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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 3

Section 1

Volume 20

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In the last four sections constituting the first two chapters, the Upanishad has been talking about अपरविद्या (objective knowledge) and परविद्या (ब्रह्म ज्ञानं, आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge) and why both kinds of knowledge are absolutely necessary for any person to reach the परम पुरुषार्थ - The Ultimate Goal of Life, namely, gaining Total Freedom, Absolute Happiness and Total Fulfillment in Life.

With reference to That परम पुरुषार्थ - The Ultimate Goal of Life, the Upanishad has been talking about अक्षर ब्रह्मन् as अद्वैश्यं, अग्राह्यं, अगोत्रं, अवर्णम्, अचक्षुः, श्रोत्रं, अपाणिपादं, नित्यं, विभुं, सर्वगतं, सुसूक्ष्मं, भूतयोनिम् - all of which indicate the Same ONE सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म, The परमेश्वर, The ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा, The Pure Conscious, all conscious आत्मा, The Self I, The true nature of ONESELF Itself, already in the body-vehicle of every person.



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That आत्मा - The Self I can be recognized by every person as आनन्द रूपं, as ब्रह्मानन्द स्वरूप, as Absolute Happiness Itself in one's बुद्धि गुह, in the बुद्धि-हृदय -आकाश, in the व्योमिन् दिव्य ब्रह्मपुरि, in the Ever-bright, Self-effulgent region of one's own बुद्धि गुह, through श्रवणं, मननं and निदिध्यासनं of Upanishad knowledge, followed by ओं मन्त्र उपासन - contemplation on the content of The Word ओं, as unfolded by the Upanishads. All that has been told in detail.

However, for most people, That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् - The आत्मा, The Self I, as unfolded by the Upanishads remains practically unreachable, and hence unrecognizable, because the अन्तः करण - the mind and बुद्धि of the person involved is not pure enough to transcend all of one's internal obstacles to reach that व्योमिन् - That दिव्य ब्रह्मपुरि region in one's own बुद्धि, where alone That ब्रह्मन्, That आत्मा, The Self I is available for direct and immediate recognition.

The "I" most people do see - do recognize - is only the अहंकार I, the ego I, which obviously controls most of one's actions in daily life. So long as one is committed primarily to प्रेयस् - worldly pursuits of various kinds, one can only see अहंकार I. Only when one's entire अन्तः करण - mind and बुद्धि turns totally to the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, can one reach That दिव्य ब्रह्मपुरि region in one's own बुद्धि, and spontaneously recognize That ब्रह्मन्, That आत्मा I, already in oneself as the true nature of ONESELF Itself. Such pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, necessarily requires the prior and continuous cultivation of certain ethical values, such as सत्यं वद, धर्मं चर, etc., and also certain spiritual practices helpful for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, such as various kinds of practices of self-discipline and ईश्वर उपासन, ईश्वर ध्यानं, ईश्वर ईक्षणं, ईश्वर आराधनं, etc. about all of which we have heard already in the भगवत् गीता and the Upanishads we have seen thus far.

In this chapter, the Upanishad talks about some of the ethical values and spiritual practices that one must cultivate in full measure in order to be able to gain पूर्ण अन्तः करण शुद्धि - Absolute Purity of Mind and बुद्धि. When that happens, the अहंकार I - the ego I, the ever-changing notion of shadow I or false I in the person, naturally disappears, enabling the person to reach spontaneously the ब्रह्मपुरि region in one's own बुद्धि, and



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recognize the true nature of oneself, the आत्मा I, The Self I, as सत् चित् आनन्द शुद्ध चैतन्य स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् Itself.

To initiate this process of Self recognition, one must first recognize the apparent coexistence of अहंकार I and आत्मा I, the ego I and the Self I, abiding in the same body vehicle of oneself. Therefore, the Upanishad first calls attention to this apparent coexistence of अहंकार I and आत्मा I, symbolically in the language of an allegory of two birds abiding in the same tree. This is how the Upanishad communicates this message.

