



कठोपनिषत्  
**Katopanishad**  
**Section 4**  
**Volume 21**

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयंभुः तस्मात् पराङ् पश्यति, न अन्तरात्मन् ।  
कश्चित् धीरः, प्रत्यगात्मानं ऐक्षत्, आवृत्तचक्षुः, अमृतत्वं इच्छन् ॥ 4-1

पराचः कामान्, अनुयन्ति बालाः, ते मृत्योः यन्ति, विततस्य पाशं ।  
अथ धीराः, अमृतत्वं विदित्वा, धृवं अध्रुवेषु, इह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥ 4-2

Thus begins the Second Session of Lord यम's Discourse on ब्रह्मविद्या. By now, it should be clear to us, that unless one understands सत्यं, one can never really understand मिथ्या, which means unless one understands the significance of the recognition of आत्मा "I" – The प्रमेश्वर, already within oneself, by oneself as oneself, one can never fully understand, nor can one ever meaningfully and effectively respond to all the unpredictable events which happen daily in one's life, in this ever-changing world of transient realities.

What exactly obstructs a person from recognizing आत्मा – The प्रमेश्वर, already within oneself? The obstructions to Self-recognition are essentially two-fold:

The first obstruction is simply अविद्या – ignorance, ignorance of the "true-nature" of one's own self. Self-knowing is ever open to everybody through the words of the Upanishads, but, most people are not exposed to such Upanishad-Knowledge. They are blissfully unaware of आत्मा "I". For such people, the word "I" simply means one's own body-mind-intellect complex, together with all its ever changing attributes. They have no idea of what आत्मा "I" is, or even what परमेश्वर really is, except in superficial terms.

On the other hand, certainly there are people, who are obviously well-versed in Upanishad Knowledge, but few of them, if any, seem to have gained the ability to see, to recognize The आत्मा "I", The परमेश्वर, already in themselves, as themselves. Therefore, it is clear that scholarship in Upanishad Knowledge, by itself, is totally inadequate for one to gain आत्मदर्शनं – Vision of आत्मा "I", The परमेश्वर within oneself as oneself itself.



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Then, what is the overriding obstruction for one to see, to reach, to recognize The आत्मा "I", The परमेश्वर, already within oneself? Recalling the Upanishad words we heard a little earlier:

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु, गूढः आत्मा न प्रकाशते ।  
दृश्यते तु अग्रयया बुद्ध्या, सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥

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Even though आत्मा "I", The परमेश्वर, is present in every being, It is not available for recognition for most people, because, It appears hidden in one's बुद्धि गुह – in the cave of one's बुद्धि. However, the Upanishad assures us, The आत्मा "I", The परमेश्वर in oneself can be seen, can be recognized. आत्मदर्शनं – the Vision of परमेश्वर in oneself as oneself is possible, by अग्रयया बुद्ध्या – for a person who has a बुद्धि totally focused on, and committed to the pursuit of परमेश्वर within oneself. Therefore, the absence of एकाग्र बुद्धि – single pointed बुद्धि, totally committed to the pursuit of परमेश्वर within oneself, is the overriding obstruction for one's ability to reach, to recognize the आत्मा "I", the परमेश्वर already within oneself.

But then, what is the reason for the absence of एकाग्र बुद्धि in the pursuit of परमेश्वर within oneself? In answer to that question, the Upanishad says:

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भू-स्तस्मात् पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।  
कश्चिद्दीरः प्रत्यगात्मानं ऐक्षत् आवृत्त चक्षुः अमृतत्वं इच्छन् ॥

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The reason for the absence of एकाग्र बुद्धि – single pointed बुद्धि directed towards, and totally focused on आत्मा "I", The परमेश्वर within oneself, the reason for the absence of such एकाग्र बुद्धि is, because one's बुद्धि is constantly being called upon to act on the knowledge gathered and interacted by the five sense organs, namely the ears, the skin, the eyes, the tongue and the nose – such knowledge being fed into the बुद्धि through one's mind. These sense organs themselves have a natural tendency only to project themselves, to go towards the world outside, to the world of objects external to one's own self. It requires extraordinary wisdom, resolve and heroic efforts on the part of an individual to effectively uplift and turn back these sense organs from their natural tendencies of preoccupation with the external world of objects, and single pointedly project themselves, in unison towards the world inside – the world within oneself, to



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enable and propel the बुद्धि to strive to reach for the TOP within oneself, through the path of अध्यात्म योग.

