



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G8

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत्

Chapter 1

शीक्षावल्ली

Lesson 1

Volume 1

हरिः ॐ ॥

शं नो मित्रः शं वरुणः । शं नो भवत्वयमा ।

शं न इन्द्रो बृहस्पतिः । शं नो विष्णुरुक्रमः ॥

नमो ब्रह्मणे । नमस्ते वायो । त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि ।

त्वामेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्म वदिष्यामि । ऋतं वदिष्यामि ।

सत्यं वदिष्यामि । तन्मामवतु । तद्वक्तारमवतु ।

अवतु माम् । अवतु वक्तारम् ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

इति प्रथमोऽनुवाकः ॥

We have just heard the opening शान्तिपाठ् - the invocation mantras, in the first

The स्वरs in Vedic chantings

उदात्तं represented by ' ; raise voice

अनुदात्तं represented by _ ; lower the voice

स्वरितं represented by " raise the voice and lengthen by three मात्र s (units of time)

प्रचयं normal pronunciation

* - गुं - कार sound symbol for total silence

substratum for all existence

ईश्वर ध्यानं by attitude

This Upanishad, like most other Vedic chantings, has a particular स्वर - mode of recitation, which has come down by tradition. In written versions of the Vedic mantras, these स्वरs are indicated by some distinguishing marks above or underneath the letters in the words involved. The purpose of स्वर is two fold

1. To provide harmony in group recitations and
2. To protect the Veda mantras from getting mutilated or swallowed in the course of their oral transfer from generation to generation.

I recite these Upanishad mantras just as I have heard them often. I have no other training in chanting mantras. While we try to maintain the tradition in reciting this Upanishad, our focus here will only be on the Upanishad words and their contents.



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chapter of the Upanishad called तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत् (Taittiriya Upanishad). This Upanishad, like most other Vedic chantings, has a particular स्वर – accent, mode of recitation, which has come down from generation to generation, by tradition (which also varies slightly from region to region). While we try to maintain some tradition in reciting this Upanishad our focus here will only be on the Upanishad words and their contents, and not on their स्वर.

Taittiriya Upanishad is one of the ten major Upanishads prescribed for study for all students of (Brahma Vidya) ब्रह्मविद्या. This Upanishad forms part of Yajur Veda, more particularly called Krishna Yajur Veda. Even among the major Upanishads, Taittiriya Upanishad is an extraordinary one - extraordinary in terms of its context, content and mode of communication of Upanishad knowledge.

As an Introduction to this Upanishad, let us talk briefly about these extraordinary aspects starting with the context.

First, let us do नमस्कार to the one Sri याज्ञवल्क्य (Yajnavalkya) on this auspicious day - the day of his graduation from his गुरुकुल (the teacher-student institution) on completion of his formal Vedic education. On this day, he was asked by his teacher to give a brief summary of all the Vedic knowledge he had gained thus far, before he leaves the गुरुकुल.

याज्ञवल्क्य responded immediately. In the next (less than) 45 minutes, याज्ञवल्क्य presented an extraordinary exposition of the essential content of the entire Veda, in clear, short sentences, before the assembly of the teacher and the students of the गुरुकुल. His exposition of the entire Vedic knowledge was so revealing in content, original and succinct, brilliant in style and scope of presentation, that the teacher was so amazingly pleased, that he asked all his other students, and also the succeeding generations of his students, to listen, understand, appreciate and absorb याज्ञवल्क्य 's exposition of the Vedic knowledge as an integral part of their own basic Vedic education. It is this exposition of the essential content of Vedic knowledge that has later come to be known as तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत्.

We understand that तैत्तिरीय is the name for a class of birds who have the extraordinary ability to pick up only good, clean and essential food even from a huge heap of food materials of various kinds.



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It is said that याज्ञवल्क्य received his own enlightenment of Vedic Knowledge directly by the grace of सूर्य देवता, who was his personal Deity (इष्ट देवता) from his childhood.

As we may recall, in the भगवत् गीता, Sri Krishna says:

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्राक्तवान् अहं अव्ययं 4 – 1

I taught this yoga of wisdom to विवस्वान् – The सूर्य देवता, in the beginning of this creation.

It is by the blessings of that सूर्य देवता, याज्ञवल्क्य is said to have received his own inspirational understanding and appreciation of the entire Vedic knowledge even during his days and years in the गुरुकुल of his immediate teacher. It is hence not surprising that he was a तेजस्वी – an outstanding student of Vedic knowledge, throughout his formative years at the गुरुकुल.

