



ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya
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आत्मानं अरणिं कृत्वा प्रणवं च उत्तरारिणीम्
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प्रपञ्चं यत् प्रकाशते ।

तत् ब्रह्माहं इति ज्ञात्वा

सर्वबन्धैः प्रमुच्यते ॥ 17

Simultaneously following, in all details, the instructions of the teacher, Ashvalayana is still in the process of meditation and contemplation on आत्मा - The परात्पर पुरुष, The परमेश्वर, The सत् चित् आनन्द स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् already in oneself. But his अन्तःकरण - his mind and बुद्धि has not yet reached That ब्रह्मन्, because of his own internal obstacles in the form of still lingering worldly bondages of many kinds. The teacher recognizes this difficulty.

In order to help the student to gain total freedom from all such worldly bondages, the teacher now leads the student further in the process of contemplation on आत्मा, using a familiar Vedic ritual, to illustrate the process. This ritual is called ज्ञान निर्मथनं "Churning out the Fire of Wisdom in one's बुद्धि"



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In the Vedic age, every time people perform a Havan कर्म, they freshly create the fire to light up the fuel pile in the Havan kund. The process of creating this fire is itself a very significant ritual, and the process is also simple. Sparks of fire are generated by the friction caused by rubbing two small blocks of wood. That fire is caught by a piece of cotton, which is then transferred into the fuel pile in the Havan kund. The process of generating the initial sparks of fire is the ritual here. This is how they do.

Two small flat circular blocks of wood are held, one above the other, with the flat surfaces in contact. Each block of wood is called अरणि. Thus there is a lower अरणि and there is an upper अरणि. Each block of wood has a hole scooped at the center, to accommodate a perpendicular wooden rod, which is firmly fixed into the hole of the lower अरणि. The rod snugly passes through the hole of the upper अरणि. A length of rope is wound, a few times, around the rod. One ब्रह्मचारि - a Vedic student, firmly holds the upper अरणि by his hand, and another ब्रह्मचारि rotates the lower अरणि and rubs the upper अरणि by pulling the rope around the rod, back and forth, exactly like what we do in churning butter in a milk pot. Both the ब्रह्मचारिs chant the मन्त्र ओँ, ओँ, ओँ... repeatedly as the rod turns back and forth during this churning process. Out of this churning process arise sparks of fire which are recognized as The Sacred Fire of Wisdom. That is the Vedic ritual. Calling attention to this Vedic ritual, the teacher says:

आत्मानं अरणिं कृत्वा प्रणवं च उत्तरारिणीम्
ज्ञान निर्मथन अभ्यासात् पाशं दहति पण्डितः ॥ 11

Let us understand this - there is no ritual or Havan involved here. What is involved is only meditation and contemplation on आत्मा, using one's बुद्धि faculty of understanding and discrimination, and one's ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge on the content of the ओँ mantra. Mantra means word of knowledge and power. Uplifting Ashvalayana in his meditation process, the teacher says: Reset your mind. How?



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आत्मानं अरणिं कृत्वा - Make your बुद्धि with all its notions about yourself as the lower अरणि, and

प्रणवं च उत्तरारिणीम् - make your knowledge about प्रणव मन्त्र ओँ, gained from ब्रह्मविद्या education as the upper अरणि.

From your ब्रह्मविद्या Knowledge, you already know that ओँ is ब्रह्मन्. ओँ is सत् चित् आनन्द स्वरूप आत्मा - The Pure Self I, the Pure Consciousness, That परात्पर पुरुष, The पुरुषोत्तम, The सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म. Let That Knowledge on the content of the ओँ mantra be the Upper अरणि. Now, contemplate on that ओँ Knowledge. How?

