



मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 1

Section 2

Volume 6

यं ब्रह्मा वरुणेन्द्ररुद्रमरुतः स्तुन्वन्ति दिव्यैः स्तवैः
वेदैः सङ्गपदक्रमोपनिषदैः गायन्ति यं सामगाः ।
ध्यानावस्थित तद्गतेन मनसा पश्यन्ति यं योगिनः
यस्यान्तं न विदुः सुरासुरगणाः देवाय तस्मै नमः ।
हरिः ॐ

10. तत् एतत् सत्यं
मन्त्रेषु कर्माणि कवयो यानि अपश्यन्
तानि त्रेतायां बहुधा सन्ततानि ।
तानि आचरथ, नियतं सत्यकामाः
एष वः पन्थाः, सुकृतस्य लोके ॥ 1 - 2 - 1

As we have seen already in the first section of this chapter, The Upanishad opens with शौनक's question to Angiras, namely:

" कस्मिन् नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवति, इति - Knowing which, recognizing the true nature of which alone, the true nature of every object in this creation, including this creation itself, becomes known, becomes self-evident?"

Responding to that question, Angiras starts with the statement:

द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये - परा च एव अपरा च - There are two distinct kinds of knowledge. They are परा विद्या, following अपरा विद्या. Both these kinds of knowledge must be sought, acquired, understood, appreciated, realized and recognized,



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

clearly and definitely beyond doubt, by every discerning person, in order to gain total fulfillment in life.

All areas of objective knowledge, including knowledge about virtue and vice, means and ends, actions and their results, etc., come under the endless field of अपरा विद्या.

After gaining adequate proficiency in one's chosen areas of अपरा विद्या, one must undertake the pursuit of परा विद्या

यया तत् अक्षरं अधिगम्यते - That knowledge by which अक्षरं, meaning ब्रह्मज्ञानं, is gained. Having said that, the Upanishad then unfolds briefly what is indicated by the word अक्षरं, namely अक्षर ब्रह्मन्. Here ends Section 1.

The Section 2 now begins with a short discourse on अपरा विद्या - objective knowledge. Even though शौनक's question is concerned only with परा विद्या, still the teacher's response starts with a brief discourse on अपरा विद्या. Why? Because the teacher wants to make sure that शौनक fully understands and recognizes the distinction between अपरा विद्या and परा विद्या, and he is seeking परा विद्या with firm conviction, श्रद्धा and devotion.

अपरा विद्या is concerned with संसार - a life in the pursuit of कर्म and कर्मफल, which continuously create bondages, and the consequent सुख - दुःख experiences of various kinds, and परा विद्या which is ब्रह्मविद्या, is concerned with मोक्ष - total liberation from all such bondages and सुख - दुःख experiences.

Therefore, before undertaking the pursuit of परा विद्या, one must clearly see, one must clearly recognize, through incisive analysis by one's own विवेक बुद्धि, the distinction between संसार and मोक्ष. In संसार - worldly life, you do कर्म and experience कर्मफल, which later produces a new शरीर - a new physical body, with which you do



more कर्म and experience more कर्मफल, which again later produces a new physical body, etc., which means, through कर्म, the life in संसार cannot be brought to an end. What कर्म, gives is only पुनरपि जननं पुनरपि मरणं - a never ending succession of birth and death.

If, and only when, a person fully realizes that परमपुरुषार्थ, the overriding purpose of life is to transcend this wheel of संसार, and gain मोक्ष - Total Liberation from all सुख-दुःख experiences arising from कर्म and कर्मफल, only then, the person is fit to undertake the diligent pursuit of परा विद्या the ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge.

In order to enter into the pursuit of परा विद्या, one must have वैराग्य - dispassion for enjoying the experiences of the fruits of one's actions. Such वैराग्य is one of the four necessary qualifications for gaining ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge. This वैराग्य should not be due to any disenchantment of worldly life. A mere disenchantment with worldly life cannot be the basis for वैराग्य, for seeking ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge. The only basis for such वैराग्य is one's own विवेक बुद्धि, on the overriding goal of human life.

It is only to point out to शौनक the scope and limitations of अपरा विद्या - objective knowledge, and also that one must have the necessary वैराग्य for the successful pursuit of परा विद्या - ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge, the teacher now presents this short discourse on अपरा विद्या. Detachment from अपरा विद्या is possible only if one clearly recognizes its scope and limitations, its real nature, as it is. Therefore, the Upanishad says:

10. तत् एतत् सत्यं
मन्त्रेषु कर्माणि कवयो यानि अपश्यन्



तानि त्रेतायां बहुधा सन्ततानि ।
तानि आचरथ, नियतं सत्यकामाः
एष वः पन्थाः, सुकृतस्य लोके ॥

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तत् एतत् सत्यं
एतत् सत्यं - This is true. What is true?
तत् - That. That means what?