Later in life, याज्ञवल्क्य became a renowned ब्रह्मविद्याचार्य and his outstanding contributions to ब्रह्मविद्या form part of बृहदारण्यक उपषित् from which we also understand that King Janaka of Mithila was a distinguished disciple of याज्ञवल्क्य.

About the content. The essential content of all the Upanishads is the same. However, in this Upanishad, there is no reference to any war, any sorrow or any distress. There is not even the usual student-teacher dialogue. At this moment याज्ञवल्क्य is neither a student, nor a teacher in the usual sense of the term, nor is he a product of worldly wisdom.

What we have here is a spontaneous and exuberant expression of the essential content of the original Vedic knowledge, as it is, presented in the freshness of an Upanishad, with no reference to any particular situation in life. For most of us, this Upanishad is as close to the pure Vedic education as we will ever have in our lives.

Ordinarily, Upanishads form part of the ज्ञानकाण्ड of the Veda, which deals primarily with ब्रह्मज्ञानं, whereas the preceding कर्मकाण्ड of the Veda deals with disciplines, rituals, meditations, values कर्म, कर्मफल, etc. Because this Upanishad is an overview of the entire Veda, it includes the essential content of both the कर्मकाण्ड as well as the ज्ञानकाण्ड of the Veda, in that sequence, and it places the content of the कर्मकाण्ड in its



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proper perspective in relation to the overriding purpose of life unfolded in the ज्ञानकाण्ड of the Veda.

Thus the first chapter of the Upanishad called शीक्षावल्ली, gives the essence of the कर्मकाण्ड of the Veda in terms of disciplines, rituals, meditations, values, code of conduct for daily life, etc. as वेद उपनिषत्, as मोक्ष साधनं - as means helpful for gaining the overriding purpose of life, namely मोक्ष - total fulfillment in life.

The second and the third chapters of the Upanishad, called ब्रह्मानन्दवल्ली and भृगुवल्ली respectively, give the essence of the ज्ञानकाण्ड of the Veda, in terms of knowledge of जीव, जगत् and ईश्वर, followed by the step-by-step process of contemplation on ब्रह्मन्, leading ultimately to मोक्ष.

Since this Upanishad deals with the entire Vedic education, it is considered to be a complete Upanishad, complete in the sense that it indicates all the necessary tools available to every person for one's continued spiritual progress towards gaining total fulfillment in life. Probably for this reason, this Upanishad is the most often recited one on all auspicious occasions, bringing the benefit of Vedic knowledge within the reach of ordinary people in daily life.

याज्ञवल्क्य presents this Upanishad, being totally under the inspiration, guidance and authority of the blessings of सूर्य देवता, who is indeed the presiding Deity for all enlightenment, and who is also the most prominent manifestation of Sri Narayana, the All-pervading महाविष्णु, as सूर्यनारायण. If the entire Veda is considered as a monograph, then the तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत् is its most effective abstract. It is with this understanding and reverential appreciation, that we will be reading this Upanishad in its entirety.

Now, about the mode of communication of Upanishad knowledge. Though this is a technical matter on teaching methodology, still it is good to recognize the methodology used in order to be able to appreciate the Upanishad mantras properly. A word can convey a meaning by two types of वृत्तिस - functional modes of thought forms. One is शक्ति वृत्ति where the word by its verbal dictionary meaning defines a thought or an object. This is the ordinary mode of communication used in the field of all objective knowledge. By this mode alone, one cannot understand Upanishads.

In the field of Upanishad knowledge, the mode of communication is through लक्षण वृत्ति,



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where communication is accomplished by indication through different pointers. There are two types of such pointers: they are **ततस्थ लक्षणं** and **स्वरूप लक्षणं**.

Let us understand these words. For example, consider the word **ब्रह्मन्**. **ब्रह्मन्** is not available as the meaning of any known word. It is not comparable to anything that we know. It does not have any attributes. It has no Guna. It has no action. Therefore, a word defining **ब्रह्मन्** is not there. Simply trying to use many words to define **ब्रह्मन्** does not really help. The only way knowledge about **ब्रह्मन्** can be communicated is through **लक्षणं वृत्ति** - by indication through appropriate pointers. There are two types of such pointers. They are **ततस्थ लक्षणं** and **स्वरूप लक्षणं**.

