



कठोपनिषत्
Katopanishad
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Section 3

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As we saw last time, both अहंकार (ego) "I", and आत्मा "I" co-exist in one's शरीर - body-complex, just as shadow and light co-exist. The ego "I" is the जीव - the individual person who entertains the notion that he is the कर्ता, the भोक्ता - the doer of कर्म s and enjoyer of कर्म फल s, etc. The आत्मा "I" is the अन्तर्यामी अमृत आत्मा - The Indwelling परब्रह्मन् - The परमेश्वर - The Immortal Self in oneself, who is अकर्ता - who is neither a Doer nor an Enjoyer but by whose presence alone, by whose blessings alone, all actions of the जीव are possible. Depending on its maturity, the जीव "I" in its journey to fulfillment in life, is free to choose either of the two paths of life, namely the pursuit of अपरं ब्रह्म or परं ब्रह्म.



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The जीव "I" using its body vehicle may choose to go through life in the pursuit of any object-destination within this creation, or if the जीव is mature enough to do so, it may choose to go through life in the pursuit of ज्ञानं, आत्म ज्ञानं - Knowledge of अन्तर्यामी अमृत आत्मा The Indwelling Immortal Self in oneself.

The vehicle for either pursuit is only one's शरीर - one's own physical body with all its component parts. Comparing one's शरीर vehicle to a horse-drawn chariot vehicle in रथ कल्पना - chariot imagery, Lord यम says:

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि, शरीरं रथमेव तु ।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि, मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥ 3 – 3

इन्द्रियाणि हयान् आहुः, विषयान् तेषु गोचरान् ।
आत्म-इन्द्रिय मनोयुक्तं, भोक्ता इति आहुः मनीषिणः ॥ 3 – 4

विद्धि means, please understand. This रथ कल्पना - chariot imagery has to be understood in terms of its essential message. What is the message? We will see.

This is the रथ कल्पना

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि - Consider "I" the self in oneself as रथिनं - as रथ स्वामिनं, the Master of the chariot seated within the chariot. "I" the self in oneself, means what? Is that the जीव "I" or the आत्मा "I" who is seated in the chariot, that is being told in the last line.

शरीरं रथं एव तु - Consider one's physical body as the chariot. The very idea of a chariot with its wheels implies a journey for its Master in the chariot. The chariot has to travel through various roads to reach its destination, whatever that be. Horses are needed to draw the chariot through the roads. The horses themselves must be properly controlled by reins held firm in the hands of a competent Driver of the chariot vehicle. Therefore, the Upanishad says:

बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि - Consider one's बुद्धि - one's intellect, the faculty of discrimination and decision as the सारथि , as the Driver for the chariot vehicle. Further

मनः प्रग्रहमेव च - consider one's मनः - the Mind, whose very nature is vacillation and indecision, as the reins held in the hands of the Driver controlling and coordinating the



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movements of the horses on the roads. Now, what are the horses and what are the roads for this chariot vehicle? The Upanishad says:

इन्द्रियाणि हयान् आहुः - one's sense organs - organs of perception and action, are said to be, are considered by the wise people to be, the horses drawing this body-chariot through the roads, and

विषयान् तेषु गोचरान् - the sense objects - the different fields of experience of the organs of perception and action, are the different roads through which this body vehicle travels through the journey of life. Thus, all the components of the chariot imagery have now been identified as follows

- one's **शरीर** - the physical body is the chariot
- one's **बुद्धि** - one's faculty of discrimination and decision is the Driver for the chariot
- one's **मनः** - one's Mind, whose very nature is vacillation and indecision, is the reins for the horses, held in the hands of the Driver, controlling and coordinating the movements of the horses
- one's **इन्द्रियाणि** - sense organs, the organs of perception, such as ears, skin, eyes, etc., and also the organs of action such as the organs of speech, hands, legs, etc., are the horses drawing the chariot through the various roads in the path of the journey of life, and
- the **इन्द्रिय विषयान्** - the fields of experience of the organs of perception such as sound, touch, sight, etc., and also those of the organs of action, such as the ability to speak, grasp objects, move from place to place, etc. are the roads through which the horses yoked to the chariot pass through

