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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 2

Section 2

Volume 16

35. धनुर् गृहीत्वा औपनिषदं महास्त्रम्
शरं हि उपासानिशितं सन्दधीत
आयम्य तद्वागतेन सेतसा
लक्ष्यं तदेव अक्षरं सौम्य विद्धि ॥ 2 - 2 - 3

36. प्रणवो धनुः शरो हि आत्मा
ब्रह्म तत् लक्ष्यं उच्यते
अप्रमत्तेन वेद्म्यं ॥
शरवत् तन्मयो भवत् ॥ 2 - 2 - 4

The Upanishad has been teaching the nature of अक्षर ब्रह्मन्, The पुरुषोत्तम, The परमेश्वर, as The ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा - The Self-effulgent Pure Consciousness, The Self I, already in every consciousness, The Self I, already in every person, as ONESELF Itself. It is that आत्मा, That Self I one needs to recognize by one's own बुद्धि, and reach That ब्रह्मन्, in terms of Knowledge.

For most people, simply listening to the words of the Upanishads, by itself, is insufficient to recognize the true nature of oneself as ब्रह्मन् itself. Following such listening, one should also simultaneously undertake some form of ईश्वर उपासन - contemplation on परमेश्वर, setting one's बुद्धि, one's entire अन्तः करण, in undistracted परमेश्वर consciousness for longer and longer periods of time, together with continuing reflection and absorption of the content of Upanishad words on ब्रह्मज्ञानं, until one does gain Self-recognition as ब्रह्मन् Itself.

The form of ईश्वर उपासन that is the most effective for such self-recognition is naturally undistracted contemplation on the content of the प्रणव मन्त्र ओं, because ओं is ब्रह्मन् Itself. Therefore, in the next verse, the teacher advises शौनक to undertake ओं मन्त्र



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Upasana with total understanding and appreciation of the content of ओँ मन्त्र, as unfolded by the Upanishads.

Before we go to the next verse, we must briefly recall what the Upanishads say on the प्रणव मन्त्र ओँ, the word ओँ. We must clearly recognize what ओँ really is. Sri Krishna says:

अहं प्रणव सर्वदेवेषु (G. 7 - 8)

"I am the प्रणव मन्त्र ओँ in all the Vedas". When Sri Krishna says "I am ओँ ", that means the content of the word ओँ is ब्रह्मन्, not simply a symbol for ब्रह्मन्. Therefore, contemplation on the content of the word ओँ leads one ultimately to ब्रह्मन् Itself. Again,

ओँ तत् सत् इति निर्देशः ब्रह्मणः त्रिविधः स्मृतः (G 17 - 23)

"The thought of ब्रह्मन्, The परमेश्वर, can be brought and retained in one's mind and बुद्धि by simply uttering again and again, with understanding and appreciation, any one of these three words ओँ , तत् or सत्, or all the three words together ओँ तत् सत्, because each of these three words reveals ब्रह्मन्, as unfolded by the words of the Upanishads", says Sri Krishna.

Further, the Taittiriya Upanishad says:

ओँ इति ब्रह्म (तै 1 - 8)

The word ओँ is ब्रह्मन्. ओँ is the word and सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म is Its meaning. Just as a word and its meaning are inseparable, ओँ and ब्रह्मन् are inseparable.

ओँ इति इदं सर्वम् (तै 1 - 8)

ओँ, The ब्रह्मन्, is all this, this entire creation in all its manifold forms and names. ओँ, The ब्रह्मन्, is all-pervading, sustaining everything in this creation, including the creation itself.

Further, the कठोपनिषत् says (कठ 2 -15 to 17)



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ओं इत्येत् - ओं इति एतत् - That is The Word ओं. What one needs to understand, appreciate, realize and recognize by one's own बुद्धि, is the very content of The Word ओं.

सर्वे वेदाः यत् पदं आमनन्ति ओं इत्येत् - That which all the Vedas and the Upanishads declare, unanimously, in one voice, without any conflict whatsoever, as यत् पदं, as the State of Supreme Existence, as the Supreme Goal of Life to be reached by knowledge, understanding and recognition, is ओं, That which is revealed by The Word ओं.

एतत् एव अक्षरं ब्रह्म - That which is revealed by the word ओं is indeed the all-inclusive सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म, which reveals both अपर ब्रह्म and पर ब्रह्म - both the known and The Knower, both the object and the Subject.