44. द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया

समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते ।

तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वादु अत्ति

अनश्नन् अन्यः अभिचाकशीति ॥

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द्वा सुपर्णा = द्वौ सुपर्णौ - Two birds

सयुजा सखाया = सयुजौ सखायौ - bound to each other in close friendship

परिषस्वजाते = परिष्यक्तवन्तौ - they remain clinging to each other. They appear bound to each other inseparably and flutter around here and there, perching on

समानं वृक्षं - the same tree

तयोः अन्यः - of the two birds, one of them

पिप्पलं स्वादु अत्ति - eats the fruits of the tree with relish and enthusiasm, while

अन्यः - the other bird

अनश्नन् - without eating or tasting anything

अभिचाकशीति = केवलं पश्यति एव - simply remains looking on, whatever the first bird does

Thus the Upanishad calls attention to two birds, apparently bound inseparably to each other in close friendship, perching on the same tree. Of them, one of the birds eats the fruits of the tree with relish and enthusiasm, while the other bird, without eating or tasting anything, remains simply looking on, whatever the first bird does. That is the simple word-meaning of this verse. Now we must understand what is being communicated by these words.



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वृक्ष - The tree referred here is the संसार वृक्ष - the tree of this phenomenal world of ever-changing existence, represented by the अश्वत्थ tree described in detail by Sri Krishna in Chapter 15 of भगवत् गीता (G 15-1 to 4). Leaving aside the माया जनित जगत् - the apparently endless world outside of oneself, every जीव - every person has a world of one's own, in the form of one's body, mind and intellect, governed by अविद्या - self-ignorance. For the time being, what an ordinary जीव recognizes as "I" - the self, is only the अहंकार I - the ego I, the false I, commonly understood as जीवात्मा.

On the other hand, the true nature of every जीव is indeed परमात्मा - the आत्मा I. In reality, there are no two Is. When the अन्तःकरण of the जीव, when the mind and बुद्धि of the person gains absolute purity, the अहंकार I (the ego I) naturally disappears, and the identity of जीवात्मा and परमात्मा becomes self-evident. Until that happens however, the ego I and आत्मा appear as two separate entities coexisting in the same one body of the जीव. In the allegory, in the symbolic language used here, the अहंकार "I" and the आत्मा "I" are the two birds, abiding in the same physical body (the tree), and it is the अहंकार I which tastes and eats the fruits of the संसार tree while the आत्मा I eats nothing, but remains as a witness to whatever the अहंकार I does.

सुयुजा सखाया - These two birds, the अहंकार I and the आत्मा I are सुयुजा - they appear to be bound to each other inseparably, because, आत्मा is सर्वगतः - all-pervasive. Consequently, every entity in this creation, real or imaginary, including अहंकार I, is non-separate from आत्मा I, and hence appear to be bound to आत्मा I. It is still an appearance, because, in reality, आत्मा I is always असंगः. It is not bound to anything, because It is पूर्णः. It is ever ONE without a second. There is nothing else to get bound to.

Still, The आत्मा I appears to be a सखा - a true friend to अहंकार I, because, आत्मा I lets अहंकार I do whatever it wants. As Sri Krishna says (G 13-22), आत्मा I is उपद्रष्टा अनुमन्ता च. The आत्मा I in the body is in the form of a pure witness in whose presence alone all knowledge and all actions take place in the entire body. Being Itself Fullness in nature, The आत्मा I blesses whatever the body-mind-intellect complex does or wants to do, by virtue of its own स्वभाव गुणs - one's सत्य-रजस्-तमस् गुणs and experience the



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results of its own actions. Thus आत्मा I remains as a true friend, अहेतुक उपकारि, one who helps without expecting anything in return. The अहंकार I easily recognizes that some ONE else is really helping it in all its actions, even though it does not know who That ONE is.

