



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

कठोपनिषत्
Katopanishad
Section 1
Volume 1

ॐ नमो भगवते वैवस्वताय मृत्यवे ।
om namo bhagavate vaivasvatāya mṛtyave ।
ब्रह्मविद्याचार्याय नचिकेतसे च ॥
brahma vidyācāryāya naciketase ca ॥

ॐ सह नावतु सह नौ भुनक्तु ।
om sahanāvavatu saha nau bhunaktu ।
सह वीर्यं करवावहै तेजस्यिनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥
saha vīryam karavāvahai tejasvi nāvadhītam astu mā vidviṣāvahai ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

प्रथमा वल्ली
prathamā vallī

ॐ उशन् ह वै वाजश्रवसः सर्ववेदसं ददौ ।
om uśan ha vai vājaśravasah sarvavedasam dadau ।
तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस ॥ 1 - 1
tasya ha naciketā nāma putra āsa ॥

तँ ह कुमारं सन्तं दक्षिणासु नीयमानासु ।
taṁ ha kumārā santam dakṣiṇāsu nīyamānāsu ।
श्रद्धा आविवेश सो अमन्यत ॥ 1 - 2
śraddhā āviveśa so amanyata ॥

Today we commence our readings on कठोपनिषत् *kāthopaniṣat* (also known as काठक उपनिषत् *kāthak upaniṣat*) as presented by कठ महर्षि *kātha maharṣi* in यजुर-वेद *yajura-veda*.



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Together with ईशावास्य उपनिषत् *isāvāsya upaniṣat* and केनोपनिषत् *kenopaniṣat* which we have already read, कठोपनिषत् *kathopaniṣat* is also traditionally considered to be one of the essential Upanishads to be studied in the pursuit of ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā*.

This Upanishad starts with the story of an event which must have happened so long ago, that it was a legend even in the times of Rig Veda. It is known that this story appears with different details in all the four Vedas, which fact authenticates the extraordinary nature and the scriptural significance of the event involved.

In any case, the story of this event provides the context for this Upanishad. The story itself is a simple one. A young boy, probably no more than 12 years old, by name Nachiketa, goes to Lord Yama - the Lord of Death, and seeks from him आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* - SELF Knowledge. Thus the Upanishad is a dialog between Nachiketa as the student, and Lord Yama as the teacher of ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā*. After making sure that Nachiketa has the necessary qualifications for gaining this knowledge, Lord Yama teaches him ब्रह्मज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*.

On gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* from the teachings of Lord Yama, Nachiketa becomes the very embodiment of that knowledge, which means Nachiketa gains मोक्ष *mokṣa*. The Upanishad concludes by saying that anyone can likewise gain मोक्ष *mokṣa*, which means the teachings of Lord Yama constitute an Upanishad open to any qualified person who seeks ब्रह्मज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* - who seeks मोक्ष *mokṣa*.

This Upanishad has a total of 120 verses in six वल्लीs *vallis*, meaning six sections. Sections 1, 2 and 3 are grouped under Chapter 1, and sections 4, 5 and 6 are grouped under Chapter 2. Lord यम's *yama's* discourse on ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* itself starts only in verse 44, which is in the middle of Section 2. The first 43 verses in the Upanishad serve only to establish the context, in which Nachiketa emerges as a boy of extraordinary character, mental discipline, and total commitment to knowledge and service at the highest level of maturity, which makes the context itself an inseparable part of the Upanishad.

Every Upanishad is unique in terms of context, scope of details, focus of attention and style of communication. Upanishad does not waste words. Upanishad is not telling us a story. Upanishad communicates knowledge, and we must understand that knowledge. We will try to understand this Upanishad as well as we can.



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

A lot of patience, time and effort is necessary on our part to orient our mental environment to the mood and pace of this Upanishad. Only then can we appreciate and try to grasp the essential content of every word of this Upanishad in its entirety.

With this introduction, let us now say नमस्कार *namaskār* to Lord यम *yama* and Nachiketa in the traditional manner, and begin reading the Upanishad, as it is in कृष्ण यजुर वेद *kṛṣṇa yajur veda*.