Now, who is the Master seated in the chariot? The Upanishad says

आत्म-इन्द्रिय मनो युक्तं भोक्ता इति आहुः मनीषिणः

मनीषिणः आहुः means **वियेकिनः आहुः** The wise people, those who have a clear vision of the nature of **आत्मा** - The Self - I, say

आत्म-इन्द्रिय मनो युक्तं भोक्ता इति - the **आत्मा** - the self "I", which identifies itself totally, which integrates itself totally, with one's **इन्द्रिया** s - organs of perception and action, and also **मनः** - mind and **बुद्धि** - as my ears, my eyes, my hands, my legs, my mind, my **बुद्धि**, etc. and thereby identifies itself totally with one's body as the **कर्ता** of one's **कर्म**s- Doer of one's actions, and consequently, the **भोक्ता** - the enjoyer and the experiencer of one's **कर्म फला** s - fruits of actions - that **आत्मा** - the self "I" - is the Master seated in the body vehicle in the chariot-vehicle in the **स्थ कल्पना**.



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Obviously then, the रथ स्वामि – the master in one's body-vehicle is the जीव "I" the ego "I" for whom is the journey of life. The destination to be reached by that जीव "I" in the body depends on the spiritual maturity of the जीव, which is reflected truly in the बुद्धि - the Driver for the body vehicle. Continuing the रथ कल्पना illustration, Lord यम says:

यः तु अविज्ञानवान् भवति अयुक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्य इन्द्रियाणि अवश्यानि दुष्टाश्वाः इव सारथेः ॥ 3 – 5

यः तु विज्ञानवान् भवति युक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्य इन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि सदश्वाः इव सारथेः ॥ 3 – 6

Since one's बुद्धि fully reflects the spiritual maturity of जीव - the self in oneself, here, in these verses, the जीव is totally identified in terms of the knowledge and capability of the बुद्धि of the जीव. Consequently, the Master sitting in the chariot is identified in terms of the knowledge and capability of the Driver of the chariot. Therefore, in the above verses, यः refers to the सारथि - the Driver of the chariot, which is the बुद्धि of the जीव in the body. One's बुद्धि can be विज्ञानवान् or अविज्ञानवान् .

विज्ञानवान् means a बुद्धि which has gone through the discipline and cultivation of पूर्ण ज्ञानं - totality of knowledge which means both objective knowledge (अविद्या) and Upanishadic knowledge (विद्या). Only such a बुद्धि is capable of understanding that the परम पुरुषार्थ - the highest goal of life is only to gain मोक्ष - gain अक्षरं परं ब्रह्म, gain, through knowledge, recognition of that indwelling परं ब्रह्म - The परमेश्वर - The अमृत आत्मा - The Immortal Self in oneself as ONESELF.

This we have seen already in ईशावास्य उपनिषत् . As we may recall

विद्यां च अविद्यां च यः तत् वेद उभयं सह ।
अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा, विद्यया अमृतं अश्नुते ॥ (Isa -11)

Through the cultivation of the discipline and the depth of objective knowledge (अविद्या), one gains the ability to understand the ever-changing nature of the material world, and through the simultaneous cultivation of the discipline and depth of the Upanishad knowledge (विद्या) one gains the ability to realize that all the changes taking place in



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the material world are only different manifestations of that ONE unchanging ever existent परं ब्रह्म. Such simultaneous cultivation of these two human abilities is the function of one's विवेक बुद्धि - which ultimately makes a person a विज्ञानवान् - a person fit for gaining मोक्ष - Total Fulfillment in Life, through recognition of That परं ब्रह्म in oneself as ONESELF Itself.

On the other hand, if the बुद्धि of the जीव, which means the सारथि - the Driver of the chariot in this रथ कल्पना - is an अविज्ञानवान् - that means one who has not gone through the discipline and cultivation of both objective knowledge and Upanishad knowledge, or one who has gone through such discipline only with respect to objective knowledge or Upanishad knowledge, but not both, such an अविज्ञानवान् बुद्धि can only understand and realize the goal of life as अपरं ब्रह्म - some kind of object destination in this संसार - worldly life, which means going through repeated cycles of सुख and दुःख for the जीव. Therefore, let us simply understand that

अविज्ञानवान् means a बुद्धि of uncultivated knowledge, and विज्ञानवान् means a बुद्धि of cultivated पूर्ण ज्ञान - totality of knowledge.

