of any kind, may we be able to praise, by words, the Glory of परमेश्वर, which reveal The Nature of परमेश्वर Itself.

व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः - As long as we live, may we enjoy good health, to be able to engage ourselves in actions which are totally in accordance with Vedic Teachings, so that we can really grasp Upanishad Knowledge.

स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः - May Lord इन्द्र bless us to be able to gain ब्रह्मानन्द
- The Exalted Happiness

स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः - May Lord Sun bless us with the ability to understand, appreciate and enjoy Upanishad Knowledge.

स्वस्ति नः ताक्षर्यो अरिष्टनेमिः - May Lord Vishnu bless us with a clear obstruction-free path in our pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या Knowledge.

स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिः दधातु - May बृहस्पति - the teacher of all देवाः, bless us with a good teacher for the pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या Knowledge.

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

May we enjoy freedom from all the three kinds of obstructions to the study of this Upanishad, namely,

- 🌈 freedom from unknown and unpredictable obstructions over which we have no control
- 🌈 freedom from obstructions from our immediate surroundings over which we have no control, and
- 🌈 freedom from obstructions from within ourselves, such as ill-health, restlessness of mind, etc.

That is the prayer.



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Now, the Upanishad begins. Like every other Upanishad, here also a teacher and student are involved. The student seeks knowledge and the teacher responds. The student's request and the teacher's response, together constitute the Upanishad. This is how the Upanishad starts.

अथ आश्वलायनः भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनं उपसमेत्य उवाच

अथ - Then

अथ is a very meaningful Upanishad word. It means, through proper preparation, when one has become ready for the knowledge that one is seeking

अथ - Then

आश्वलायनः भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनं उपसमेत्य उवाच - Ashvalayana, the student, seeking knowledge, approaching respectfully and reverentially his परमगुरु - The Great Teacher, said as follows:

In the Vedantic literature, आश्वलायन is well-known as a great teacher of Rig Veda.

Even today, many who belong to the tradition of Rig Veda follow आश्वलायन सूत्र - the Vedic rituals formulated by Rishi Ashvalayana. Before he became a great teacher himself, Ashvalayana is said to have received his education in ब्रह्मविद्या from ब्रह्मजी -

The Creator Himself, who is referred here as भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनं, as परमगुरु - The Great Teacher. On the other hand, in our context here, Ashvalayana could be any well-qualified student, seeking knowledge from any distinguished teacher who can always be referred to as परमगुरु - as a mark of respect. Therefore, let us understand that Ashvalayana, a well-qualified student, approached a distinguished teacher, and said as follows:

अधीहि भगवन् ब्रह्मविद्यां वरिष्ठं
सदा सद्भिः सेव्यमानां निगूढाम् ।
यया अचिरात् सर्वपापं व्यपोह्य
परात्परं पुरषं याति विद्वान् ॥

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Addressing the teacher as भगवन् - O! Lord. O! Respected teacher

अधीहि - Please teach me (please bring into my बुद्धि, what?)

अधीहि ब्रह्मविद्यां - Please teach me Brahma Vidya.

It is here that the initial word "अथ - Then" becomes meaningful. The student knows exactly what he wants from the teacher, because of his prior preparations, discipline and readiness for the knowledge he seeks. Why does he want this knowledge? Because,

वरिष्ठां, means श्रेष्ठां. Brahma Vidya is the most exalted among all forms of knowledge, since It is मोक्ष शास्त्र - It is about the highest पुरुषार्थ - the highest purpose of human existence, and It is about The Absolute Reality behind all forms and names of transient reality. What exactly he wants to know about Brahma Vidya?

सदा सद्भिः सेव्यमानां - He wants to know That knowledge which is constantly being sought by सद्भिः - all सत् पुरुषs, all people who are blessed with the predominance of सत्त्व गुण - all the highest among ईश्वर भक्तs - devotees of परमेश्वर. The only thing such people constantly seek is मोक्ष- Total Union with परमेश्वर Itself, nothing else and nothing less.

निगूढाम् - That परमेश्वर, That destination they seek, appears deeply hidden somewhere beyond the reach of one's sense organs. Therefore, the student seeks the help of the teacher to give him That knowledge.

