



कठोपनिषत्
Katopanishad
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यः पूर्वं तपसो जातं अद्भ्यः पूर्वं अजायत ।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तं, यो भूतेभिः व्यपश्यत ।
एतत् वै तत् ॥ 4 - 6

या प्राणेन संभवति, अदितिः देवतामयी ।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्ती, यो भूतेभिः व्यजायत ।
एतत् वै तत् ॥ 4 - 7

अरण्योः निहितो जातवेदाः गर्भ इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः ।
दिवेदिवे ईड्यो जागृवद्भिः हविष्मद्भिः मनुष्येभिः अग्निः ॥
एतत् वै तत् ॥ 4 - 8

Lord यम has been focusing Nachiketa's attention to the Nature of आत्मा – The आत्मा “I”, – already within oneself as ONESELF Itself. The Nature of That आत्मा – The SELF “I” already within oneself is:

शुद्ध विज्ञान स्वरूप चैतन्यं – Pure Consciousness, direct and clear, All Knowledge within oneself, because of whose presence and blessings alone one is able to recognize anything, any knowledge in this creation.

That आत्मा, the Self “I”, already within oneself, is the same in all of one's three states of existence – the waking state, the dream state and the deep-sleep state. That आत्मा – The Self “I”, already within oneself is Limitless, all-pervading, all-inclusive, ever-existent, unchanging and unchangeable. That आत्मा the Self “I”, already within oneself is the nourisher and enjoyer of all of one's कर्मs and कर्मफलs, the sustainer of one's प्राण, and indeed The परमेश्वर Itself. Further, Lord यम says

यः पूर्वं तपसो जातं अद्भ्यः पूर्वं अजायत ।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तं, यो भूतेभिः व्यपश्यत ।



एतत् वै तत् ॥

4 – 6

In the previous verse, the आत्मा – Self “I” was pointed out as ईशानं भूत भव्यः – which means सर्वलोक महेश्वरः – as परमेश्वर Itself, already within oneself. In the next few verses, through a series of pointer words, the आत्मा – the Self “I” in oneself is being pointed out as the same one परमेश्वर in every self, in every manifestation of परमेश्वर, the परब्रह्मन् in Its अनन्त स्वरूप – limitless forms and names. By so doing, the isolation of आत्मा The Self “I” is negated.

Further, in the Vedas, कर्मकाण्ड comes first, and then come the Upanishads. In the कर्मकाण्ड part of Vedas, various forms of rituals, Havans and meditations involving ईश्वर उपासन कर्मस – acts of worship of परमेश्वर in different forms and names are mentioned, mainly intended for those people in the pursuit of various objects of desire.

In such उपासन कर्मस – ritualistic acts of worship, परमेश्वर is indicated by words representing various forms and names such as हिरण्यगर्भ, विराट् and also various individual देवताs such as अग्नि, वायु, वरुण, सूर्य etc. These words naturally flow into the subsequent Upanishad teachings, only to show that the परमेश्वर indicated by different words in the कर्मकाण्ड part of the Vedas is no different from the परमेश्वर indicated by the word ब्रह्मन् in the Upanishad part of the Vedas.

Every form and Name of परमेश्वर and every देवता – whatever be Its form and name, is only a particular manifestation of the glory of the same one परमेश्वर – the same one ब्रह्मन्, the सत्य स्वरूप, ज्ञान स्वरूप, अनन्त स्वरूप ब्रह्मन्, just as any form and name arising from gold, is also gold.

In to-day’s verses, Lord यम points out that any person who recognizes clearly and directly the same one परमेश्वर in all manifestations of परमेश्वर, in all glories of परमेश्वर, that person gains a clear, direct and immediate knowledge of आत्मा – the Self “I”, as परमेश्वर itself, already in oneself. This is how Lord यम communicates the above message:

यः पूर्वं तपसो जातं अद्भ्यः पूर्वं अजायत ।



गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तं, यो भूतेभिः व्यपश्यत ।
एतत् वै तत् ॥

4 – 6

यो विपश्यत – Anyone who sees, who recognizes, directly, clearly and beyond doubt
That हिरण्यगर्भ. What is that हिरण्यगर्भ?

