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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

Kaivalya Upanishad

कैवल्य उपनिषत्

Volume 1

यं ब्रह्मा वरुणेन्द्र रुद्रमरुतः स्तुन्वन्ति दिव्यैः स्तवैः
yaṁ brahmā varuṇendra rudramarutaḥ stunvanti divyaiḥ stavaiḥ
वेदैः साङ्गपद क्रमोपनिषदैः गायन्ति यं सामगाः
vedaiḥ sāṅgapada kramopaniṣadaiḥ gāyanti yaṁ sāmagāḥ
ध्यानावस्थित तद्गतेन मनसा पश्यन्ति यं योगिनः
dhyānāvasthita tadgatena manasā paśyanti yaṁ yoginaḥ
यस्यान्तं न विदुः सुरासुरगणाः देवाय तस्मै नमः ॥
yasyāntaṁ na viduḥ surā surgaṇāḥ devāya tasmai namaḥ ॥
हरिः ओम्
hariḥ om

As indicated last time, we now commence our readings on a short Upanishad called कैवल्य उपनिषत् *kaivalya upaniṣat* from Atharva Veda, in lieu of the necessary contemplation on the content of the ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge to which we have been exposed in the current cycle of our scripture readings.

कैवल्य *kaivalya* means Absolute Oneness - The state of being पूर्णम् *pūrṇam* - The Whole. Thus कैवल्य *kaivalya* is simply another name for मोक्ष *mokṣa* - The परम पुरुषार्थ *param puruṣārtha*, The Ultimate Goal of human existence, namely, gaining परमात्म स्वरूप *paramātma svarūp* - Self Realization, Self-Recognition, as ब्रह्मन् *brahman* Itself, as परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself, as परमात्मा *paramātmā* already in oneself.

As usual, the Upanishad opens with this familiar शान्ति पाठ *śānti pāṭh* - Peace Invocation, as follows:

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः भद्रं पश्येम अक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
om bhadraṁ karṇebhiḥ śrīṇuyāma devāḥ bhadraṁ paśyema
akṣabhiryajatrāḥ ।
स्थिरैः अङ्गैः तुष्टुवांसस्तनूभिः व्यशेम देव हितं यदायुः ॥



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

sthiraīḥ aṅgaiḥ tuṣṭuvāmsa stanūbhiḥ vyaśema deva hitaṁ yadāyuh ॥

स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।

svasti na indro vṛddha śravāḥ svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ ।

स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ॥

svasti nastārksyo ariṣṭanemiḥ svasti no bṛhaspatirdadhātu ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

We have already seen this शान्ति मन्त्र *śānti manta* in मुण्डक उपनिषत् *muṇḍaka upaniṣat* in detail. Briefly recalling, we do नमस्कार *namaskar* to all our इष्ट देवता *iṣṭa devatās* - The Presiding Deities of all our organs of perception and action, and offer Them a prayer in these words:

देवाः *devāḥ* - O! Gods

भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम *bhadraṁ karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyāma* - May we hear through our ears, those sounds and sanctifying words, which reveal, and help one to recognize आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self I in every self, including oneself, which revelation and recognition give one मोक्ष *mokṣa* - Absolute Liberation from all limitations. May we become qualified to listen, understand, appreciate and grasp the content of the Upanishad words.

भद्रं पश्येम अक्षभिः यजत्राः *bhadraṁ paśyema akṣabhiḥ yajatrāḥ* - We being committed to the pursuit of Upanishad Knowledge, may we be able to see with our own eyes, with our own बुद्धि *buddhi*, what is भद्रं *bhadraṁ*. May we be able to recognize परमेश्वर *parameśvar* in everything in this creation, including our own selves, by our own eyes, by our own बुद्धि *buddhi*, through these Upanishad words.

स्थिरैः अङ्गैः तुष्टुवांसः तनूभिः *sthiraīḥ aṅgaiḥ tuṣṭuvānsaḥ tanūbhiḥ* - Keeping the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* free from restlessness and distractions of any kind, may we be able to praise, by words, the Glory of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, which reveal The Nature of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself.

व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः *vyaśema devahitaṁ yadāyuh* - As long as we live, may we enjoy good health, to be able to engage ourselves in actions which are totally in accordance with Vedic Teachings, so that we can really grasp Upanishad Knowledge.



