



कठोपनिषत्
Katopanishad
Section 5
Volume 26

पुरं एकादशद्वारं अजस्य अवक्रचेतसः ।
अनुष्ठाय न शोचति, विमुक्तः च विमुच्यते ॥
एतत् वै तत् ॥ 5 – 1

हंसः शुचिषद्, वसुः अन्तरिक्षसद्, होता वेदिषद् अतिथिः दुरोणसत् ।
नृषद् वरसद्, ऋतसद्, व्योमसत्,
अब्जा, गोजा, ऋतजा, अद्रिजा, ऋतं, बृहत् ॥ 5 – 2

ऊर्ध्वं प्राणं उन्नयति, अपानं प्रत्यगस्यति ।
मध्ये वामनं आसीनं, विश्वे देवाः उपासते ॥ 5 – 3

अस्य विस्रंसमानस्य शरीर स्थस्य देहिनः ।
देहात् विमुच्यमानस्य, किं अत्र परिशिष्यते ॥
एतत् वै तत् ॥ 5 – 4

न प्राणेन न अपानेन, मर्त्यो जीवति कश्चन ।
इतरेण तु जीवन्ति, यस्मिन् एतौ उपाश्रितौ ॥ 5 – 5

In view of the difficulties commonly experienced by human intellects, in recognizing the true nature of oneself, Lord यम again focuses the attention of Nachiketa on the Nature of आत्मा, through another set of pointer-words, indicating both The Immanent and The Transcendent Nature of आत्मा – The Self “I”, being identical with the Ever-existent, All-pervading and all-inclusive ब्रह्मन् – The परमेश्वर, already in oneself as ONESELF Itself.

Reopening the Discourse on आत्मा, Lord यम says:

पुरं एकादशद्वारं, अजस्य अवक्रचेतसः ।
अनुष्ठाय न शोचति, विमुक्तः च विमुच्यते ॥
एतत् वै तत् ॥ 5 – 1



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पुरं एकादशद्वारं

पुरं – A city which has

एकादशद्वारं – 11 doors

The शरीर – the body of a person, is compared to a city which has 11 doors, which means it has 11 entrance/exit openings. The भगवत् गीता likens the body to a city of 9 doors नवद्वारे पुरे [G-5-13]. Lord यम includes the navel and a potential opening at the top of the head and makes the शरीर look like a City which has 11 doors.

The potential opening at the top of head is indicated in Taittiriya Upanishad as यत्रासौ केशान्तो विवर्तते – a potential opening exists where the parting of the hair divides. This opening at the top of the head normally remains closed, but it can open under certain circumstances, according to योग शास्त्र.

Thus the शरीर – the body of a person is compared to a पुर – a city which has 11 doors. It is पुरं इव, पुरं शरीरं – the शरीर is like a city. Just as a city, it has several द्वारा and द्वारपालकाः – it has several entrance / exit points, all of them having their own sentries – controllers, to keep guard on them. For example, the sense organs are the entrance /exit points द्वारः and their Presiding Deities – the cosmic Powers – are the द्वारपालकाः. Like a city, so many activities are going on inside this body-city in terms of thoughts, words and deeds, and all of them have their own never ending consequences. Therefore, just like any great city, there are also some slum areas in this body city.

The purpose of this illustration is to point out that the body-city is not meant for the body itself, it is meant to serve the Master of the body-city who is independent of the body itself. That master of the city is आत्मा – The Self “I” in the body and in whose service is every part of this body. Therefore, this body vehicle is meant only to serve आत्मा – The Self “I” – already in oneself. That आत्मा is indicated by the two words अजस्य अचक्रचेतसः

अजस्य means, of the unborn. आत्मा is unborn. It is ever existent. It is free from all the body qualities - the six fold qualities of अस्ति, जयते, वर्धते, विपरिणमते, अपक्षीयते and चिनश्यति – coming into being, birth, growth, maturity, decay and death. These qualities are only for the शरीर – the body, and not for the आत्मा. The Master of the body-city is free from the attributes of the city. Further,



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अचक्र चेतसः – one whose consciousness is not crooked, which means one whose consciousness is all pervading, undivided and unchanging, like the light of the sun. That आत्मा is ONE and the same for everybody. आत्मा is impartial. आत्मा does not have a preference for one over the other. It is ONE and the same for everybody. Therefore अजस्य अचक्रचेतसः indicates परमात्मा – The परमेश्वर – The ब्रह्मन्.

