



कठोपनिषत्  
**Katopanishad**  
**Section 6**  
**Volume 29**

ऊर्ध्वमूलः, अवाक् शाखः, एषः अश्वत्थः सनातनः तदेव शुक्रं, तत् ब्रह्म तदेव अमृतं उच्यते ।  
तस्मिन् लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तद् नात्येति कश्चन । एतत् चै तत् ॥ 6 – 1

यदिदं किञ्च जगत् सर्वं, प्राणे एजाति निस्सृतम् ।  
महत् भयं वज्रं उद्यतं, ये एतत् विदुः, अमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥ 6 – 2

भयात् अस्य अग्निः तपति, भयात् तपति सूर्यः ।  
भयात् इन्द्रश्च वायुश्च, मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥ 6 – 3

इह चेत् अशकत् बोद्धुं, प्राक् शरीरस्य विस्रसः ।  
ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु, शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥ 6 – 4

यथा आदर्शः, तथा आत्मनि यथा स्वप्ने, तथा पितृलोके ।  
यथा अप्सु परीव ददृशे, तथा गन्धवलोके छाया आतपयोः इव ब्रह्मलोके ॥ 6 – 5

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् भावं उदय अस्तमयौ च यत् ।  
पृथक् उत्पद्यमानानां, मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ 6 – 6

In this final Section of कठोपनिषत् Lord यम opens His Discourse on ब्रह्मज्ञानं – Knowledge on ब्रह्मन् – with a description of ब्रह्मन् through वृक्षकल्पना – the imagery of संसार वृक्ष – The Tree of Existence.

We have already heard extensively from Sri Krishna (G. 15: 1 – 4) about this imagery and how it is an effective means of communicating Knowledge on ब्रह्मन्. This ever-changing world – The संसार, is rooted in the never-changing world of Eternity – The ब्रह्मन्. ब्रह्मन् is the Ultimate Cause (unseen) and संसार is the ever changing effects which are seen. The Object here is to recognize the Ultimate Cause through Its effects.



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Indicating That ब्रह्मन् as the Ultimate cause for this संसार – this ever changing world of forms and names, Lord यम says:

ऊर्ध्वमूलः, अवाक् शाखः, एषः अश्वत्थः सनातनः  
तदेव शुक्रं, तत् ब्रह्म, तदेव अमृतं उच्यते ।  
तस्मिन् लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे , तदु नात्येति कश्चन ।  
एतत् वै तत् ॥

6 – 1

एषः अश्वत्थः सनातनः, ऊर्ध्वमूलः, अवाक् शाखः

एषः अश्वत्थः - This अश्वत्थ Tree. This संसार वृक्ष is called अश्वत्थ. This Tree of Existence is called अश्वत्थ.

सनातनः - is Eternal, is a perennial flow of existence as cause and effect, without any beginning.

For example, the tree gives rise to the seed, and the seed gives rise to the tree and thus the tree-seed-tree cycle is सनातनः - a perennial flow of existence. Similarly, the शरीर gives rise to कर्म and the कर्म gives rise to शरीर, and thus the शरीर-कर्म-शरीर cycle is सनातनः - a perennial flow of existence. Such is the nature of संसार – this world of Existence.

Further, एषः अश्वत्थः ऊर्ध्वमूलः, अवाक् शाखः -This अश्वत्थ tree, this संसार वृक्ष, has its root above and branches below. Please understand, the Upanishad is not talking about a tree turned upside down. The Upanishad is talking about संसार – this World of Existence, this creation. This संसार has its root cause above – ऊर्ध्वमूलः, which means the root cause of this संसार is above one's comprehension, whereas, its manifestations are below. अवाक् शाखः means that these manifestations are effects and they are available for comprehension in the world of time and space. Thus, the cause is above, and its effects are below.

Now, what is ऊर्ध्वमूलः - the root cause? The immediate cause for this संसार - entire creation, is माया - the inherent Power of ब्रह्मन्. माया has no independent existence. माया exists because ब्रह्मन् exists - ब्रह्माश्रया माया, माया being dependent on ब्रह्मन्. The independent entity in all existence is only ब्रह्मन्. Therefore उर्ध्वमूलः - the ultimate root



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cause for this entire creation, for this संसार – the world of all existence – is only ब्रह्मन्.  
Therefore the Upanishad says:

तत् ब्रह्म – That ऊर्ध्वमूलः, the ultimate root cause for this संसार – this entire creation is ब्रह्मन्. What is the Nature of That ब्रह्मन् ?