In the **ततस्थ लक्षणं**, **ब्रह्मन्** is indicated not by what It is, but how It is related to the things that we know. For example, when we say

यस्मात् जातं जगत् सर्वम्, तस्मै ब्रह्मणे नमः - "I do **नमस्कार** to That Brahman from which this entire creation is born". This statement does not tell what **ब्रह्मन्** is. It only tells that there is something called **ब्रह्मन्**, and That is the cause for this creation. Here again, we must understand that this creation is not an attribute of **ब्रह्मन्**, and **ब्रह्मन्** stands independent of creation. Such method of indicating **ब्रह्मन्** is called **ततस्थ लक्षणं** (**ततस्थ** means standing apart).

On the other hand, in **स्वरूप लक्षणं**, one indicates **ब्रह्मन्** as It is. For example, when the Upanishad says: **सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म**, **ब्रह्मन्** is **सत्यं**, That which is never subject to change, is **ज्ञानं** - That which is all knowledge Itself, is **अनन्तं** - That which is Limitlessness Itself. All these three indicators point to the same ONE **ब्रह्मन्**. Here the Upanishad indicates **ब्रह्मन्** Itself, as It is, and this method of indication is called **स्वरूप लक्षणं**.

In this method of indication, we do not talk about creation at all. Even though we do not talk about creation as such, **ब्रह्मन्** being **अनन्तं** - Limitless Itself, there can be nothing independent of **ब्रह्मन्**, which means all names and forms in this creation are non-separate from **ब्रह्मन्**, even though **ब्रह्मन्** Itself remains independent of this creation, which is subject to change from time to time. In this way, we gain knowledge of both **सत्यं** and **मिथ्या** and their relationships.



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In the तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत्, ब्रह्मन् is introduced by both types of indicators, namely तत्स्थ लक्षणं and स्वरूप लक्षणं, which is the extraordinary feature in the mode of communication used in this Upanishad.

With the above Introduction, we are now ready to go into the details of the Upanishad itself. As pointed out already, this Upanishad has three chapters, and each chapter has several small sections. Each chapter is called वल्ली, indicating a stage in the development of one's maturity, or spiritual growth. Each small section in each वल्ली is called an अनुवाक - a lesson, which means a step in one's progress in Vedic education. The entire Upanishad has a total of 31 such short lessons.

The first chapter is called शीक्षावल्ली. शीक्षा means basic training, which is the content of the first stage in Vedic education. The training here is for the overriding purpose of life, and that purpose is शीक्षा, which means शी - ईक्षा or शीर्ष ईक्षणं - शीक्षा, which is the same as संयक् दर्शनं - ability to see properly, clearly and totally, so that one ultimately gains an unobstructed vision of the truth of all existence.

As we may recall, the very first words of Sri Krishna in the भगवत् गीता, Chapter 1, is पश्य - see. See what? पश्यैतान् समवेतान् कुरुन् (G1 - 25). See all these कौरव s gathered together "कौरव s" also means "all कर्म born forms and names in this creation". To gain the ability to see them properly, clearly and totally is indeed the real purpose of training in any field of objective knowledge, which is part of the कर्मकाण्ड of the Veda.

Therefore, शीक्षावल्ली - the first chapter of this Upanishad, gives a concise summary of such शिक्षा - basic training techniques, taught in the original Vedic education for leading a meaningful life. The first chapter has 12 short lessons, each lesson teaching a major step in one's spiritual progress.

The first lesson in this chapter is शान्ति पाठ् Itself - the peace invocation which we heard at the very beginning. That means, an understanding and appreciation of the शान्ति mantras is Itself the first step in the basic training for संयक् दर्शनं - for a clear vision of the means for achieving the overriding purpose of life.

As we already know, the overriding purpose of life is gaining मोक्ष, gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं - recognition of परमेश्वर already in oneself and realizing one's identity with परमेश्वर Itself. And, the pre-requisite for such recognition and realization is diligent cultivation of कर्मयोग बुद्धि and अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति, which together constitute ईश्वर उपासन -



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worship of परमेश्वर, which means cultivation of ईश्वर आराधन बुद्धि, ईश्वर अर्पण बुद्धि and ईश्वर प्रसाद बुद्धि.

