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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

केनोपनिषत्
Kena Upanishad
Chapters 3 & 4
Volume 5

The Upasana part of केनोपनिषत् takes the form of a story for reflection and contemplation. The story starts in Chapter 3 and continues in Chapter 4. Briefly, the story is the following.

Once upon a time, there was a war between असुरs and देवs who are eternal enemies. In Vedantic mythology, असुरs represent the forces of evil and देवs represent the forces of good. When the देव forces were pressed hard by their enemies, ब्रह्मन् came to the rescue of the देवs to ensure their survival and victory for the welfare of the world. By the grace of ब्रह्मन्, the देवs won the war.

However, on gaining victory in the war, the देवs became so egoistic that they attributed their victory to their own powers, not recognizing that real power behind their victory was that of ब्रह्मन्. ब्रह्मन् wanted to teach the देवs a lesson and bring enlightenment to them on the source of the real power behind their own powers. What ब्रह्मन् did, we will see in the story.

The student is listening. The teacher is telling the story, just for reflection and contemplation.

ब्रह्म ह देवेभ्यः विजिग्ये ।
तस्य ह ब्रह्मणः विजये देवाः अमहीयन्त ।
ते ऐक्षन्त अस्माकं एव अयं विजयः ।
अस्माकं एव अयं महिमा इति ॥

3 -1

The story goes that ब्रह्मन् obtained a victory for the देवs in their battle with असुरs. Though the victory was entirely due to the power of ब्रह्मन्, the देवs, became excessively elated by their victory and thought "This victory is due to us only, our power only. This glory belongs to us only".

तत् ह एषाम् विजज्ञौ तेभ्यः ह प्रादुर्बभूव ।



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तत् न व्यजानत् किं इदं यक्षं इति ॥

3 - 2

Seeing the देवs indulging in their self-glory on their victory, and in order to bring enlightenment to them about the real power behind their victory, ब्रह्मन् suddenly and unexpectedly appeared before them in the form of a यक्ष - an extraordinary celestial being never seen before by anyone.

The देवs could not recognize who was that यक्ष confronting them. Therefore they decided to depute one among themselves to interview the यक्ष. They chose Agni for the mission.

ते अग्निं अब्रुवन् । "जातवेद एतत् विजानीहि
किं एतत् यक्षं" इति । "तथा" इति ॥

3 - 3

They said to Agni "O! जातवेद - The all-knower, please go and find out who this यक्ष is, what is his nature, what is his power, etc." Agni agreed to the mission enthusiastically.

तत् अभ्यद्रवत् । तं अभ्यवदत् "कः असि" इति ।
"अग्निः वा अहं अस्मि" इति अब्रवीत्
"जातवेदा वा अहं अस्मि" इति ।

3 - 4

Agni hastened to the place where the यक्ष was. The यक्ष asked Agni who he was. Agni replied in a haughty tone " I am indeed Agni देवता - Lord Agni. I am also well-known in the world as जातवेद - The All-knower - The Omniscient" hoping to impress the visitor.

The यक्ष did not seem to be much impressed by the credentials of Agni.

"तस्मिँ न् त्वयि किं वीर्यं" इति ।
"अपि इदं सर्वं दहेयं यत् इदं पृथिव्यां" इति ।

3 - 5

The यक्ष asked again "What is the power in you that is so glorious that you are famous about?"

Agni replied " I, being अग्नि देवता - Lord Agni, I can burn everything, whatever there is on earth."



तस्मै तृणं निदधौ ।" एतत् दह " इति ।
तत् उपप्रेयाय सर्वजवेन । तत् न शशाक दग्धुं ।
स तत एव निववृते । " न एतत् अशकं
विज्ञातुं यत् एतत् यक्षं " इति ।

3 - 6

The यक्ष placed a blade of dry grass (straw) before Agni and said to him "please burn this blade of grass". (This was of course an insult to Agni; still Agni obeyed the order, because the order really came from ब्रह्मन्, even though Agni did not know it).

Agni attacked the blade of grass with all its force but still he could not burn it, much to his own surprise and disappointment. So he withdrew from the यक्ष and returned to the देवs, and reported saying "I could not find out who that यक्ष is". Agni's ego was terribly bruised by his experience with the यक्ष and he became dejected and dispirited by the discovery that his power was so limited.

अथ वायुं अब्रुवन् । "वायो एतत् विजानीहि
किं एतत् यक्षं " इति । " तथा " इति ।

3 - 7

Then the देवs told वायु "O! वायु, please go and find out who this यक्ष is, what is his nature, what is his power, etc.". वायु agreed to the mission enthusiastically.