यः तु अविज्ञानवान् भवति - If the सारथि - the Driver of the chariot vehicle, that is the बुद्धि of the जीव in the body vehicle, is one of uncultivated knowledge

अयुक्तेन मनसा सदा - with the मनस् - the Mind always held undisciplined, then

तस्य इन्द्रियाणि अवश्यानि (भवन्ति) the sense organs of the जीव become unavailable for control and discipline

दुष्टाश्वाः इव सारथे : - like the loosely held vicious horses, yoked to the chariot become unavailable for control by the सारथि - the Driver of the chariot. On the other hand

यः तु विज्ञानवान् भवति - If the सारथि - the Driver of the chariot-vehicle, that is the बुद्धि of the जीव in the body vehicle is one of cultivated पूर्ण ज्ञान totality of knowledge

युक्तेन मनसा सदा - with the मनस् - the Mind always held under discipline

तस्य इन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि (भवन्ति) - the sense organs of the जीव become available for control and discipline

सदश्वाः इव सारथे - like the firmly held good and trained horses yoked to the chariot are always available for control by the सारथि - the Driver of the chariot. Further,



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यः तु अविज्ञानवान् भवति अमनस्कः सदा अशुचिः ।
न सः, तत् पदं आप्नोति, संसारं च अधिगच्छति ॥

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यः तु विज्ञानवान् भवति समनस्कः सदा शुचिः ।
सः तु तत् पदं आप्नोति यस्मात् भूयो न जायते ॥

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यः तु अविज्ञानवान् भवति - If the सारथि - the Driver of the chariot-vehicle - that is, the बुद्धि of the जीव in the body-vehicle is one of the uncultivated knowledge,
अमनस्कः सदा अशुचिः - with मनस् - the Mind, always held undisciplined and always impure,
न सः तत् पदं आप्नोति - that सारथि - that Driver - the बुद्धि of the जीव in the body-vehicle - न आप्नोति - never reaches - never gains - the परम पुरुषार्थ - the highest goal of life - namely
तत् पदं, तत् अक्षरं पदं, तत् ब्रह्म पदं that Exalted Goal of recognizing परं ब्रह्म - The परमेश्वर - the अन्तर्यामी अमृत आत्मा - The Immortal SELF in oneself, as ONESELF Itself; not only that
संसारं च अधिगच्छति - that सारथि - the Driver - that is the बुद्धि of that जीव - gets into संसार - the never ending cycle of worldliness, life of सुख and दुःख transient happiness and sorrow. On the other hand
यः तु विज्ञानवान् भवति - If the सारथि - the Driver of the chariot-vehicle - that is, the बुद्धि of the जीव in the body-vehicle - is one of cultivated पूर्ण ज्ञानं - Totality of Knowledge,
समनस्कः सदा शुचिः - With मनस् - the Mind, always held disciplined and always pure,
सः तु तत् पदं आप्नोति - that सारथि - that Driver - that is the बुद्धि of the जीव in the body-vehicle - आप्नोति - naturally reaches, naturally gains the परम पुरुषार्थ - the highest goal of life, namely तत् पदं, तत् अक्षरं पदं, तत् ब्रह्म पदं - That exalted goal of recognizing परं ब्रह्म - The परमेश्वर - The अन्तर्यामी अमृत आत्मा - as ONESELF Itself,
यस्मात् भूयो न जायते - from which Goal, there is no return to संसार - which means - that जीव gains मोक्ष.

In the next verse, Lord यम tells what is that तत् पदं, तत् ब्रह्म पदं - That Exalted Goal of Life.



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Before we go to the next verse, let us briefly stop here to reflect on the message of रथ कल्पना – chariot imagery, given thus far. This phenomenal world itself, is the road for the journey of life - विषयान् तेषु गोचरान्, says the Upanishad. Vedanta summons every human being to play the game of life in this world – here and now. The World of Sound, Touch, Sight, Taste and Smell, is the environment for this journey – but it is not a physical journey outside of oneself – it is a spiritual journey deep into one's own self.

