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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत्

Chapter 1

श्रीक्षावली

Lessons 11 and 12 (continued)

Volume 12

The Upanishad is now talking about वेद उपदेश mantras - the basic teachings of the कर्म काण्ड of the Vedas, part of which we saw last time. We now continue. These are the very words of the Vedas, delivered by the teacher to the Vedic students, on the eve of their departure from the गुरुकुल - the teacher-student institution. The teacher says:

ये के चास्मच्छेयाँ सो ब्राह्मणाः । तेषाम् त्वयाऽसनेन प्रश्वसितव्यम् - The teacher is now referring to ब्राह्मणस in the Vedic society. Let us now set aside for the time being, our own current notions about ब्राह्मण s, and just listen to what the Veda mantras say.

ब्राह्मणः - The ब्राह्मणाs, ये के च - whoever they are, whether they are born of ब्राह्मण parents or not. Let us understand this clearly. While the incidence of birth is certainly a help, it is never a necessary or sufficient qualification to make a person a ब्राह्मण. A ब्राह्मण is a ब्राह्मण only by virtue of one's गुण and कर्म. A ब्राह्मण has a preponderance of सत्त्व गुण, and he is totally committed to the pursuit of ब्रह्मज्ञानं and service to society in terms of ब्रह्मविद्या and ब्रह्मज्ञानं. Such ब्राह्मण s, ये के च - whoever they are

अस्मात् श्रेयाँसः - they are even superior to us, teachers, because such ब्राह्मणस are श्रेयाँसः - they not only have the wisdom of ब्रह्मज्ञानं, they are the very embodiments of ब्रह्मज्ञानं - the Veda Upanishad knowledge in its entirety. When such ब्राह्मणस come to you

त्वया आसनेन तेषां प्रश्वसितव्यं - they should be received and treated by you with the highest respect. How?

आसनेन - by offering them an appropriate seat, and by attending to their immediate needs. Probably such a ब्राह्मण has come to you under difficult circumstances, walking over a long distance in the hot sun, and he is probably tired. Or, he has just come to see you under his own inspiration. In any case, give him a seat, offer him a glass of water, etc. and attend to his immediate needs. Also



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

प्रश्नसितव्यं - listen to him attentively. There is nothing to discuss. Just listen to him attentively. Why? Because, what for a ब्राह्मण would come to you? A ब्राह्मण, by his very nature, is a fulfilled person. He has nothing to seek for himself. At all times, his thought word and deed are totally, and naturally, directed towards the welfare of the entire society.

A ब्राह्मण comes to you only in the discharge of his natural duties to the society, as ordained by परमेश्वर. His कर्म s are all ईश्वर कर्म s, and what are they?

ज्ञानं विज्ञानं आस्तिक्यं ब्रह्म कर्म स्वभावजं (G 18 - 42) - So says Sri Krishna. To spread the wisdom of the teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads, to uplift the moral and spiritual fiber of the society as a whole, to cultivate God consciousness and to uphold one's faith in oneself, and to help you to uplift yourself, by yourself, that is indeed the natural function of a ब्राह्मण in the Vedic society.

When such a ब्राह्मण comes to see you, certainly he seeks nothing for himself. Probably he has come to see you, to seek some help from you, by virtue of your station in life, for the welfare of the entire society, in which case, what do you do? Or alternatively, the ब्राह्मण has not come to see you to ask for anything. He has come to see you for reasons unknown to you. Because he, in fact, did not ask for anything. He just imparted some Vedic knowledge to you, and then went away.

After he is gone, you realize what the ब्राह्मण did. The only wealth the ब्राह्मण has is his Vedic knowledge. And that wealth he shared with you, seeking nothing in return. By such sharing, the ब्राह्मण did not become poorer either. You were ready for that knowledge; therefore, by listening to him attentively you were certainly inspired, inspired to greatness in action, you being a man of action.

There is, just now, in front of you, a worthy cause, which needs the help of your own wealth. By God's grace, you can help. Then, what do you do? With respect to such a situation, the Vedic command is:

श्रद्धया देयम् । अश्रद्धया अदेयम् । श्रिया देयम् । ह्रिया देयम् । भिया देयम् । संविदा देयम् ।

श्रद्धया देयम् - देयम् means दातव्यं. You must give your wealth, as much as you can, for the worthy cause, as an expression of your gratitude to Lord Almighty, for whatever you are, just as you are, by God's grace. That expression of gratitude itself will uplift you. That is the overriding purpose of all wealth, to give away for the worthy cause for the welfare of the entire society.



