



कठोपनिषत्
Katopanishad
Section 6
Volume 31

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामाः, ये अस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।
अथ मर्त्यः अमृतो भवति, अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥ 6-14

यदा सर्वे प्रभिद्यन्ते, हृदयस्य इह ग्रन्थयः ।
अथ मर्त्यः अमृतो भवति, एतावत् हि अनुशासनं ॥ 6-15

शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्यः तासां मूर्धानं अभिनिस्सृता एका ।
तया ऊर्ध्वं आयन् अमृतत्वं एति विश्वक् अन्याः उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥ 6-16

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषः, अन्तरात्मा सदा जनानां हृदये संनिविष्टः ।
तं स्यात् शरीरात् प्रवृहेत् मुञ्जात् इव इषीकां धैर्येण ।
तं विद्यात् शुक्रं अमृतं, तं विद्यात् शुक्रं अमृतं इति ॥ 6-17

मृत्युप्रोक्तां नचिकेतोऽथ लब्ध्वा विद्यां एतां योगविधिं च कृत्स्नम् ।
ब्रह्मप्राप्तः विरजः अभूत् विमृत्युः अन्यः अपि, एवं यो वित् अध्यात्मं एव 6-18

इति षष्ठी वल्ली ॥

ॐ सह नावतु, सह नौ भुनक्तु, सह वीर्यं करवावहै
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥ 6-19

इति कठोपनिषत् समाप्ता

Recalling the last line of the last verse that we saw last time,

अस्तीत्येव उपलब्धस्य, तत्त्वभावः प्रसदीति ॥



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

In order for one to be able to embark on the journey within oneself, in the Process of Self Discovery, to reach The आत्मा – The ब्रह्मन् – The परमेश्वर, already within oneself, as ONESELF Itself, one must first comprehend आत्मा as आत्मा अस्ति – आत्मा exists, not only because such comprehension stands to reason, but also because all the Upanishads confirm the existence of आत्मा, and the declarations of the Upanishads are independent expressions of people who have realized आत्मा, in themselves, by themselves, through direct experience. For those people who embark on the journey within oneself, in the Process of Self-Discovery on the basis आत्मा अस्ति – आत्मा exists, and who try to reach That आत्मा in themselves, by themselves, following the teachings of the Upanishads, through श्रवणं, मननं and निदिध्यासनं – listening to, and reflecting on the words of the Upanishads, and absorbing their content in their own daily lives, only for those people, तत्त्वभावः प्रसीदति – The True Nature of आत्मा reveals Itself.

Now suppose one is convinced that आत्मा exists, and wishes to discover That आत्मा within oneself, by oneself, and hence follows the teachings of the Upanishads through श्रवणं, मननं and निदिध्यासनं, as much as one can, when will That आत्मा reveal Itself to that person? To this all-important question, Lord यम gives the following all-important answer:

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते, कामाः ये अस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।

अथ मर्त्यः अमृतो भवति, अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥ 6- 14

यदा सर्वे प्रभिद्यन्ते हृदयस्य इह ग्रन्थयः ।

अथ मर्त्यः अमृतो भवति, एतावत् हि अनुशासनं 6- 15

अस्य हृदि श्रिताः, सर्वे ये कामाः, यदा प्रमुच्यन्ते

When all the worldly desires lodged in one's heart – which means in one's sense organs, mind and बुद्धि, are totally destroyed (by knowledge) and thus, when all such desires naturally disappear – now, when can that happen? That can happen only through कर्म योग बुद्धि and ज्ञान लक्षण ईश्वर भक्ति, leading ultimately to the knowledge ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं – all existence is only ब्रह्मन् and everything that is seen in this creation, including the creation itself, is only a superimposition on ब्रह्मन्, and such superimposition arises only from self-ignorance (imparting the Means for gaining That



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

knowledge is the entire Mission of The भगवत् गीता, as we have seen already), therefore, when all the worldly desires lodged in one's sense organs, mind and बुद्धि are totally destroyed by That knowledge,

अथ – then,

मर्त्यः अमृतः भवति – a mortal becomes Immortal. The one who was only a mortal before gaining That knowledge of ब्रह्मन्, becomes Immortal by That Very knowledge, because,

अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते – on gaining That knowledge of ब्रह्मन्

अत्र – here itself, in this life itself

ब्रह्म समश्नुते – one becomes ब्रह्मन् Itself

ब्रह्मचित् ब्रह्मैव भवति – The Knower of ब्रह्मन् is ब्रह्मन् Itself

Just as, before gaining the knowledge of the truth of the matter, one sees a snake, and on gaining that knowledge that snake disappears, and one sees only a rope in its place, and one immediately recognizes that there was never any snake, and what is seen has been a rope all along, and it continues to be so, similarly, before gaining self-knowledge, one sees oneself as a bundle of worldly desires, cravings, hopes, fears, expectations etc., and on gaining self-knowledge, all such worldly desires etc. instantly disappear, and one immediately recognizes oneself as one really is, as ब्रह्मन् Itself, and all previous notions about oneself are simply due to self-ignorance.

