



कठोपनिषत्
Katopanishad
Section 4
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येन रूपं रसं गन्धं, शब्दान् स्पर्शान् च मैथुनान् ।
एते नैव विजानाति, किं अत्र परिशिष्यते ।
एतत् वै तत् ॥ 4 - 3

स्वप्नान्तं, जागरितान्तं च, उभौ येन अनुपश्यति ।
महान्तं विभुं आत्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति॥ 4 - 4

य इमं मध्यदं वेद, आत्मानं जीवं अन्तिकात् ।
ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य, न ततो विजुगुप्सते ॥
एतत् वै तत् ॥ 4 - 5

Throughout this Upanishad, as we have already seen – Lord यम uses simple looking words to communicate profound knowledge. We must take time to understand these words properly, and try to grasp their Upanishadic content.

As we may recall, Lord यम has been talking about कश्चित् धीर – a person of extraordinary wisdom, resolve and discipline, and his heroic feat of आवृत्तचक्षुः –turning the senses and the mind inward, and his ultimate Self-discovery - discovery of one’s true self, The Immortal SELF – The प्रत्यग आत्मा – The Divine SELF – The आत्मा “I”, The परमेश्वर within oneself, as ONESELF Itself.

That आत्मा “I”, the True Self of oneself is what the Upanishad calls ब्रह्मन्, which is also The SELF of the entire universe – the ultimate Unity of the universe, both “within” and “without”. What is the nature of That आत्मा “I”, The ब्रह्मन् – That which includes everything, and, at the same time, transcends everything in this universe? That is the question which Lord यम now proceeds to answer, because, that is precisely Nachiketa’s question, as we may recall his words earlier:

“येयं प्रेते विचिकित्स्या मनुष्ये अस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके ।
एतत् विद्यां अनुशिष्टः त्वयाऽहं वराणां एषः वरस्तृतीयः ” 1-20



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

“When the body falls, some people say that an आत्मा, which is distinct from the body, which is other than the body, sense organs, mind and intellect, and which gets connected to a new body in one’s next life – such an आत्मा does exist. Some others say that such an आत्मा does not exist. Please teach me the Truth about आत्मा.”

A few verses later, Nachiketa asks the same question in a more direct form:

अन्यत्र धर्मात् अन्यत्र अधर्मात्, अन्यत्र अस्मात् कृत - अकृतात् ।
अन्यत्र भूतात् च भव्यात् च, यत् तत् पश्यसि, तत् वद ॥

2-14

“What you see, what you recognize as That which is different from, which is other than, which transcends धर्म and अधर्म – virtue and vice, कारण and कार्य – cause and effect, काल and देश – time and space, तत् वद – please tell That to me” so asked Nachiketa.

In essence, Nachiketa’s question is “What is आत्मा ?” Lord यम has been answering that question in different ways in the second and the third sections of the Upanishad which we have seen already, and He is going to answer that question again in this and the next 2 sections in a more focused manner through a variety of pointer words, starting from the next verse. Lord यम says:

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं, शब्दान् स्पर्शान् च मैथुनान् ।
एतेनैव विजानाति, किमत्र परिशिष्यते ।
एतत् वै तत् ॥

4-3

Before we take up this verse, let us be clear about two things with respect to आत्मा. आत्मा means अहं - “I”, The Self – “oneself”. Is आत्मा – am I – known to me, directly or indirectly? Is “I” the आत्मा – The SELF, oneself, direct knowledge (अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं) to me, or indirect knowledge (परोक्ष ज्ञानं) to me?

आत्मा the Self is always अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं – direct knowledge, immediate knowledge to me, because, even in pitch darkness, I recognizes myself, I know that I exist – and I do not need any प्रमाण – any means of knowledge such as the eyes or ears to confirm the fact that I do exist. In fact, the only thing in this creation which is अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं – Self established knowledge, direct and immediate knowledge to me, is अहं – I, The SELF – The आत्मा. I do not need any Vedanta to establish that I exist, The Self – The आत्मा exists.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

But Vedanta always talks only about आत्मा. If आत्मा is already a matter of direct and immediate knowledge to me, what for is Vedanta? Vedanta is needed only because, I have some confusion in my knowledge about myself. I have no definite, doubt-free knowledge about आत्मा. It is obvious to me, that an indefinite knowledge, a confused knowledge is no knowledge at all. Even though I think I know myself, it is clear to me that I do not know myself well enough, definite enough and full enough.