तत् अभ्यद्रवत् । तं अभ्यवदत् " कः असि " इति ।
"वायुः वा अहं अस्मि " इति अब्रवीत्
"मातरिष्या वा अहं अस्मि " इति ।

3 - 8

वायु hastened to the place where the यक्ष was. The यक्ष asked वायु who he was. वायु replied in a haughty tone "I am indeed वायु देवता - Lord Vayu. I am also well known in the world as मातरिष्या - the all-mover", hoping to impress the visitor. The यक्ष did not seem to be much impressed by the credentials of वायु either.

"तस्मिँन् त्वयि किं वीर्यं" इति ।
" अपि इदं सर्वं आददीय यत् इदं पृथिव्यां इति । 3 - 9



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The यक्ष asked वायु "What is the power in you that is so glorious that you are famous about?"

वायु replied "I, being वायु देवता, Lord Vayu, I can blow away anything, whatever there is on this earth.

तस्मै तृणं निदधौ । "एतत् आदत्स्य" इति ।
तत् उपप्रेयाय सर्वं जवेन । तत् न शाशाक आदातुं ।
स तत एव निवृत्ते ।" न एतत् अशकं विज्ञातुं
यत् एतत् यक्षं इति ।

3 - 10

The यक्ष placed a blade of grass before वायु and said, "Please blow this away". वायु attacked the blade of grass with all his force, and still he could not move it even a little bit, much to his surprise and disappointment. So he withdrew from the यक्ष, returned to the देवs and reported to them saying "I could not ascertain who this यक्ष is". Obviously, वायु 's ego was also terribly bruised by his experience with the यक्ष.

अथ इन्द्रं अब्रुवन् । "मघवन् एतत् विजीनीहि
किं एतत् यक्षं " इति । " तथा" इति ।
तत् अभ्यद्रवत् । तस्मात् तिरोदधे ।

3 - 11

The देवs then decided to request their leader इन्द्र to solve the mystery. They addressed इन्द्र: "O! मघवन् meaning भगवन् O! Lord, please ascertain who this यक्ष is". Indra agreed to the mission and hastened to the place where the यक्ष was. But the यक्ष disappeared from his view. Indra was baffled, but his perplexity turned into amazement a few moments later as the next sentence tells us.

सः तस्मिन् एव आकाशे स्त्रियं आजगाम
बहुशोभमानां उमाँ हैमवतीं तां ह उवाच
" किं एतत् यक्षं " इति ।

3 - 12

In that very spot where the यक्ष was before, इन्द्र saw an exquisitely beautiful woman, the extraordinarily effulgent goddess UMA Haimavati, the daughter of Himavan, who is



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ever in association with the Omniscient परमेश्वर. Indra approached her and asked her respectfully, "Please tell me what is this यक्ष who showed itself and vanished?"

इति तृतीय खण्ड - Thus ends Chapter 3 of केनोपनिषत्

The story continues in Chapter 4. Before we go to Chapter 4, let us briefly reflect on what happened in Chapter 3. Essentially three questions arise.

- ❖ Why ब्रह्मन् chose to appear before the देव्स in the first place
- ❖ Why ब्रह्मन् disappeared from the vision of इन्द्र
- ❖ What is the significance of the appearance of Goddess UMA before इन्द्र

First, it must be noted that the vision of ब्रह्मन्, with form or no form, became possible only when the देव्स gained victory over the असुर्स, meaning, only when the forces of good gained victory over the forces of evil within oneself. Now with reference to the story itself.

Why ब्रह्मन् chose to appear before the देव्स in the first place? For the welfare of the entire creation, and also for their own spiritual progress, it is absolutely important that all देवतास - the presiding deities of natural laws, do their allotted duties with full आत्म ज्ञानं - Total God consciousness at all times.

The victory of the देव्स over the असुर्स in the story was not due to the inherent power of the देव्स themselves, as separate limited cosmic entities, but it was due to the ONE all-inclusive Divine power - the power of ब्रह्मन्, which sustains all powers in all beings. Intoxicated by their victory, the देव्स temporarily forgot that eternal truth, namely आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यं and they were indulging in ignorance-born vanity of their individual cosmic powers. For the welfare of the world, and for their own welfare ब्रह्मन् wanted to uplift the देव्स from their spiritual degradation and bring Enlightenment to their बुद्धि. That is why ब्रह्मन् chose to appear before the देव्स. Then

Why ब्रह्मन् disappeared from the vision of इन्द्र? By the very fact that अग्नि and वायु had to return defeated in their mission to ascertain the nature of that यक्ष, इन्द्र recognized the folly of the egoistic vanity of the देव्स, including himself, and became deeply God



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conscious, prayerful and totally committed to the pursuit of the truth about that यक्ष, who was ब्रह्मन् itself, even though he did not know it. As a result of his changed attitude, the purity of his अन्तःकरण - mind and बुद्धि, was restored, and he became his natural self namely, the very embodiment of pure जीव uplifted from all its diverging ego personalities.