तदेव शुक्रं – That ब्रह्मन् alone is Pure, in the sense it is uncontaminated with anything else, because It is ONE without a second. ब्रह्मन् alone is सत्यं – everything else is मिथ्या. It alone is independent and eternal, and everything else is dependent and transient appearance. Further,

तदेव अमृतं उच्यते – That ब्रह्मन् alone is called The Immortal. Immortality is only for ब्रह्मन्, not for any object in this संसार – in this creation.

तस्मिन् सर्वे लोकाः श्रिताः – In That ब्रह्मन् rest all लोकाः – all worlds, all objects and all experiences. That ब्रह्मन् is Infinite Awareness which is the abode of all existence, all worlds, all knowledge, all objects and all experiences.

तत् उ न अत्येति कश्चन – Nothing in this creation can ever transcend That ब्रह्मन्. Nothing in this creation exists apart from That ब्रह्मन्. That ब्रह्मन् is all-inclusive.

एतत् वै तत् – That ब्रह्मन् is indeed The आत्मा – The Self “I” you asked about, so says Lord यम to Nachiketa. The ऊर्ध्वमूलः is ब्रह्मन्; तस्मिन् सर्वे लोकाः श्रिताः तद् न अत्येति कश्चन, एतत् वै तत् – That ब्रह्मन् is आत्मा. That is the central Message here.

ब्रह्मन् is the Unity of all existence, and no part of the manifested creation can exist apart from ब्रह्मन् – just as no part of the tree can exist apart from its root.

The World-Tree – The संसार वृक्ष, is in the sphere of time, bound by time. It is ever subject to change, in the never ending cycle of birth and death. By attaching oneself to this world of changes and by being engaged in the incessant pursuits of its transient attractions, one ever remains ignorant of one’s own true dimensions and in the grip of bondage to the never ending ups and downs of life. That is false life.

One’s true life begins only when one develops the spirit of total detachment to one’s sense-bound life and embarks on a search for the ultimate root of the world of existence – namely ब्रह्मन्, through a penetration into the spiritual core of one’s own being. That is the central Message here.



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Having pointed out That **ब्रह्मन्** as the root-cause for this creation, Lord **यम** now presents That **ब्रह्मन्** as The cosmic Order and The Rhythm in the creation which fall within the bounds of human experience as the Eternal Laws of Nature, just as the invisible root of the tree manifests itself as the Law governing the growth of the visible tree.

यदिदं किञ्च जगत् सर्वं, प्राणे एजति निस्सृतम् ।

महत् भयं वज्रं उद्यतं, ये एतत् विदुः, अमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

6-2

भयात् अस्य अग्निः तपति, भयात् तपति सूर्यः ।

भयात् इन्द्रश्च वायुश्च, मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥

6-3

यत् इदं किञ्च जगत् सर्वं

यत् किञ्च इदं, जगत् सर्वं - Whatever there is in this entire creation

प्राणे एजति निस्सृतं - प्राण here stands for **ब्रह्मन्** as the Lord of this entire creation, therefore, प्राणे निस्सृतं means प्राणे निर्गतं - having come out of That **ब्रह्मन्**, एजति प्रचलति नियमेन moves according to a certain ORDER, which means because of **ब्रह्मन्** being there, this entire creation behaves in a certain ORDER in accordance with Unchanging and Unchangeable "Laws of Nature". Thus, even though this entire creation is a मिथ्या - a transient appearance, all the infinite ever changing elements in this entire creation cannot behave haphazardly at random as they please, because,

महत् भयं वज्रं उद्युतं (इव) - **ब्रह्मन्** is a Great Terror like the upraised thunderbolt, which means **ब्रह्मन्** as the Universal Law of Nature totally controls all that happens in this entire ever changing universe at all times