The horses (the इन्द्रियाs- the sense organs) provide the motive power for this journey; but the journey is not for the horses, not for the sense organs; the journey is for the Master in the chariot - the जीव in the body, as reflected in the बुद्धि of the जीव.

The sense organs should not be allowed to set the pace or the direction for the journey; if that should happen, then the बुद्धि and the जीव will become helpless victims of the reckless wanderings of the sense organs. The reins (the मनस् - the Mind) are meant to prevent this happening; the more energetic the horses (the इन्द्रियाs- the sense organs), the tougher the reins (the mind) should be. But the reins (the Mind) can control the horses (the इन्द्रियाs - the sense organs) only when they are in the firm hands of the Driver of the chariot- the सारथि – the बुद्धि. It is the Driver- the बुद्धि - that should set the pace, direction and goal of the journey, guided by the need and satisfaction of the Master (the जीव) inside the vehicle.

The Driver (the बुद्धि) must have विज्ञानं - cultivated पूर्ण ज्ञानं – cultivated discipline and depth of both objective knowledge and Upanishad Knowledge, if the जीव should reach the परम पुरुषार्थ - the Highest Goal of Life- namely मोक्ष – Total Fulfillment in life – which means, the जीव - I recognizing its total identity with आत्मा – I the SELF in oneself. It is not safe to entrust one's journey to a drunken or emotionally unstable Driver – that would be worse than entrusting the journey to the undisciplined and uncontrolled horses - the इन्द्रियाs themselves.

The reins (the Mind) must be tough; if they snap at the slightest pull (distraction or temptation of any kind), it will be disastrous for the journey. The chariot, the horses, the reins, the Driver and the Master in the chariot each plays a vital part in the progress of the journey. Each succeeding member of the team is to provide the motive power for each of its preceding member – or members – in the team.

Similarly, life's journey, to be successful needs the contributions of all the constituents of the personality of the जीव - namely, the शरीर – the physical body, इन्द्रियाणि – the



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sense organs, मनस् – the Mind, बुद्धि – the faculty of discrimination and decision, and the SELF within oneself each playing a vital part in this journey.

But the most important thing is to ensure that the initiative and control pass from the organs of perception and action (इन्द्रियाणि) to the बुद्धि through मनस् – the Mind. This cannot happen unless the बुद्धि and the मनस् are properly educated, cultivated and disciplined into their true forms. What are their true forms?

The true form of मनस् is its clear and pure state when it is aligned with बुद्धि, and it ceases to be a mere appendage to the senses; then alone, the Mind can withstand the stress and strain involved in its situation of being between two powerful, and often opposite, forces of the senses and the बुद्धि.

The true form of बुद्धि is its state of Pure Consciousness, independent of मनस् (Mind) and इन्द्रिया -s (sense organs). It is That बुद्धि that reflects the true SELF – The आत्मा – I in oneself – it is That बुद्धि that is endowed with विज्ञानं – The discipline and content of पूर्ण ज्ञानं – both objective knowledge and Upanishadic Knowledge – both अपर विद्या and पर विद्या .

The बुद्धि under any form of intoxication (power, knowledge, wealth, beauty etc.) falls from its true form, and ultimately degrades itself to the level of senses - sense organs and sense objects. Free from such intoxications, बुद्धि becomes Pure, Luminous, Calm and Steady, Sure and Self-revealing. Such बुद्धि is the best guide in life's journey – It denotes the fusion of विज्ञानं and वैराग्यं in their purest forms. Its impact on life is irresistible and uplifting at all times. When the senses dominate the journey, life remains at the gross worldly level; life's achievements are then measured in superficial terms of transient appearances

When मनस् (Mind), which is naturally volatile - dominates the journey one's life experiences erratic movements and intense fluctuations, between luminous inspirations and low depressions – between high morals and low selfish worldly ends.

When बुद्धि dominates the journey, life steadily rises to ethical and spiritual levels, enjoys true freedom, and achieves fulfillment through spiritual illuminations and upliftment. Such is the essential message of the रथ कल्पना – Chariot imagery – we have seen thus far; there is much more - which we will see next time.