ज्ञान निर्मथन अभ्यासात् - By repeated practice of churning of That Knowledge on ओँ by your बुद्धि. This is how you do that. All your bondages constitute the rope - the पाश, for the churning process. By pulling the पाश (the rope) back and forth, which means, by repeatedly uttering the mantra ओँ, ओँ, ओँ..., contact your बुद्धि back and forth repeatedly on the content of your knowledge on ओँ mantra. That is the process of contemplation. By the repeated practice of such contemplation, sparks of the fire of wisdom will arise, and they will progressively burn the entire rope, which means, all bondages with past कर्मs and कर्मफलs will ultimately disappear naturally. That is how

पाशं दहति पण्डितः - a wise person burns up all bondages with कर्मs and कर्मफलs, making the बुद्धि totally free to reach आत्मा naturally and spontaneously.

While the above illustration itself appears clear, some difficulty may be experienced in the practical process of the required contemplation, because:



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- all bondages are only in one's बुद्धि
- all Upanishad knowledge on ओँ mantra is also in one's बुद्धि; and
- the fire of wisdom also has to take place in the same बुद्धि

When that is the case, what process of contemplation on आत्मा can churn the बुद्धि in That ओँ Knowledge, to bring about the required freedom and wisdom to the बुद्धि? Anticipating this question, the teacher now unfolds, in the next few verses, an appropriate process of contemplation, through अवस्थात्रय प्रक्रिया - an analysis of the three fields of experience of an individual जीव in the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states of existence. A clear understanding and appreciation of this analysis can churn out the required fire of wisdom. Therefore, focussing the बुद्धि in the 3-fold experiences in one's own daily life, in terms of the ब्रह्मविद्या Knowledge on ओँ, is the theme of contemplation here. Describing the जीव in the waking state of existence, the teacher says:

स एव माया परिमोहितात्मा
शरीरं आस्थाय करोति सर्वम् ।
स्त्री-अन्नपानादि विचित्रभोगेः
स एव जाग्रत् परितृप्तिमेति ॥

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स एव माया परिमोहित आत्मा - That आत्मा, The Self I, The Pure Infinite consciousness manifesting Itself through the सूक्ष्म शरीर - the subtle body as a जीव, appearing as an individual person with a deluded mind and बुद्धि (परिमोहित आत्मा), completely overpowered by माया गुण वासनाs - the left-over impressions of one's past actions, both in this life and previous lives, that जीव, the individual person



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शरीरं आस्थाय करोति सर्वम् - identifying oneself with the body-mind-intellect complex with all its attributes, performs all actions, all पुण्य कर्मs and पाप कर्मs - all good actions and bad actions; and

स एव जाग्रत् परितृप्तिमेति - that same जीव, the individual person, in the waking state of existence, as a waker, seeks to gain supreme satisfaction in life. How?

स्त्री-अन्नपानादि विचित्रभोगे: - By going after endless varieties of transient pleasures of various kinds, foods, drinks, etc.

Thus, the आत्मा, The Pure Infinite Consciousness, manifesting Itself as a जीव, as an individual person with a deluded mind and बुद्धि, because of one's माया गुण वासनाs, identifies oneself with the body-mind-intellect complex, and all its attributes, and performs all good and bad actions. And, in its waking state of existence, as a waker, the जीव seeks to gain supreme satisfaction in life, going after varieties of pleasures available in this transient world. Further

स्वप्ने स जीवः सुखदुःख भोक्ता

स्वमायया कल्पित जीवलोके ।

सुषुप्तिकाले सकलेविलीने

तमोभिभूतः सुखरूपमेति ॥

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स्वप्ने स जीवः - In the dreaming state of existence, the very same जीव, the very same individual person who was a waker before, and who is now a dreamer,

सुखदुःख भोक्ता स्वमायया कल्पित जीवलोके - becomes the experiencer of joy and sorrow in the dream world, created by one's own माया गुण वासनाs - residual effects of one's past actions - thoughts, words and deeds.

The difference between the waking state of existence and the dreaming state of existence must be clearly understood. The world one experiences in the waking state of



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existence is a manifestation of the totality of all माया गुण वासनाs of all जीवs in this creation (which means that any action by any one, anywhere, at any time, leaves a continuing effect on every one in this creation) whereas the world one experiences in the dreaming state of existence is a manifestation of the माया गुण वासनाs of that particular जीव only. That is the difference.