यया - by which, by which knowledge

अचिरात् - quickly, naturally and spontaneously

सर्वपापं व्यपोह्य - totally exhausting, totally eliminating, all पापs, all वासनs of past कर्मs obstructing the realization of That Knowledge



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विद्वान् याति - the विद्वान्, the one who is blessed with That Knowledge, goes to gain, which means reaches

परात्परं पुरुषं - That परात्पर पुरुष, That उत्तम पुरुष, The पुरुषोत्तम, The परमेश्वर Itself

Thus Ashvalayana requests his teacher to teach him That ब्रह्मविद्या Knowledge by which he can quickly overcome all obstacles to the realization of That Knowledge and reach That परात्पर पुरुष, The पुरुषोत्तम, The परमेश्वर Itself, quickly, naturally and spontaneously (अचिरात्).

There are two words here, namely, अचिरात् and परात्पर पुरुष, which we must understand clearly.

अचिरात् means "quickly, naturally and spontaneously with no time lag in between". It always takes time and effort to create the conditions necessary for gaining any knowledge. But when the conditions are proper, the knowledge itself takes place

अचिरात् - naturally and spontaneously, because ज्ञानं is वस्तु तन्त्रं - knowledge is centered on वस्तु - the object. When the object of knowledge, and the means of gaining that knowledge are properly aligned, knowledge itself always takes place अचिरात् - spontaneously, independent of one's will. For example, if an object is in front of my eyes, and if my mind and eyes are properly aligned towards that object, I see the object as it is, naturally and spontaneously, whether I want to see it or not.

The situation is different with respect to कर्म - any action, because कर्म is पुरुष तन्त्रं. कर्म is centered on the will of the person. One may will to do the कर्म, or not to do the कर्म, or do it in a different way. In each case, the result also is different.



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Now about परात्पर पुरुष. We talked about पर and अपर before. पर is Unmanifest, and अपर is manifest. For example, a huge tree can come from a tiny seed, but one cannot see the tree in the seed. Therefore, with respect to the tree, which is अपर - manifest, the seed is पर - unmanifest.

But each seed is पर only with respect to a particular tree. There are countless trees and hence countless seeds, which means, there are countless परs - countless unmanifest beings. If there is ONE unmanifest पर, which includes all seeds in ONE, all the countless परs and अपरs in ONE, That all-inclusive ONE पर is परात्पर. As we have seen in the पुरुषोत्तम योग of भगवद्गीता, That परात्पर पुरुष is पुरुषोत्तम, The परमेश्वर, which includes both क्षर and अक्षर, जगत् and माया, and at the same time transcends both. That पुरुषोत्तम is परात्पर पुरुष, The परमेश्वर, The Absolute Reality of all that exist.

Here Ashvalayana is asking his teacher to teach him how to reach That परात्पर पुरुष - That Unmanifest, All-inclusive Absolute Reality, अचिरात् - naturally and spontaneously. The teacher responds by saying:

तस्मै स हो वाच पितामहश्च
श्रद्धाभक्तिध्यानयोगात् अवेहि ॥ 2

सः पितामहः च तस्मै उवाच ह - The Great Teacher (परमगुरु - ब्रह्माजी - पितामह) gladly accepting Asvalayana as a student, said to him as follows:

श्रद्धाभक्तिध्यानयोगात् अवेहि - The Knowledge you are seeking is something that you have to learn to know, you have to learn to discover, by yourself, in yourself, through श्रद्धा, भक्ति and ध्यानयोग, all together, each being पूर्णम् - in full measure.



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श्रद्धा is पूर्ण श्रद्धा - Absolute Faith in yourself, Absolute Faith in the Knowledge that you seek, and Absolute Faith in your ability to gain That Knowledge and reach your Destination. भक्ति is पूर्ण ईश्वर भक्ति, rooted in Upanishad Knowledge on ईश्वर, together with the attitude of पूर्ण ईश्वर शरणागति; and ध्यानयोग is constant meditation and contemplation on That परात्पर पुरुष, The पुरुषोत्तम, The परमेश्वर.

As Sri Krishna says, मच्चित्तः सततं भव - Be in परमेश्वर-consciousness at all times. Such ध्यानयोग itself is पूर्ण श्रद्धा and पूर्ण ईश्वर भक्ति, which makes श्रद्धाभक्तिध्यानयोग as ONE (singular).