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः *svasti na indro vṛddhaśravāḥ* - May Lord इन्द्र *indra* bless us to be able to gain ब्रह्मानन्द *brahmānand* - The Exalted

स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः *svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ* - May Lord Sun bless us with the ability to understand, appreciate and enjoy Upanishad Knowledge.

स्वस्ति नः ताक्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः *svasti naḥ tārkṣyo ariṣṭanemiḥ* - May Lord Vishnu bless us with a clear obstruction-free path in our pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* Knowledge.

स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु *svasti no bṛhaspatirdadhātu* - May बृहस्पति *bṛhaspati*, the teacher of all देवास *devās*, bless us with a good teacher for the pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* Knowledge.

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः *om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ*

May we enjoy freedom from all the three kinds of obstructions to the study of this Upanishad, namely,

- ✚ freedom from unknown and unpredictable obstructions over which we have no control
- ✚ freedom from obstructions from our immediate surroundings over which we have no control, and
- ✚ freedom from obstructions from within ourselves, such as ill-health, restlessness of mind, etc.

That is the prayer.

Now, the Upanishad begins. Like every other Upanishad, here also a teacher and student are involved. The student seeks knowledge and the teacher responds. The student's request and the teacher's response, together constitute the Upanishad. This is how the Upanishad starts.

अथ आश्वलायनः भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनं उपसमेत्य उवाच
atha āśvalāyanaḥ bhagavantaṁ parmeṣṭīnaṁ upasametya uvāca

अथ *atha* - Then

अथ *atha* is a very meaningful Upanishad word. It means, through proper preparation, when one has become ready for the knowledge that one is seeking



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

अथ *atha* - Then

अथ आश्वलायनः भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनं उपसमेत्य उवाच *atha āśvalāyanah bhagavantam parmeṣṭinam upasametya uvāca* - Ashvalayana, the student, seeking knowledge, approaching respectfully and reverentially his परमगुरु *paramguru* - The Great Teacher, said as follows:

In the Vedantic literature, आश्वलायन *āśvalāyana* is well-known as a great teacher of Rig Veda. Even today, many who belong to the tradition of Rig Veda follow आश्वलायन सूत्र *āśvalāyana sūtra* - the Vedic rituals formulated by Rishi Ashvalayana. Before he became a great teacher himself, Ashvalayana is said to have received his education in ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* from ब्रह्माजी *brahmājī* - The Creator Himself, who is referred here as भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनं *bhagavantam parmeṣṭinam*, as परमगुरु *paramguru* - The Great Teacher. On the other hand, in our context here, Ashvalayana could be any well-qualified student, seeking knowledge from any distinguished teacher who can always be referred to as परमगुरु *paramguru* - as a mark of respect. Therefore, let us understand that Ashvalayana, a well-qualified student, approached a distinguished teacher, and said as follows:

अधीहि भगवन् ब्रह्मविद्यां चरिष्टां
adhīhi bhagavan brahma vidyām variṣṭām
सदा सद्भिः सेव्यमानां निगूढाम्
sadā sadbhiḥ sevyamānām nigūḍham
यया अचिरात् सर्वपापं व्यपोह्य
yayā acirāt sarvapāpam vyapohya
परात्परं पुरुषं याति विद्वान् ॥
parātparam puruṣam yāti vidvān ॥

Addressing the teacher as भगवन् *bhagavan* - O! Lord. O! Respected teacher

अधीहि *adhīhi* - Please teach me (please bring into my बुद्धि *buddhi*, what?)

अधीहि ब्रह्मविद्यां *adhīhi brahma vidyām* - Please teach me Brahma Vidya.



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

It is here that the initial word "अथ *atha* - Then" becomes meaningful. The student knows exactly what he wants from the teacher, because of his prior preparations, discipline and readiness for the knowledge he seeks. Why does he want this knowledge? Because,

वरिष्ठां *variṣṭāṃ* means श्रेष्ठां *śreṣṭhāṃ*. Brahma Vidya is the most exalted among all forms of knowledge, since It is मोक्ष शास्त्र *mokṣa śāstra* - It is about the highest पुरुषार्थ *puruṣārtha* - the highest purpose of human existence, and It is about The Absolute Reality behind all forms and names of transient reality. What exactly he wants to know about Brahma Vidya?