Again, the same जीव, the same individual person

सुषुप्तिकाले - in the dreamless, deep-sleep state of existence, as the sleeper

सकले विलीने - when all experiences dissolve into the consciousness of total absence of everything

(We must understand that absence of a thing is also an object of consciousness. When I say "I see nothing", I am conscious of the absence of the thing. Thus, the characteristic of the deep sleep state is the consciousness of total absence of everything - सकले विलीने)

तमोभिभूयः - being overpowered by तमस् गुण of माया - the state of simple ignorance

सुखरूपम् एति - the जीव enjoys a kind of सुख आनन्द - a kind of happiness in deep sleep, even though the person is blissfully unaware of that happiness while sleeping.

The जीव went to sleep because its body required rest. After a good sleep, the जीव - the person automatically wakes up again. Why? If the person enjoys sleeping, why does the जीव wake up? Because it cannot sleep any more. It has कर्म to do. It came into the world only for the purpose of doing कर्म to exhaust all its वासनाs- lingering impressions of past actions. Therefore,

पुनश्च जन्मान्तर कर्म योगात्

स एव जीवः स्वपिति प्रबुद्धः ।



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पुरत्रये क्रीडति यश्च जीवः
ततस्तु जातं सकलं विचित्रं ।
आधारमानन्दमखण्डबोधं
यस्मिन् लयं याति पुरत्रयं च ॥

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पुनः च स एव जीवः - Again, the very same जीव - the very same individual person who was earlier the waker, then the dreamer, and then the sleeper, That very same जीव

जन्मान्तर कर्म योगात् - (कर्मयोग here is कर्म संबन्ध - connection to कर्म) because of its connection to कर्म, arising from वासनाs of कर्मs of past lives

स्वपिति प्रबुद्धः - the जीव wakes up automatically, and that waking also is स्वपिति - another kind of dream, because the जीव is not waking up to Absolute Reality, but it is waking up to this outer world of transient reality, which is only a manifestation of the totality of the वासनाs of all जीवs in this creation.

Let us understand this clearly: The Upanishad is telling here something very significant. Even when we are awake, as we think that we are right now, we are not really awake, because we are not awake to Absolute Reality. Our waking state is only another kind of dreaming state, where we continue to be ignorant about the true nature of ourselves. The Upanishad continues:

पुरत्रये क्रीडति यश्च जीवः - That Pure Conscious Being, which is in every जीव, That Pure Consciousness, The आत्मा, in whose presence alone the जीव plays the role of waker, dreamer, and sleeper in the three states of existence, namely the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep state respectively

ततस्तु जातं सकलं विचित्रं - it is from That Pure Consciousness alone, from That आत्मा, The Pure Self I alone, that all these amazingly varied beings, in different



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forms and names in this creation are born, which means that there is nothing in this creation which is independent of That आत्मा.

Ashvalayana is already in deep ध्यानयोग with पूर्ण श्रद्धा, ज्ञानलक्षण ईश्वर भक्ति and त्यागबुद्धि, intently listening to and absorbing the content of every word of the teacher. By the above analytical description of the three states of existence of a जीव - an individual person, what the teacher tells Ashvalayana is the following. The teacher says:

Recognize yourself, as you are, by your बुद्धि. The waker, the dreamer and the sleeper are simply different roles played by the जीव in the three states of existence.

Please understand this. The waker is not in the dream state of experience, or in the deep-sleep state of experience. Again, the dreamer is not in the waking state of experience, or in the deep sleep state of experience; and likewise the sleeper is not in the waking state of experience, or the dreaming state of experience, but you are in all the three states of experience, which means *The waker is you, but you are not the waker. The dreamer is you, but you are not the dreamer. The sleeper is you, but you are not the sleeper.*

Who are you, then? You are That ONE invariable conscious Being in all the three of them. While the waker, the dreamer and the sleeper are dependent on your existence, you exist in all of them, independent of all of them. As the waker, you are conscious of all the experiences in the waking state. As the dreamer, you are conscious of all the experiences in the dreaming state. And as the sleeper, you are conscious of the absence of every experience in the deep-sleep state. That Pure Consciousness in you is common in all the three fields of experience, in all the three states of existence.

