



ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 2

Section 1

Volume 11

23. तत् एतत् सत्यं

यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकात् विस्फुलिङ्गाः

सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः ।

तथा अक्षरात् विविधाः सोम्य भावाः

प्रजायन्ते तत्र चेवापि यन्ति ॥

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24. दिव्यो हि अमूर्तः पुरुषः सबाह्य अभ्यन्तरो हि अजः

अप्राणो हि अमनाः शुभ्रो हि अक्षरात् परतः परः ॥ 2 - 1 - 2

The second chapter of this Upanishad opens with the statement

तत् एतत् सत्यं

एतत् सत्यं - This is true. What is true?

तत् - That. "That" means what?

As we may recall, the last section (मु 1 - 2) which we completed reading last time, also started with the statement तत् एतत् सत्यं. In the last section the Upanishad was talking about अपरविद्या - objective knowledge, in general. With reference to अपरविद्या, the word सत्यं refers to सामान्य सत्यं - ordinary truth, that which is ordinarily recognized as true in this world of transient existence. Such सामान्य सत्यं is आपेक्षिक सत्यं, which means it is all about matters relating to dependent reality. For example, कर्म and कर्मफल are matters of dependent reality. कर्म depends on



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कर्मफल, and कर्मफल depends on कर्म. Neither one is independent. Therefore, that which is true with respect to कर्म and कर्मफल is आपेक्षिक सत्यं - a matter of dependent reality, transient reality, अपरविद्या, which was the subject matter of the last section.

In this section (मु 2 -1) the Upanishad opens its discourse on परविद्या - matters relating to Absolute Reality, that which is independent, ever-existent and never subject to change. Therefore, the word सत्यं here refers to Absolute Truth - पारमार्थिक सत्यं - That which is Absolute Reality of all existence. Such truth is independently Self-existent. Therefore, the opening statement here तत् एतत् सत्यं means, That which is being unfolded here is परविद्या विषयं. It is about matters relating to परब्रह्मन् - सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म - The परमेश्वर, The आत्मा, The Self I in every Self there is. Thus, the Upanishad now introduces परविद्या ब्रह्मविद्या - by the statement तत् एतत् सत्यं. Unfolding That सत्यं - That Absolute Reality of all existence, the Upanishad says:

23. यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकात् विस्फुलिङ्गाः

सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः ।

तथा अक्षरात् विविधाः सोम्य भावाः

प्रजायन्ते तत्र चेवापि यन्ति ॥ 2 - 1 - 1

Saunaka, the disciple is listening attentively, and Angiras, the Teacher is teaching. Addressing Saunaka as सोम्य - O! Young Friend, the teacher opens his discourse on ब्रह्मविद्या as follows:

(सोम्य is an endearing way of addressing a disciple by a teacher who is satisfied with his disciple for his श्रद्धा and devotion to ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge.) The teacher says:



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यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकात् सहस्रशः सरूपाः विस्फुलिङ्गाः प्रभवन्ते

यथा - Just as

सुदीप्तात् पावकात् - from a very well burning fire, from a blazing fire

सहस्रशः विस्फुलिङ्गाः - thousands of sparks of fire

प्रभवन्ते निर्गच्छन्ति - arise and come out. All these sparks of fire are

सरूपाः विस्फुलिङ्गाः - meaning दीप्त पावक स्वरूपाः विस्फुलिङ्गाः These sparks of fire are of the nature, identical with the nature of the blazing fire itself, which means, in terms of their स्वरूप - their inherent nature, each spark of fire is fire itself.

From blazing fire arise and come out thousands of sparks of fire, all of which have the same essential nature as fire itself. They are therefore सरूपाः, meaning स्वप्रकाश

स्वरूपाः अग्निलक्षणाः - all sparks of fire are self-effulgent and have identical characteristics and potentialities as fire itself.

तत् एतत् सत्यं - That all sparks of fire are of the nature of fire Itself is सत्यं, is

true, a truth that is never subject to change. That सत्यं being an easily recognized fact of nature, the Upanishad uses this fact as illustration to communicate another important fact of nature in the next line. Before we go to the next line, let us briefly reflect on the fact of nature involved in the illustration itself, namely

सुदीप्तात् पावकात् सहस्रशः सरूपाः

विस्फुलिङ्गाः प्रभवन्ते ॥

From a blazing fire, thousands of sparks of fire, all having the same essential nature as fire Itself, arise and come out. If each spark of fire is fire itself, then why call it spark?

The spark is so called because of its उपाधि - difference in form, limited by time and space. But differences born of one's उपाधि - form and name, do not and cannot change the स्वरूप - the true nature, the inherent nature of the spark of fire being fire itself.