The method of training one's mind and बुद्धि for such ईश्वर उपासन - worship of परमेश्वर, is the very first mission of the कर्मकाण्ड of the Veda, and that is what is indicated by the opening शान्ति mantras in this Upanishad. Let us now try to understand and appreciate the mantras in the शान्ति पाठ itself.

The शान्ति पाठ starts with the mantra हरिः ॐ. हरिः ॐ is an extraordinary way to open the शान्ति पाठ of an Upanishad. In every other major Upanishad, the शान्ति पाठ starts with ॐ. Only in this Upanishad, the शान्ति पाठ starts with हरिः ॐ. That is because this Upanishad represents the entire Veda whose subject matter includes both जीव as an individual person and परमेश्वर, and their relationship. Let us briefly reflect on this opening mantra.

हरिः ॐ - is first and foremost a ध्यान मन्त्र, a mantra for repeated meditation and contemplation. A mantra is a manifestation of ईश्वर शक्ति - the infinite power of परमेश्वर. When meditated upon properly, the mantra uplifts one from fear of all kinds, and it inspires the person to greatness in action.

In practice, this is what happens. Through the हरिः ॐ mantra, I meditate on my own इष्ट देवता as परमेश्वर, in whatever form and name I am close to by my स्वभाव - by my innate or cultivated nature. By such meditation, I uplift my mind from external and internal world of plurality, and project and propel my mind towards परमेश्वर. And I do so with the help of two word pointers. The first pointer is हरिः and the second pointer is ॐ. These are two distinct pointers, but they point to the same one परमेश्वर I am trying to reach through my इष्ट देवता.

Now, what is the nature of that परमेश्वर and how do I recognize that परमेश्वर? As indicated earlier, Upanishads point to परमेश्वर as ॐ, and unfolds ॐ as सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म. That, indeed, should be the स्वरूप लक्षणं for परमेश्वर is understandable to me, on the basis of every kind of enquiry, which my own mind is capable of making. Therefore, I naturally identify ॐ with my own इष्ट देवता and through such identification, I project and propel my mind towards परमेश्वर.



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Thus ॐ, becomes a pointer to परमेश्वर through my own इष्ट देवता. One day I hope that I will indeed be able to reach परमेश्वर through ॐ, by ॐ and as ॐ Itself, meaning, as सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म. But, I must admit that in my present state of maturity, as a human being, That सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म is beyond my comprehension.

Recognizing my limitation, the Veda gives me another pointer by which I can project and propel my mind towards the same परमेश्वर. This pointer is well within the reach of my mind, and my mind can hold it, and hold on to it, even in my present state of maturity. That pointer is हरिः.

हरिः means हरति इति हरिः - The ONE who takes away, who carries away, who removes all my obstacles in daily life, all obstacles to संयक् दर्शनं - clarity of vision of परमेश्वर as सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म.

I know, even my limited mind knows, that परमेश्वर exists. That परमेश्वर whom the Upanishads call ॐ, does exist. How do I know? Because I recognize That परमेश्वर as हरिः ॐ - as the ONE who carries away and removes all my problems and obstacles in life, and I know that परमेश्वर by my special relationship with my own इष्ट देवता. What follows is just to give an illustration.

One day, I suddenly found myself in the midst of a difficult personal problem. I did not know what to do. Hence I did the only thing that I could do, namely, meditate on my इष्ट देवता as हरिः ॐ - as परमेश्वर. That is all I did. A little later, I suddenly found, that the problem just disappeared. How the problem appeared in the first place, how did it disappear later and why, and where did it go, I do not know, and I do not even care to know.

But I do recognize परमेश्वर by His Power in relation to me, as हरिः ॐ. I can meditate on परमेश्वर by His own power. My mind can touch परमेश्वर by the power of His own grace, and by that very power, I might one day be able to reach परमेश्वर as ॐ itself, as सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म itself. As for His infinite power and His infinite grace, how can I find words to express my deep appreciation and gratitude? I can only say हरिः ॐ with this prayer.

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये, अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
युयोधि अस्मन् जुहुराणं एनो, भूयिष्ठां ते नम उक्तिं विधेम ॥ (ईश - 18)



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O! Lord, please lead me through the right path in life, so that I can reach you and become ONE with you. That is what हरिः ॐ is, both a ध्यान mantra and प्रणव mantra, a mantra both for meditation, and recognition of the glory of परमेश्वर as ॐ Itself, as परमेश्वर Itself.