ॐ नमो भगवते वैवस्वताय मृत्यवे ।
om namo bhagvate vaivasvatāya mṛtyave ।
ब्रह्म विद्याचार्याय नचिकेतसे च ॥
brahma vidyācāryāya naciketase ca ॥

ॐ *om* is मङ्गल वचनं *maṅgala vacanam* - word of auspicious beginning. ॐ *om* is शब्दरूप प्रत्यक्ष ब्रह्मन् *śabdārūpa pratyakṣa brahman*.

As unfolded by the माण्डूक्य उपनिषत् *māṇḍūkya upanaṣat* (which we may read sometime in our continuing program) the sound ॐ *om* has within it, the लक्षण *lakṣaṇa* of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* the reflection of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, so that contemplation on ओंकार शब्द *omkār śabd* - the sound of OM, reveals ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam* - knowledge of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. ॐ *om* is not simply a word for ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. The ओंकार शब्द *omkār śabd* - The sound of OM is a means for recognition of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*.

On such recognition, OM is ब्रह्मन् *brahman* itself, OM is परमेश्वर *parameśvar* itself, OM is ONESELF, the आत्मा *ātmā*, the SELF in every self.

Uttering the sound OM with भक्ति *bhakti*, श्रद्धा *śraddha* and an attitude of contemplation – ईश्वर ध्यानं *īśvara dhyānam*, one spontaneously touches ब्रह्मन् *brahman* through ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam*. One gains ब्रह्म संस्पर्शं *brahma saṁsparśam* that Sri Krishna talked about in ध्यान योग *dhyāna yoga*. Consequently, one spontaneously recognizes OM as परमेश्वर *parameśvar* within oneself and also within everything else that exists in this creation. Thus one recognizes OM as ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं *īśāvāsyam idam sarvaṁ* - ॐ इति इदं सर्वं



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

om iti idāṃ sarvaṃ - OM is all this, as we have seen in ईशावास्य उपनिषत् *īśāvāsya upaniṣat* and तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत् *taittirīya upaniṣat* respectively.

Such recognition of OM is Auspiciousness Itself - आनन्द स्वरूप ब्रह्मन् *ānand svarūp brahman*. Uttering the ओंकार शब्द *ōmkār śabd* - the sound of OM with such recognition of OM is मङ्गल वचनं *maṅgala vacanaṃ*. With that मङ्गल वचनं, *maṅgala vacanaṃ*, we commence our Upanishad reading.

ॐ भगवते मृत्यवे नमः *om bhagavate mṛtyave namaḥ* - do नमस्कार् *namaskār* to भगवान् मृत्यु देवता *bhagvān mṛtyu devatā* meaning यम देवता *yama devatā* - Lord मृत्यु *mṛtyu*, Lord यम *yama* - Lord of Death. Lord of Death is the very embodiment of knowledge of सत्यं *satyaṃ* and मिथ्या *mithyā* - that which is eternal and that which is transient, उत्पत्ति *utpatti* and विनाश *vināśa* - birth and death, and कर्म *karmas* and कर्मफल *karmaphalas* - actions and results of actions of all beings. Lord मृत्यु *mṛtyu* is the Lord of Absolute Justice. नमस्कार् *namaskār* to that भगवान् मृत्यु *bhagvān mṛtyu* - Lord यम *yama*.

ॐ भगवते, वैवस्वताय मृत्यवे नमः *om bhagavate, vaivasvatāya mṛtyave namaḥ* - नमस्कार् *namaskār* to भगवान् मृत्यु *bhagvān mṛtyu* - Lord यम *yama* who is the son of विवस्वान् *vivasvān*, the सूर्य देवता *sūrya devatā* - Lord Sun.

ॐ भगवते वैवस्वताय मृत्यवे ब्रह्म विद्याचार्याय नमः *om bhagavate vaivasvatāya mṛtyave brahma vidyācāryāya namaḥ* - नमस्कार् *namaskār* to भगवान् मृत्यु *bhagvān mṛtyu* - Lord यम *yama*, son of विवस्वान् *vivasvān*, and also who is the teacher of ब्रह्म विद्या *brahma vidyā* - आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṃ* - Self Knowledge in this Upanishad.