ये एतत् विदुः - Those who know this fact, namely That **ब्रह्मन्** is the sole cause for the cosmic manifestation of the universe, and **ब्रह्मन्** is The Unbreakable Law governing every change in this creation, including all our mental activities, those people who clearly recognize this fact

ते अमृताः भवन्ति - they become Immortal, which means those who recognize the true nature of **ब्रह्मन्** become Immortal, and **ब्रह्मन्** is in every self including oneself, as ONESELF Itself. Illustrating how the world behaves out of "fear" of **ब्रह्मन्** the Upanishad says:

अस्य भयात् अग्निः तपति - Out of Fear of **ब्रह्मन्**, which means Under the Overriding Law of **ब्रह्मन्**, Fire burns as it does



## ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

अस्य भयात् सूर्यः तपति - Under the Law of ब्रह्मन् The Sun is hot as it is and it shines as it does

इन्द्रः, च वायुः च, पञ्चमः मृत्युः च अस्य भयात् धावति - इन्द्र, वायु and fifthly मृत्यु - The Lord of Death, all of them perform their respective functions unerringly and without fail at all times under the overriding and unchanging Law of ब्रह्मन्. Even though all the देवताs have their own extraordinary powers, they limit themselves to their own duties as ordained by परमेश्वर.

In the next 2 verses, Lord यम earnestly urges Nachiketa, and through him every human being, to gain ब्रह्मज्ञानं and realize one's identity with ब्रह्मन्, in this very life itself. Lord यम says:

इह चेत् अशकत् बोद्धुं, प्राक् शरीरस्य विस्रसः ।  
ततः सर्गेषु, लोकेषु, शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥

6 - 4

इह चेत् अशकत् बोद्धुं प्राक् शरीरस्य विस्रसः

इह - Here, in this very life itself, even while living

(तत् ब्रह्म) बोद्धुं अशकत् (शक्नोति) चेत् - if a person is able to recognize That ब्रह्मन् in oneself as ONESELF Itself, that person,

संसार बन्धनात् विमुच्यते - becomes free from the bondages of संसार - this ever-changing world as said before

ते अमृताः भवन्ति - such people become Immortal

न चेत् - if not, if a person continues to be governed by Self ignorance

ततः - then, that person

सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते - becomes fit only for taking another body in this created world

सर्गेषु लोकेषु - which means, he is fit only to get reborn again in some form in this created world. After death, there is no मोक्ष - there is no Liberation for that person. There is only further travel for that person in this created world in some form

यथा कर्म यथा श्रुतं - in accordance with one's past कर्म and mental disposition

Hence, one must make every effort in this very life itself, to gain ब्रह्मज्ञानं and SELF-Realization, because,



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यथा आदर्शे तथा आत्मनि यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके ।

यथा अप्सु परीच दृष्टे, तथा गन्धर्वलोके छाया आतपयोः इव ब्रह्मलोके ॥

6 – 5

The Glory of Life in human body is that it is in this body, Self-Realization – the vision of ब्रह्मन् in oneself as ONESELF Itself – is achievable most clearly and fully in every respect.

यथा आदर्शे तथा आत्मनि – just as one sees oneself clearly and fully in a mirror

यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके – in पितृलोक – which means in the disembodied State, the vision of ब्रह्मन् is hazy as in a dream

यथा अप्सु परिदृष्टे इव तथा गन्धर्वलोके – in the world of celestial beings, the vision of ब्रह्मन् is like one's reflection in water; and

छाया आतपयोः इव ब्रह्मलोके - In ब्रह्मलोक the vision of ब्रह्मन् is like shade and light

How ब्रह्मन् is perceived differently in different planes of consciousness is described above through similes. In human embodiment alone, ब्रह्मन् can be perceived clearly and distinctly as an image in a mirror. This distinctness becomes less and less in the worlds like those of manes, Gandarwas etc. But in the ब्रह्मलोक which is reached by persons who follow क्रम मुक्ति, ब्रह्मन् is no doubt realized clearly – as distinctly as Light is separated from darkness – but it is extremely difficult to reach ब्रह्मलोक because it involves an extraordinary level of Pure Vedic Knowledge, Meditations, and Rituals etc. Therefore, every effort should be made to gain Self-Realization in this very human life itself – that is the easiest Means for realizing one's identity with ब्रह्मन् – The परमेश्वर – already within oneself.