As we saw in ईशावास्य उपनिषत् - *Pure जीव is identical with Formless ब्रह्मन् - अकायं अत्रणं अस्नाविरम् - ब्रह्मन् with no शरीर.* Consequently the Form of ब्रह्मन् as a यक्ष disappeared from the vision of इन्द्र. By the disappearance of यक्ष from the vision of इन्द्र, the Upanishad story indicates the experience of a sincere devotee at the final stage of self-realization through self enquiry (आत्म विचार).

The significance of the appearance of Goddess UMA before इन्द्र As इन्द्र hastened towards the place where that यक्ष was, the यक्ष disappeared from his sight. इन्द्र was baffled at this inexplicable event. While he was still contemplating on the nature of that यक्ष, he was experiencing a profound spiritual upliftment in himself. Unlike अग्नि and वायु, इन्द्र did not accept defeat and withdraw. He continued his search of truth even deeper. Seeing this devotion to truth in the heart of इन्द्र, spiritual knowledge itself, ब्रह्मविद्या-ज्ञान लक्ष्मी - Herself appeared before इन्द्र in the form of Goddess UMA to bless Indra in his endeavours. Goddess UMA is aptly described in the story as बहु शोभमाना, meaning

सर्वेषां शोभनानां शोभतमा - विद्या - The most extraordinarily effulgent among all beings in this creation which is indeed विद्या - ब्रह्मविद्या - ज्ञान लक्ष्मी Goddess Spiritual Knowledge Herself.

This spiritual Knowledge, personified as Uma Haimavati in the story, now reveals to इन्द्र the truth about the यक्ष in the next and the last chapter in केनोपनिषत्. Now we go to the next chapter, Chapter 4.

सा "ब्रह्म " इति ह उवाच । " ब्रह्मणः वा एतत्
विजये महीयध्वं " इति । ततः ह एव



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विदाञ्चकार " ब्रह्म " इति ॥

4 - 1

"That यक्ष was ब्रह्मन्" said She (Goddess UMA). "It was through the victory of ब्रह्मन् that you achieved this glory" It was from the words of Uma that Indra understood that the यक्ष was ब्रह्मन्.

Indra saw ब्रह्मन् with no form and realized the truth of ब्रह्मन् through the grace of spiritual knowledge in the form of Uma. The other two देवताs Agni and Vayu, also saw ब्रह्मन् in the form of यक्ष and also spoke with him, but they could not recognize who he was. They came to know later through Indra that the यक्ष was indeed ब्रह्मन्.

तस्मात् वा एते देवाः अतितरां इव
अन्यान् देवान् यत् अग्निः वायुः इन्द्रः
ते हि एनत् नेदिष्टं पस्पर्शुः ।
ते हि एनत् प्रथमः विदाञ्चकार ब्रह्म इति ॥

4 - 2

Therefore, verily, these देवताs, Agni, Vayu and Indra, excel the other देवताs because they approached the यक्ष nearest. They were the first to know him as ब्रह्मन्.

तस्मात् वा इन्द्रः अतितरां इव । अन्यान् देवान्
सः हि एनत् ने दिष्टं पस्पर्श । सः हि
एनत् प्रथमः विदाञ्चकार ब्रह्म इति ॥

4 - 3

Even among the above three देवताs, इन्द्र excels the most because he approached the यक्ष the nearest through contemplation, and he was the first to know him as ब्रह्मन्.

Here ends the story.

This story may be understood in different ways by different people in the light of the Upanishad knowledge presented earlier. To me, this story particularly calls attention to the importance of the earlier teachings, namely आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यं - All greatness in action arises only from परमेश्वर. Whatever greatness, whatever glory, power, success, accomplishment, prosperity, happiness, etc. one is blessed with, the source of all such greatness is only परमेश्वर. This teaching should never be forgotten. Further, the



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unbroken realization of this knowledge at all times naturally brings one closer and closer to the परमेश्वर within oneself, leading to पूर्ण ईश्वर शरणागति and ultimately to जीव ब्रह्म ऐक्यं - oneness with परमेश्वर Itself. That is what we learn from this story.