सदा सद्भिः सेव्यमानां *sadā sadbhiḥ sevyamānām* - He wants to know That knowledge which is constantly being sought by सद्भिः *sadbhiḥ* - all सत् पुरुष *sat puruṣas*, all people who are blessed with the predominance of सत्त्व गुण *satva guṇa* - all the highest among ईश्वर भक्त *īśvar bhaktas* - devotees of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* The only thing such people constantly seek is मोक्ष *mokṣa* - Total Union with परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself, nothing else and nothing less.

निगूढाम् *nigūdhām* - That परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, That destination they seek, appears deeply hidden somewhere beyond the reach of one's sense organs. Therefore, the student seeks the help of the teacher to give him That knowledge.

यया *yayā* - by which, by which knowledge

अचिरात् *acirāt* - quickly, naturally and spontaneously

सर्व पापं व्यपोह्य *sarva pāpaṃ vyapohya* - totally exhausting, totally eliminating, all पाप *pāpas*, all वासन *vāsanās* of past कर्म *karmas* obstructing the realization of That Knowledge

विद्वान् याति *vidvan yāti* - the विद्वान् *vidvan*, the one who is blessed with That Knowledge, goes to gain, which means reaches

परात्परं पुरुषं *paratparaṃ puruṣaṃ* - That परात्पर पुरुष *paratpara puruṣa*, That उत्तम पुरुष *uttama puruṣa*, The पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottama*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Thus Ashvalayana requests his teacher to teach him That ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* Knowledge by which he can quickly overcome all obstacles to the realization of That Knowledge and reach That परात्पर पुरुष *paratpara puruṣa*, The पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottama*, The परमेश्वर ज्ञानं *parameśvar jñānaṁ* Itself, quickly, naturally and spontaneously (अचिरात् *acirāt*).

There are two words here, namely, अचिरात् *acirāt* and परात्पर पुरुष *paratpara puruṣa*, which we must understand clearly.

अचिरात् *acirāt* means "quickly, naturally and spontaneously with no time lag in between". It always takes time and effort to create the conditions necessary for gaining any knowledge. But when the conditions are proper, the knowledge itself takes place अचिरात् *acirāt* - naturally and spontaneously, because ज्ञानं *jñānaṁ* is वस्तु तन्त्रं *vastu tantraṁ* - knowledge is centered on वस्तु *vastu* - the object. When the object of knowledge, and the means of gaining that knowledge are properly aligned, knowledge itself always takes place अचिरात् *acirāt* - spontaneously, independent of one's will. For example, if an object is in front of my eyes, and if my mind and eyes are properly aligned towards that object, I see the object as it is, naturally and spontaneously, whether I want to see it or not.

The situation is different with respect to कर्म *karma* - any action, because कर्म *karma* is पुरुष तन्त्रं *puruṣa tantraṁ*. कर्म *karma* is centered on the will of the person. One may will to do the कर्म *karma*, or not to do the कर्म *karma*, or do it in a different way. In each case, the result also is different.

Now about परात्पर पुरुष *parātpara puruṣa*. We talked about पर *para* and अपर *apara* before. पर *para* is Unmanifest, and अपर *apara* is manifest. For example, a huge tree can come from a tiny seed, but one cannot see the tree in the seed. Therefore, with respect to the tree, which is अपर *apara* - manifest, the seed is पर *para* - unmanifest.

But each seed is पर *para* only with respect to a particular tree. There are countless trees and hence countless seeds, which means, there are countless परs *paras* - countless unmanifest beings. If there is ONE unmanifest पर *para*, which includes all



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

seeds in ONE, all the countless परs *paras* and अपरs *aparas* in ONE, That all-inclusive ONE पर *para* is परात्पर *parātpara*. As we have seen in the पुरुषोत्तम योग अक्षर *puruṣottama yoga akṣar* of भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā*, That परात्पर पुरुष *parātpara puruṣa* is पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottama*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, which includes both क्षर *kṣar* and अक्षर *akṣar*, जगत् *jagat* and माया *māyā*, and at the same time transcends both. That पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottamais* परात्पर पुराष *parātpara puruṣa*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, The Absolute Reality of all that exist.