My knowledge about आत्मा is just like my knowledge about rope-snake. I see an object, directly with my eyes, which looks like a snake. With a little further examination, I recognize that my knowledge about that object is erroneous. In reality, the object is only a rope. Similarly, I see myself directly indeed, in terms of my forms, names, body, mind, intellect, accomplishments and other attributes and possessions, but then, that knowledge of myself goes on changing, unpredictably and uncontrollably.

Herein comes The Vedanta, The Upanishad. Vedanta points out that there is an error in my vision of myself. I am really NOT anything that I see by my eyes or other sense organs including my mind. My real SELF – आत्मा “I”, is never subject to change, and Vedanta also points out why I appear to be changing all the time. Through the words of Vedanta, I recognize, by myself, the error and confusion in my vision of myself, and ultimately I gain doubt-free, direct and immediate knowledge – अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं about आत्मा – The SELF “I”. Thus Vedanta is needed not to confirm “I am”, but to know, clearly and definitely, who I am, and who I am not, and why I am what I am.

By listening to Vedanta, either one gains अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं – direct, definite, doubt-free, immediate knowledge about oneself, or one gains no knowledge at all about oneself. About आत्मा “I”, there can be erroneous knowledge, but there can never be indirect knowledge; that is the first thing we must understand about आत्मा – The Self “I”.

Further, suppose I say: “I know something”. That means I am The Knower, and that “something” is an object of my knowledge. In particular, I am not that “something”. I am distinct from, and independent of what I know. Thus with respect to any knowledge I am aware of, I am the Knower, which means I am Awareness Itself, because of which alone I am aware of the object of my knowledge. Thus, the real nature of “I” The आत्मा – The SELF, is विज्ञान स्वरूपं – Pure Awareness, Pure Consciousness Itself, and NOT any object I am aware of, or conscious of. Therefore, let us be clear in our understanding:

1. “I” The आत्मा – The SELF, is a matter of अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं - direct, doubt-free, immediate knowledge about oneself, never subject to change ; and
2. The real nature of “I” The आत्मा – The SELF, is Pure Awareness, not any object one is aware of.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

With this understanding, let us now see what the Upanishad verse says:

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं, शब्दान् स्पर्शान् च मैथुनान् ।
एते नैव विजानाति, किं अत्र परिशिष्यते ।
एतत् वै तत् ॥

4 – 3

येन एतेनैव - येन एतेन एव - That by which alone, meaning

येन विज्ञान स्वरूपेण - चैतन्य स्वरूपेण - एव - That Pure Consciousness, That Pure Awareness because of which alone

विजानाति - a person knows, recognizes, gains, clear, direct and immediate knowledge of

रूपं - form and color

रसं - taste

गन्धं - Smell

शब्दान् - sounds

स्पर्शान् - all senses of touch

मैथुनान् - and also all pleasures of sexual contacts, and indeed, all kinds of sense enjoyments; and also,

किं अत्र परिशिष्यते - किं अत्र लोके परिशिष्यते - what is left over in this world, which is unknowable to That Pure Consciousness? Obviously nothing, meaning, nothing in this world is beyond the scope of That Pure Consciousness, Pure Awareness – शुद्ध चैतन्यं.

That शुद्ध चैतन्यं - एतत् वै तत् - That is indeed The आत्मा - The Self “I”

That Pure Consciousness, That Pure Awareness - That शुद्ध विज्ञान स्वरूप चैतन्यं because of which alone, because of whose presence and power alone a person recognizes, a person gains clear, direct and immediate knowledge of रूपं - form and color, रसं - taste, गन्धं - smells, शब्दान् - sounds, स्पर्शान् - all sense of touch and also मैथुनान् - all pleasures of sense enjoyments, and also everything else in this creation without exception, That Pure Awareness – एतत् वै तत्, That is indeed तत् - The आत्मा - The SELF I - about which you wanted to know when you asked me “तत् चद - Please tell that to me” in your opening question, so says Lord यम.

