



ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 3

Section 2

Volume 24

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तस्य एष आत्मा विशते ब्रह्म धाम ॥ 3 - 2 - 4

In the last verse we saw last time, the Upanishad says भूतिकामः आत्मज्ञं अर्चयेत् - Let a भूतिकाम, a person who is after various objects of worldly desire, let such a भूतिकाम develop a reverential attitude (अर्चयेत्) towards an आत्मज्ञ - a person who is already a ब्रह्मचित्, an आत्मचित् - a knower of ब्रह्मन्, The आत्मा, The Self I already in oneself, which means a person who is already an embodiment of आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge. Let a भूतिकाम seek the blessings of such an आत्मज्ञानी - Self-realized, self-recognized person, for the fulfillment of one's worldly desires.



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This is the Upanishad's advice to most people in the world, and this is a very important advice, because, even though one may be a भूतिकाम for the time-being, by coming into contact with an आत्मज्ञानी - a Self-realized, Self-recognized person, one knowingly or unknowingly develops also a value and respect for आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, which has a profound effect on one's subsequent entire life-style, and continuing spiritual growth.

Having talked about भूतिकामः - people committed to the pursuit of various kinds of worldly desires, the Upanishad now talks about अकामाः. अकामाः are desire-free people, in the sense, they do not have any cravings, longings or bondages to worldly objects, since they have विवेक-वैराग्य बुद्धि, and unqualified श्रद्धा in the pursuit of The परमपुरुषार्थ - The मोक्ष - Total Fulfillment in life. What they do not have as yet is the necessary ब्रह्मज्ञानं, आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge to recognize आत्मा - The Self I, already in every self as ONESELF Itself. They are called मुमुक्षुs or जिज्ञासुs.

The Upanishad here advises them also to approach an आत्मज्ञानी with a worshipful attitude and seek and follow his teachings, and thereby receive ज्ञान प्रसादं as the very blessings from परमेश्वर Itself. This is how the Upanishad communicates this message:

54. स वेद एतत् परमं ब्रह्म धाम
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उपासते पुरुषं ये हि अकामाः
ते शुक्रं एतत् अतिवर्तन्ति धीराः ॥

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स एतत् वेद
(यस्मात्) सः (आत्मज्ञः) एतत् (आत्मानं) वेद
यस्मात् - because

सः आत्मज्ञः - That knower of आत्मा, The आत्मज्ञानी whose blessings the भूतिकाम was able to seek for the fulfillment of one's worldly desires, That आत्मज्ञानी
वेद - knows clearly and absolutely

एतत् आत्मानं - That आत्मा, The Self I in oneself



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What does an आत्मज्ञ know about आत्मा - The Self I? He knows that आत्मा - The Self I in oneself is

परमं ब्रह्मधाम - The abode of परब्रह्म, The सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म, The Abode of परमेश्वर यत्र विश्वं, समस्त जगत्, निहितं समर्पितं - where this entire universe of forms and names are naturally, inseparably and indistinguishably held together as शुभ्रं शुद्धं भाति, स्वतेजसा भाति, the ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा - as the undifferentiated, all-inclusive Self-effulgent Pure Consciousness in oneself. That is what an आत्मज्ञ knows about आत्मा- The Self I in oneself.

Because an आत्मज्ञ, The knower of आत्मा knows, clearly recognizes that fact as the very nature of all existence, therefore

ये अकामाः - those who are devoid of all worldly desires, the मुमुक्षुः

ये हि अकामाः, तं आत्मज्ञं पुरुषं उपासते - worshipfully approach That आत्मज्ञ, that Self-realized, Self-recognized person and receive from him ज्ञान प्रसादं, आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge as the very blessings of परमेश्वर already in themselves. By so receiving the आत्म ज्ञानं

ते धीराः भवन्ति - they become wise, and

एतत् शुक्रं अतिवर्तन्ति हि - naturally transcend

एतत् शुक्रं नृबीजं - the seed that causes rebirth

शुक्रं means नृबीजं - the seed that causes birth, namely अविद्या काम कर्म बन्धनः - desires, actions and bondages rooted in self-ignorance. By receiving ज्ञानप्रसादं, by following the teachings of an आत्मज्ञानी, an अकामः, a मुमुक्षु naturally becomes wise, transcending Self-ignorance and naturally becomes an आत्मज्ञानी oneself.

There is also another significant message here.