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

श्रद्धया देयम् - It is not enough that you just give. You must give with **श्रद्धा** - faith, faith in your own self, faith in the infinite power of truth and goodness, faith in the ultimate meaningfulness of life, faith in the impelling force behind your culture. Such faith is the spontaneous force behind your search for truth, already in yourself, as yourself. That is indeed **अस्तिव्य बुद्धि** - faith in God. It is with such faith that you must give. Such giving is **श्रद्धया देयम्**

अश्रद्धया अदेयम् - If you do not have that kind of faith, do not give, because you still have a lot to grow up. You must first develop **श्रद्धा** - faith in God, faith in yourself, before you can even qualify for giving, in a spiritual sense. Giving without **श्रद्धा** can only promote hypocrisy.

श्रिया देयम् - **श्री** means all forms of wealth. Every form of wealth is only meant for sharing for the welfare of the society as a whole. Therefore, share your wealth, in whatever form it is, with immense faith in the best and the highest in your own self.

ह्रिया देयम् - Give with **ह्रिया** - modesty. Modesty is total absence of any air of superiority or arrogance. The cause is **ईश्वर कार्य** and giving is **ईश्वर कर्म**. You should consider yourself extremely fortunate that you have been given the opportunity to serve as an instrument in this divine play of cause-effect relationships in this creation.

भिया देयम् - means **भयेन देयम्** - Give with a sense of fear, the fear is only with respect to one's own ego power. One never knows when one's ego power overwhelms one's **बुद्धि** - faculty of judgment.

Prayer is the only means of keeping one's ego under control. Therefore, one must always be prayerful in giving. Never get overpowered by your ego.

संविदा देयम् - **संविदा** is friendly help. Give friendly help to whoever needs it. Whether the help is in the form of advice at the right time, or a word of solace, or a word of encouragement, all such help is **दानम्** - a divine gift, which is what giving is. Whether it is your friend or foe, be helpful in times of need.

So much about **दानम्** - giving a divine gift. Then, the teacher calls attention to the Vedic commands about **कर्म विचिकित्सा** and **वृत्त विचिकित्सा**. **विचिकित्सा** means doubts, doubts about **कर्म** - what to do and what not to do, and doubts about **वृत्त** - codes of proper behavior under different circumstances of life. When you have such



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

doubts, the Vedic command is: "Seek the advice of ब्राह्मण^s, and do as the ब्राह्मण^s would do". This is how the Veda says that:

अथ यदि ते कर्म - विचिकित्सा वा, वृत्त - विचिकित्सा वा स्यात् ।
ये तत्र ब्राह्मणाः सम्मर्शिनः । युक्ता आयुक्ताः । अलूक्षा धर्मकामाः स्युः ।
यथा ते तत्र वर्तेरन् । तथा तत्र वर्तेथाः ॥

अथ - Then, for a person like you, who is living in the manner advised above, in terms of सत्यं, धर्मम्, and स्वाध्याय प्रवचन,

यदि ते - suppose, at any time for you, in your particular circumstances

कर्म विचिकित्सा वा, वृत्त - विचिकित्सा वा स्यात् - if you have doubts as to what action is proper, or what kind of behavior is proper.

Doubts about कर्म - action, and वृत्त - modes of behavior are always possible. Personal circumstances are always complex and indefinable, and it is often difficult to decide what is धर्म कर्म in one's particular circumstances, even for one who is familiar with the teachings of श्रुति^s and स्मृति^s. For one who has a limited knowledge of श्रुति^s and स्मृति^s, the decision is even more difficult.