ॐ नचिकेतसे च नमः *om naciketase ca namaḥ* - नमस्कार् *namaskār* to Nachiketa also, who is the शिष्य *śiṣya* - the student seeking and receiving Self Knowledge from Lord यम *yama* as the teacher of ब्रह्म विद्या *brahma vidyā*.

Without नचिकेत *naciketa* there is no कठोपनिषत् *kāthopaniṣat*. Nachiketa sought and received ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* from Lord यम *yama*, and having received that



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

knowledge, he also realized That Knowledge by himself, in himself, and became the very embodiment of That Knowledge just as good as Lord यम *yama* Himself, thus opening up that possibility for every human being. Thus Nachiketa is a very important link in the perennial flow of ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* - the Upanishad knowledge in the world of human beings.

We do नमस्कार *namaskār* to both गुरु *guru* and शिष्य *śiṣya* - the teacher and the student. By so doing, we pay homage to the tradition of the perennial flow of ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge from generation to generation, and also, we create in ourselves a reverential attitude of भक्ति *bhakti* and श्रद्धा *śraddhā* towards both the teacher and the teaching.

As usual, the Upanishad starts with a शान्ति पाठ *śānti pāṭh* - Peace Invocation, chanted both by the teacher and the students together. The शान्ति पाठ *śānti pāṭh* here is a familiar one.

ॐ *om*

सह नावतु सह नौ भुनक्तु ।

saha nāvavatu sahanau bhunaktu ।

सह वीर्यं करवावहै तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥

saha vīryam karavaavahai tejasvi nāvadhītamastu mā viddhviṣāvahai ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥

We have already seen this शान्ति पाठ *śānti pāṭh* in Kenopanishad. Briefly, recalling again:

ॐ *om* is मङ्गल वचनं *maṅgaḷa vacanam* - bringing the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* into God-consciousness, we pray together.

सह नौ अवतु *saha nau avatu* - May the Lord protect us all together

सह नौ भुनक्तु *saha nau bhunaktu* - May the Lord bring nourishment of Upanishad knowledge to all of us.

सह वीर्यं करवावहै *saha vīryam karavaavahai* - May this study inspire us to greatness in action. Let us realize आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यं *ātmanā vandate vīryam* - that the source of all greatness is only परमेश्वर *parameśvar* within oneself.



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

तेजस्य नौ अधीतं अस्तु *tejasvi nau adhītam astu* - May this study bring enlightenment to all of us. May this study enable us to recognize परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* in everything in this creation, and at the same time recognize everything in this creation in the same ONE परमेश्वर *paramēśvar*.

मा विद्मिषावहै *mā viddhviṣāvahai* - O! Lord, By thy Grace, let us be totally free from any kind of द्वेष *dveṣa*, so that we are fit for the pursuit of ब्रह्म विद्या *brahma vidyā* - Upanishad Knowledge.

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः *om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ* - This is a prayer for ॐ शान्तिः *om śāntiḥ* - Exalted Peace, conducive to Self discovery, gaining Self Knowledge. It is meant to induce a state of creative tranquility in the अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa*, mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, making it receptive to Upanishad Knowledge. Only then the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* become capable of receiving, digesting, assimilating and getting nourished by the knowledge gained.

Such is the significance of this prayer. Now the Upanishad starts.

प्रथमा वल्ली *prathamā vallī*

ॐ *om*

उशन् ह वै वाजश्रवसः सर्वं वेदसं ददौ ।

uśan ha vai vājaśravasaḥ sarva vedasam dadau ।

तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस ॥ 1 - 1

tasya ha naciketā nāma putra āsa ॥

The Upanishad opens with a simple statement of a well-known fact, referring to an old legend. The Upanishad says:

ह वै *ha vai* - It is well known. The words ह *ha* and वै *vai* are Vedic expressions indicating or recalling the fact of an event that happened long time ago. By so saying, the Upanishad authenticates the event, with respect to all that is going to be said about it in this Upanishad. Therefore ह वै *ha vai* - It is well known. What is well known?