Lord यम now repeats the same Message in the next verse, just to underline its enormous importance to one's spiritual progress. In Vedanta, there is really no such thing as repetition; every apparent repetition is a welcome help in one's spiritual endeavor. In the next verse, Lord यम says:

यदा हृदयस्य सर्वे ग्रन्थयः प्रभिद्यन्ते – When all the हृदय ग्रन्था s – which means all the knots in one's heart, all the bondages lodged in one's sense organs, mind and बुद्धि are प्रभिद्यन्ते – are rent asunder – get shattered and totally destroyed (though आत्म ज्ञानं – Self-Knowledge)

इह – in this very life, while one is still living, which is the same as told in the last verse namely

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामाः ये अस्य हृदि श्रिताः – when all the worldly desires lodged in one's sense organs, mind and बुद्धि – which are the हृदय ग्रन्थाs – the knots, the



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

bondages lodged in one's heart, when they are totally destroyed through कर्म योग बुद्धि and ज्ञानलक्षण ईश्वर भक्ति – which means, through बुद्धि योग

अथ – then

मर्त्यः अमृतः भवति – a mortal becomes Immortal – which means, it is then तत्त्वभावः प्रसीदति – The True Nature of आत्मा reveals Itself as ब्रह्मन् – as परमेश्वर in oneself as ONESELF Itself

एतावत् हि अनुशासनं – This much only is the content of all Vedantic Teachings. This much alone is the central Message of all Upanishads. This much alone is the succinct expression of all Upanishad-Knowledge. This much alone is ईश्वर शासनं – The Unbreakable Eternal Law of परमेश्वर.

So saying, Lord यम has effectively summarized, not only His own Teachings in this Upanishad, but also all the Teachings of all the Upanishads.

As we may recall, Nachiketa's request for his 3rd चर is essentially concerned with the question “when a person dies, what happens to that person?” This question has only been partially answered so far. The person in whom all the हृदयग्रन्थयः, अविद्या-काम-कर्म-बन्धनाः – all the bondages lodged in one's sense organs, mind and बुद्धि, bondages born of Self-ignorance and such ignorance generated desires and actions, are totally destroyed by आत्मज्ञानं – Self-Knowledge, अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते – that person instantly becomes ब्रह्मन् Itself. That person gains मोक्ष – Total Liberation, even while living with his individual physical body.

That means, That आत्मज्ञानि – That Self-Realized person is already ONE with ब्रह्मन्, already ONE with परमेश्वर, in the frame of an individual body for the time-being. When all his प्रारब्ध कर्मः are exhausted, his physical frame just falls off, and the person continues to be ब्रह्मन्, continues to be परमेश्वर, as सर्व व्यापक अलिंग आत्मा – without any individual उपाधि – body vehicle. Nothing else happens to the person. On “death”, his प्राण (vital air) does not go out of the body. The प्राण in the body just stops, and there is nothing to go out – That is all. There is no further गति – no further path of life for that person. Being an आत्मज्ञानी, the person has already gained मोक्ष – Total Liberation from all limitations.



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

On the other hand, what about a person who is not yet an आत्मज्ञानी, who is not yet free from all worldly bondages. Regarding such a person, the Upanishad says

सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्याय कल्पते – that person is fit only to be reborn again in some form in this संसार – in this created world, which means, that person, in the form of his सूक्ष्मशरीर – subtle body, has to get out of his present physical body – his शरीर, when it falls, on exhaustion of his प्रारब्ध कर्म s to continue its गति – further path in life in this created world, in some other body.

Lord यम now tells how the सूक्ष्म शरीर – the subtle body of an अज्ञानि – the one who is not yet a ज्ञानि, gets out of one's gross physical body at the time of death. Lord यम says:

शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्यः तासां मूर्धानं अभिनिस्सृता एका ।
तया ऊर्ध्वं आयन् अमृतत्वं एति विश्वक् अन्या॥ उत्क्रमणे भवति ॥

6-16

According to योगशास्त्र, there are hundreds of नाडिs arising from one's heart-space, and reaching out to all parts of the body. A नाडि is best understood as an invisible peculiar pathway through which the सूक्ष्म शरीर can pass through, and force itself out, eject itself out, of the gross physical body at the time of one's death. The availability of each such नाडि is specific to each individual सूक्ष्म शरीर – which means, every नाडि is not available for every सूक्ष्म शरीर at the time of death of the gross physical body. Of all the नाडिs arising from one's heart, one particular नाडि called Susumna नाडि extends all the way from the heart to the head and it becomes available, when needed, for the सूक्ष्म शरीर of a person who has qualified oneself for reaching ब्रह्मलोक, after death, by virtue of the पुण्य कर्म s done, and the Vedic rituals performed by that person during one's life-time.