Here Ashvalayana is asking his teacher to teach him how to reach That परात्पर पुरुष *parātpara puruṣa* - That Unmanifest, All-inclusive Absolute Reality अचिरात् *acirāt* - naturally and spontaneously. The teacher responds by saying:

तस्मै स हो वाच पिता महश्च
tasmai sa ho vāca pitā mahāśca
श्रद्धा भक्ति ध्यान योगात् अवैहि ॥ 2
śraddhā bhakti dhyāna yogāt avaihi ॥

सः पितामहः च तस्मै उवाच ह *saḥ pitāmahaḥ ca tasmai uvāca ha* - The Great Teacher (परमगुरु *paramguru* - ब्रह्माजी *brahmājī* - पितामह *pitāmaha*) gladly accepting Asvalayana as a student, said to him as follows:

श्रद्धा भक्ति ध्यान योगात् अवैहि *śraddhā bhakti dhyāna yogāt avaihi* - The Knowledge you are seeking is something that you have to learn to know, you have to learn to discover, by yourself, in yourself, through श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, भक्ति *bhakti* and ध्यान योग *dhyāna yoga*, all together, each being पूर्णम् *pūrṇam* - in full measure.

श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is पूर्ण श्रद्धा *pūrṇa śraddhā* - Absolute Faith in yourself, Absolute Faith in the Knowledge that you seek, and Absolute Faith in your ability to gain That Knowledge and reach your Destination. भक्ति *bhakti* is पूर्ण ईश्वर भक्ति *pūrṇa īśvara bhakti*, rooted in Upanishad Knowledge on ईश्वर *īśvar*, together with the attitude of पूर्ण ईश्वर शरणागति *pūrṇa īśvar śaraṇāgati*; and ध्यान योग *dhyāna yoga* is constant meditation and contemplation on That परात्पर पुरुष *parātpara puruṣa*, The पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottama*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*.



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

As Sri Krishna says, मच्चित्तः सततं भव *maccittaḥ satatam bhava* - Be in परमेश्वर *parameśvar*-consciousness at all times. Such ध्यान योग *dhyāna yoga* itself is पूर्ण श्रद्धा *pūrṇa śraddha* and पूर्ण ईश्वर भक्ति *pūrṇa īśvar bhakti*, which makes श्रद्धाभक्तिध्यान योग *śraddhā bhakti dhyāna yoga* as ONE (singular).

Thus, through such श्रद्धाभक्तिध्यान योग *śraddhā bhakti dhyāna yoga*, all together, you have to learn to discover That परात्पर पुरुष *parātpara puruṣa*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, by yourself, in yourself. Further, you must know:

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन
na karmaṇā na prajayā dhanena
त्यागेन एके अमृतत्वं आनशुः ।
tyāgena eke amṛtatvaṁ ānaśuḥ ।
परेण नाकं निहितं गुहायां
pareṇa nākaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyām
विभ्राजते यत् यततो विशन्ति ॥ 3
vibhrājate yat yatato viśanti ॥ 3
वेदान्त विज्ञान सुनिश्चितार्थाः
vedānta vijñāna suniścītārthāḥ
सन्यास योगात् यतयः शुद्ध सत्त्वाः
sanyāsa yogāt yatayaḥ śuddha satvāḥ
ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्त काले
te brahmalokeṣu parānta kale
परामृतात् परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे ॥ 4
parāmṛtāt parimucyanti sarve ॥ 4

(See also मुण्डक *muṇḍaka* 3 - 2 - 6)

These two verses are very well known in Vedānta. They are often used to welcome people with scholarship and maturity in वेदान्त विज्ञानं *vedānta vijñānam* - Upanishad Knowledge. In the context here, the Teacher says:

The Destination that you want to reach, namely The Abode of That परात्पर पुरुष *parātpar puruṣa*, The पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottama*, That वैष्णवं परमं पदं *vaiṣṇavaṁ*



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

parmaṁ padaṁ, is अमृतत्वं *amṛtatvaṁ* - The state of Immortality, The state of Total Freedom from any change, time and death.

अमृतत्वं आनशुः *amṛtatvaṁ ānaśuḥ* - That state of Immortality is gained, is reached
न कर्मणा *na karmaṇā* - not by doing any action

न प्रजया धनेन *na prajayā dhanena* - not by the services of other people, nor by any kind of material wealth. But it is gained

त्यागेन एके *tyāgena eke* - only by त्याग बुद्धि *buddhi* - an attitude of renunciation, by giving up identifications with one's body, mind and intellect, and कर्म's *karmas* and कर्म फल's *karma phalas* - actions and their results, and seeking only the grace of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* to reach परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself. As Sri Krishna says:

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मां एकं शरणं व्रज *sarvadharmān paritajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*

Thus, only the attitude of total identification with परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, through पूर्ण ईश्वर शरणागति बुद्धि *pūrṇa īśvar śaraṇāgati buddhi*, can one reach That अमृतत्वं *amṛtatvaṁ* - state of Immortality. What is That state of Immortality?

