



कठोपनिषत्
Katopanishad
Volume 11
Section 2

- जानाम्यहं शेवधिः इति अनित्यं न हि अध्वैः प्रप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत् ।
ततो मया नाचिकेतश्चितोऽग्निः अनित्यैः द्रव्यैः प्राप्तवान् अस्मि नित्यं ॥ 2 - 10
- कामस्य आप्तिं जगतः प्रतिष्ठां क्रतोः आनन्त्यं, अभयस्य पारं ।
स्तोमं महत्, उरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां, दृष्ट्वा धृत्या धीरः नाचिकेतो अत्यस्त्रक्षीः ॥ 2 - 11
- तं दुर्दर्शं गृहं अनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणं ।
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स मोदते मोदनीयं हि लब्ध्वा चिवृत्तं सद्य नचिकेतसं मन्ये ॥ 2 - 13

As we may recall, Lord यम is full of praise for Nachiketa's firm commitment to the pursuit of सत्यं - Absolute Truth.

सत्यधृतिः बतासि त्वाहक् नः भूयात् नचिकेतः प्रष्टा - "Indeed, you have your will yoked to Truth. May the teachers of ब्रह्म विद्या have शिष्याs - disciples totally committed to the pursuit of truth like you are". These are Lord यम 's words, said in high appreciation of his extraordinary student Nachiketa who is in the pursuit of The Changeless and The Eternal, hidden in the world of change and death. Knowledge of the changeless is the only key to the knowledge of the changeful. Otherwise, the changeful will always remain a mystery.'

Having praised Nachiketa for his one-pointed love of truth, Lord यम now proceeds to say something about himself in the next two verses, again in praise of Nachiketa's devotion to सत्यं - Absolute Truth. Lord यम says:

- जानाम्यहं शेवधिः इति अनित्यं न हि अध्वैः प्रप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत् ।
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ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

जानामि अहं शेवधिः अनित्यं - इति

अहं जानामि - I know

शेवधिः अनित्यं इति - that शेवधि is only

अनित्यं - transient existence

शेवधि means treasure or wealth, which signifies not only material wealth which contributes to worldly pleasure and power, but also fruits of meritorious actions – कर्म फल of पुण्य कर्मs, which contribute to pleasure and power in the life after death also. In either sense, शेवधि is कर्म फल लक्षणं. Therefore, शेवधि simply means कर्म फल.

Every कर्म is finite, and hence every कर्म फल is also finite, which means time-bound, transient in nature. Therefore

जानामि अहं शेवधिः इति अनित्यं means I know, whatever be the कर्म, the कर्म फल of that कर्म can only be अनित्यं - transient, impermanent, not eternal in nature, because

न हि अध्वैः प्रप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत्

अध्वैः : meaning अनित्यैः - through means which are transient in nature

तत् ध्रुवं - that which is eternal, that treasure called परमात्मा - The Supreme Self

न हि प्राप्यते - certainly cannot be obtained

That which is Eternal cannot be attained through that which is transient. That which is Infinite cannot be attained through the multiplication of the finite. That which is Timeless cannot be reached by an endless extension of time. That which is Unconditioned cannot be had by an indefinite stretching of the conditioned. That is the meaning of न हि अध्वैः प्रप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत्.

Lord यम says: I know that ध्रुवं -That eternal treasure called परमात्मा - The Supreme Self, cannot be gained as a कर्म फल of any कर्म.

ततः, ततः अपि - Even though I knew that already

मया नाचिकेतश्चितोऽग्निः अनित्यैः द्रव्यैः

नाचिकेताग्निः मया चितः - That exalted यज्ञ कर्म, हवन् कर्म - now called नाचिकेताग्निः, which I taught you earlier, was performed by Me



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अनित्यैः द्रव्यैः - using objects and materials which are themselves transient in nature. Even though I knew very well that what is Eternal cannot be gained by any कर्म, still I performed नाचिकेताग्नि यज्ञ कर्म

What for would one do नाचिकेताग्नि कर्म? Only to enjoy स्वर्ग कामाs, pleasures of heavenly life. Therefore, as a result of that यज्ञ कर्म

प्राप्तवान् अस्मि नित्यं - I have gained this relatively permanent life of यम देव - Lord of Death.

Here नित्यं does not mean Absolute Eternity. It only means relative eternity, eternal relative to the life of a human being. This means that Lord यम has to continue to do the job of Lord यम till the end of this कल्प - the present cycle of creation.