परिष्वजाते - The अहंकार I and The आत्मा I appear to cling to each other inseparably, because, wherever the अहंकार I moves around in this संसार वृक्ष - in this ever-changing world of transient reality, the आत्मा I is there with the अहंकार I at all times, everywhere. That is because, अहंकार I has no existence apart from आत्मा I.

पिप्पलं स्वादु अत्ति - Living in the अश्वत्थ tree - the संसार वृक्ष, this is how the अहंकार bird spends its time. It moves about in the various branches of the tree, पिप्पलं स्वादु अत्ति- tasting, relishing and eating the varieties of the fruits obtainable in the tree as

अनेक विचित्र वेदन आस्वाद रूपं - in the form of varieties of tastes such as sweet, sour, bitter, etc., which means the अहंकार I is experiencing the results of its own actions in the form of varieties of सुख-दुःख - pleasure and pain experiences in life. On the other hand

अन्यः - The other bird, the आत्मा bird, the आत्मा I

अनश्नन् - does not taste or eat anything. It does not do anything, because आत्मा is अकर्ता - That is the स्वरूप of आत्मा. Therefore, आत्मा I neither does any कर्म, nor It has any कर्मफल to experience. Being so,

अभिचाकशीति केवलं पश्यति एव - The आत्मा bird simply goes on looking at the bird, which means, the आत्मा I remains simply as उपद्रष्टा and अनुमन्ता - a witness and permitter of every action that takes place in the body vehicle of the person. The आत्मा I blesses whatever the बुद्धि of the person decides to do, and lets the person experience the fruits of all of one's actions.

The Upanishad continues.

45. समाने वृक्षे पुरुषो निमग्नः

अनीशया शोचति मुह्यमानः

जुष्टं यदा पश्यति अन्यः ईशं

अस्य महिमानं इति वीतशोकः ॥

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समाने वृक्षे पुरुषः - The पुरुष, the जीव bird, the अहंकार bird, abiding in the same tree, पिप्पलं स्वादु अत्तिs, tasting, relishing and eating the fruits obtainable in the अश्वत्थ tree, the संसार वृक्ष, which means the अहंकार I, the ego I, abiding in one's own body vehicle, entertaining the notions that "I am the कर्ता, the भोक्ता, the सुखी, the दुःखी, etc. - I am the doer of actions and enjoyer of कर्मफलs, I am happy now and then, I am unhappy and miserable at other times" etc. In all of such feelings, the notion of "I" is involved. Being so involved, the अहंकार bird, the अहंकार I - the ego I

शोचति - then becomes sad, entertaining sorrow of various kinds, such as

निमग्नः शोचति - निमग्नः means "drowned"

देहात्मभावं आप्पन्नः निश्चयेन मग्नः is निमग्नः - Being fully convinced of its identity with one's body, the अहंकार bird, the अहंकार I - the ego I is drowned in sadness arising from its own body-mind-intellect limitations of various kinds. Seeing its own body limitations, the अहंकार I - the ego I, feels " अयं एव अहं " - I am only this (body). Please note here that with reference to anything else in this creation, the अहंकार I - the ego I does not say "I am this". It is only with reference to one's own body that it says "I am this" because of its देहात्मभावं - sense of identification with one's own body. The moment one feels that "I am this body", one already entertains an immediate relationship with all of one's body attributes, qualities and associations, real or imaginary. Thus, being convinced that "I am this body", the अहंकार I - the ego I associates itself with birth and death, and everything in between. Being so is निमग्नः - निश्चयेन मग्नः - being inescapably drowned in the ocean of one's body limitations. Further,