एतत् एव अक्षरं परं - The word ओं indeed reveals परं परम पदं - The Exalted State of Existence, The Supreme Goal of Life to be reached through श्रवणं, मननं and निदिध्यासनं - listening, reflecting and absorbing the content of the words of the Upanishads.

एतत् एव अक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यत् इच्छति तस्य तत् - Knowing, recognizing That which is revealed by the content of the word ओं, one gets whatever one desires, which means, one gains identity with ब्रह्मन् Itself, if that is what one really wants.

एतत् आलम्बनं श्रेष्ठं - Understanding and appreciation of the content of the word ओं is the surest and the best means of support for reaching ब्रह्मन् Itself, for gaining identity with ब्रह्मन् Itself.

एतत् आलम्बनं परं - That which is revealed by the content of the word ओं is परं परम पदं - the highest Goal to be reached by one's own बुद्धि.

एतत् आलम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते - Reaching ब्रह्मन् revealed by the content of the word ओं, one enjoys ब्रह्मानन्द - the Supreme Joy of being ब्रह्मन् Itself.

On the content of The Word ओं, the माण्डूक्य उपनिषत् says:



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ओं इति एतत् अक्षरं इदं सर्वम् - All this, this entire universe of forms and names, visible or invisible, everything is indeed what is revealed by this monosyllabic Word ओं.

इदं सर्वम् - ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वम् - The अक्षर ब्रह्मन् revealed by the word ओं pervades this entire creation, in and out.

तस्य उपव्याख्यानं - Its further explanation is this:

भूतं भवत् भविष्यत् इति सर्वम् ओंकार एव - Everything that existed in the past, everything that exists at present, and everything that will ever exist in the future, all that is only ओं. Not only that

यत् च अन्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तत् अपि ओंकार एव - Whatever else that exists transcending all the three periods of time, that too is only ओं. Thus

सर्वम् हि एतत् ब्रह्म - Everything indicated above as ओं is indeed That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् unfolded by the Upanishad expression सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म, which means ओं is The Word and ब्रह्मन् is Its meaning. Just as a word and its meaning are inseparable, similarly ओं and ब्रह्मन् are inseparable. Further, the statement सर्वम् हि एतत् ब्रह्म is identical with the महावाक्य we saw earlier, namely पुरुष एव इदं विश्वं, and also ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वम्.

Again, the Upanishad continues:

अयं आत्मा ब्रह्म - This आत्मा, The Self I in every person, is ब्रह्मन् Itself. That means ओं is ब्रह्मन्. आत्मा is ब्रह्मन्. The words ओं, ब्रह्मन् and आत्मा indicate The Same ONE Supreme Being, The परमेश्वर, which makes अयं आत्मा ब्रह्म a महावाक्य, a Great Declaration of TRUTH.

Thus the Upanishad unfolds the content of the word ओं as ब्रह्मन् Itself as सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म Itself, identical with The ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा - The Self-efulgent light of Pure Consciousness, Pure Awareness, The Self I Itself, already in oneself, already in every person.

Unfolding further, the content of The Word ओं, the Upanishad says:

अयं आत्मा चतुष्पात्



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सः - That which is indicated by The **ओं मन्त्र**, Word **ओं**, already identified as The **आत्मा**, The Pure Consciousness Self I in oneself, is **चतुष्पात्**. The Upanishad word **चतुष्पात्** is difficult to translate, but easy enough to understand in terms of three **मात्रा**s in ONE - **अमात्रा** (not **मात्रा**). Please understand this: a **मात्रा** is a time-bound state of *existence*, and The **अमात्रा** is The ONE Ever-existence, pervading, sustaining, and transcending all the time-bound **मात्रा**s, Itself being unbound by time.

For example, in terms of states of existence, the three **मात्रा**s are the past, present and the future, each of which is naturally limited by time, and all of which exist only in the **अमात्रा** - The limitless ever-existence, which accommodates, sustains, and also transcends all the past, present and future, Itself being independent of time, and beyond the reach of time.

The words "past", "present" and "future" are fluid terms, in the sense, what was "past" was "present" at one time, and also "future" at another time. Similar is the case with respect to the words "present" and "future". Thus every existence in the past, present or future is only transient existence, not real existence, not independent existence. Sri Krishna says that (G 2 - 16)

नासते विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ॥

For transient existence, there is no real existence at all.

On the other hand, all transient existence, all past, present and future existence exists only in ever-existence, inseparable from Ever-existence, which means, The ONE Ever existence pervades all the three transient states of existence, namely the past, present and the future, and also prior to, and beyond all the three states of existence.