Therefore, पुरं एकादशद्वारं अजस्य अचक्रचेतसः (आत्मनः) (अस्ति) – This 11 gated city, namely the शरीर – the physical body of a person is of आत्मा, is meant to serve The आत्मा – The Self “I”, The ब्रह्मन् – The परमेश्वर – the Master of this body city. That आत्मा is already in oneself.

(तं आत्मानं) अनुष्ठाय, न शोचति – Here अनुष्ठाय means ध्यात्वा, तं आत्मानं ध्यात्वा – contemplating on that आत्मा, न शोचति – one never comes to grief.

The purpose of आत्म ध्यानं – contemplation on आत्मा is सम्यक् आत्म विज्ञानं – gaining a clarity of the vision of आत्मा – The Self “I” already in oneself. Such आत्म विज्ञानं is possible only through श्रवणं, मननं and निदिध्यसनं – listening to the words of the Upanishads and subsequently reflecting and absorbing the content of the Upanishad knowledge until one gains obstructionless, clearly recognized आत्म ज्ञानं, namely ब्रह्मैवाहं अस्मि – that “ I am indeed ब्रह्मन् “

That is the meaning of अनुष्ठानं here. This अनुष्ठानं – this contemplation on आत्मा involves आवृत्तचक्षुः – turning one’s sense organs and mind inward and letting the बुद्धि discover आत्मा – The Self “I”, already in oneself as ONESELF Itself, through the Means of the Meditation like contemplation process described earlier in the last Section, namely

अङ्गुष्ठा मात्रः पुरुषो ज्योतिः इव अधूमकः ।

ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य, स एव अद्य, स उ इव ॥

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Contemplation on That आत्मा – The Self I, simultaneously

as अङ्गुष्ठा मात्र हृत् पुण्डरीक रूप, आनन्द स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् – seated in one’s own heart space

as ज्योतिः इव अधूमकः – as ज्ञान स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् and



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as स एव अद्यः, स उ श्वः - as सत्य स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् as भूतभव्यस्य ईशानः as परमेश्वर
Itself, so contemplating on That आत्मा (आत्मानं अनुष्ठाय) and so recognizing The
आत्मा - The Self "I", as ब्रह्मन् Itself already in oneself

न शोचति - the person is totally uplifted from all sorrow and distress; not only that,

विमुक्तः च - the person is released from all bondages born of अविद्या - Self- Ignorance.

विमुच्यते च - so released from all bondages, the person gains Total Liberation, Total
Freedom.

In fact, the person has always been free; only now, on gaining Self-knowledge the
person recognizes oneself as being Totally Free.

एतत् वै तत् - Such Free Self is indeed The आत्मा -The Self "I". So says Lord यम.

In the next verse, Lord यम points out that आत्मा - The Self "I" is not only the Indweller
of the city of one body, but It is also the Indweller of all the cities of all bodies - which
means there is only ONE आत्मा and That is Omnipresent. This is how He
communicates this Message.

हंसः शुचिषद्, वसुः अन्तरिक्षसद् होता वेदिषद्, अतिथिः दुरोणसत् । 5 - 2

नृषद्, वरसद्, ऋतसद्, व्योमसद्, अब्जा, गोजा, ऋतजा, अद्रिजा, ऋतं, बृहत् ॥

हंसः शुचिषत्

हंस is the name for a celestial Bird and it is also another name for आदित्य - The सूर्य -
The Sun, which is what is indicated there:

हंसः शुचिषत् means आदित्य रूपेण आत्मा शुचौ दिवि सीदति- गच्छति

In the form of Sun, आत्मा exists and appears to move in the pure आकाश - The Space.
The knowledge involved here is two-fold, not only the नाम रूप - the name and form of
Sun is आत्मा, but also the Law governing the function of Sun in the Universe, including
the function itself, is आत्मा, because आत्मा is सर्वस्य निमित्त कारणं as well as विवर्त
उपादान कारणं, which means आत्मा is both the Efficient cause as well as the Material
cause for this entire universe, without आत्मा Itself undergoing any change. That means
both the efficient cause as well as the material cause abide in the same आत्मा, just as
the Dreamer and the Dream, and the cotton and the cloth etc., abide in the same Being.