Thus, through such श्रद्धाभक्तिध्यानयोग, all together, you have to learn to discover That परात्पर पुरुष, The परमेश्वर, by yourself, in yourself. Further, you must know:

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन
त्यागेन एके अमृतत्वं आनशुः ।
परेण नाकं निहितं गुहायां
विभ्राजते यत् यततो विशन्ति ॥ 3

वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः
सन्यासयोगात् यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः
ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले
परामृतात् परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे ॥ 4 (See also मु ३ - 2 - 6)

These two verses are very well known in Vedanta. They are often used to welcome people with scholarship and maturity in वेदान्तविज्ञानं - Upanishad Knowledge. In the context here, the Teacher says:



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The Destination that you want to reach, namely The Abode of That परात्पर पुरुष, The पुरुषोत्तम, That वैष्णवं परमं पदं, is अमृतत्वं - The state of Immortality, The state of Total Freedom from any change, time and death.

अमृतत्वं आनशुः - That state of Immortality is gained, is reached

न कर्मणा - not by doing any action

न प्रजया धनेन - not by the services of other people, nor by any kind of material wealth. But it is gained

त्यागेन एके - only by त्याग बुद्धि - an attitude of renunciation, by giving up identifications with one's body, mind and intellect, and कर्मs and कर्म फलs - actions and their results, and seeking only the grace of परमेश्वर to reach परमेश्वर Itself. As Sri Krishna says:

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मां एकं शरणं ब्रज

Thus, only the attitude of total identification with परमेश्वर, through पूर्ण ईश्वर शरणागति बुद्धि, can one reach That अमृतत्वं - state of Immortality. What is That state of Immortality?

परेण नाकं - It is That state which is far higher than all the heavenly joys. It is The State of ब्रह्मानन्द - Eternal Infinite Bliss. Where is That State?

निहितं गुहायां - That state of ब्रह्मानन्द lies hidden in the cave of one's own बुद्धि, in the region of one's बुद्धि not accessible to one's recognition because of internal obstructions

विभाजते यत् - That which shines in your बुद्धि as "Pure I", "The Self I", without any उपाधि, like body, mind, etc., is indeed That परेण नाकं, ब्रह्मानन्दं - The परात्पर पुरुष, The पुरुषोत्तम, The परमेश्वर, Which is what you want to reach, and which is what you have to learn to recognize, in yourself, by yourself.



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यतयः विशन्ति - The Enlightened Ones, the rishis, striving through पूर्ण श्रद्धा ज्ञानलक्षणईश्वरभक्ति, ध्यान योग and त्याग बुद्धि, they are the ones who reach and enter into That state of ब्रह्मानन्दं, That वैष्णवं परमं पदं, That अमृतत्वं, That state of Eternal Immortal Bliss.

Now, who are those यतयः - The Enlightened Ones? How did they become महात्माs and rishis? Those Enlightened Ones are:

वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः - those who have well ascertained, doubt-free, Vedantic Knowledge, gained through

सन्यासयोगात् यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः - their exclusive pursuit of परमेश्वर, by virtue of their पूर्ण श्रद्धा, ज्ञानलक्षणईश्वरभक्ति, ध्यानयोग and त्यागबुद्धि with their अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि, purified by their कर्मयोग way of life.

ते - Those Enlightened Ones

ब्रह्मलोकेषु - already being ONE with ब्रह्मन्, which means, having already gained मोक्ष in this life itself, having already reached The Abode of परात्पर पुरुष, The पुरुषोत्तम, The परमेश्वर already in themselves.

परान्तकाले - at the time of the natural death of their body vehicles

परामृतात् - because of their already gained State of Immortality

परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे - they are totally liberated from all their कर्मs, both प्रारब्ध कर्मs and संचित कर्मs - both their already begun कर्मs in their present life and their

accumulated, not yet fructified past कर्मs, which means, all their वासनाs - lingering impressions, having disappeared, they are free from any rebirth. They are Immortal.

They have already become ONE with परमेश्वर forever. Thus, the Teacher tells Ashvalayana:



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The Knowledge that you are seeking is something that you have to learn to gain through श्रद्धा, भक्ति, and ध्यान योग - all in ONE. That which shines in your बुद्धि as "I", The Pure I, independent of your body, mind, intellect and other limitations, That Pure I is indeed That परात्पर पुरुष - The Unmanifest, All-inclusive परमेश्वर which you are seeking, and which you have to learn to recognize by your own self through ध्यान योग - meditation and contemplation on That परमेश्वर Itself.

So saying, the Teacher then proceeds to describe how to get started in such ध्यान योग, which we will see next time.