यः पूर्वं तपसो जातं – The हिरण्यगर्भ which is the totality of all subtle elements
constituting this entire creation, that हिरण्यगर्भ is पूर्वं जातं = प्रथमं जातं – the first one,
born of परब्रह्मन्, the सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म. How?

तपसः जातं – by ज्ञान दृष्टि – vision of the all-knowledge nature सर्वज्ञत्वं of ब्रह्मन्, as
ब्रह्मकाम - as the very thought desire of ब्रह्मन्. That ब्रह्मकाम – the thought-desire of ब्रह्मन्
has ब्रह्म लक्षणं – has ब्रह्मन् in it (just as when you think of something, you are already in
your thoughts, even though you are independent of your thoughts). Consequently,
हिरण्यगर्भ, being the very thought of ब्रह्मन्, is ब्रह्ममयं – is all ब्रह्मन् itself.

That is the Vedantic vision of the cycle of creation as we have seen already in Taittiriya
Upanishad. Briefly recalling the Upanishad words on the cycle of creation:

सोऽकामयत । बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति । स तपोऽतप्यत
स तपस्तप्त्वा । इदं सर्वम् असृजत । यदिदं किंच
तत् सृष्ट्वा तदेवानु प्राविशत् ॥

This is the famous अनुप्रवेश श्रुति in Taittiriya Upanishad. In each cycle of creation, from
ब्रह्मन् first comes हिरण्यगर्भ – the totality of this entire creation in its subtle form (समस्त
सूक्ष्म प्रपञ्च), and then later, from that हिरण्यगर्भ comes विराट्, which is the totality of
all gross elements which make up this entire physical universe (समस्त स्थूल प्रपञ्च).
Thus both हिरण्यगर्भ and विराट् arise from ब्रह्मन् only, which means they are effects for
which the cause is ब्रह्मन्. In the Upanishad verse here, we are talking about हिरण्यगर्भ.
Therefore,

यः पूर्वं तपसो जातं – That हिरण्यगर्भ which is the first-born of ब्रह्मन्, as ब्रह्मकाम as
ज्ञानमय ब्रह्मन् whose स्वरूप is ब्रह्मन् itself, and also

अद्भ्यः पूर्वं अजायत – That हिरण्यगर्भ was born before अद्भ्यः – water, etc. Here
अद्भ्यः stands for all the पञ्चमहाभूताः – the five great elements आकाश, वायु, अग्नि,



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

आफ़ and पृथिवी, which subsequently give rise to the entire creation made up of an infinite number of सूक्ष्म स्थूल शरीरs – bodies made up of subtle and gross elements.

गुहां प्रविश्य – The same हिरण्यगर्भ as ज्ञानमय ब्रह्मन्, having entered into the entire creation, even before its gross manifestation as indicated in the अनुप्रवेश श्रुति cited above.

Just as, when you think of something, you have already entered into what you think, similarly, as the ज्ञानमय ब्रह्मन् thinks about, envisions the सूक्ष्म स्थूल शरीरs in the forthcoming cycle of creation, That ब्रह्मन् has already entered into everything in the entire creation, including the creation itself, even before its gross appearance. That is what is indicated in the अनुप्रवेश श्रुति cited above. Therefore,

यो भूतेभिः तिष्ठन्तं व्यपश्यत – The one who sees, who recognizes clearly, directly and immediately, That हिरण्यगर्भ as ब्रह्मस्वरूपं, as ब्रह्मन् Itself, as परमेश्वर Itself in the सूक्ष्म स्थूल शरीर – in the subtle and gross body of every जीव in this creation

एतत् वै तत् – what that person sees is indeed the आत्मा – the Self “I” you asked about, so says Lord यम to Nachiketa. Thus Lord यम points out that आत्मा – the Self “I” exists already in every self in this creation, as ब्रह्मन् Itself, as परमेश्वर Itself.