For example, as was pointed out earlier by Lord यम, a person who has performed the नाचिकेताग्नि ritual 3 times together with उपासन – Meditation on विराट पुरुष invoked in the अग्नि देवता of the Havan Alter, is qualified to go to



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

ब्रह्मलोक after death. Therefore, at the time of death, the Susumna नाडि is available for the सूक्ष्म शरीर of that person to eject itself out of the gross physical body through the head, and proceed directly to ब्रह्मलोक. Therefore, the Upanishad says:

हृदयस्य नाड्यः शतं एका च - The नाडिs arising from one's heart are Hundred and ONE – which means, they are many in number, together with a distinguished ONE

तासां एका - of the many नाडिs, the distinguished ONE, called, in योगशास्त्र, as Susumna नाडि

मूर्धानं अभिनिःसृतता - extends up to the head through which the सूक्ष्म शरीर of the person can force itself out, at the time of death

तया ऊर्ध्वं आयत् - bringing the सूक्ष्म शरीर up through the Susumna नाडि, and ejecting itself out of the gross physical body through the head,

अमृतत्वं एति - the सूक्ष्म शरीर of the person reaches ब्रह्मलोक – the World of Immortality in this संसार – created world, till the end of the present cycle of creation.

Going to ब्रह्मलोक is not gaining मोक्ष, it is only relative Immortality for the duration of the present cycle of creation.

विष्वक् अन्याः उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति - For the सूक्ष्म शरीरs of other अज्ञानिs, those who are not yet ज्ञानि, and who are not qualified to go to ब्रह्मलोक, the other नाडिs become the path-ways for their departure from their respective gross physical bodies, towards their respective destinations in accordance with their past कर्मs and mental dispositions (यथा कर्म यथा श्रुतं, as pointed out earlier). When a person dies, that is what happens to that person.

Lord यम has now completed all His obligations with respect to the Three वरs – The Three Boons, which He granted to Nachiketa, and as the ब्रह्मविद्याचार्य – as his Teacher of ब्रह्मविद्या, now Lord यम completes His Teaching as follows:

अद्भुष्टमात्रः पुरुषः अन्तरात्मा सदा जनानाम् हृदये संनिविष्टः ।

तं स्यात् शरीरात् प्रवृहेत् मुञ्जात् इव इषीकां धैर्येण ।

तं विद्यात् शुक्रं अमृतं, तं विद्यात् शुक्रं अमृतं इति ॥



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषः अन्तरात्मा - refers to the process of contemplation on ब्रह्मन् as indicated in the two verses in Section 4 (12 and 13), namely, contemplation on ब्रह्मन् simultaneously as अङ्गुष्ठमात्रं हृत् पुण्डरीकं - as Thumb Size Full Bloom Lotus Flower, already in one's Heart Space revealing आत्मा - The Self I, as आनन्द स्वरूप ब्रह्मन्, and as ज्योतिः इव अधूमकः - as Flame without Smoke, revealing आत्मा - The Self "I" as ज्ञान स्वरूप, चित् स्वरूप ब्रह्मन्, as स एव अद्यः स उश्चः - as ONE already existing right now, and will continue to exist to-morrow also, thus revealing आत्मा - The Self I - as सत्य स्वरूप ब्रह्मन्, as भूतभव्यस्य ईशानः - as the Lord of all the past, present and the future, revealing आत्मा The Self "I" as परमेश्वर Itself, already in oneself as ONESELF Itself.

Therefore, अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषः अन्तरात्मा means, contemplating on ब्रह्मन् through ईश्वर ध्यानं - revealing अन्तरात्मा - The Self "I" as सत्य स्वरूप, ज्ञान स्वरूप, आनन्द स्वरूप ब्रह्मन्, as परमेश्वर Itself, already in oneself in one's Heart Space, as Thumb Size Full Bloom Lotus Flower

सदा जनानाम् हृदये सन्निविष्टः - recognize That आत्मा - The Self "I", The ब्रह्मन्, indwelling in the heart of all beings at all times (सर्वान्तर आत्मा)

तं (आत्मं) स्वात् शरीरात् प्रवृहेत् - learn to separate, learn to discriminate That आत्मा - That ब्रह्मन् from your शरीर - your body, through चिबेक बुद्धि - discriminative knowledge gained through the discipline of बुद्धि योग.