भूतिकामः परमेश्वरं अर्चयते

मोक्ष कामः परमेश्वरं उपासते



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One can do ईश्वर पूजा - any act of worship of परमेश्वर, either as an अर्चना or उपासन. The difference between अर्चना and उपासन must be appreciated. In an अर्चना, one prays for the fulfillment of some objects of worldly desires. In an उपासन, one prays only for ज्ञानप्रसादं, आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge and nothing else. That is the difference between अर्चना and उपासन. The Upanishad continues.

55. कामान् यः कामयते मन्यमानः
स कामभिः जायते तत्र तत्र ।
पर्याप्त कामास्य कृतात्मनस्तु
इहैव सर्वे प्रविलीयन्ति कामाः ॥

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यः कामान् कामयते - The one who desires various objects of desire, how does one desire?

यः मन्यमानः सन् कामयते - the one who desires those objects, thinking, craving, longing and brooding over those objects again and again, and thereby developing a bondage with those objects of desire. As Sri Krishna says:

सद्गात् सञ्जायते कामः (G 2-62) - The person develops a passion for those objects of desire. Then what happens to the person? In his efforts to accomplish or gain those objects of desire

स कामभिः तत्र तत्र (कर्मसु) जायते that person, goaded by those very desires, finds himself in various types of actions, good and bad, and ultimately

कामभिः जायते तत्र तत्र - he is born again amidst those very objects, impelled by those very desires

Thus the bondages created by the passion for one's objects of desire constitute the very basis for one's good and bad actions, which, in turn, form the basis for one's future births in various wombs.

तु - on the other hand

पर्याप्तकामस्य कृतात्मनः - for a person who is a पर्याप्तकामः - one who is totally fulfilled in all desires, कृतात्मनः - one who is totally fulfilled in all actions, for such a person there is still nothing left to be done to fulfill oneself. Such a person is indeed an आत्मज्ञः - a ज्ञानी who recognizes one's true nature as पूर्ण आत्मा - The Self I as Fullness Itself. For that person



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इह एव सर्वे कामाः प्रविलीयन्ति

इह एव - here itself, in this body itself, while one is still alive, in this life itself

सर्वे कामाः प्रविलीयन्ति - all desires enter and disappear in ONESELF itself

As Sri Krishna says:

आपूर्यमाणं अचलप्रतिष्ठं समुद्रं आपः प्रविशन्ति यद्भूत् ।

तद्भूत् कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिं आप्नोति न कामकामी ॥

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Just as waters from all the rivers enter the ocean, which is already full, which still welcomes all waters, and still does not move or change in any way, in a similar manner, the one in whom all desires joyfully enter and disappear, that person gains peace. That is indeed the mark of a स्थितप्रज्ञ, पर्याप्त कामस्य कृतात्मनः, a पूर्ण पुरुष, an आत्मज्ञः, a ज्ञानी.

56. नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यः

न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।

यं एव एष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः

तस्यैष आत्मा चि वृणुते तनु स्वाम् ॥

3 - 2 - 3

We have already seen this verse in detail in कठोपनिषत् (कठ 2-23)

न अयं आत्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यः - This आत्मा, The उत्तलक्षण आत्मा, The आत्मा about which the Upanishad has been talking all along, This आत्मा cannot be recognized simply by listening to discourses on आत्मज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, which means, simply listening to such discourses alone will not give one the ability to recognize The आत्मा, The Self I already in oneself as ब्रह्मन् Itself, as परमेश्वर Itself, as Pure Consciousness Itself

न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन - nor मेधा - memory, and sharp intellect or listening to Veda-Upanishad mantras repeatedly, can give one that ability. One can gain आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, only when one is ready for such knowledge by mental disposition. That means

यं एषः आत्मा एव वृणुते - only when a person seeks and ardently prays for आत्म ज्ञानं only and nothing else, only when a person is totally and exclusively committed to the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, with unqualified श्रद्धा and reverential devotion



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तेन एव एषः आत्मा लभ्यः - by that person only, it is possible to gain आत्म ज्ञानं

तेस्य एषः आत्मा विवृणुते तनुं स्वा, स्व आत्मरूपं - only to that person, The आत्मा, already in oneself, shines forth, revealing its true nature as ब्रह्मन् Itself, as परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* Itself, as The Immortal Self I Itself. Further,

57. नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः

न च प्रमादात् तपसो वापि अलिङ्गात् ।

एतैः उपायैः यतते यस्तु विद्वान्

तस्य एष आत्मा विशते ब्रह्म धाम ॥

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अयं आत्मा बलहीनेन न लभ्यः - This आत्मा, The Self I already in oneself, cannot be gained, cannot be reached, cannot be recognized by a person who is weak in the required strength (बलहीनेन). बलहीनं means बलरहितं - lack of strength. For achieving different objectives, different kinds of strength are needed. Now, what kind of strength one needs for recognizing The आत्मा, The Self I, already in oneself? First, one must educate oneself on आत्म ज्ञानं - Self-knowledge, and then one must pursue That Knowledge diligently to its ultimate end.