So is the nature of the **शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा** - The Pure Consciousness, The Pure Awareness, The Self I, which exists at all times including, and ever beyond every conceivable past, present and future. Thus, the Upanishad points out that The ONE **आत्मा**, The ONE Pure Consciousness, The ONE Self I, exists without any distinction in every person in all the three states of existence in time, The **आत्मा** Itself being beyond the scope of time.

We must understand clearly that Pure Consciousness is not a state of existence. There is only ONE **आत्मा** - only ONE Self I, only ONE Pure Consciousness, in all the three states of existence.



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It is That आत्मा, That Self I, That Pure Consciousness, That ब्रह्मन्, sustaining all the three states of existence, is indicated here by the word चतुष्पात् in the Upanishad. It is That चतुष्पात् which is the content of the ओँ मन्त्र The Word ओँ. Similarly, one can talk about the three states of experience of a person in the waking, dreaming and deep-sleep states of existence. It is obvious that the waker is not in the dream and deep sleep states of existence. Likewise the dreamer is not in the waking and deep-sleep states of existence, and the sleeper is not in the waking and dream states of existence, while The शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा, The Pure Consciousness, The Self I, is in all the three states of existence, pervading, sustaining and transcending all of one's experiences in all the three states of existence.

It is That आत्मा, The Self I, The Pure Consciousness that is indicated by the word चतुष्पात् in the Upanishad, as the very content of ओँ मन्त्र, the word ओँ.

Now we must understand how That चतुष्पात् - the three मात्राs in ONE अमात्रा, is built into the monosyllabic single word ओँ, the ओँ मन्त्र. As already pointed out in The Introduction to Upanishads, the sound ओँ is the integrated expression of all possible speech sounds, which means every possible speech sound is only a partial derivative of the integrated phonetic structure of the sound ओँ. But the word ओँ Itself is far more than the sound ओँ. The sound ओँ involves a seamless integrateion of the three sounds, namely अ, उ and म्. This is how the sound ओँ manifests itself.

You start with Absolute silence. Then you open the mouth and try to say अ for an extended length of time. Finally, you close the mouth with the sound म्. In between अ and म्, depending on the anatomical disposition of the mouth and the effort put in, the sound अ, naturally, inseparably and imperceptably evolves through उ, manifesting itself as ओँ finally ending in म्, which tapers into Absolute Silence again. Now, what is That Absolute silence? That Absolute Silence is the Limitless Sound, accomodating and sustaining all possible speech sounds, all limited sounds.

Thus अ, उ and म् are the three limited sounds, the three मात्राs bound by time, and preceding and following Absolute Silence is The Limtless Sound, The ONE अमात्रा on which rest all the three मात्राs, Itself being totally independent in existence. Please



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understand that all limited sounds exist only in the ONE Limitless Sound, The Absolute Silence, which is The all-inclusive, ever-existent Pure Consciousness, The आत्मा, The Self I in every person.

Thus while the sound ओँ involves only the three मात्राs (अ, उ and म्), the word ओँ, The ओँ मन्त्र includes all the above three मात्राs, inseparably and imperceptably together in The ONE अमात्रा, The Limitless Sound, The Absolute Silence, accomodating and sustaining all the three मात्राs. Therefore, the proper recitation of The ओँ मन्त्र involves continuously being conscious of That ONE अमात्रा - Absolute Silence from which the sound ओँ arises, by which the sound ओँ is sustained, and into which the sound ओँ merges and disappears. Without such consciousness of the अमात्रा, Absolute Silence throughout the utterance of the sound ओँ, there is no ओँ मन्त्र recitation at all. (The curve ँ included in the written word ओँ is the sound symbol for the Limitless Sound, Absolute Silence).

That is how चतुष्पात् is built into the ओँ मन्त्र, The Word ओँ. It is That अमात्रा, That Absolute Silence Sri Krishna refers to as मौनं

With reference to विज्ञान सहितं ज्ञानं - ब्रह्मज्ञानं - The Totality of all knowledge, as गृह्यतमं - the greatest secret (G (-1), Sri Krishna says (10-38)

मौनं चैवास्मि गुह्यानां - I am मौनं. I am The Absolute Silence behind the totality of all knowledge. Thus That अमात्रा, That Absolute Silence is परमेश्वर Itself, is ब्रह्मन् Itself, is आत्मा Itself, is Pure Consciousness Itself, is The Self I Itself. Being conscious of That Absolute Silence while reciting the sound ओँ, as The Word ओँ, The ओँ मन्त्र, is being in परमेश्वर -consciousness throughout the duration of such recitation; and, so being during the ओँ मन्त्र recitation is being in ओँ मन्त्र उपासन - contemplation on the content of ओँ मन्त्र, the Word ओँ as परमेश्वर Itself, as ब्रह्मन् Itself, as Pure Consciousness Itself, as The आत्मा, The Self I Itself.