The teacher is now about to bring his teachings on the nature of ब्रह्मन् to a close. Before he does that, he talks about the three well-known methods of meditation and contemplation on ब्रह्मन् namely अधिदैवतं, अध्यात्मं and तद्रूप उपासनं,

About अधिदैवतं, the teacher says

तस्य एषः आदेशः ।

यत् एतत् विद्युतः व्यद्युतत् आ ।

इति इत् न्यमीमिषत् आ । इति अधिदैवतं ॥

4 - 4

This is about अधिदैवतं - Recall पुरुषश्चाधिदैवतम् (G8-4). Therefore अधिदैवतं is contemplation on ब्रह्मन् through any extraordinary Form, Name, Event or phenomenon in nature external to oneself. How one experiences the revelation of ब्रह्मन् during such contemplation is being pointed out here through an आदेश - comparison with a natural phenomenon.

तस्य एषः आदेशः - For the recognition of that incomparable ब्रह्मन्, एषः आदेशः this is a comparison. The comparison here is only for understanding.

यत् एतत् विद्युतः व्यद्युतत् आ - The revelation of that ब्रह्मन् is आ - like विद्युतः व्यद्युतत् - the flash of lightning which means the recognition of that ब्रह्मन् in such mode of contemplation is only momentary.

इति इत् - again, another comparison

न्यमीमिषत् आ - It is like the wink of an eye, meaning momentary.

If one chooses to contemplate on ब्रह्मन् in the mode of अधिदैवतं, meaning contemplation on ब्रह्मन् through any visible glory of परमेश्वर external to oneself through any extraordinary form, name, event or phenomenon in nature external to oneself, the recognition of the revelation of ब्रह्मन् in one's बुद्धि in such contemplation can only be momentary and discontinuous like the flash of lightening or the wink of an eye, because of the interference of cognition of external objects by one's mind and बुद्धि during such contemplation. On the other hand,



अथ अध्यात्मं यत् एतत् गच्छति इव च मनः
अनेन च एतत् उपस्मरति अभीक्ष्णं सङ्कल्पः ॥

4 - 5

This is about अध्यात्मं. Recall that अध्यात्मं is contemplation on ब्रह्मन् as प्रत्यग आत्मा - as one's innermost self. How one experiences the revelation of ब्रह्मन् during such contemplation is being pointed out here.

अथ -Then अध्यात्मं - the description here is about contemplation on ब्रह्मन् as प्रत्यग आत्मा as the innermost self in oneself.

यत् एतत् गच्छति इव च मनः - In this mode of contemplation on ब्रह्मन्, it is as though the mind is always trying to reach ब्रह्मन् and
अनेन च एतत् उपस्मरति अभीक्ष्णं सङ्कल्पः - by so doing (अनेन), the mind continuously remembers ब्रह्मन्, always trying to bring ब्रह्मन् closer and closer to the vision of one's बुद्धि, which means that ब्रह्मन् reveals itself continuously to one's बुद्धि simultaneously with every pulsation of the contemplating mind.

Thus if one chooses to contemplate on ब्रह्मन् in the mode of अध्यात्मं - ब्रह्मन् as the innermost self in oneself, the recognition of the revelation of ब्रह्मन् in one's बुद्धि in such contemplation is continuous and simultaneous with every pulsation of the contemplating mind. Further,

तत् ह तद्ब्रह्मं नाम । तद्ब्रह्मं इति उपासितव्यं ।
सः यः एतत् एवं वेद अभि ह एनं सर्वाणि
भूतानि संवाञ्छन्ति ॥

4 - 6

तत् ह तद्ब्रह्मं नाम - That ब्रह्मन् is well-known by the name तद्ब्रह्मं . Therefore,
तद्ब्रह्मं इति उपासितव्यं -That ब्रह्मन् should be contemplated upon as तद्ब्रह्मं
तद्ब्रह्मं means तत् वननीयं तत् संभजनीयं संपूजनीयं -That which is to be properly worshipped through भजन्s, पूजाs, etc. similar to what we do here.

Therefore तद्ब्रह्म उपासन is ईश्वर उपासन contemplation on ब्रह्मन् through proper worship of परमेश्वर by भजन्s, पूजाs, etc. Proper worship of परमेश्वर means worship of



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परमेश्वर through ज्ञान लक्षण ईश्वर भक्ति - devotion to परमेश्वर rooted in the certainty of knowledge of one's identity with ब्रह्मन्, gained through ज्ञान निष्ठा, which Sri Krishna describes in chapter 18 of भगवत् गीता.