We may recall the words of Sri Krishna here

वीत राग भयक्रोधाः मन्मया मां उपाश्रिताः ।

बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भाव आगताः ॥

G. 4 – 10

Releasing oneself from the forces of passion, fear, and anger and identifying oneself with ME – the परमेश्वर in all of one's actions, with the mind totally directed towards परमेश्वर at all times, very many people have gained identity with ME – The परमेश्वर, when their minds are purified by आत्मज्ञानं, ईश्वर ज्ञानं, ब्रह्मज्ञानं – says Sri Krishna.



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Therefore, कर्मयोग, ध्यानयोग, भक्तियोग and ज्ञानयोग together is the Best and the only surest Means of Self Discovery for all of us. In the remaining verses of this Upanishad, Lord यम sums up His Teachings, repeating some of His earlier Teachings and also adding some more by way of explanation or emphasis.

In the next verse, Lord यम points out that while आत्मा is everywhere in one's शरीर at all times, आत्मा is distinctly separate from one's body and body-components – the इन्द्रियाs – all organs of perception and action. Lord यम says:

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् भावं, उदय, अस्तमयौ च यत् ।  
पृथक् उत्पद्यमानानां, मत्वा, धीरो न शोचति ॥

6 – 6

यत् मत्वा, यत् ज्ञात्वा – Knowing which, Understanding which, Recognizing which, Fully realizing which. What is that “which” – we will see. Fully realizing that, what happens? धीरः न शोचति – a धीर पुरुष, a ज्ञानी – one who recognizes one's identity with The आत्मा – The Self “I” in oneself as ONESELF Itself, such a धीर पुरुष never comes to grief.

(न शोचति) – never experiences any kind of sorrow and distress. That means:

Sorrow and distress disappear when आत्मा The Self “I” is realized, by knowing, by fully realizing the nature of one's इन्द्रियाs – instruments of perception and action, with respect to the following:

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् उत्पद्यमानानां, मत्वा,  
इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् उदय अस्तमयौ च मत्वा

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् उत्पद्यमानानां मत्वा (ज्ञात्वा) – knowing that the nature of the sense organs, for example, is such that they are created individually and separately, each one having its own cause and its own function, the sense organs namely the ear, the skin the eye, the tongue and the nose are created from the सत्त्व गुण of the Five Great Elements – आकाश, वायु, अग्नि, आपः and पृथ्वी respectively, for the sole purpose of perceiving each individual and separate sense object, namely Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell. Each sense organ is limited in its origin, individuality and purpose, recognizing fully the above nature of the sense organs, and further.

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् भावं मत्वा – also recognizing fully that the individuality of each sense organ is distinct and separate both from that of each other, and also from the स्वरूप of



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आत्मा whose nature is Pure consciousness – which is ONE, totally independent, unlimited and all-inclusive; further,

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् उदय अस्तमयौ च मत्वा – also recognizing fully the उदय and अस्तमय – the rising and setting, the activity and inactivity, the appearance and disappearance-nature of sense organs, individually and separately. For example, these sense organs function only in one's waking state of existence, and they cease to function in one's deep sleep and dream states of existence. Even in the waking state of existence, these sense organs have their moments of black-out. Thus the उदय and अस्तमय – rising and setting – is only for the इन्द्रियाs – not for आत्मा, which is always awake, in all the three states of existence, namely the waking, the deep sleep and the dream states of one's existence.

What is said above with respect to the sense organs, is applicable to all इन्द्रियाs – all organs of perception and actions in one's शरीर. Thus, realizing fully that all the individual and separate attributes of all the इन्द्रियाs are only अध्यास – super impositions on आत्मा and the Absolute Reality behind all the इन्द्रियाs is only the आत्मा – The SELF “I” which is ONE, limitless, changeless, all-pervasive all- inclusive, ever-existent Pure Consciousness – The ब्रह्मन् – The परमेश्वर – already in oneself as ONESELF itself, realizing That – यत् मत्वा

धीरः न शोचति – अ धीर पुरुष – a ज्ञानी never experiences sorrow and distress of any kind.

Lord यम 's Discourse continues, which we will see next time.