Lord यम repeats the expression एतत् वै तत् again and again, focusing Nachiketa's attention on आत्मा - The Self “I”.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Now, for the sake of argument suppose you say “I recognize, I gain Knowledge of रूपं, रसं, गन्धं ... form, taste, smell etc., by my sense organs - mind and बुद्धि. Where does आत्मा come into the picture?” If you ask such a question, the answer is: “You are NOT your sense organs, mind or बुद्धि. They are also only objects you are aware of. They themselves gain their powers to function as they do, only because of the presence and powers of आत्मा – your True SELF, already within yourself. This we have already seen in केनोपनिषत्.

Let us recall briefly the words of केनोपनिषत् here:

यत् वाचा अनभ्युदितं, येन वाग् अभ्युध्यते – That which is not revealed by words, but That, by which, words reveal their meanings

यन्मनसा न मनुते येन आहुः मनो मतं – That which cannot be comprehended by the mind but That by which the mind is able to comprehend the world of objects and changes.

यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति येन चक्षुषि पश्यति – That which cannot be seen by the eyes, but That by whose grace the eyes are capable of seeing

यत् श्रोत्रेण न शृणोति येन श्रोत्रं इदं श्रुतम् – That which is not heard by the ear, but That by which the ear is able to hear this sound

यत् प्राणेन न प्राणिति येन प्राणः प्रणीयते – That which is not sustained by प्राण, but that by which प्राण is sustained.

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि – Please understand – That alone is ब्रह्मन्. That alone is आत्मा. That alone is the Self “I”. Lord यम ‘s message here is the same.

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं, शब्दान् स्पर्शान् च मैथुनान् ।

एते नैव विजानाति, किं अत्र परिशिष्यते ।

एतत् वै तत् ॥

That is indeed आत्मा. Further, the Upanishad continues:

स्वप्नान्तं, जागरितान्तं च, उभौ येन अनुपश्यति ।

महान्तं विभुं आत्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥

4 - 4



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Again, pointing attention to अपरोक्ष आत्म दर्शनं – clear, direct and immediate vision of the unchanging and the unchangeable eternal आत्मा – The Self, Pure Consciousness in oneself as ONESELF, Lord यम says:

येन अनुपश्यति – That because of which, That by whose presence and blessings alone a person sees, as they truly are, namely

स्वप्नान्तं जागरितान्तं च उभौ – the events and objects known and seen in both of one's dream state and the waking state. That same one pure consciousness by whose presence and blessings alone a person sees, whatever he sees, in one's dream state and also in one's waking state. That pure consciousness शुद्ध चैतन्यं is एतत् चै तत्, is indeed the आत्मा – The Self that you asked about. What one sees in one's dream state and waking state is only a manifestation of one's माया गुण वासनाs – the lingering effects of one's past and present सत्य, रजस्, तमस्, गुणs born of माया. Being so, they are all only objects of one's pure awareness. That pure awareness itself is आत्मा.

तं महान्तं विभुं आत्मानं मत्वा – That आत्मा is महान्तं, देश-काल अपरिच्छिन्नं – not bound by space and time, which means that आत्मा is Infinite, limitless, ever existent and also that आत्मा is विभुं (विविदं भवति इति विदुः) – the one who manifests oneself in an endless variety of forms and names. All varieties of names and forms in this creation are only manifestations of That One आत्मा which is the अधिष्ठान – the basis, the root for everything in this creation. As the basis for this entire creation, आत्मा is all-pervasive. That आत्मा is विभुं, सर्व व्यापक स्वरूपं, which means विष्णु स्वरूपं.

That is why in our सहस्रनाम अर्चन, we worship विष्णु as ओं विभवे नमः. Thus

तं आत्मानं मत्वा – Knowing that limitless all-pervading आत्मा – the self, मत्वा means ज्ञात्वा – knowing; how does one know that आत्मा?

तं आत्मानं आत्म भावेन मत्वा – ज्ञात्वा – Recognizing that limitless all-pervading आत्मा – The Self as Oneself itself, which means

साक्षात् अहं ब्रह्मेति ज्ञात्वा – Recognizing clearly, directly and immediately through the words of the Upanishads that “I am indeed that limitless all-pervading ब्रह्मन् – the आत्माः. So recognizing oneself as ब्रह्मन् Itself, as आत्मा Itself, as pure consciousness Itself, as परमेश्वर Itself.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

धीरः न शोचति – a धीर पुरुष, a विवेकि never comes to grief. A धीर पुरुष, a wise person gains freedom from the hold of every kind of sorrow and distress arising from संसार – life in this ever-changing world.