The same thing applies to वृत्त also. वृत्त is आचार विषय - matters related to conduct in day-to-day activities, personal behavior in interaction with people, details regarding food, clothing, levels of cleanliness, modes of communication, etc. All these come under वृत्त. Doubts in these matters means you cannot decide for yourself what is proper and what is improper in precise terms, under one's immediate particular circumstances. If that is the case, then what should one do? The Veda says:

यथा ते (ब्राह्मणाः) तत्र वर्तेरन् । तथा तत्र वर्तेथाः

यथा ते ब्राह्मणाः - Just as those ब्राह्मण^s

तत्र वर्तेरन् - how they would behave in those circumstances

तथा - in the same manner

तत्र वर्तेथाः - may you also do likewise in those circumstances.

In matters of doubt, seek the advice of the ब्राह्मण^s, and do as they would do. Then, you will not go wrong. Why? Because of the very nature of ब्राह्मण^s, namely

ये तत्र ब्राह्मणाः सम्मर्शिनः - सम्यक् दर्शिनः - The ब्राह्मण^s endowed with ब्रह्मज्ञानं have clarity of vision. They are विचार समर्थाः. They have the natural capacity to analyze and



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

understand the situation in its essentials, and relate them to the overriding purpose of life. Therefore, they can, and they will, help you. Further, they are

युक्ताः - they are committed to कर्म and वृत्त - action and conduct, in terms of सत्यं and धर्मम्, which means मोक्ष. They are committed to the highest पुरुषार्थ - overriding purpose of life, which is the same for everybody. Further, they are

आयुक्ताः - which means अपर प्रयुक्ताः विवेकिनः, स्वतन्त्राः. They are committed to कर्म and वृत्त in terms of सत्यं and धर्मम्, not because they are indoctrinated or tutored by somebody else to be so, but because they are independent by virtue of their विवेक बुद्धि - a बुद्धि which is capable of discriminating between सत्यं and मिथ्या - truth and transient appearance.

Thus a ब्रह्मण is both a युक्त as well as an आयुक्त. Further, ब्रह्मण s are

अलूक्षाः means अरूक्षाः - क्रोध रहिताः. They are free from anger. अक्रूर मतयः - they are not crooked in their thinking. They are शान्त स्वभावाः - peaceful by nature, and hence they are not carried away by momentary passions. They are

धर्मकामाः स्युः (भवेयुः) - By nature, their desires (कामाः) are always consistent with धर्म, because of their total commitment to धर्म - propriety in daily life.

धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि (G 7 - 1) - In people who are totally committed to धर्म, I am their कामाs - I am their desires " says Sri Krishna. Therefore, by nature, the ब्रह्मणs are अकामहताः - they are not destroyed by their own राग-द्वेष forces, forces of likes and dislikes, passions and hatreds. The ब्रह्मणs by nature are always in unison with the all-pervading ब्रह्मन्, and hence always in unison with God consciousness.

Because of these reasons, the Vedic command is " When you have doubts about कर्म and वृत्त in daily life, seek the advice of ब्रह्मणs, and do as they would do in your circumstances. Then you can never go wrong".

Now, if one should ask the question " Where do I find such a ब्रह्मण in the world of today? The answer is : In the world of today, tomorrow and forever, please find that ब्रह्मण in the words of the भगवत् गीता. Read the भगवत् गीता again and again, and do as the Gita teachings direct you to do. Then you can never go wrong." At least that is my understanding and also experience.



The Vedic teaching continues:

अथाभ्याख्यातेषु । ये तत्र ब्राह्मणाः सम्मर्शिनः ।
युक्ता आयुक्ताः । अलूक्षा धर्मकामाः स्युः ।
यथा ते तत्र वर्तेरन् । तथा तत्र वर्तेथाः

अथ, अभ्याख्यातेषु

अभ्याख्याताः are those who are accused of wrong actions without proper or sufficient evidence.

तेषु - with respect to such people, what should be your attitude? The Vedic command is "Your attitude towards them should be the same as said above with respect to doubts on कर्म and वृत्त, namely, if you cannot decide for yourself, seek the advice of ब्रह्मणःs, and behave as they would in your circumstances, for the same reasons given earlier, namely, the ब्रह्मणःs who are totally committed to सत्यं, and धर्मम् at all times, and are also endowed with ब्रह्मज्ञानं, are naturally सम्मर्शिनः । युक्ता आयुक्ताः । अलूक्षा धर्मकामाः. Therefore, if you follow their advice, you can never go wrong.