हरिः ॐ is also जप mantra. जप is repeated and continuous ध्यान - meditation. We must understand that mind is the cause for all positive and negative achievements in life. Mind is also the cause for all notions of bondage and liberation. That mind, as it is, is usually restless. It has to be brought under control, then projected and propelled towards परमेश्वर, already in oneself, to ultimately gain मोक्ष. To bring that mind under such control, requires effort in the form of अभ्यास (practice) and चैराग्य (conscious release from all obstructive thoughts, words and deeds). By the हरिः ॐ जप and by dwelling on the content of the जप mantra, the mind begins to realize the futility of the other kinds of efforts in life for gaining absolute happiness - total fulfillment. Thus हरिः ॐ is an effective जप mantra.

Through जप and ध्यान, the mind gets released from अहंकार - ego power, and gets absorbed in ईश्वर भक्ति, ईश्वर शरणागति - total surrender to परमेश्वर.

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मां एकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो माक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

Renounce all अहंकार - renounce all ego-power, renounce all notions of doership. Surrender to me totally. Get absorbed in ईश्वर ध्यान and do whatever has been left for you to do, with ईश्वर आराधन बुद्धि. I will uplift you from all your obstructions to मोक्ष, so assures Sri Krishna in the भगवत् गीता (G. 18-66).

Thus हरिः ॐ is ईश्वर शरणागति mantra. When ईश्वर शरणागति takes place, जीव, ब्रह्म ऐक्यम् takes place. The river of जीव reaches its destination and joins the ocean of ब्रह्मन्. The जीव and ब्रह्मन् become ONE at this junction. Such a junction is called संगमं. That is why, in our culture, every संगमं - wherever a river joins the ocean, is a sacred place, because it indicates जीव - ब्रह्म ऐक्यम्, where the pointer हरिः and the pointer ॐ have both reached their common destination. At this destination, हरिः and ॐ have become ONE. हरिः ॐ. Thus हरिः ॐ is संगमं mantra or जीव - ब्रह्म ऐक्यम् mantra, or मोक्ष mantra.



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When the river joins the ocean, the river discovers the ocean. Similarly, when जीव - ब्रह्म ऐक्यम् takes place, the जीव discovers ब्रह्मन्. What does it discover? ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वम् - ईश्वर is in everything. पूर्णं अदः पूर्णम् इदं - ईश्वर is everything. Thus ईश्वर is सर्वव्यापी - the all-pervading महाविष्णु, which means

यच्च किञ्चित् जगत् सर्वम् दृश्यते श्रूयतेऽपि वा ।

अन्तर्बहिश्च तत्सर्वम् व्याप्य नारायणः स्थितः ॥ (ना - 5)

Whatever there is in this universe, whatever I see, whatever I hear, whatever I perceive through my sense organs, inside and outside, all that is only Narayana. By the power of परमेश्वर, by the grace of परमेश्वर, I discover परमेश्वर as Narayana everywhere.

Thus हरिः ॐ is Narayana mantra - the divine power which leads to संयुक्त दर्शनं - clarity of vision of परमेश्वर as नारायण. When that clarity of vision occurs, I no longer entertain any individual identity of my own. I have no "my" notion any more. From that moment onwards

कायेन वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा, बुद्ध्याऽऽत्मना वा प्रकृतेः स्वभावात् ।
करोमि यद्यत्सकलं परस्मै, नारायणायेति समर्पयामि ॥

Whatever I do, by any means, is all ईश्वर कर्म. All that कर्म is dedicated to परमेश्वर as आवाहन, which means every कर्म I do is only oblation (आहुति) for परमेश्वर.

इदं न मम - There is nothing "mine" any more

सर्वम् वै पूर्णं स्वाहा - Everything is ONE with पूर्णम्. Everything is indeed Divine.

Thus हरिः ॐ is पूर्ण आहुति mantra. Therefore, let us understand and appreciate हरिः ॐ as a वेद महा मन्त्र - a great Veda mantra. It is ध्यान mantra, प्रणव mantra, जप mantra, ईश्वर शरणागति, संगम mantra, जीव - ब्रह्म ऐक्यम् mantra, नारायण mantra, पूर्ण आहुति mantra. Thus हरिः ॐ is an Upanishad in Itself. It is the essence of the तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत्, and as such, It is also the essence of the entire Veda. It is with That हरिः ॐ mantra the तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत् opens.

We will continue next time.