सः यः एतत् एवं वेद - The one who realizes ब्रह्मन् in oneself through such तद्गुण उपासन - ईश्वर उपासन

एनँ सर्वाणि भूतानि अभिसंवाञ्छन्ति - All beings love that person indeed. Realization of ब्रह्मन् in oneself as the innermost self of all beings through तद्गुण उपासन - ईश्वर उपासन transforms a person into a ज्ञानी - ब्रह्मन् Itself, and hence naturally he is loved by all people, indeed all beings.

Thus the teacher has indicated three distinct modes of contemplation on ब्रह्मन्, namely अधिदैव उपासन, अध्यात्म उपासन and तद्गुण उपासन which is परमेश्वर उपासन. There is no suggestion here that one mode of contemplation is superior to the other. One is free to choose whatever mode of contemplation on ब्रह्मन् is appropriate to one's own circumstances.

Now follows a brief dialogue between the student and the teacher

"उपनिषदं भोः ब्रूहि " इति ।

"उक्ताः त (ते) उपनिषत् ब्राह्मी ।

वा च त (ते) उपनिषदं अब्रूम" इति

4 - 7

The student asks भोः Sir उपनिषदं ब्रूहि please teach me उपनिषत्

The teacher replies:

उक्ताः त (ते) उपनिषत् ब्राह्मी -The Upanishad about ब्रह्मन् has already been imparted to you.

वा च - Indeed

त (ते) उपनिषत् अब्रूम" इति - I have already imparted the Upanishad knowledge to you.

The student just wants to know whether the subject matter on ब्रह्मज्ञानं has been imparted to him in full. The teacher however, now chooses to impart some additional knowledge relating to the successful pursuit of ब्रह्मज्ञानं .

तस्यै तपो दमः कर्मति प्रतिष्ठा ।



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वेदाः सर्वे अङ्गानि । सत्यं आयतनं ॥

4 - 8

तपस् - Discipline

काय तपस्, वाक् तपस्, मानस तपस् - Discipline at the body level, at the speech level and at the mind level and

दमः - control over all levels of physical expressions and कर्म इति - ईश्वर अर्पित कर्म, कर्म totally dedicated to परमेश्वर.

तस्य प्रतिष्ठा - these are the foundations for the successful pursuit of ब्रह्मज्ञानं.

वेदाः सर्वे अङ्गानि - सर्वे वेदाः सर्वे अङ्गानि - all moral and spiritual values taught by the वेद उपनिषत् मन्त्रs - basic Vedic teachings, are its limbs, the means, the instruments for the successful pursuit of ब्रह्मज्ञानं and

सत्यं आयतनं - Realization of Absolute Reality - Realization of Truth is the ultimate Goal of the pursuit of ब्रह्मज्ञानं. Being truthful in thought, word and deed at all times, is The Abode, The Basis, The Alter, The Means for such a Realization.

यो वा एतां एवं वेद अपहत्य पाप्मानं अनन्ते

स्वर्गं लोके ज्येये प्रतितिष्ठति । प्रतितिष्ठति ॥

4 - 9

यो वा एतां एवं वेद - The one who realizes the knowledge of ब्रह्मन् in this manner - in the manner taught in this Upanishad, that person,

अपहत्य पाप्मानं - overcoming obstacles of every kind

अनन्ते स्वर्गं लोके ज्येये प्रतितिष्ठति - gets well established in the Infinite Exalted Bliss of ब्रह्मन्. Again

प्रतितिष्ठति - certainly such a person gets well established in the Infinite Exalted Bliss of ब्रह्मन्

इति चतुर्थः खण्डः - Thus ends the fourth and the final chapter of केनोपनिषत् and the Upanishad now formally concludes with the same Peace Invocation with which it started.

ओं सहना ववतु । सहनौ भुनक्तु । सहवीर्यं करवावहे ।

तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा चिद्विषावहे ॥

ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

ओं आप्यायन्तु ममाङ्गानि । वाक् प्राणश्चक्षुः
श्रोत्रमथो बलमिन्द्रियाणि च सर्वाणि ।
सर्वं ब्रह्मोपनिषदम् । माहं ब्रह्म निराकुर्याम् ।
मा मा ब्रह्म निराकरोत् । अनिराकरणं अस्तु । अनिराकरणं मे अस्तु । तदात्मनि निरते य
उपनिषत्सु धर्माः ते मयि सन्तु ते मयि सन्तु ॥
ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Thus ends केनोपनिषत् ॥

We have now completed the first segment of our Readings on Upanishads. We are going to stop here for the time being and return to **भगवत् गीता** next time. We will start with chapter 3 of **भगवत् गीता** and continue.

After reading chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 of **भगवत् गीता**, we will be returning to further readings on Upanishads.