Lord यम says to Nachiketa "Even though I knew the limitations of कर्म, namely अधुवैः, ध्रुवं न प्राप्यते - by means which are finite in nature, that which is infinite cannot be achieved, even though I knew that, still I performed the नाचिकेताग्नि यज्ञ कर्म when I was young, being attracted to the heavenly pleasures. Because of that यज्ञ कर्म I got this याम्य पदं - the status of यम देवता, and I have to do my duties as the Lord of Death, till the end of this cycle of creation.

You are young. If you perform the नाचिकेताग्नि कर्म, you can go even up to ब्रह्मलोक and enjoy all the pleasures of life in this संसार - in this transient world of existence. But you chose not to do that. You are wise, having recognized the significance of the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं, every other pursuit has no real value to you. For your age, your spiritual maturity is great indeed. Thus Lord यम praises Nachiketa.

Lord यम continues his praise of Nachiketa.

कामस्य आप्तिं जगतः प्रतिष्ठां क्रतोः आनन्त्यं अभयस्य पारं ।

स्तोमं महत् उरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा धृत्या धीरः नचिकेतो अत्यस्त्राक्षीः ॥

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दृष्ट्वा - Having seen, having taken into account, having analyzed fully the scope and limitations of the entire world of pleasures available in ब्रह्मलोक



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

The ब्रह्मलोक and the pleasures available in ब्रह्मलोक are indicated by six pairs of words here, namely कामस्य आप्तिं, जगतः प्रतिष्ठां, क्रतोः आनन्त्यं, अभयस्य पारं, स्तोमं महत्, उरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां

कामस्य आप्तिं दृष्ट्वा - Every काम desire is only for the experience of some worldly pleasure संसार सुख which is always विषय सुख - an experience of pleasure, depending on some object or situation in life. The highest of all संसार सुखs is ब्रह्मलोक सुख, which is the end of all of one's objective desires. Therefore the end of all काम desires, विषय सुख, is the experience of ब्रह्मलोक सुख which Nachiketa could have got if he had wanted.

Therefore कामस्य आप्तिं दृष्ट्वा means, having analyzed the scope and limitations of all विषय सुख s available in ब्रह्मलोक, and

जगतः प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा

जगतः means the entire creation for which आश्रय - the abode is हिरण्यगर्भ - which is totality of all that exists in this creation in both its subtle and gross forms.

Beyond हिरण्यगर्भ what exists is only अव्यक्त - the Unmanifest ब्रह्मन्. Therefore जगतः प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा means having analyzed the scope and limitations of all that exists in हिरण्यगर्भ - the entire creation, in both its subtle and gross forms, and

क्रतोः आनन्त्यं दृष्ट्वा

क्रतु is हिरण्यगर्भ उपासन - ritualistic worship of हिरण्यगर्भ, whose कर्म फल is ब्रह्मलोक which is आनन्त्यं - relatively endless in terms of time (ब्रह्म लोक disappears only at the end of the कल्प - the present cycle of creation). Therefore, क्रतोः आनन्त्यं दृष्ट्वा means having analyzed the scope and limitations of हिरण्यगर्भ उपासन कर्म and

अभयस्य पारं दृष्ट्वा - अभयस्य पारं is that which is beyond Fearlessness. Within the संसार - this manifest ever-changing creation, if one wants to get away from fear, it is only ब्रह्म लोक which disappears only at the end of the कल्प. Therefore

अभयस्य पारं दृष्ट्वा - having analyzed the scope and limitations of the Fear-free world available in ब्रह्मलोक, and



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स्तोमं महत् दृष्ट्वा

स्तोमं means praiseworthy and

महत् means अनेक विशिष्ट गुण संहितं - endowed with various desirable virtues and powers.

Therefore स्तोमं महत् दृष्ट्वा means, having analyzed the scope and limitations of all the praiseworthy and desirable virtues and powers available in ब्रह्मलोक, and

उरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा

उरुगायं means that which is praised in all the वेदाs as the most fulfilling end for all of one's efforts and desires. Therefore उरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा means having analyzed the scope and limitations of the fulfillment of all of one's efforts and desires, praised in the Vedas as कर्म फल of Vedic rituals

धृत्या धीरः नाचिकेतः अत्यस्त्राक्षीः

नाचिकेतः - O! Nachiketa

धीरः - you being a बुद्धिमान् - a wise person

धृत्या - with firm resolve

अत्यस्त्राक्षीः - you chose to reject the entire world of pleasures available in संसार लोकs, seeking only आत्म ज्ञानं - Self Knowledge

अहो बत आश्चर्यं - you are a wonder. Your wisdom is extraordinary

So says Lord यम, praising Nachiketa's firm commitment to the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं - Self Knowledge. Before we go to the next verse, we must stop briefly to reflect on what the Upanishad is communicating here.