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Therefore, हंसः शुचिषत् – “As the Sun, The आत्मा exists and appears to move in आकाश – the Space” indicates that आत्मा is सर्वगत : - the आत्मा is all pervasive – which means, The आत्मा in the Sun is everywhere in this Universe, and thus, The आत्मा is both Immanent and Transcendent at the same time. This Message is reinforced by the other words in the verse.

वसु : अन्तरिक्षसत् – वसु is another name for वायु – the air. अन्तरिक्ष is the inter-space between the earth and all the other heavenly bodies. Therefore,

वसु : सन् आत्मा अन्तरिक्षसत् – As air, आत्मा exists in the inter-space between the earth and the other heavenly bodies.

होता वेदिषत् – होता in Vedanta, stands for अग्नि – the sacred fire in a Havan ritual and वेदि stands for the पुण्य भूमि – the sanctified spot where the Alter for the Havan is established for the performance of the Havan ritual. Therefore,

होता वेदिषत् means अग्निः सन् वेदि सत्

As the अग्नि in the Havan Alter, आत्मा blesses the sanctified spot – the पुण्य भूमि where the Havan Alter is situated. Further,

अतिथि : दुरोणसत् – This expression has two meanings

The juice of the सोम plant which is commonly distributed in many Havan rituals is called अतिथि and दुरोण is a कलश – a pot to hold the सोम Juice. Therefore, अतिथिः दुरोणसत् means सोम : सन्, आत्मा दुरोण सत् – आत्मा is in the pot, in the form of some juice.

Another meaning is the following. अतिथि means a House guest. दुरोण means गृहं – one’s dwelling place. Therefore, अतिथि दुरोण सत् means अतिथि रूपेण, आत्मा गृहेषु अस्ति – In the form of House Guest आत्मा is in your own dwelling-place – in your own house that is why तै. उ. teaches us: अतिथि देवो भव, इति.

नृषत् – नृषु, मनुष्येषु , आत्मा सत्

आत्मा is in all human beings, as themselves

वरसत् – वरेषु, देवेषु, आत्मा सत् meaning देवा : सन् , आत्मा देवेषु अस्ति

आत्मा is in all celestial beings as देवास

ऋतसत् – ऋतं is सत्यं , सत्यभाषणं – also ऋतं is यज्ञकर्म; आत्मा is in the form of truth in all speeches. आत्मा is in all Vedic rituals dedicated to परमेश्वर.



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व्योमसत् - व्याम is आकाशं – the Space. आत्मा is in everything in space.

अब्जा - Anything born in water is called अब्जा such as fish, all aquatic animals, creatures, insects, shells etc. etc. आत्मा is in every thing born in water.

गोजा - Anything born on earth (गो means पृथिवी) including the entire plant kingdom is called गोजा.

Therefore, आत्मा is in everything born on earth including the plant kingdom.

ऋतजा - Everything associated with, a यज्ञ कर्म – a Vedic ritual such as all the वेद मन्त्रा, यज्ञ देवता, यज्ञ कर्म, यज्ञ फल, etc. is called ऋतजा.

Therefore, आत्मा is in everything associated with a यज्ञ कर्म – any Vedic ritual dedicated to परमेश्वर.

We may recall the Gita verse here (4-24)

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविः ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतं ।

ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्म कर्म समाधिना ॥ [Gita Ch.4-24]

आत्मा is in all that is involved in such a Havan ritual.

अद्रिजा -Anything born in mountains such as rivers, stones, rocks etc., including the mountains themselves, is called अद्रिजा. Therefore आत्मा is in everything born in the mountains including the mountains themselves.

ऋतं means सत्यं - Even though आत्मा is in everything, each looking different from every other, the स्वरूप of आत्मा – the Nature of आत्मा is सत्यं – ONE Absolute Reality never subject to change, which means आत्मा is not a मिथ्या – an appearance of Forms and Names which are always subject to change. आत्मा is सत्यं – Absolute reality, Unborn, Ever-existent, All-knowledge, Pure-consciousness, All-pervasive, All-inclusive and never subject to change. That is the स्वरूप of आत्मा – The true nature of Self “I”.