As Pure Consciousness, you are in every thought, in every perception, and in every kind of cognition, and you are also in all in-between thoughts where there is no thought, in all in-between perceptions where there is no perception, and in all in-between cognitions of any kind where there is no cognition of any kind.



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That unchanging, continuous, unbroken Pure Consciousness You are. Therefore, That which is indicated by the content of ओँ mantra, you are. That सत् चित् आनन्द स्वरूप आत्मा you are. That सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म you are. You are सत्यं - ever-existent Absolute Reality. You are indeed

आधारं आनन्दं अखण्ड बोधं
यस्मिन् लयं याति पुरत्रयं च

You are the basis of all existence, limitless and undivided Infinite Pure Consciousness, in which all the three fields of experience, all the three states of existence resolve themselves into ONE पूर्ण आत्मा. That पूर्ण आत्मा you are. Now recognize That पूर्ण आत्मा as Yourself.

एतस्मात् जायते प्राणः मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च ।
खं वायुः ज्योतिरापःपृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी ॥

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It is from That Pure Consciousness alone, from That पूर्ण आत्मा alone, the प्राण, the mind and बुद्धि, all organs of perception and action, the five great elements - आकाश, वायु, अग्नि, आपः, पृथिवी which sustain this entire universe, all of them are born.
(see मु 2-1-3)

यत् परं ब्रह्म सर्वात्मा
विश्वस्य आयतनं महत् ।
सूक्ष्मात् सूक्ष्मतरं नित्यम्
तत् त्वं एव त्वं एव तत् ॥

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यत् परं ब्रह्म - That which is The Limitless ब्रह्मन्

सर्वात्मा - That which is The आत्मा - The Pure Self I of all beings, That which is the Truth of every one and everything in this creation

विश्वस्य आयतनं महत् - That which is the Abode of this Great Universe, and at the same time

सूक्ष्मात् सूक्ष्मतरं - That which is more subtle than the most subtle one can think of

नित्यं - That which is eternal existence, unbound by time

तत् त्वं एव - That you are, certainly so

त्वं एव तत् - You are indeed That

Thus the teacher effectively points out the identity of Pure जीव and परमेश्वर, and that the true nature of every individual person is परमेश्वर Itself. The teacher concludes his teaching by saying

जाग्रत् स्वप्नसुषुप्त्यादि प्रपञ्चं यत् प्रकाशते ।

तत् ब्रह्माहं इति ज्ञात्वा सर्वबन्धेः प्रमुच्यते ॥ 17

यत् ब्रह्म जाग्रत् स्वप्नसुषुप्त्यादि प्रपञ्चं प्रकाशते - That ब्रह्मन् which illuminates the waking world, the dream world and the deep-sleep world, and also all the infinitely mixed worlds of existence and experience

तत् ब्रह्म अहं इति ज्ञात्वा - realizing That ब्रह्मन् as The Absolute Reality of The Self I in oneself, recognizing "I am That ब्रह्मन्"

सर्व बन्धेः प्रमुच्यते - one is totally released from all bondages. One gains total freedom from all bondages.

Here ends the teaching.



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Even as the teacher has been unfolding This Truth, Ashvalayana, who is already in deep ध्यानयोग, finds himself totally released from all bondages, and recognizes his identity with ब्रह्मन् Itself.

That is the process of contemplation called ज्ञान निर्मथनं - churning out the fire of wisdom in one's बुद्धि. The wisdom is direct and immediate recognition of oneself as अहं ब्रह्म - I am ब्रह्मन्. The result is सर्व बन्धेः प्रमुच्यते - total release from all bondages. Such release is indeed मोक्ष - gaining जीव ब्रह्म ऐक्यं - becoming ONE with ब्रह्मन् Itself.

Thus Ashvalayana has now gained मोक्ष, and has now become ONE with ब्रह्मन् Itself.

We will be completing this Upanishad next time. By doing so, we will also be completing this entire second cycle of our ब्रह्मविद्या scripture readings next time.