Lord यम, while he was a young person, performed नाचिकेताग्नि कर्म, and as a कर्म फल, gained the status of यम - The Lord of Death, shining as यम धर्म राजा, as the very Lord of धर्म - Justice, and as the master of self discipline, as his very name यम indicates. But then, the same Lord यम is now ब्रह्मविद्याचार्य - which means he is a ब्रह्मवित् - a knower of ब्रह्मन्, a ज्ञानी, one who has gained मोक्ष and one who is श्रोत्रिय and ब्रह्मनिष्ठ - one who is well versed in उपनिषत् knowledge and one who is already a Self-realized person.



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Now we must understand the connection between the status of यम and that of ब्रह्म विद्याचार्य. Lord यम has been talking about प्रेयस् and श्रेयस् , प्रेयस् - is the pursuit of transient pleasures of worldly life and श्रेयस् is pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं which is Absolute Happiness - Total Fulfillment in Life.

We must understand that our वेदाः are not against the pursuit of प्रेयस् . Every person being कर्म born, naturally starts only with प्रेयस्, and that is why the कर्मकाण्ड, which deals with प्रेयस् , comes first in the Vedas. The कर्म काण्ड of the Vedas tells us that one's pursuit of प्रेयस् should be within the bounds of धर्म , as indicated by the words सत्यं वद, धर्मं चर, स्वाध्यायात् मा प्रमदः, which is the surest means for gaining wisdom in daily life.

Lord यम performing नाचिकेताग्नि कर्म is only part of his pursuit of प्रेयस् - pursuit of transient pleasures in life. One must first get some degree of stabilization, a degree of quietude of mind in one's pursuit of प्रेयस् . Only then can one gain the mental disposition necessary for analyzing the scope and limitations of all pursuits of प्रेयस् . That is why Sri Krishna says:

न बुद्धि भेदं जनयेत् अज्ञानां कर्म सङ्गिनाम् ।
जोषयेत् सर्वकर्माणि विद्वान् युक्तः समाचरन् ॥ (G 3-26)

The wise man must never create confusion in the minds of people who are committed to कर्म for the sake of enjoying the results of कर्म. On the other hand, the wise man must create joy, enthusiasm, and commitment to excellence in action in the minds of such people, by himself doing all his own actions as well as he can, with the greatest joy and enthusiasm.

When one's अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि, is sufficiently mature, then one realizes that all pursuits of प्रेयस् yield only that which is अनित्यं - transient, which has no Absolute Reality and That which is Absolutely Real can be gained only through the pursuit of श्रेयस् . It is That realization which is pointed out by the मुण्डक Upanishad:

परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणः निर्वदं आयात्, नास्ति अकृतः कृतेन



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Analyzing all of one's worldly experiences, the one who is awake to Absolute Reality realizes नास्ति अकृतः कृतेन - The uncreated Being - The परमेश्वर - cannot be the result of any action.

Lord यम's message here is also the same: अध्वयैः ध्रुवं न प्राप्यते - By means, which are finite, That which is Infinite cannot be reached. When Lord यम became mature enough to follow through that message, his path of life naturally changed from the pursuit of प्रेयस् to that of श्रेयस् . He sought ब्रह्मविद्या from his father विवस्वान् , who was himself a ज्ञानी , and progressively through श्रवणं, मननं, निदिध्यासनं, कर्म योग, ध्यान योग, ज्ञान लक्षण ईश्वर भक्ति and ज्ञान निष्ठा, Lord यम ultimately became a ज्ञानी Himself. That is how Lord यम evolved into a ब्रह्मविद्याचार्य, while still being the Lord of death – यम देवता. Lord यम's father, विवस्वान् himself became a ब्रह्मविद्याचार्य, having gained ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge directly from Sri Krishna Himself in one of His earlier incarnations, so says Sri Krishna in the भगवत् गीता

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवान् अहं अव्ययं (G 4 – 1)

Therefore, such opportunity to gain ब्रह्मविद्या Knowledge, directly from Sri Krishna Himself, is always open to every one of us through the भगवत् गीता .

Within the past few years, we have heard Sri Krishna's teachings in the entire भगवत् गीता, in a series of 157 short scripture readings at this Temple. By reading one or two every day, all these 157 scripture readings, repeatedly with devotion to Sri Krishna, and श्रद्धा in ब्रह्मविद्या , one can listen to Sri Krishna's teachings in the entire भगवत् गीता, every day, loud and clear. By so doing, one will discover more and more about oneself every day, and spiritual progress within oneself will take place naturally, by the very Grace of **Sri Krishna**.