The Upanishad is now talking about the scope and limitations of अपरा विद्या, which is concerned with संसार विषयs - matters of worldly life. Therefore, here the word सत्यं refers to सत्यं - ordinary truth, that which is commonly recognized as true in worldly life. The worldly life is one of कर्मs and कर्मफलs - actions and their results, for everybody. Every action, whether it is लौकिक कर्म - a secular action, or वैदिक कर्म - a Vedic ritual of some kind, every action does produce some result - तत् एतत् सत्यं. That it is so, so is true, says the Upanishad.

The truth of this statement with respect to the लौकिक कर्मs - secular actions, is a commonly and easily recognized fact of life. For example, everybody knows that a car vehicle can take a person from place to place. One may not know, and one need not know, how the car works, but if the components of the car are chosen and assembled properly, and if the person drives the car properly, the action certainly yields the intended result.

तत् एतत् सत्यं - That it is so, is true. On the other hand, if the assembly of the car itself is defective, the result also is defective, or if one's driving mode is defective, the result also is defective in the sense one cannot get the intended result, and one may even get an unintended and undesirable result.



तत् एतत् सत्यं - That it is so, is true. The same is the case with respect to वैदिक कर्मs also. A Vedic ritual, whether it is some simple form of उपासन, or an exalted Havan of some kind, it is still a कर्म, and it will certainly yield the prescribed result, but only when the कर्म is done, and done properly. तत् एतत् सत्यं - That it is so, is true, says the Upanishad.

The Vedas prescribe various वैदिक कर्मs - Vedic rituals involving Veda mantras and strict performance details for the कर्म ritual involved, capable of giving certain specific results. One may or may not know the meaning of the Veda mantras, and the connection between the mantras and the mode of performing the ritual on one hand, and the ultimate result expected on the other hand. Still, if only the *mantras* are uttered properly, and the mode of performing the कर्मs is strictly as prescribed by the Vedas, the prescribed result will certainly happen

तत् एतत् सत्यं - That it is so, is true, says the Upanishad. If the Veda mantras are not uttered properly, and/or, if the कर्म itself is not done strictly as prescribed by the Veda, the prescribed result not only will not happen, it may even yield an undesirable result. तत् एतत् सत्यं - That it is so, is also true, says the Upanishad.

The purpose of this Upanishad statement here is to point out the scope, the validity, and the limitations of अपरा विद्या, in terms of कर्म and कर्मफल. वैदिक कर्म - Vedic rituals are taken here for illustration, mainly because शौनक is already familiar with Vedic rituals, and at this time, before he enters into the pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या knowledge, he must clearly recognize the powers and limitations of Vedic rituals.

This illustration also serves to educate those among us, who tend to be skeptical about the powers of Veda Mantras and Vedic rituals in general. Talking about Veda Mantras and Vedic rituals, the Upanishad says:



कवयः मन्त्रेषु यानि कर्माणि अपश्यन् - Every Veda Mantra is a discrete quantum manifestation of knowledge and power, with infinite dimensions for potential utilization in worldly life, just like any scientific and engineering principle. Just as researchers in the field of present day objective knowledge perceive, in their mind and बुद्धि, unique assemblage of different scientific and engineering principles in the form of unique कर्मs, capable of producing unique results, in a similar manner, through विचार - contemplative research on Veda mantras, the enlightened Rishis of olden days perceived in their mind and बुद्धि, unique assemblage of different Veda mantras, in the form of unique कर्मs, capable of yielding unique कर्मफलs. That is how a wide variety of वैदिक कर्मs - Vedic rituals, enjoined in the कर्मकाण्ड of the Vedas, had come into existence, and they have been in worldly utilization since then. The Upanishad says here:

यानि कर्माणि कवयः मन्त्रेषु अपश्यन् - Those Vedic rituals seen by the enlightened Rishis in the form of Veda Mantras
तत् एतत् सत्यं - all that, is true, in the sense those Vedic rituals, when performed properly, will certainly yield their intended results.

तानि त्रेतायां बहुधा सन्ततानि

तानि means तानि कर्माणि, वेद विहितानि, ऋषि दृष्टानि कर्माणि.

त्रेतायां means त्रयी संयोग लक्षणायां, अधिकरण भूतायां.

बहुधा means बहुप्रकारं, सन्ततानि meaning प्रवृत्तानि. Those Vedic rituals are elaborately described in all the three Vedas (Rig, Sama and Yajur Vedas), along with full details on what materials are needed for those कर्मs, and how exactly those कर्मs should be performed, etc. in order to get the intended results. (Only *mantras* in Rig, Sama and Yajur Veda are used in performing Vedic rituals.) The Atharva Veda Mantras are used for performing लौकिक कर्मs - secular activities only. Most of Atharva Veda Mantras are now said to have been lost forever. The Upanishad here authenticates the



fact that वैदिक कर्मs - Vedic rituals enjoined in the Vedas, when performed properly as prescribed, do certainly yield the intended results.