Only that person, who has the necessary wisdom, resolve and disciplined efforts, only that person who has such एकाग्र बुद्धि for अध्यात्म योग, ultimately succeeds in reaching The TOP within oneself - the विष्णोः परमं पदं, in seeing, in recognizing The आत्मा "I", The परमेश्वर within oneself, as oneself Itself. Such recognition is अमृतत्वं – gaining one's inherent Immortality, by आत्मदर्शनं – recognizing one's own true nature, as it is. That is what the Upanishad says in this verse here. Let us now see the words in some detail.

पराञ्चि खानि - पराञ्चि means पराग् गच्छन्ति इति पराञ्चि – Those which go after, the world of objects outside of oneself are called पराञ्चि; What are they? They are: खानि - the sense organs implied by the world ख; ख means आकाश – The Space. The गुण of आकाश is शब्द – Sound, which is received and recognized by one's श्रोत्र – the ear, which is born of the सत्य गुण of आकाश. Here the word ख stands for all the organs of perception, namely श्रोत्र the ear, त्वक् the skin, चक्षुः the eye, रसन the tongue and ध्राण – the nose. Thus, the word ख stands for all five sense organs – the organs of perception. What do these sense organs do? They engage themselves in lighting up and gathering knowledge of the sense objects of Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell in the world outside of oneself, and constantly feeding that knowledge into one's बुद्धि through one's mind. Thus पराञ्चि खानि means पराञ्चि एव खानि.

The खानि – the sense organs are only पराञ्चि – they always tend to go after only external objects. Therefore, the sense organs are only पराञ्चि. Why do sense organs tend to go after, only external objects? Because that is their स्वभाव – their nature. That is how they are meant to be in the eternal order of creation. Why is it that they have been created that way? Because, that is how The Lord Almighty has made them to be. It may seem as if God made a mistake in designing inherent nature of these sense organs, so says Lord यमः:

व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भूः - स्वयम्भू is ONE who is Self-born, and That is परमेश्वर  
व्यतृणत् – has made a mistake



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स्वयंभू : व्यतृणत् must be understood as स्वयंभूः व्यतृणत् इव - it looks as though परमेश्वर created these sense organs with some inherent defect, because of which they always tend to go only after external objects. There is really no mistake or defect involved in any natural phenomenon in this creation.

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयंभूः simply means that the sense organs have a natural spontaneous tendency to go after the world of objects external to oneself, because that is what they are meant to do in order to help the individual to experience the world, and exhaust all of one's प्रारब्ध कर्मs in this very life.

तस्मात् पराङ् पश्यति, न अन्तरात्मन्

तस्मात् – Therefore, because of such natural tendencies of the sense organs to project themselves outward

पराङ् पश्यति – ordinarily, a person sees, recognizes and gains the knowledge and experiences of the world external to one's own self, but

न अन्तरात्मन् पश्यति – does not see, does not recognize, does not gain the knowledge and experiences of the world within oneself, or the आत्मा "I" within oneself.

The fact that the sense organs have a natural tendency to project themselves outward, does not mean that they, together with the mind, cannot be turned towards one's inner world and the inner self. It only means, that such inward projection is not their natural tendency or spontaneous nature, and hence some extraordinary efforts on the part of the individual person, in the form of तपस् – personal disciplines of various kinds, would be necessary in order to accomplish their inward projection towards one's inner world and आत्मा "I" – The परमेश्वर within oneself.

Who can make such extraordinary efforts? Only the one who has the necessary wisdom, resolve and discipline can make such extraordinary efforts.

Why would one like to take all the trouble for making such extraordinary efforts? Only to wake up from the slumber of Self-ignorance, and discover oneself, as one really is; to see, to recognize, to reach आत्मा "I" – the परमेश्वर already within oneself, as oneself and enjoy the State of अमृतत्वं – The State of one's inherent Immortality, implied by such Self-discovery. Therefore the Upanishad says:

कश्चित् धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानं ऐक्षत्, आवृत्तचक्षुः अमृतत्वं इच्छन् ॥

कश्चित् धीरः - A rare person who is a धीरः- one endowed with extraordinary wisdom



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(विवेक बुद्धि), resolve and discipline, fit for the pursuit of Self-discovery, discovery of the reality of one's own self, such a rare person

प्रत्यगात्मानं ऐक्षत् (पश्यति) – does see, does succeed in seeing, recognizing, reaching

प्रत्यगात्मा – one's innermost Self, the all pervading, ever-existent, all inclusive आत्मा "I",

The परमेश्वर within oneself as oneself. How does he accomplish his mission?

आवृत्त चक्षुः (सन्) - by turning all of one's sense organs and the mind, and all actions governed by them, inwards, towards one's own बुद्धि, to explore the reality of one's own self. What for does one do that?