Now we return to the Upanishad.

By this time, Lord यम is fully convinced that this young boy Nachiketa's श्रद्धा in ब्रह्म विद्या, श्रद्धा in आत्म ज्ञानं is firm, pure and genuine. Therefore, he is now ready to begin his discourse on the nature of आत्मा and the means of gaining आत्म ज्ञानं. In order to draw Nachiketa's total attention to his forthcoming discourse, Lord यम introduces the topic as follows.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

तं दुर्दर्शं गूढं अनुप्रविष्टं , गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्टं पुराणं ।
अध्यात्मयोग अधिगमेन देवं मत्वा , धीरः हर्षशोकौ जहाति ॥

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तं देवं मत्वा धीरः हर्षशोकौ जहाति

देवं here refers to चैतन्य स्वरूपं ज्योतनात्मकं देवं आत्मानं - The आत्मा whose very nature is चैतन्य स्वरूपं - Pure Consciousness, ज्योतनात्मकं - Self-effulgent, देवं आत्मानं - Divine Self. That is the nature of आत्मा . Therefore,

तं देवं मत्वा means, knowing the nature of that आत्मा , recognizing That Divine Self as It is.

धीरः - a बुद्धिमान् - a wise person

हर्षशोकौ जहाति - gives up, transcends, both elation and sorrow

Recognizing आत्मा - The Divine Self as It is, a wise person transcends both elation and sorrow.

Describing आत्मा - The Divine Self in every self, Lord यम says "That आत्मा is

दुर्दर्शं - difficult to be seen or known. Why?

अतिसूक्ष्मत्वात् - because it is extremely subtle. आत्मा cannot be seen or known as an object, but it can be subjectively experienced as the experiencer's own self by, in, and through every pulsation of action, knowledge and awareness - प्रतिबोधविदितं, as we have seen in केनोपनिषत्. Further,

गूढं अनुप्रविष्टं - being hidden in the depths of one's own बुद्धि, आत्मा remains a secret, beyond the reach of one's own sense perceptions.

गुहाहितं - still आत्मा is available for recognition in one's own बुद्धि गुह, the cave of one's own बुद्धि . Not that आत्मा is located in one's बुद्धि, but आत्मा is available for recognition only in one's own बुद्धि - Pure Reason. (ब्रह्मपुरि region of one's own बुद्धि मु.उ. 2 - 2- 7)

गह्वरेष्टं - the बुद्धि - the Pure Reason by which आत्मा can be recognized is hard to reach, because the बुद्धि is not pure, being contaminated with राग, द्वेष impurities - impurities of likes and dislikes.

गूढं अनुप्रविष्टं, गुहाहितं and गह्वरेष्टं are the reasons why आत्मा is दुर्दर्शं - difficult to be seen or known.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

तं पुराणं देवं (आत्मानं) मत्वा (ज्ञात्वा)

Knowing that पुराणं Eternal, देवं आत्मानं - The Divine Self. How does one know That Eternal Divine Self?

अध्यात्मयोग - अधिगमेन ज्ञात्वा

Knowing आत्मा - The Divine Self, by reaching That Self through अध्यात्मयोग - contemplation on ब्रह्मन् as प्रत्यग आत्मा - as one's innermost Self, as indicated by the words of Kenopanishad which we may recall here:

अथ अध्यात्मं, यत् एतत् गच्छति इव च मनः अनेन च एतत् उपस्मरति अभीक्ष्णं सङ्कल्पः
Ke 4 - 5

In the अध्यात्मयोग mode of contemplation on ब्रह्मन् as प्रत्यग आत्मा - as The Divine Self in oneself, the mind is totally withdrawn from all external objects, and directed towards ब्रह्मन् as if it is continuously trying to reach ब्रह्मन्. By doing so, the mind continuously remembers ब्रह्मन् always trying to bring ब्रह्मन् closer and closer to the vision of one's बुद्धि. Thus The आत्मा, The Divine Self in oneself reveals Itself continuously in one's बुद्धि, simultaneously with every pulsation of the contemplating mind –प्रतिबोधविदितं, as the Upanishad says. More about अध्यात्मयोग we will see later in this Upanishad and in the भगवत् गीता. Thus, knowing आत्मा - The Divine Self within oneself,

धीरः हर्षशोकौ जहाति - a wise person transcends both हर्ष and शोक, elation and depression.

By knowing आत्मा, how does one transcend हर्ष and शोक ?