आत्मा and शरीर seem to be inseparably locked up together. But there is no distance in space or time between आत्मा and शरीर. The distance is only in terms of स्वरूप, which you must learn to recognize through बुद्धि योग gained through उपनिषत् Knowledge.

मुञ्जात् इषीकां इव, धैर्येण - Such separation of आत्मा from शरीर through Knowledge, through चिबेक बुद्धि is like separation of the slender stalk from the leaf of grass, which is indeed a very delicate operation to be done with great care

धैर्येण - with reference to the separation of आत्मा and शरीर, the धैर्य - the great care, is only in the form of चिबेक बुद्धि and आत्मज्ञानं

When you learn to separate आत्मा from शरीर through चिबेक बुद्धि and आत्मज्ञानं, तं (आत्मानं) विद्यात् शुक्रं अमृतं - you will naturally realize That आत्मा - The Self "I", That



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

ब्रह्मन् as शुक्रं – Pure, Spotless, Uncontaminated and अमृतं – Immortal. The repetition here is to indicate the conclusion of the उपदेश - The teaching.

तं (आत्मानं) विद्यात् शुक्रं अमृतं इति – you will naturally realize That आत्मा The Self “I” – That ब्रह्मन् as Pure, Spotless, Uncontaminated, and Immortal

Here ends Lord यम's Teachings to Nachiketa

Nachiketa has been listening to these teachings all along. Now what has happened to Nachiketa? The Upanishad says:

मृत्यु प्रोक्तां नचिकेतोऽथ लब्ध्वा विद्यां एतां योगविधिं च कृत्स्नम् ।
ब्रह्मप्राप्तः विरजः अभूत् विमृत्युः अन्यः अपि, एवं यो चित्, अध्यात्मं एव ॥ 6-18

अथ – Then,

नचिकेतः एतां मृत्युप्रोक्तां विद्यां योगविधिं च कृत्स्नम् लब्ध्वा

नचिकेतः कृत्स्नम् लब्ध्वा – Nachiketa, having received, which means, having listened, understood, appreciated and absorbed, in its entirety

एतां मृत्युप्रोक्तां विद्यां योगविधिं च – this knowledge on ब्रह्मविद्या and योग शास्त्र taught by Lord यम

विरजः अभूत् – he became free from all रजस् impurities, he became free from the hold of all forces of transient realities, which means,

विमृत्युः अभूत् – he became free from all अविद्या, काम, कर्म बन्धनाs – all bondages born of Self-ignorance, and such ignorance-born desires and actions, and consequently,

ब्रह्मप्राप्तः अभूत् – he became one who has gained ब्रह्मज्ञानं, इश्चर ज्ञानं, आत्माज्ञानं – Self-Knowledge – he became an आत्मज्ञानी – he became a ब्रह्मचित् – Knower of ब्रह्मन्, and hence ब्रह्मन् Itself, which means, he gained मोक्ष – Total Liberation – Total Fulfillment in life, then itself, while still living in his very life itself.

Having said that, the Upanishad now declares:

अन्य यः अपि – any other person, whoever that be

अध्यात्मं एव एवं चित् – who also pursues only The Path of Self Discovery in the manner of Nachiketa, that person also, will likewise



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

ब्रह्मप्राप्तः भवति - becomes the gainer of ब्रह्मज्ञानं - the Knower of ब्रह्मन्, will become ब्रह्मन् Itself, will gain मोक्ष immediately even while living, in one's very life.

Nachiketa, having listened, understood, appreciated and absorbed, in its entirety, this Knowledge on ब्रह्मविद्या and योग शास्त्र taught by Lord यम, became free from the hold of all transient worldly realities, became free from the bondages born of Self-ignorance, and ignorance created desires and actions, and he became a ब्रह्मचित् - Knower of ब्रह्मज्ञानं. He became ब्रह्मन् Itself, he gained मोक्ष immediately, even while living in his very life itself. Further, the Upanishad declares:

Any person, who ever that be, who also pursues the path of अध्यात्म योग in the manner of Nachiketa, that person likewise becomes the gainer of ब्रह्मज्ञानं - will become the Knower of ब्रह्मन्, will gain मोक्ष immediately even while living in one's own very life.

इति षष्ठी वल्ली

With the above Declaration ends the sixth and the final Section of this Upanishad. This Upanishad study now concludes with the same Peace Invocation with which it started:

ॐ सह नावतु सह नौ बुनक्तु ।
सह वीर्यं करवावहै तेजस्यिनावधीतमस्तु
मा विद्विषावहै
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

इति कठोपनिषत् समाप्ता. That is the End of कठोपनिषत्