अमृतत्वं इच्छन् – desiring Immortality, desiring मोक्ष – liberation from all worldly bondages, desiring freedom from the hold of all transient realities of every day life, desiring upliftment from अविद्या-काम-कर्म बन्धनs – desiring release from the bondages of Self-ignorance and the consequent worldly desires and actions, which means desiring total fulfillment in life.

What does that धीरः – the wise person, find in his बुद्धि ?

प्रत्यगात्मानं ऐक्षत् – he finds, he sees, he recognizes, he reaches प्रत्यगात्मा – one's Innermost Immortal Self – The आत्मा "I", The परमेश्वर within oneself as oneself. He discovers total fulfillment in life.

We must understand the words कश्चित् धीरः : and आवृत्तचक्षुः : . कश्चित् धीरः means, some particular धीर पुरुष – wise person, among the many who try to be so. We may recall Sri Krishna's words:

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चित् यतति सिद्धये ।

यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चित् मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ॥

G.7-3

Among the thousands of people in the world, only one particular person does make – has the mental disposition to make, any effort to gain ईश्वरज्ञानं – Knowledge about परमेश्वर, and thus gain total fulfillment in life. Even among those who do make such efforts, only one particular person, कश्चित् – a rare person indeed, really succeeds in gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं – आत्म ज्ञानं and Total Fulfillment in Life. Such a rare person is indeed a धीरः - a hero in the pursuit of ब्रह्म ज्ञानं – ईश्वर ज्ञानं – आत्म ज्ञानं – Self Knowledge. Such a धीरः : is naturally endowed with extraordinary wisdom, resolve and discipline.



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What is extraordinary about that person?

आवृत्तचक्षुः - आवृत्तचक्षुः literally means the one whose eye is turned inward. Here चक्षुः : “the eye” stands for all of one’s organs of perception and action, including the entire अन्तःकरण – mind and बुद्धि. Such inward turning is not by force of will; it is the natural result of शुद्ध अन्तःकरण – purity of mind and बुद्धि, together with कर्मयोग बुद्धि, ज्ञानलक्षण ईश्वर भक्ति and पूर्ण ईश्वर शरणागति – which means the person with आवृत्तचक्षुः is in ज्ञाननिष्ठा, as Sri Krishna says:

सर्व कर्माणि अपि सदा कुर्वाणः मद् व्यपाश्रयः ।

मत्प्रसादात् अवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदं अव्ययं ॥

G.18-56

While all parts of one’s body are fully and actively engaged in all their respective duties at all times, at the same time, they all remain in the state of मद् व्यपाश्रय, functioning simply as instruments serving the Will of परमेश्वर within, being fully turned towards परमेश्वर in total unison, and seeking refuge in परमेश्वर with पूर्ण ईश्वर भक्ति and एकाग्र बुद्धि. Being so, that person ultimately reaches विष्णोः परमं पदं – The Indwelling Immortal SELF within, by the Very Grace of परमेश्वर. That is ज्ञाननिष्ठा, that is आवृत्तचक्षुः :

Recalling the full verse again

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयंभूः, तस्मात् पराङ् पश्यति, न अन्तरात्मन् ।

कश्चित् धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानं ऐक्षत्, आवृत्तचक्षुः अमृतत्वं इच्छन् ॥

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The sense organs have a natural spontaneous tendency to go after the world of objects external to oneself. Therefore, ordinarily, a person sees, recognizes and gains the Knowledge and experiences of the world external to oneself, but not of the world within or आत्मा – I within oneself.

On the other hand, desiring Immortality, being totally committed to the pursuit of मोक्ष – liberation from the hold of transient realities, a rare person endowed with extraordinary wisdom, resolve and discipline, by turning all of one’s organs of perception and action together with mind and बुद्धि towards the world within oneself, ultimately sees – recognizes – reaches the Immortal Indwelling Self – The प्रत्यग आत्मा – The आत्मा “I”, The परमेश्वर already within oneself, as ONESELF itself.