By knowing आत्मा, one becomes आत्मा, आत्मा is not an object, आत्मा is oneself. By knowing yourself, you become your True Self, you recognize your True Self, which is beyond any हर्ष or शोक, elation or depression. You become the very embodiment of पूर्ण, meaning पूर्ण आनन्दं, ब्रह्मानन्दं, which is the स्वरूप of आत्मा, and That is your own true nature. Further,

एतत् श्रुत्वा संपरिगृह्य मर्त्यः, प्रवृह्य धर्म्यं अणुमेतमाप्य ।
स मोदते मोदनीयं हि लब्ध्वा, विवृतं सद्य नचिकेतसं मन्ये ॥

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ब्रह्मचिदा **Brahma Vidya**

एतत् श्रुत्वा

After listening attentively to That, namely

एतत् चक्ष्यमाणं आत्मतत्त्वं तत्, प्रसन्न, आचार्य मुखात् श्रुत्वा

After listening attentively to a discourse on the truth about आत्मा - The Self, from an आचार्य - a well-qualified teacher, who is also pleased with the attitude of the student seeking such knowledge (such listening is श्रवणं)

संपरिगृह्य - meaning, संयक् आत्मभावेन परिगृह्य

This is मननं and निदिध्यासनं After firmly grasping that knowledge, after gaining the certainty of the knowledge that ब्रह्मन् is प्रत्यगात्मा, that सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्मन् is indeed the true nature of oneself, मर्त्यः - a human being, a person

प्रवृह्य धर्म्यं अणुं एतं प्राप्य

धर्म्यं, धर्मात् अनपेतं is धर्म्यं That which is non-separate from धर्म at all times, the Self-Existent, Self-Effulgent आत्मा which sustains everything in this creation

प्रवृह्य धर्म्यं separating, discriminating, distinguishing such आत्मा from one's शरीर - body, etc.

अणुं एतं (आत्मा) That आत्मा is अणुं , सूक्ष्मं , सूक्ष्मतमं - extremely subtle

एतं (आत्मानं) प्राप्य gaining recognition of that आत्मा . Therefore

प्रवृह्य धर्म्यं अणुं एतं प्राप्य

clearly understanding That आत्मा is separate from one's शरीर - body, etc and gaining recognition of that extremely subtle आत्मा - The Self as It is,

सः मर्त्यः - that person, who is now an enlightened person, even though he continues to wear the same physical body (which is subject to death on conclusion of his प्रारब्ध कर्मs) that wise human being

मोदते rejoices. *What is there for him to rejoice?*

मोदनीयं हि लब्ध्वा having certainly gained मोदनीयं - That which is Supreme Blissful Joy, what he is enjoying now is ब्रह्मानन्दं, आत्मानं - The आत्मा - The Self, whose very nature



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

is ब्रह्मानन्दं, परमानन्दं - Supreme Joy which is अक्षय सुखं - Absolute Happiness which is never subject to change.

स : ब्रह्मयोग युक्तात्मा सुखं अक्षयं अश्नुते (G. 5 – 21)

as Sri Krishna says in the भगवत् गीता, which means

आनन्दं लब्ध्वा आनन्दी भवति

आनन्द is the स्वरूप of आत्मा - Gaining Supreme Happiness, one becomes Supreme Happiness Itself. That is the result of श्रवणं , मननं , and निदिध्यासनं of ब्रह्म विद्या which Lord यम is going to talk about.

विवृतं सद्य नचिकेतसं मन्ये

सद्य means ब्रह्म भवनं The abode of ब्रह्मन्

विवृतं, अपावृत द्वारं - That ब्रह्म भवनं whose gates are wide open. Therefore,

विवृतं सद्य नचिकेतसं means, for you, Nachiketa, the doors of the ब्रह्म भवनं - the abode of ब्रह्मन् are wide open, because you are qualified for ब्रह्म ज्ञानं, आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-Knowledge.

मन्ये - so I think. "I consider you as eminently well qualified for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-Knowledge" says Lord यम to Nachiketa.

With the above statement from Lord यम, the scriptural context for कठोपनिषत् has now been fully established. What follows is pure Vedanta in the traditional form, a meaningful question from a जिज्ञासु - a student committed to the pursuit of ब्रह्म विद्या, followed by an adequate answer to that question from an आचार्य who is a श्रोत्रिय and ब्रह्म निष्ठ, a Self-realized ज्ञानी. Here the जिज्ञासु is Nachiketa, and the ब्रह्म विद्याचार्य is Lord यम, and the discourse on ब्रह्म विद्या is कठोपनिषत्, commencing from the next verse, which we will take up next time.