It is such contemplation on the content of The Word ओँ, The ओँ मन्त्र उपासन, that Saunaka is now being asked to undertake in order to be able to recognize and reach ब्रह्मन्, already in himself, by his own बुद्धि vehicle.



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In Vedic tradition, the most common form of **ओं मन्त्र उपासन** is **गायत्री महा मन्त्र जप**, a repeated utterance of the words of the **गायत्री मन्त्र**, with an understanding and appreciation of the words themselves, while consciously keeping one's entire **अन्तःकरण** - mind, **बुद्धि** and **अहंकार**, steadily dwelling on the content of The **ओं मन्त्र** - The Word **ओं** as unfolded by the Upanishads. **गायत्री** is just the name for a Vedic metre, involving a single **मन्त्र** - word of power, containing 24 syllables. The entire **गायत्री मन्त्र** is as follows:

ओं । भूर्भुवस्सुवः । तत् सवितुर्वरेण्यम् ।
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि । धियो यो नः ।
प्रचोदयात् ॥

The meaning of this **मन्त्र** is briefly as follows:

ओं धीमहि - I am now in **ओं मन्त्र ध्यानं**. I am now in the process of contemplation on

The **ओं मन्त्र**, The content of The Word **ओं**.

ओं भूः भुवः सुवः धीमहि - Let me contemplate on That **ओं** as **भूः भुवः सुवः** as **ब्रह्मन्** Itself, manifesting as all the worlds in this creation, all the worlds of thought, word, deed, experiences of all kinds, past, present, future and all that is beyond

ओं तत् सवितुः धीमहि - Let me contemplate on That **ओं** as The creator of all existence there is, as The Source, as The Sustenance and The Abode of all existence there is, as The ONE on which every existence depends.

ओं तत् वरेण्यम् धीमहि - Let me contemplate on That **ओं**, The ONE the most sacred, the most worthy of worship, adoration and prayer, The ONE to be recognized and reached by knowledge, because That alone is **सत्यं शिवं मद्गलं** - Absolute Truth, Absolute Peace, Absolute Happiness.

देवस्य भर्गः यः धियः नः प्रचोदयात् तत् ओं धीमहि - That **ओं** whose **भर्गः** - The Self-effulgent light of all lights (**ज्ञान दीपं**) lights up both existence-knowledge and object-knowledge of all kinds, and being so, kindles and stimulates the **बुद्धि** of every person seeking **ब्रह्मज्ञानं**. Let me contemplate on That **ओं**, recalling the words of The Upanishads again and again.

That is the simple meaning of the **गायत्री महा मन्त्र जप**. In lieu of such **गायत्री जप**, one may simply engage oneself in **ओं मन्त्र जप** - uttering within oneself the word **ओं** again



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and again, firmly setting one's mind and बुद्धि on the content of the word ओं, the ओं मन्त्र, as revealed by the words of the Upanishads.

The effectiveness of all forms of ओं मन्त्र उपासन - contemplation on the content of ओं मन्त्र, for the ultimate objective of gaining आत्म ज्ञान - Self-knowledge, depends on one's clarity of understanding and appreciation of the content of ओं मन्त्र as revealed by the words of the Upanishads and also on one's ability to keep one's mind and बुद्धि, indeed entire अन्तःकरण, totally concentrated on reflection and absorption of all related Upanishad knowledge during such contemplation.

Initiating such ओं मन्त्र उपासन, contemplation on the content of The Word ओं, the teacher advises Saunaka as follows:

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शरं हि उपासानिशितं सन्दधीत
आयम्य तद्वाचगतेन सेतसा
लक्ष्यं तदेव अक्षरं सौम्य विद्धि ॥ 2 - 2 - 3

36. प्रणवो धनुः शरो हि आत्मा
ब्रह्म तत् लक्ष्यं उच्यते
अप्रमत्तेन वेद्म्यं ॥
शरवत् तन्मयो भवत् ॥ 2 - 2 - 4

We will see these verses next time.