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Such is the meaning of this opening verse. The Upanishad continues:

पराचः कामान् अनुयन्ति बालाः, ते मृत्योः यन्ति विततस्य पाशं ।

अथ धीराः अमृतत्वं विदित्वा, ध्रुवं - अध्रुवेषु, इह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥

4-2

The natural tendency of the sense organs, together with the mind, to go after the world outside, but not the world within oneself is only due to अविद्या - Self-ignorance, and such ignorance-born तृष्णा - cravings for worldly objects. Thus अविद्या and तृष्णा are the real obstructions to one's आत्मदर्शनं - Vision of आत्मा "I" The परमेश्वर within oneself. Because of such अविद्या and तृष्णा, the Upanishad says

पराचः कामान् अनुयन्ति बालाः :

बालाः - children. People who have not yet cultivated their विवेक बुद्धि, and hence who are still spiritually immature are indicated here as बालाः - children. They are like children - whatever be their age. Such बालाः - children

अनुयन्ति (अनुगच्छन्ति) - go after

पराचः कामान् (कामविषयान्) - objects of desire outside of oneself, external to one's own body.

Therefore, पराचः कामान् अनुयन्ति बालाः means, due to lack of विवेक बुद्धि, the spiritually immature people go after various objects of desire, external to one's own physical body . As a result,

ते मृत्योः विततस्य पाशं यन्ति

ते - Those people, people who lack विवेक बुद्धि

यन्ति - go to, get caught into

मृत्योः विततस्य पाशं - the wide-spread net of the मृत्यु - the world of changes.

मृत्यु is Death, and that is in the form of every kind of change arising from

अविद्या - Self ignorance

काम - ignorance-born desires and

कर्म - such desire prompted actions, all of which constitute

संसार लक्षणं - the distinguishing characteristic of the transient life of a जीव - an individual person, in this ever changing world



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पाशं -That by which one is bound is called पाशं, for example, a rope is called a पाशं. Here, we are concerned with मृत्यु पाशं.

A जीव – an individual person is bound to one's body by the three stranded rope of अविद्या, काम, कर्म. Because of this rope, the जीव is bound to संसार – the never ending cycle of birth and death and all the सुख-दुःखs in between, in this ever changing world. That is मृत्यु पाशं – the net of मृत्यु. Such मृत्यु पाशं is विततस्त पाशं meaning सर्वतः व्याप्तस्य पाशं – The net of मृत्यु is spread all over, in all directions, in all places, at all times. मृत्यु is everywhere, so long as the जीव exists within the orbit of काल – Time, one cannot escape मृत्यु – Death, the world of changes, so long as one is bound by Time.

Therefore, ते मृत्योः यन्ति विततस्य पाशं means the spiritually immature people are ever subject to get caught in the never ending cycle of birth and death, and all changes in between. That being the case,

अथ धीराः अमृतत्वं विदित्वा. ध्रुवं अध्रुवेषु, इह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥

अथ – Therefore

धीराः – the विवेकिनः, those who have विवेक बुद्धि together with resolve and discipline  
अमृतत्वं विदित्वा – knowing, fully understanding and clearly recognizing what अमृतत्वं – Immortality means; realizing that अमृतत्वं – transcends TIME – काल. अमृतत्वं is प्रत्यगात्म स्वरूपे अवस्थानं – Abiding in प्रत्यगात्मा – being in विष्णोः परमं पदं – The अमृत आत्मा - The Immortal SELF – The आत्मा “I” - The परमेश्वर already within oneself

अमृतत्वं is recognizing one's identity with the Immortal Self already within oneself, and also,

अध्रुवेषु (मध्ये) ध्रुवं विदित्वा – recognizing clearly that आत्मा – “I” alone – परमेश्वर alone – is ध्रुवं – is नित्यं – is सत्यं, and every thing else in this creation is मिथ्या;

आत्मा “I” alone - परमेश्वर alone is Absolutely Eternal – Absolutely never subject to change – Absolute Reality in all existence, and every object in this creation is transient appearance and ever subject to change. Further, realizing

ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं – no object in this creation exists independent of परमेश्वर, and the SAME आत्मा “I” – The परमेश्वर is in every object in this creation

विदित्वा - so realizing



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इह न प्रार्थयन्ते - a धीर पुरुष – a wise person never prays for, never craves for any object in this creation external to oneself, which means, a धीर पुरुष – a Wise person, a चिवेकि with resolve and discipline prays only for आत्मज्ञानं – Self-Knowledge and आत्मदर्शनं – Vision of आत्मा “I” – The परमेश्वर already within oneself as ONESELF.

Thus a धीर पुरुष – a wise person prays for एकाग्र बुद्धि – a single-pointed बुद्धि totally committed to the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं – Self Knowledge leading to the Vision of आत्मा – I – The परमेश्वर already within oneself as ONESELF Itself

With this Introduction, Lord यम proceeds to show, in the rest of this section, how आत्मा is not only the ONE behind the many, and the changeless behind every change, It is also the ONE in the many, and the changeless in every change in this creation.

We will continue, next time.