वाजश्रवसः *vājaśravasaḥ* - The person known as वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa*, who is the son of वाजश्रव *vājaśrava*. वाजश्रवसः *vājaśravasaḥ* means son of वाजश्रव *vājaśrava*



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

वाज *vāja* means food. श्रव *śrava* means यशः *yaśaḥ* - one who has gained fame. Therefore वाजश्रव *vājaśrava* means a person who became famous through अन्नदानं *annadānaṁ* - his charity in giving food to the needy. वाजश्रव *vājaśrava* is more a title than a given name.

वाजश्रवस 's *vājaśrava*'s father वाजश्रव *vājaśrava* was well-known by his charitable disposition in giving food to the needy. Therefore,

वाजश्रवसः *vājaśravasaḥ* - वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa*, son of the अन्नदान *annadāna* famous वाजश्रव *vājaśrava*, what about him? From the details given in the Vedas, we understand that वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa* performed a यज्ञ *yajña* - an elaborate Vedic Havan ritual called विश्वजित् यज्ञ *viśvajit yajña*, involving the services of several highly qualified priests from all the four Vedas, and also the assistance of many qualified ब्रह्मणाः *brahmaṇās*, by open invitation - who can and who are willing to participate in the ritual.

In this यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*, the यजमान *yajmān* - the performer of the यज्ञ *yajña*, is governed by very strict personal discipline and commitment to the proper performance of the ritual in all details. In particular, the performer of the ritual is required to give away all his possessions, generally meaning, all his wealth, as gifts to the priests and all the ब्रह्मणाः *brahmaṇās* participating in the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*. Every such यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* is a काम्य कर्म *kāmya karma* undertaken, desiring, seeking and expecting some कर्म फल *karma phala*. The कर्म फल *karma phala* that is sought by doing the विश्वजित् यज्ञ *viśvajit yajña* is to be able to enjoy all heavenly pleasures in one's present and future lives. Therefore the Upanishad says

उशन् *uśan* - meaning इच्छन् *icchan*, काम्यमानः सन् *kāmyamānaḥ san* - prompted by काम *kāma* - desiring, expecting and seeking heavenly enjoyments of various kinds in his present and all future lives,

वाजश्रवसः सर्ववेदसं ददौ *vājaśravasaḥ sarvavedasaṁ dadau* - वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa* performed the विश्वजित् यज्ञ *viśvajit yajña* in which he gave away all his possessions, all his wealth as gifts. In those days, one's wealth was counted mainly in terms of the number of cows that one possessed. Therefore, वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa* gave away all his cows as दक्षिण *dakṣiṇa*, as gifts to the priests and the ब्रह्मणाः



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

brahmaṇās in appreciation of their services in the proper performance of the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*. Referring to this event, the Upanishad says:

उशन् ह वै वाजश्रवसः सर्ववेदसं ददौ *uśan ha vai vājaśravasaḥ sarvavedasam dadau* - It is well known that, prompted by desire for heavenly enjoyments in this present and future lives, वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa* performed the विश्वजित् यज्ञ *viśvajit yajña* in which he gave away all his wealth - all his cows as gifts to the priests and the ब्रह्मणाs *brahmaṇās*.

तस्य ह *tasya ha*, नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस *naciketā nāma putra āsa* -
ह *ha* - Again it is well known

तस्य *tasya* (वाजश्रवसस्य *vājaśravasasya*) - for that वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa*
नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस *naciketā nāma putra āsa* - there was a son by name Nachiketa. It is also well known that वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa* had a son, by name Nachiketa. By so saying, the Upanishad confirms the fact that Nachiketa is not a fictional character created for the purpose of this Upanishad. Nachiketa was indeed a person who really existed long time ago, as the son of वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa* and the grandson of the well-known अन्नदान *annadāna* famous वाजश्रव *vājaśrava*. Having thus authenticated the old legend, from now on, the Nachiketa story is being narrated in the language of the Upanishad, just as it happened.