By saying तत् एतत् सत्यं - the Upanishad points out, when the वैदिक कर्म is done, the corresponding कर्मफल is सत्यं, the result is certain. Therefore, the Upanishad says:

तानि (कर्माणि) आचरथ, नियतं सत्यकामाः

सत्यकामाः means कर्मफलकामाः - Those who seek कर्मफलs - worldly experiences of different kinds by doing वैदिक कर्मs - Vedic rituals of different kinds. Addressing all such people as सत्यकामाः - the Upanishad advises them saying

नियतं, नित्यं - always, every day

तानि (कर्माणि) आचरथ - may you follow properly the वैदिक कर्मs, the Vedic rituals enjoined in the Vedas for your station in life, in order for you to experience the desired कर्मफलs, because

एष (एव) वः पन्थाः, सुकृतस्य लोके

सुकृतस्य लोके - स्वयं कृतस्य कर्मणः फलनिमित्तं - for the sake of experiencing the कर्मफलs of your वैदिक कर्मs, the results of your Vedic rituals

वः (युष्माकं) एषः एव पन्थाः (मार्गः) - for you, this alone is the means for achieving what you want. This is indeed the way for you to experience the कर्मफल that you seek through performance of Vedic rituals. If you want to fulfill your worldly desires by performing Vedic rituals, the means to fulfill them is only through performing appropriate Vedic rituals, strictly as prescribed in the Vedas. That means, कर्मफल is सत्यं. Every वैदिक कर्म, Vedic ritual, will certainly yield its intended result, but then, only when one does the कर्म properly in all details.



Thus, the first verse in this section glorifies कर्मs in general, and वैदिक कर्मs, Vedic rituals in particular.

But one must also understand that doing Vedic rituals properly, in all details is not easy. There are limitations both with respect to proper performance of Vedic rituals, and also with respect to what one can get from them. Some of these limitations are pointed out in the next few verses, with particular reference to some Havan कर्मs, just for illustration.

In order to understand and appreciate the content of the next few verses, one must be aware of a few common details about Vedic rituals, and Havan कर्मs in particular. There are many Vedic rituals (वैदिक कर्मs) described in the Vedas. Each Vedic ritual is a unique form of worship of परमेश्वर, manifested as an अधिष्ठान देवता - presiding Deity, endowed with some specific and limited aspect of ईश्वर power.

We must understand that all देवताs derive their power only from परमेश्वर. Consequently, any prayer to any देवता at any time, in any form, is really a prayer to, or worship of परमेश्वर only, whether it is so recognized or not.

Through unique assemblage of Veda *mantras*, people seek the Grace of different देवताs through Vedic rituals of some form and name, seeking fulfillment of their objects of desire in worldly life. The Vedic rituals themselves are of different kinds, performed by different people, on different occasions, either individually or collectively, for different purposes. Those Vedic rituals, which involve fire as the Alter for worship, are collectively called होम कर्मs or Havan कर्मs. The Upanishad here talks about Havan कर्मs in particular, just for communicating the essential message involved.

Chanting appropriate Veda *mantras*, with श्रद्धा and devotion, one invokes the desired देवता in the fire, properly lighted in the Havan Kund, and offers some materials such as ghee, grains, fruits, food, etc. as oblations into the fire, in order to seek the grace of the देवता being worshipped. That which is offered, or which is to be offered as oblations is



called हव्यं and the fire itself is called हव्यवाहन - that which carries the oblation to the देवता being worshipped. Thus the fire in the Havan Kund is the connecting link between the देवता and the person who performs the Havan कर्म. Further, all oblations are to be offered into the very mouth of the fire (as Agni Devata) and no oblation should be offered when the fire is smoldering in the Havan Kund.

Among various Havan कर्मs, the Agnihotra ritual is the foremost as well as the simplest, but it has to be performed by every householder, every married person every day, throughout one's life, twice daily, one in the morning immediately after sunrise, and one in the evening, immediately after sunset. In the morning ritual, the oblations are directed towards सूर्य देवता and प्रजापति देवता chanting mantras ॐ सूर्याय स्वाहा and ॐ प्रजापतये स्वाहा. In the evening ritual, the oblations are directed towards अग्नि देवता and प्रजापति देवता chanting the mantras ॐ अग्नये स्वाहा and ॐ प्रजापतये स्वाहा

The Agnihotra ritual is usually followed by some other rituals such as दर्श and पूर्ण मास, which are rituals performed on the new moon day and the full moon day respectively. Similarly, there are also many other rituals to be performed by every householder on special days such as the beginning of each month, change of seasons, new year's day, etc., and also some peculiar rituals which some people must do, or must not do, etc. All these details, together with details on mantras to be used, materials needed for the rituals, how exactly they should be performed by whom, when, etc. , all these details are given in the कर्मकाण्ड of the Vedas.

Whatever be the rituals involved, there are rules governing their proper performance details which have to be followed very strictly. Otherwise, the rituals will not yield the desired result, and they may yield even some undesirable and unexpected results.

The Upanishad talks about Havan कर्मs in general and Agnihotra related rituals in particular in the next few verses, which we will see next time.