बृहत् - That आत्मा – The Self “I”, is बृहत् means महत् – Great indeed. आत्मा being the अधिष्ठान – the basis for all existence, is indeed बृहत् – Great.



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So says Lord यम. This is an extraordinary verse. Except for the last word बृहत् – meaning आत्मा is Great, the rest of the verse is a famous Hymn occurring originally in Rig Veda, and repeated often in subsequent Vedic Literature.

The Hymn in Rig Veda is:

हंसः शुचिषद्, वसुः अन्तरिक्षसद्, होता वेदिषत्, अतिथिः दुरोणसत् ।
नृषद् चरसद्, ऋतसद्, व्योमसद्, अब्जा, गोजा, ऋतजा अद्रिजा, ऋतं ॥

The आत्मा – The Self “I” is in Sun, in Air, in Fire, in Soma Juice, in the House guest, in all Human Beings, in all देवताs, in all यज्ञ कर्मs, in truthful Speech, in Proper behavior, in everything in space, in everything born in water, in everything born on earth, in everything associated with any Vedic ritual dedicated to परमेश्वर, in everything born in mountains. आत्मा – The Self “I” is indeed The Absolute reality in all Existence, never subject to change. आत्मा – The Self “I” is ONE, and It is everywhere in every form and name in this creation – ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं. Therefore, Lord यम adds to this Hymn बृहत् – The आत्मा – the Self “I” – is indeed Great, unqualified Greatness Itself.

In order to help one to be able to appreciate That आत्मा – a Means is indicated in the next three verses.

ऊर्ध्वं प्राणं उन्नयति, अपानं प्रत्यगस्यति ।
मध्ये वामनं आसीनं, विश्वे देवाः उपासते ॥ 5 - 3

अस्य विश्वसमानस्य, शरीरस्य देहिनः ।
देहात् विमुच्यमानस्य, किं अत्र परिशिष्यते ॥
एत् वै तत् 5 - 4

न प्राणेन न अपानेन, मर्त्यो जीवति कश्चन ।
इतरेण तु जीवन्ति, यस्मिन् एतौ उपाश्रितौ ॥ 5 - 5

By turning all of one’s sense organs, mind and बुद्धि inwards and focused on The आत्मा – The Self “I”, during contemplation as described earlier, namely visualizing That आत्मा simultaneously

✚ as अङ्गुष्ठ मात्र हृत् पुण्डरीकं



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- ✚ as आनन्द स्वरूप ब्रह्मन्
- ✚ as ज्योतिः इव अधूमकः
- ✚ as ज्ञान स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य स्वरूप ब्रह्मन्
- ✚ as स एव अद्यः, स उ इवः
- ✚ as सत्य स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् and
- ✚ as भूतभव्यस्य ईशानः
- ✚ as परमेश्वर Itself – as the Pure conscious Being already within oneself, in one's own heart-space as ONESELF Itself, the बुद्धि now appreciates That आत्मा as The Lord indwelling in one's body vehicle, and all of one's sense organs. Mind and बुद्धि serve only That आत्मा, and all activities of the body take place in the presence of and by the Blessings of That आत्मा only. For example:

ऊर्ध्वं प्राणं उन्नयती – It is the Power of That आत्मा which lifts up the प्राण – air from inside to outside during exhalation (the breathing-out process), and,

अपानं प्रत्यक् अस्यति – It is the Power of That आत्मा which pushes in the अपान – air during inhalation (breathing in process)

Here, प्राण and अपान functions are only उपलक्षण – illustrations for all other natural body functions. Being so,

विश्वे देवाः – all the देवताs in the body, which means all the individual sense organs including mind and बुद्धि in the body, already turned Inwards and focused on आत्मा, bring all their activities, experiences, and knowledge of the outside world as offerings to That आत्मा Inside.