All the above basic teachings of the Vedas go together. They are one and inseparable, and must be treated together as

एष आदेशः । एष उपदेशः । एषा वेदोपनिषत् ।
एतदनुशासनं । एवमुपासितव्यं । एवमुचैतदुपास्यं ॥

एष आदेशः means एषः आदेशः (note singular). That is the order, that is the command. Whose command?

वेद आदेशः - That is the command of the Vedas, which means

ईश्वर आदेशः - That is the command of परमेश्वर, which means that is the eternal order. That is सनातन धर्म.

एष उपदेशः means एषः उपदेशः (again singular). That is the teaching, teaching of the teacher to the students, teaching of the parents to the children. As one matures, parents and teacher merge into ईश्वर, and then the उपदेशः becomes ईश्वर उपदेशः - the teachings of ईश्वर to all humanity

एषा वेदोपनिषत् (again singular) - That is the essence of all the Vedas and Upanishads for the day-to-day life of every human being. Since this teaching is ज्ञान साधनं -



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

helpful for gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं, परमेश्वर ज्ञानं, आत्मज्ञानं - Self knowledge, It, in its entirety, is an Upanishad in Itself. Therefore this teaching is वेद उपनिषत्.

एतदनुशासनं - एतत् अनुशासनं (again singular) - That is divine declaration - ब्रह्मणो मुखः - The word of the Lord, the essence of all Upanishads with respect to daily life, in terms of both advice and command. That is the eternal law for daily life.

एवं उपासितव्यं - let these words of Divine Message - Divine Advice - Divine Command, sink into your mind and बुद्धि, as actions to be done, as the overriding rule of proper conduct in daily life. Do not forget them. Let me repeat for emphasis.

एवमुचैतदुपास्यं - एवं उ च एतत् उपास्यं - As actions to be done, all these command words, together, should be meditated upon, reflected upon, and absorbed by you. Do not forget today's lesson. It is all-important for your daily life.

Thus ends the वेद उपदेश mantras on the basic teachings of Vedic education, and also this 11th lesson of this chapter. This also brings to completion the overview of the essential content of the entire कर्म काण्ड of the Vedas, which makes this overview itself an Upanishad. Now this Upanishad concludes with the following उत्तर शान्ति - the concluding peace Invocation designated here as a distinct lesson, Lesson 12 of this chapter.

शं नो मित्रः शं वरुणः । शं नो भवत्वय्यमा ।
शं न इन्द्रो बृहस्पतिः । शं नो विष्णु रुरुक्रमः ।
नमो ब्रह्मणे । नमस्ते वायो ।
त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि ।
त्वामेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मावादिषं ।
ऋतमवादिषं । सत्यमवादिषं ।
तन्मामाचीत् । तद्भवत्कारमाचीत् ।
आचीन्मां । आचीद्वत्कारम् ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।
हरिः ॐ

As we may note here, these concluding शान्तिः mantras are the same as those in Lesson 1, except with respect to two words, which make the content of this lesson distinct from that of Lesson 1.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

What was said in Lesson 1 as चदिष्यामि (I would declare) is said here as अवादिषं (I have declared or I have been declaring). Again, what was said in Lesson 1 as अचतु (May (ब्रह्मन्) protect (me)) is said here as आसीत् (That ब्रह्मन्) has protected (me) or has been protecting (me)).

The significance of these two changes must be clearly understood.

Here is a Vedic student and ईश्वर भक्त, who lives a daily life of सत्यं, धर्मम् and स्वाध्याय (scripture reading) in accordance with the basic teachings of the वेद mantras. Both as a matter of self-discipline and natural daily lifestyle, he spends a few minutes every day, together with his entire family in front of the Alter of his इष्ट देवताs with a lighted lamp at the Puja spot of his own residence, and recites these वेद उपदेश mantras, with understanding, appreciation and devotion. As a result of this practice, he and his family enjoy a degree of peace, happiness and contentment in daily life, for which he is extremely grateful for his Vedic education. Therefore, during his daily prayer time, he spontaneously expresses his deep sense of gratitude to परमेश्वर, The Vedas and his Vedic education for everything he is blessed with.

What we are hearing in the शान्तिः mantras in this lesson, are his words of worship to परमेश्वर, together with his spontaneous expression of gratitude to the Vedas and the ईश्वर उपासन mantras for all the peace, happiness and sense of contentment he is blessed with in his daily life.