Further, the Upanishad continues

या प्राणेन संभवति, अदितिः देवतामयी ।

गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्ती, यो भूतेभिः व्यजायत ।

एतत् वै तत् ॥

4 – 7

Here again the message is the same. The same हिरण्यगर्भ स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् is referred here as प्राण and अदिति. प्राण means प्राणस्य प्राणः – That by which प्राण – one’s individual breath is sustained, and That is ब्रह्मन्. Again,

अदिति : means the one who is the true sole enjoyer of all sense objects, and that is ब्रह्मन् Itself. Therefore,

या प्राणेन संभवति - That हिरण्यगर्भ born of ब्रह्मन्



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

अदितिः – That हिरण्यगर्भ who is the sole enjoyer of all sense objects - शब्द, स्पर्श, रूप, रस and of गन्ध, which are themselves manifestations of ब्रह्मन् .

देवतामयी meaning सर्व देवता रूपा – that हिरण्यगर्भ who is in the form of all देवताs, such as the presiding deities of sense objects, namely आकाश, वायु, सूर्य, चरुण and अश्विनि देवताs, etc.

गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्ती – That हिरण्यगर्भ who, having entered into the individual सूक्ष्म स्थूल शरीरs of all beings in this creation, exists in all of them

या भूतेभिः (कार्य-कारण लक्षणैः सह) – That हिरण्यगर्भ from which all beings in this creation were created, along with their individual effect-cause characterizes.

We must note here that व्यष्टि is resolved into the समष्टि – the individual beings are resolved into the totality of all beings, namely हिरण्यगर्भ – where the effect is resolved in the cause. The person who recognizes That हिरण्यगर्भ स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् – the cause of all effects – एतत् वै तत् what that person sees is indeed the आत्मा – the Self “I” you asked about, says Lord यम.

In the next two verses, the nature of आत्मा – the Self “I” is unfolded in terms of चिराट्, which is the समष्टि स्थूल प्रपञ्च – the totality of the entire gross physical universe. Being born of ब्रह्मन् Itself, चिराट् also is ब्रह्मन् Itself in the form of चिराट्. The Upanishad says:

अरण्योः निहितो जातवेदाः गर्भ इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः ।

दिवेदिवे ईड्यो जागृवद्भिः हविष्मद्भिः मनुष्येभिः अग्निः ॥

एतत् वै तत् ॥

4 – 8

The people who do चिराट् उपासन – worship of ब्रह्मन् – परमेश्वर in the form of चिराट् – समष्टि स्थूल प्रपञ्च – the totality of entire gross physical universe, through some kind of a fire-ritual हवन् कर्म – invoke that चिराट् रूप परब्रह्मन् in the अग्नि देवता the divine fire, in the Havan Kund. In such a Havan ritual, the अग्नि देवता – the fire in the Havan Kund stands for चिराट्, the entire स्थूल प्रपञ्च – the entire gross physical universe.



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

For example, Lord यम has already taught Nachiketa the अग्नि विध्या – now known as नाचिकेताग्नि wherein चिराट् रूप पर ब्रह्मन् is प्रतिष्ठां – invoked in the अग्नि देवता of हवन् Kund. Therefore the अग्नि देवता in यज्ञ कर्मस, such as नाचिकेताग्नि is only पर ब्रह्मन्.

Calling attention to that अग्नि – which अग्नि? चिराट् रूप पर ब्रह्म प्रतिष्ठ अग्नि देवता – The अग्नि – the fire as अग्नि देवता – in which पर ब्रह्मन् in the form of चिराट् is invoked that अग्नि – एतत् वै तत् – That अग्नि is indeed the आत्मा – the Self “I” you asked about, says Lord यम, which simply means,

अयं आत्मा ब्रह्म – This आत्मा, the self in oneself is सत्य स्वरूप, ज्ञान स्वरूप, अनन्त स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् .

This is how Lord यम gives this message:

अरण्योः निहितो जातवेदाः गर्भ इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः ।
दिवेदिवे ईड्यो जागृवद्भिः हविष्मद्भिः मनुष्येभिः अग्निः ॥
एतत् वै तत् ॥

अग्निः, एतत् वै तत् – That अग्नि is indeed the आत्मा the Self “I” you asked about, says Lord यम.

अग्नि means fire, in order to recognize आत्मा – The Self “I” in fire, a certain mental disposition is necessary and that mental disposition is brought about by all the other words in the above verse.