Such bringing is मद् व्यपाश्रयः in the words of Sri Krishna – bringing such offerings, the sense organs, mind and बुद्धि, मध्ये वामनं आसीनं उपासते – worship वामनं – The Divine आत्मा, seated in the heart space of one's own body. By so saying, the Upanishad also points out that आत्मा is distinct from, is different from the body, the body components and their functions. In the next verse, the Upanishad says:

शरीर स्थस्य देहिनः – The देही, which means the जीव, सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body indwelling the gross physical body – the देह

अस्य विश्रंसमानस्य – on its detachment from the देह, which means



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देहात् विमुच्यमानस्य - when the जीव, the सूक्ष्म शरीर - subtle body leaves the देह - the gross physical body

किं अत्र परिशिष्यते ? - what is left out of that जीव in the देह - the gross physical body?

Obviously nothing of that जीव - the subtle body is left out in the देह, which is now dead. Let us understand what the Upanishad says here.

आत्मा is असंगः - Unbound. That Unbound आत्मा is in every object, whether it is conscious or inert. It is the जीव, the कर्म born सूक्ष्म शरीर - the subtle body in the देह which reflects the Pure Consciousness of The असंग आत्मा - The Unbound Self "I" - and it is that reflected consciousness that makes the देह - the gross physical body a living being.

When the सूक्ष्म शरीर - subtle body leaves the देह on the exhaustion of all of one's प्रारब्ध कर्मs - the देह simply becomes an inert material and it falls. It is then, we say, that the body is dead (the जीव is never dead).

The Upanishad points out that one's देह - gross physical body, lives as a conscious being only so long as the जीव - the subtle body is there reflecting the all-pervasive, all-inclusive, ever-existent, Pure Consciousness शुद्ध चैतन्यं, and That Pure Consciousness शुद्ध चैतन्यं is एतत् वै तत् - is indeed The आत्मा - The Self "I". By so saying, the Upanishad again points out that The आत्मा - The Self "I" is distinct from, is other than the देह - the gross physical body and its functions. One may say that a body dies when it stops breathing - why bring in आत्मा in this matter? The Upanishad points out that is not the case.

न प्राणेन न अपानेन, मर्त्यः जीवति कश्चन ।

इतरेण तु जीवन्ति, यस्मिन् एतौ उपाश्रतौ ॥

न प्राणेन - Not by प्राण

न अपानेन - Not by अपान

कश्चन मर्त्यः : जीवति - a mortal, a human being lives. No human being lives merely by प्राण or अपान - by breathing out and breathing in or by any of the other material functions of the body organs, or any other body parts. Here प्राण and अपान stand for all the natural body functions.



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

The various organs of the body and their functions constitute an assemblage of parts to perform various actions only for the service of some ONE other than the assemblage. For example, breathing is not for breathing itself, it is for someone other than breathing itself. That some ONE should be a conscious Being. All parts of the body function only for That conscious Being, which is other than the body components and their assembly.

इतरेण तु जीवन्ति - All body parts, live and function by the power of some other Being
यस्मिन् - on whom

एतौ (प्राणापानौ) उपाश्रितौ - the प्राण and अपान - the breathing out and the breathing in, and indeed all natural body functions depend - उपाश्रितौ. That Some ONE on Whom, on Whose Power all the natural body functions depend, is indeed ब्रह्मन् - The आत्मा - The Self "I".

Thus the Upanishad points out again that आत्मा - The Self "I" in one's देह is other than the देह, is other than the physical body, its parts, and their functions. We have already heard this Message in both केनोपनिषत् as well as the भगवत् गीता.

Recalling the words of केनोपनिषत् - यत् प्राणेन न प्रणिति, येन प्राणः प्रणीयते तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि - That which is not sustained by प्राण but That by which प्राण is sustained - That is ब्रह्मन्

Again, recalling the words of Sri Krishna:

सर्वतः पाणिपादं तत् , सर्वतोऽक्षिशिरो मुखं ।
सर्वतः श्रुतिमल्लोके, सर्वमावृत्य तिष्ठति ॥

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सर्वेन्द्रिय गुणाभासं , सर्वेन्द्रिय विवर्जितम् ।
असक्तं सवभृच्चैव , निर्गुणं गुणभोक्तृ च ॥

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That is the Nature of ब्रह्मन् - The आत्मा The Self "I". We will continue next time.