Now, suppose, just imagine, the spark says: "I am only a miserable tiny spark. I exist only for a few seconds. I am mortal, etc." The Upanishad now wakes up the spark and



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teaches: " O! spark, you are not spark at all. Spark is only your name and form. You are in fact fire itself. You are indeed hot, self-effulgent, sparkling fire, with all the characteristics and potentialities of fire itself. Please recognize your true nature. You are indeed fire itself".

Contemplating on the above teachings of the Upanishads, suppose the spark is able to recognize its true nature as fire itself. Now, let us understand what the Upanishad actually did. The Upanishad did not make "spark" into fire. The spark was already fire, and it has been so all along. The spark was only ignorant of its own true nature all along, ever since its birth, until it was awakened by the Upanishad by its teaching "You are indeed fire itself". That Upanishad teaching removed self-ignorance in spark. When self-ignorance was removed, the spark gained अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं - immediate knowledge of its own true nature, as It is.

That is exactly what the Upanishad teaching does. Upanishad teaching removes self-ignorance, and gives a person अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं - immediate knowledge of oneself, as one really is, provided the person is both emotionally and intellectually ready for such awakening.

Now, let us continue with the Upanishad. The Upanishad says: Just as , from a blazing fire, thousands of sparks, all having the same essential nature as fire itself, arise and come out

तथा अक्षरात् विविधाः सरूपाः भावाः प्रजायन्ते

तथा - in a similar manner

अक्षरात् - from that अक्षर ब्रह्मन्, whose nature has already been indicated earlier (मु 1-1 - 6 to 9) as अद्रेश्यं, अग्राह्यं, अगोत्रं, अवर्णम्, अचक्षुः श्रोत्रं, अपाणिपादं, नित्यं, विभुं, सर्वगतं, सुसूक्ष्मं, अव्ययं and भूतयोनिम् (we have already seen the content of these pointer words in detail in verses 6 to 9 in Chapter 1, Section 1) - from that अक्षर ब्रह्मन्, whose nature is सत्यं-ज्ञानं-अनन्तं-ब्रह्म, as we have seen in Taittiriya Upanishad. From that अक्षर ब्रह्मन्

विविधाः (सर्वे) भावाः - all the different varieties and multitudes of beings in this entire creation, all having different उपाधिस - different forms, names and distinguishing characteristics



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सरूपाः - still all of them having the same essential nature as अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself

प्रजायन्ते - arise and come out, manifesting themselves as they are

That means, the स्वरूप of each भाव - the true nature of every Being in this creation is अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself, is सत्यं-ज्ञानं-अनन्तं-ब्रह्म Itself. The true nature of myself,

yourself, everyone else, and everything else in this creation is that अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself.

All the differences among us are only with respect to नाम-रूप-काल-देश उपाधि

भेद - differences in name, form, time, space and related consequences, which do not, and cannot change the true nature of every Being in this creation, including the creation itself.

By the above statement, the Upanishad unfolds अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं - immediate knowledge of the true nature of every Being in this creation, including the creation itself as:

ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं - which means, अक्षर ब्रह्मन् is the true nature of आत्मा - the

Self I in oneself, and indeed, in every self there is. That also means that the स्वरूप -

the true nature of what was indicated earlier as अक्षरं, and the स्वरूप of आत्मा - the

Self I, are indeed identical सत्यं-ज्ञानं-अनन्तं-ब्रह्म. Further, the Upanishad continues:

विविधाः (सर्वे) भावाः

तत्र एव अपि यन्ति च

All Beings in this creation, with their varieties and multitude of उपाधिs - body limitations, on the dissolution of their transient existence

अपि यन्ति च - also merge into, also get resolved into

तत्र एव - That Same ONE अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself. As we have seen in the Taittiriya Upanishad:



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यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते
येन जातानि जीवन्ति
यत् प्रयन्ति अभिसंविशन्ति
तत् ब्रह्म इति विजिज्ञासस्व ।

- ◇ That from which, all that exists in this creation are born
- ◇ That by which, those which are born, live and grow, and
- ◇ That, into which, all those which live and grow, ultimately go back into, entirely merge into, giving up their forms and names, and become ONE with That from which they came

That is indeed the लक्षण of अक्षर ब्रह्मन्, the सत्यं-ज्ञानं-अनन्तं-ब्रह्म that one must learn to appreciate and recognize. That is also the content of the famous verse

पूर्णम् अदः पूर्णम् इदं पूर्णात् पूर्णम् उदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णम् आदाय पूर्णम् एव अवशिष्यते ॥

Recalling the entire verse again:

यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकात् विस्फुलिङ्गाः
सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः ।
तथा अक्षरात् विविधाः सोम्य भावाः
प्रजायन्ते तत्र चेवापि यन्ति ॥ 2 - 1 - 1

Thus, in this opening verse on the discourse on परविद्या - ब्रह्मविद्या, the Upanishad communicates three distinct messages:

1. The Upanishad removes Self-ignorance, and unfolds अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं - immediate knowledge on the true nature of oneself as अक्षर ब्रह्मन् itself



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2. The Upanishad calls attention to the eternal fact ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वम् - the true nature of every Being in this creation, including the creation itself, is अक्षर ब्रह्मन्
3. Every Being in this creation, including the creation itself, arises from, is sustained by and ultimately resolves into That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself, which means, That अक्षर ब्रह्मन्, while Itself being causeless, is both the efficient instrumental cause as well as the material cause for every Being in this creation, including the creation itself.