Thus, we must understand that while the शान्तिः mantras in Lesson 1 are words of pure ईश्वर उपासन (worship of परमेश्वर), the शान्तिः mantras in this lesson, which we are reading now, are the words of ईश्वर उपासन, together with a spontaneous expression of gratitude to Vedas and वेद उपदेश mantras from an ईश्वर भक्त who enjoys the fruits of his Vedic education in his daily life.

With this understanding, we may now go through these mantras briefly, since we have already seen the words in Lesson 1 in detail. The Vedic student and ईश्वर भक्त looks upon all his इष्ट देवता s as the very manifestations of ब्रह्मन् - the परमेश्वर. Therefore, he says

शं नो मित्रः शं वरुणः - may मित्र देवता and वरुण देवता, as the very manifestations of ब्रह्मन् - the परमेश्वर, be the bestowers of



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

शं सुखं - उत्तम सुखं - exalted happiness to us, who are praying in the pursuit of परमेश्वर Itself.

शं नो भवत्वयमा - may सूर्य देवता, as the very manifestation of ब्रह्मन् - the परमेश्वर, be the bestower of शं सुखं - उत्तम सुखं - exalted happiness to us

शं न इन्द्रो बृहस्पतिः - may इन्द्र देवता and बृहस्पति देवता, as the very manifestations of ब्रह्मन् - the परमेश्वर, be the bestowers of शं सुखं - उत्तम सुखं - exalted happiness to us

शं नो विष्णु रुरुक्रमः - may the all-pervading महाविष्णु, being the very manifestation of ब्रह्मन्, be the bestower of शं सुखं - उत्तम सुखं - exalted happiness to us.

नमो ब्रह्मणे - नमस्कार to ब्रह्मन्, the परमेश्वर. By doing नमस्कार to all my इष्ट देवताs, I do नमस्कार to ब्रह्मन् - the परमेश्वर.

नमस्ते वायो । त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि - O! Lord वायो, नमस्कार to you, you being the प्राण देवता, you are indeed प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मन्, ब्रह्मन् - the परमेश्वर, directly available for my immediate sense perception as प्राण

त्वामेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मावादिषं - O! Lord वायु, recognizing You as You are, I have been declaring in my daily prayers that You are indeed प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मन् to me, ब्रह्मन् - the परमेश्वर, directly available for my immediate sense perception as प्राण, as the very breath of life.

ऋतमवादिषं । सत्यमवादिषं - Fully recognizing ब्रह्मन् - the परमेश्वर in ऋतं and सत्यं - proper conduct, ethical behavior and good moral character in daily life, and also being truthful in thought, word and deed at all times, I have always declared, and I have been declaring in my daily prayers that ऋतं and सत्यं are indeed प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मन् to me, ब्रह्मन् - the परमेश्वर directly available to me for my immediate sense perception in daily life.

तत् मां आवीत् । तत् वक्तारं आवीत् - That प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मन्, whom I recognize in my प्राण, That प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मन् whom I recognize in ऋतं and सत्यं in daily life, has protected me, has always been protecting me (from all dangers, all fears and all possible degradations in daily life). So that ब्रह्मन् is, has always been, to the teacher of Vedic knowledge as well.



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

As an expression of my profound gratitude to That ब्रह्मन् – the परमेश्वर, and as an expression of my profound sense of gratitude to the Vedas and the Vedic education as ब्रह्मणो मुखं – as the very words of परमेश्वर itself, I wish to say again

आवीत् मां । आवीत् वक्तारम् – that प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मन् whom I recognize in my प्राण, That प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मन् whom I recognize in ऋतं and सत्यं in daily life, has protected me, has always been protecting me (from all dangers, all fears, and all possible degradations in daily life) so that ब्रह्मन् is and has always been, to the teacher of Vedic knowledge as well.

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

नमस्कार to ॐ शान्तिः-प्राण स्वरूप

ऋत स्वरूप सत्यस्वरूप प्रत्यक्ष ब्रह्मन् ॥

हरिः ॐ

Thus ends the first chapter of तैत्तिरीय Upanishad, शीक्षावल्ली ॥

We will go to Chapter 2 next time.