The अग्नि – the fire that is pointed out here is not any fire. It is अधियज्ञ अग्नि. It is the fire that is created for and sustained in every यज्ञ कर्म, in every Havan ritual. That अग्नि is called अधियज्ञ अग्नि. Now what is अधियज्ञ ? Sri Krishna says: अधियज्ञः अहं एव (G.8 – 4). I am indeed अधियज्ञ. Therefore, the fire that is created for and sustained in the Havan Kund throughout the Havan ritual is indeed परब्रह्मन् परमेश्वर, recognizable through contemplation on ब्रह्मन्, by the means shown in कैवल्य उपनिषत् , which we will see later. First, how is fire created for performing a Havan ritual?



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

अरण्योः निहितो जातवेदाः – जातवेद is Upanishad expression indicating the fire that is created for and sustained in the हव्यन् Kund throughout the Havan कर्म. जातवेद means The “All-knower, The Omniscient, which is indeed परमेश्वर. निहितः means स्थितः , abiding in अरण्योः in the two अरण्यि, blocks of wood. Therefore,

अरण्योः निहितो जातवेदाः means the जातवेदाः, the अग्नि देवता abiding in the two अरण्यि, the two blocks of wood. What are the two अरण्यि? We must recall here what we have talked about in कैवल्य Upanishad. 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 sacred ritual.

This is how they do it. Two small circular flat blocks of wood are held, one above the other with the flat surfaces in contact. Each block of wood is called अरण्यि. Thus there is a lower अरण्यि and an upper अरण्यि. These are the two अरण्यि. 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 अरण्यि, and the rod passes snugly through the hole of the upper अरण्यि.

A length of rope is wound a few times around the rod. One ब्रह्मचारि – a Vedic student, firmly holds the upper अरण्यि by hand, and another ब्रह्मचारि rotates the lower अरण्यि, and rubs the upper अरण्यि by pulling the rope around the rod, back and forth, exactly like we do in churning butter in a milk pot. Both the ब्रह्मचारिs chant the मन्त्र ॐ ॐ ॐ repeatedly as the rod turns back and forth, during this churning process.

Sparks of fire are generated by the friction caused by rubbing the two अरण्यि. That fire is caught by a piece of cotton, which is then transformed into fuel piles in the Havan Kund. The sparks of fire so created from the two अरण्यि are recognized as the sacred fire of wisdom, and the churning process itself is called मथन अभ्यास – a process of contemplation on ब्रह्मन्. For such contemplation on ब्रह्मन्, one just has to recall the above process and then, as the Kaivalya Upanishad says:

आत्मानं अरण्यिं कृत्वा, प्रणवं च उत्तरारणी ।

ज्ञान निर्मथन – अभ्यासात्, पाशं दहति पण्डितः ॥

कै - 11



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Simulating mentally the above process of creating The अग्नि – The Sacred Fire of Wisdom for performing a Havan कर्म, the process of contemplation on ब्रह्मन् is indicated here.

आत्मानं अरणिं कृत्वा – Make your बुद्धि, with all its notions about yourself, your body, mind, intellect, and your entire personality as the Lower अरणि, then

प्रणवं च उत्तरारणिं – Make your knowledge about प्रणव मन्त्र ॐ gained from ब्रह्मविद्या education as the Upper अरणि.

From your ब्रह्मविद्या education, you understand that ॐ is शब्द रूप प्रत्यक्ष ब्रह्मन्, ॐ is सत् चित् आनन्द स्वरूप आत्मा – The परात् पर पुरुष – The पुरुषोत्तम – The परमेश्वर
Let that knowledge of ॐ be the Upper अरणि

Now, contemplate upon That ॐ-knowledge. How?

ज्ञान – निर्मथन अभ्यासात् – By the repeated practice of churning That knowledge on ॐ, by your बुद्धि. How to do that? All your bondages constitute the rope – the पाश, for the churning process. By pulling the पाश back and forth, which means by repeatedly uttering the word ॐ, ॐ, ॐ, contact your बुद्धि back and forth, repeatedly on the content of the knowledge on ॐ. That is the process of contemplation.

By the repeated practice of such contemplation, sparks of Fire of Wisdom will arise, and they will progressively burn the entire rope, which means, all bondages with कर्म and कर्मफल will ultimately disappear naturally. That is how पाशं दहति पण्डितः – a wise person burns up all bondages with कर्म and कर्मफल, making the बुद्धि totally free to reach, to recognize clearly, directly and immediately The आत्मा – The Self “I”, The ब्रह्मन् – The प्रमेश्वर, already in oneself, naturally and spontaneously. That is how one recognizes the आत्मा - The Self “I” in अग्नि - The Sacred Fire of Wisdom.