In the above verse, Lord यम essentially points out:

1. In the deep sleep state, there is only Pure Awareness – there is no object awareness. That pure awareness is one and the same in all the three states of existence, namely the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state.
2. That pure awareness is the limitless, all-pervading, all-inclusive, ever-existent, unchanging and unchangeable आत्मा – the self.
3. The person who recognizes beyond doubt one's identity with that आत्मा is naturally uplifted from all the सुख दुःख inherent in this संसार – ever-changing world.

In addition, any person who recognizes clearly, directly and immediately one's identity with the आत्मा – The परमेश्वर already in oneself as oneself itself, that person gains freedom from hatred and fear of every kind, so says Lord यम in the next verse.

य इमं मध्यदं वेद, आत्मानं जीवं अन्निकात् ।
ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य, न ततो विजुगुप्सते ॥
एतत् वै तत् ॥

4 – 5

य इमं मध्यदं वेद – Any person who recognizes clearly, directly and immediately this आत्मा. The nature of this आत्मा is indicated here by the three words मध्यदं, जीवं and भूतभव्यस्य ईशानं

मध्यदं – मधु literally means honey. Here मधु stands for इष्ट कर्मफल – the desirable results of one's कर्मs, which means one's पुण्य कर्मफलs. Therefore मध्यदं means पुण्य कर्मफल भुजं

The भोक्ता is the nourisher and enjoyer of one's पुण्य कर्मफलs. The आत्मा, the परमेश्वर is the real nourisher and enjoyer of all कर्मs and कर्मफलs of a धीर पुरुष, a wise person, who alone can gain आत्म दर्शनं . For a धीर पुरुष – a wise person with resolve and discipline totally committed to the pursuit of परमेश्वर within, every कर्म is indeed ईश्वर कर्म. And one is only an instrument to serve the will of परमेश्वर, and consequently, परमेश्वर is indeed the भोक्ता – the nourisher and enjoyer of all of one's कर्मs and



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

कर्मफलs. Therefore, a धीर पुरुष – a wise person recognizes परमेश्वर within as मध्यदं, meaning भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां (G.5-29) as the nourisher and enjoyer of all his कर्मs and कर्मफलs.

जीवं – The धीर पुरुष – the wise person recognizes the आत्मा – the परमेश्वर within as जीवं, meaning प्राणस्य प्राणः – as the sustainer of one's प्राण – the breath of life.

भूतभव्यस्य ईशानं means सर्वलोक महेश्वरं. The धीर पुरुष the wise person recognizes the आत्मा – the परमेश्वर within oneself as भूतभव्यस्य ईशानं – The Lord of the past and the future, which naturally includes the present as well, because all past and future are with reference to the present. Therefore, भूतभव्यस्य ईशानं means सर्वलोक महेश्वरं - the Lord of all the three periods of TIME, the Lord of the three worlds, The Absolute Reality transcending TIME itself. Therefore,

यः मध्यदं जीवं भूतभव्यस्य ईशानं इमं आत्मानं वेद – the person who recognizes this आत्मा within oneself as the nourisher and enjoyer of one's कर्मफलs, as the sustainer of one's प्राण, and as the Lord of all the three worlds, as the Lord of all the three periods of time, transcending time itself

यः इमं आत्मानं अन्तिकात् वेद – the person who knows, who recognizes this आत्मा within oneself as the ONE nearest to oneself, which means as ONESELF itself

ततः – on such recognition

न विजुगुप्सते – that person does not, and cannot suffer from any kind of hatred or fear.

न विजुगुप्सते – literally means does not hate, does not fear and does not seek any defense, protection, or a place to hide. All notions of hatred, self-protection, self-defense, etc. arise only from fear. Recognizing oneself as the आत्मा – The परमेश्वर Itself, there is absolutely nothing, no scope for any kind of hatred or fear.

एतत् वै तत् – Such absolute freedom from hatred and fear is indeed the nature of आत्मा - about which you wanted to know, so says Lord यम.

The Upanishad continues, which we will see next time.