तत् एतत् सत्यं - All this knowledge is सत्यं, पारमार्थिक सत्यं - Absolute truth, never subject to change. That is the content of the opening verse.

While it is easy enough for any one to recognize that true nature of a spark of fire is fire itself, it is not that easy to recognize that true nature of oneself is अक्षर ब्रह्मन् Itself.

Therefore, the Upanishad commences to unfold the nature of That अक्षर ब्रह्मन्, again through another set of pointer words in the next verse.

दिव्यो हि अमूर्तः पुरुषः सबाह्य अभ्यन्तरो हि अजः

अप्राणो हि अमनाः शुभ्रो हि अक्षरात् परतः परः ॥ 2 - 1 - 2

That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् is pointed out here as पुरुषः. पुरुषः means पूर्णः the ONE who is all-inclusive, and हृदि सर्वस्य विष्ठितम् - The ONE who is the heart and बुद्धि of all Beings as ONESELF Itself, as the आत्मा - The Self I in oneself, and in every self there is. That पुरुष, That आत्मा, That Self I, is अक्षर ब्रह्मन्, सत्यं-ज्ञानं-अनन्तं-ब्रह्म Itself. The nature of That आत्मा is

दिव्यः means द्योतनवान्, स्वयं ज्योति स्वरूपः, the ONE whose very nature is all-inclusive Self-effulgence, lighting up every object in this creation. As the कठोपनिषत् says:

तमेव भान्तं अनुभाति सर्वम्



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तरय भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति - That आत्मा not only shines by Itself, It also shines as every object in this creation, including the creation itself, as Pure Awareness.

हि - Because of that reason

अमूर्तः means सर्व मूर्ति वर्जितः. Being all-inclusive आत्मा, The Self I, has no form. आत्मा is Formless. All forms are only for objects and not for the Subject I Itself.

सबाह्य अभ्यन्तरः - यत् बाह्यं अभि अन्तरं च - आत्मा is both inside and also outside of all that exists. आत्मा is inside and also outside of this physical body.

आत्मा is inside of all of one's thoughts, words and deeds, and also outside of all of them, which means आत्मा is Limitless, Limitlessness Itself.

हि - Further

अजः - आत्मा is Unborn. Anything that is born from something has only dependent reality and no independent reality. आत्मा exists as Independent Reality, Absolute Reality. Being Itself Limitless, आत्मा is सर्वात्मकं, आत्मा is the basis for everything in this entire creation, including the creation itself. आत्मा being अजः - unborn, is causeless, and totally free from all the six-fold modifications, namely जायते, अस्ति, वर्धते, विपरिणमते, अपक्षीयते, विनश्यति च - birth, is, grows, undergoes change, decays and death. आत्मा is free from these modifications.

अप्राणः - आत्मा is independent of प्राण. As केनोपनिषत् says:

यत् प्राणेन न प्रणिति, येन प्राणः प्रणीयते - That which is not sustained by प्राण, but That by which प्राण is sustained, That is indeed आत्मा. अप्राणः should not be understood simply as "आत्मा is not प्राण ", because that would mean आत्मा is other than प्राण. If आत्मा is other than प्राण, then प्राण becomes another independent reality. It is not so. प्राण has no separate existence. The Truth is: प्राण is आत्मा, but



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आत्मा is not प्राण, just as pot is clay, but clay is not pot. Therefore, the pointer word अप्राणः indicates that आत्मा is independent of प्राण, while प्राण is dependent on आत्मा, exactly as pointed out by केनोपनिषत्.

हि - Similarly

अमनाः - again, as the केनोपनिषत् says

यत् मनसा न मनुते येन आहुः मनो मतं।

आत्मा is That which cannot be comprehended by the mind, but That by which mind is able to comprehend the world of objects and changes. Therefore, आत्मा is independent of mind. Again, while mind is आत्मा, आत्मा is not mind.

शुभ्रः means शुद्धः - Absolutely Pure, because आत्मा is पूर्णः - all-inclusive, and ONE without a second. There is nothing else in this creation to cause any impurity to आत्मा. आत्मा being अकर्ता - does no कर्म. Therefore, आत्मा is totally free from पुण्य, पाप, etc. Therefore, आत्मा is Absolutely Pure.

अक्षरात् परतः परः - आत्मा is even beyond अक्षरं.

We will talk about this pointer expression next time.