Whenever we do a Havan कर्म of any kind, we must remember the content of this Upanishad verse:

आत्मानं अरणिं कृत्वा, प्रणवं च उत्तराणी ।
ज्ञान निर्मथन – अभ्यासात्, पाशं दहति पण्डितः ॥



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

With the foregoing background knowledge, let us now return to our present कठोपनिषत् verse:

अग्निः - That अग्नि, That Fire, freshly created for the sole purpose of performing effectively a यज्ञकर्म – a Havan ritual

अरण्योः निहतः जातवेदाः - That अग्नि, That अग्निदेवता, potentially abiding in, and subsequently appearing from the two अरणिs – by the repeated contacts of the Upper अरणि and the Lower अरणि

गर्भ इव सुभृतः गर्भिणीभिः - That अग्नि, after having been generated from the two अरणिs, and used in lighting up the fuel pile in the Havan Kund, That अग्नि which is, सुभृतः – well protected, well nourished and well maintained, continuously, carefully with श्रद्धा, भक्ति and happy mental disposition, by the performers of यज्ञकर्म – Haven ritual (मनुष्येभिः)

How well is That अग्नि protected?

गर्भिणीभिः गर्भः सुभृतः इव - just as fetus are well protected, well nourished and well maintained continuously, carefully, with श्रद्धा, devotion, and happy mental disposition by the pregnant women – that is how well, the performers of Havan कर्म and Meditators on ब्रह्मन् protect The विराट् अग्नि in their hearts.

The कर्म ज्ञान सुमुच्चय – the total integration, the total fulfillment of the combination of यज्ञकर्म and ईश्वर ज्ञानं is possible only when there is pure, sustained and unbroken श्रद्धा and भक्ति, both in the performance of the यज्ञकर्म and in the pursuit of ईश्वर ज्ञानं. That is the Upanishad content of the illustration here.

“गर्भ इव सुभृतः गर्भिणीभिः - Just as the baby in the womb is always held well protected and nourished by the pregnant mother”. Further,

दिवे दिवे ईड्यो जागृवद्भिः हविष्मद्भिः मनुष्येभिः, अग्निः

अग्नि - That अग्नि – That अग्नि देवता – which is

दिवे दिवे day after day – everyday glorified and worshipped by

जागृवद्भिः हविष्मद्भिः मनुष्येभिः

जागृवद्भिः मनुष्येभिः - by people who are awake to आत्म ज्ञानं – Self-Knowledge, which means by people who are not careless or indifferent to what they are doing with respect



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

to both the यज्ञकर्म and the worship of the विराट्-प्रतिष्ठ अग्नि देवता in the Havan Kund, and also

हविष्मद्भिः meaning आज्यादिमद्भिः and ध्यान भावनामद्भिः – with respect to the oblations they do to the अग्नि देवता in the Havan Kund, and the श्रद्धा-भक्ति and ध्यानभाव – meditative and contemplative mental disposition in performing the Havan कर्म and the worship of ब्रह्मन् in the form of विराट् involved in the अग्नि देवता in the Havan Kund.

Therefore दिवे दिवे ईड्यो जागृवद्भिः मनुष्येभिः अग्निः means That अग्नि – That अग्नि देवता which is invoked and worshipped daily by the performers of यज्ञ कर्म – The Havan ritual, who are never indifferent or careless in their performance, particularly with respect to their oblation to the अग्नि देवता in the Havan Kund, and their श्रद्धा, भक्ति, and ध्यानभाव – their meditative and contemplative mental disposition in performing the हवन् कर्म and the worship of ब्रह्मन् in the form and name of विराट् invoked in the अग्नि देवता in the Havan Kund,

एतत् वै तत् - That अग्नि is indeed The आत्मा - The Self “I” you wanted to know about, so says Lord यम to Nachiketa.

Thus, we see in the above verses how beautifully the contents of the कर्मकाण्ड of the Vedas flow into the contents of the ज्ञानकाण्ड of the Vedas.

We will continue next time.