परेण नाकं *pareṇa nākaṁ* - It is That state which is far higher than all the heavenly joys. It is The State of ब्रह्मानन्द *brahmānanda* - Eternal Infinite Bliss. Where is That State?

निहितं गुहायां *nihitaṁ guhāyām*- That state of ब्रह्मानन्द *brahmānanda* lies hidden in the cave of one's own बुद्धि *buddhi*, in the region of one's बुद्धि *buddhi* not accessible to one's recognition because of internal obstructions

विभ्राजते यत् *vibhrājate yat* - That which shines in your बुद्धि *buddhi* as "Pure I", "The Self I", without any उपाधि *upādhi*, like body, mind, etc., is indeed That परेण नाकं *pareṇa nākaṁ*, ब्रह्मानन्दं *brahmānandam* - The परात्पर पुराष *paratpara puruṣa*, The पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottama*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, Which is what you want to reach, and which is what you have to learn to recognize, in yourself, by yourself.



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

यतयः विशन्ति *yatayah viśanti* - The Enlightened Ones, the rishis, striving through पूर्ण श्रद्धा ज्ञानलक्षणईश्वर भक्ति *pūrṇa śraddhā jñāna lakṣaṇa īśvara bhakti*, ध्यान योग *dhyāna yoga* and त्याग बुद्धि *tyāga buddhi*, they are the ones who reach and enter into That state of ब्रह्मानन्द *brahmānandam*, That वैष्णवं परमं पदं *vaiṣṇavam paramam padam*, That अमृतत्वं *amṛtatvam*, That state of Eternal Immortal Bliss. Now, who are those यतयः *yatayah* - The Enlightened Ones? How did they become महात्माs *mahatmās* and rishis? Those Enlightened Ones are:

वेदान्त विज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः *vedānta vijñāna suniścitarthāḥ* - those who have well ascertained, doubt-free, Vedantic Knowledge, gained through सन्यासयोगात् यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः *sanyāsa yogāt yatayah śuddhasatvāḥ*- their exclusive pursuit of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, by virtue of their पूर्ण श्रद्धा *pūrṇa śraddhā*, ज्ञानलक्षणईश्वर भक्ति *jñāna lakṣaṇa īśvara bhakti*, ध्यान योग *dhyāna yoga* and त्याग बुद्धि *tyāga buddhi*, with their अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, purified by their कर्म योग *karma yoga* way of life.

ते *te* - Those Enlightened Ones

ब्रह्मलोकेषु *brahma lokeṣu* - already being ONE with ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, which means, having already gained मोक्ष *mokṣa* in this life itself, having already reached The Abode of परात्पर पुरुष *paratpara puruṣa*, The पुरुषोत्तम *puruṣottama*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar* already in themselves.

परान्तकाले *parāntakāle* - at the time of the natural death of their body vehicles

परामृतात् *parāmṛtāt* - because of their already gained State of Immortality

परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे श्रद्धा भक्ति ध्यान *parimucyanti sarve śraddhā bhakti dhyāna* - they are totally liberated from all their कर्मs *karmas*, both प्रारब्ध कर्मs *prārabdha karmas* and संचित कर्मs *sañcita karmas* - both their already begun कर्मs *karmas* in their present life and their accumulated, not yet fructified past कर्मs *karmas*, which means, all their वासनाs *vāsanās* - lingering impressions, having disappeared, they are



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

free from any rebirth. They are Immortal. They have already become ONE with परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* forever. Thus, the Teacher tells Ashvalayana:

The Knowledge that you are seeking is something that you have to learn to gain through श्रद्धा *śraddha*, भक्ति *bhakti* and ध्यान योग *dhyāna yoga* - all in ONE. That which shines in your बुद्धि *buddhi* as "I", The Pure I, independent of your body, mind, intellect and other limitations, That Pure I is indeed That परात्पर पुराष *paratpara puruṣa* - The Unmanifest, All-inclusive परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* which you are seeking, and which you have to learn to recognize by your own self through ध्यान योग *dhyāna yoga* - meditation and contemplation on That परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* Itself.

So saying, the Teacher then proceeds to describe how to get started in such ध्यान योग *dhyāna yoga*, which we will see next time.