अनीशया शोचति - अनीशया means न ईशया - feeling a sense of total helplessness. The अहंकार bird, the अहंकार I - the ego I feels that life is taking its own unpredictable course, and it has no say on the matter. The ego I feels bound to one's कर्मs; and, every time it tries to undo the undesirable results of one's कर्मs, that effort itself creates more कर्मs, and more unpredictable results, all of which bind it to कर्मs for ever. The ego I is now convinced that there is no escape from कर्मs and their results. That is अनीश - the sense of helplessness to uplift oneself from the sorrows of worldly life. With such sense of helplessness

मुह्यमानः शोचति, मूढ भावः सन् शोचति - The अहंकार bird, the अहंकार I - the ego I, feels thoroughly confused and deluded with a sense of deep sorrow, sadness and depression. Then, something happens:



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जुष्टं यदा पश्यति अन्यः ईशं  
अस्य महिमानं इति वीतशोकः ॥

यदा - When

We must understand what is indicated by the word **यदा** here, in the context here. Every **जीव**, every person, without exception in one's life, does some **पुण्य कर्म**s also. They may take their own time to fructify, but they certainly do fructify at some time. When that happens, when the good **कर्म**s of the **जीव** I, the **अहंकार** I - the ego I fructify, by the very grace of **आत्मा** I, The **परमेश्वर** already in the **बुद्धि - हृदय-आकाश** of the **जीव** - the ego I, comes across a great teacher like Sri Krishna, or the great teachings like the **भगवत् गीता** and the Upanishads, and gets exposed to the teachings therein. Inspired by such Teachings, the mind and **बुद्धि** of the **जीव** - the ego I, gains a new set of values and embarks on a new line of thought and action in daily life, governed by **सत्यं, धर्मम्, शमदमादि** qualities (indicated in our Introduction to The Upanishads), **अहिंसा, ब्रह्मचर्यं, सर्वकर्मफल त्याग बुद्धि, ईश्वर प्रसाद बुद्धि** and thereby gains **समाहित चित्तं** - absolute equanimity of mind and **बुद्धि**, enabling it to live a continuing life of **कर्मयोग, ज्ञानयोग, ध्यानयोग** and **भक्तियोग** as directed by the great teachings (**दर्शित योग मार्गः**), leading to the attitude of **पूर्ण ईश्वर शरणागति** together with **ज्ञाननिष्ठा - सदा ईश्वर चिन्तनं**.

यदा - when that happens

**अन्यं पश्यति** - the **जीव** I - the ego I sees, recognizes the other bird, the **आत्मा** bird, the **आत्मा** I already in the body, as

**जुष्टं ईशं परमेश्वरं** - The most worshipful, the most sought after (**जुष्टं**), **आनन्दं**

**परमेश्वरं** - as **आनन्द स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा** - The Self I Itself.

By **पश्यति**, by such seeing, the **जीव** gains **अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं** direct and immediate knowledge of the **स्वरूप** of oneself, the true nature of oneself as The **आत्मा** I Itself, as **ब्रह्मन्** Itself, as **परमेश्वर** Itself. Not only that

**अस्य महिमानं पश्यति** - The **जीव** now sees the entire creation as the very glory of That **परमेश्वर**, The **आत्मा** I, The Self I Itself. Now the **जीव** recognizes, **अहं सर्वभूतात्मा, न**



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तु देहस्य आत्मा - I am not simply the Self I of this body, I am The आत्मा of all beings in this creation, including the creation itself.

इति - So recognizing oneself as आत्मा I Itself, as परमेश्वर Itself

वीतशोकः भवति - The जीव becomes totally free from any kind of sorrow, sadness and depression. That means, the अहंकार I, the ego I, the false I has naturally disappeared and the identity of जीवात्मा and परमात्मा reveals Itself.

46. यदा पश्यः पश्यते रुक्मवर्णम्  
कर्तारं ईशं पुरुषं ब्रह्मयोनिम् ।  
तदा चिद्ब्रह्म पुण्यपापे विधूय  
निरञ्जनः परमं साम्यं उपैति ॥ 3 - 1 - 3

We will see this verse next time.