Generally speaking, for the successful pursuit of any knowledge, one must be in reasonably good health, enjoying good physical, mental, intellectual and emotional strength. This general requirement applies equally to the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं as well. In addition, diligent and successful pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं requires, in full measure, what we saw earlier as साधन चतुष्टयं - the four fold requirements, namely:

1. नित्य-अनित्य विवेक - ability to discriminate between नित्यं - That which is eternal existence, and अनित्यं - that which is transient existence
2. वैराग्य - total dispassion towards all कर्मs and कर्मफलs. We must understand that विवेक and वैराग्य always go together. One without the other is ineffective.
3. The six-fold virtues of शम, दम, उपरम, तितिक्षा, श्रद्धा and समाधान

शम is मनोनिग्रहं - control over one's ways of thinking

दम is बाह्य इन्द्रिय निग्रहं - control over one's external organs of perception and action



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उपरम is स्वधर्म अनुष्ठानं - ability to do one's duties, whatever they are, at all times

तितिक्षा is happy endurance of whatever comes one's way, and at the same time, doing whatever needs to be done

श्रद्धा is absolute faith in oneself, absolute faith in one's ability to gain that knowledge and reach one's goal; and

समाधानं is चित्त एकाग्रतं - capacity to keep one's mind steadily in the pursuit of the knowledge being sought, without any distractions

4. मुमुक्षुत्वं is the pursuit of मोक्ष - Total Freedom, freedom from the hold of transient appearances in worldly life.

Pursuit of मोक्ष is pursuit of सत्यस्य सत्यं - The Truth of all truths, through सत्यधृति (कठ 2-9) - one's will yoked to That सत्यस्य सत्यं. Being in सत्यधृति is possible only with अग्रय बुद्धि (कठ 3-12) - a बुद्धि whose sole commitment is the pursuit of ब्रह्म-आत्मैक्यं - recognition of the ONENESS of ब्रह्मन् and The Self I in oneself. Being in सत्यधृति for the recognition of ब्रह्म-आत्मैक्यं - is indeed अध्यात्म योग (कठ 2-12).

Contemplation on ब्रह्मन् as प्रत्यग आत्मा - as one's innermost Self I Itself, accomplished through withdrawing the mind totally from external objects, and directing it towards ब्रह्मन्, already available for recognition in one's बुद्धि गुह - in the ब्रह्मपुरि region of one's own बुद्धि.

It is that kind of strength of mind and बुद्धि that one needs for recognizing The आत्मा - The Self I, already in oneself. If one is weak in that kind of strength, one cannot reach, one cannot recognize The आत्मा, The Self I, though It is already in oneself. That is what is indicated by the Upanishad statement अयं आत्मा बलहीनेन न लभ्यः Again,

प्रमादात् च अयं आत्मा न लभ्यः - Through प्रमाद also, आत्मा The Self I cannot be recognized. प्रमाद is a kind of indifference to the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं, resulting from a lack of वैराग्य - dispassion towards all other worldly pursuits. If वैराग्य is not in full measure, then विचेक also is not in full measure, and hence exclusive pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं is not possible, and, as a consequence, आत्मा न लभ्यः - The Self I in oneself cannot be recognized, cannot be reached. Further, the Upanishad says:



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अलिङ्गात् तपसा वा आत्मा न लभ्यः - Through तपस् without लिङ्ग, also, आत्मा The Self I cannot be recognized, cannot be reached by a person.

As we may recall, earlier, the Upanishad said (3-1-5)

तपसा हि एष आत्मा लभ्यः - Through तपस्, through being self-disciplined in body, mind and intellect at all times, with single pointed devotion to the pursuit of Self-knowledge, one can certainly recognize and reach आत्मा - The Self I already in oneself. Now the Upanishad says:

अलिङ्गात् तपसा वा आत्मा न लभ्यः - If that तपस् has no लिङ्ग then one cannot recognize, one cannot reach The आत्मा, The Self I already in oneself.

What this statement means, we will see next time.