The story thus far is this. वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa* was performing the विश्वजित् यज्ञ *viśvajit yajña*, prompted by desires for all heavenly enjoyments in his present and future lives. His son Nachiketa was intensely watching the progress of the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*. Then what happened? The Upanishad says

तँ ह कुमारं सन्तं दक्षिणासु नीयमानासु श्रद्धा आविवेश । 1 - 2
taṁ ha kumārāṁ santāṁ dakṣiṇāsu nīyamānāsu śraddhā āviveśa |
सो अमन्यत ॥
so amanyata ॥

ह *ha* - Again, narrating the story exactly as it happened

दक्षिणासु नीयमानासु *dakṣiṇāsu nīyamānāsu* - when the दक्षिणाs *dakṣiṇas*, the gifts of cows meant for presentation to the officiating priests and the participating ब्राह्मणाs *brāhmaṇas* in appreciation for their services, when those cows were being brought in



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

and being led separately to the priests and the assembled ब्रह्मणाः *brāhmaṇas* for distribution, just at that time, something important happened in the अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - in the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* of Nachiketa, and that is in the words of the Upanishad:

तं कुमारं सन्तं श्रद्धा आविवेश *taṁ kumārāṁ santāṁ śraddhā āviveśa* - सः अमन्यत - *saḥ amanyata* - श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in the event of the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*, naturally and fully, entered into the son Nachiketa who was still a young boy. विवेश means entered. आविवेश *āviveśa* means entered into oneself, from within oneself, fully and naturally, which means Nachiketa was filled with श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in what was going on in the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*, and he thought within himself as follows. That is the simple meaning, but there is much more to understand here.

तं कुमारं सन्तं *taṁ kumārāṁ santāṁ*—The Upanishad refers to Nachiketa as a कुमार *kumār*, which means a son young in age. Young means how young? The Upanishad does not give the age of Nachiketa precisely, but the word कुमार *kumār* dictates his age. कुमार *kumār* refers to a बाल *bāla*, not a युव *yuva*, which means the son is still in boyhood age and he has not yet matured into a young adult.

In Vedic terminology, कुमार *kumār* refers to a son who is in the first stage of life following childhood. Traditionally, the childhood age extends up to age 4 or 5, when the son is formally introduced into अक्षराभ्यास *akṣarābhyāsa* - learning to read and write and recite simple prayers. After a few years of such education, at the age of 7 or 8, the son has now matured into a कुमार *kumār* - a boy ready for उपनयनं *upanayanam* - formal introduction into वेद अध्ययनं *veda adhyayanam* and daily Vedic rituals. After a few years of such Vedic education, by about age 10 or 12, the boy is usually sent to a गुरु कुल *guru kul* - a Teacher-student family for further Vedic and Vedantic education. Since Nachiketa is now in the कुमार *kumār* stage of life, the Upanishad indicates his age as no more than 12 years old. In one of the commentaries on this Upanishad, Nachiketa is actually referred to as a 9 year old boy.

Even though Nachiketa was still a boy, his mental disposition at this moment of the story was far more spiritually advanced than what is normally indicated by his physical age. Therefore, about that कुमार *kumār* Nachiketa, the Upanishad says:



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

तै कुमारं सन्तं *taṁ kumāraṁ santaṁ* - Whenever the symbol for ॐ is indicated in the Upanishad, it is a reminder for the reader to uplift one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* into a mood of Total God-consciousness, if it is not already in that state of mental disposition. Only then one can properly understand and appreciate what the Upanishad communicates. It is not necessary to utter the ॐ कार शब्द *ṁ kāra śabd* while reading or reciting the Upanishad, but it is necessary to bring one's अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, into the mood of ईश्वर चिन्तनं *īśvara cintanaṁ* - God-consciousness, to absorb the content of the Upanishadic message.

With reference to the context here, तै कुमारं सन्तं *taṁ kumāraṁ santaṁ*, by indicating the ॐ कार शब्द *ṁ kāra śabda* in referring to Nachiketa, the Upanishad points out that Nachiketa's entire अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, at this moment is totally occupied by ईश्वर चिन्तनं *īśvara cintanaṁ* - God-consciousness, because he is fully absorbed in witnessing a यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* in progress. Every यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* is a form of worship of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*.

Just by being totally absorbed as a witness to the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*, Nachiketa is also an active participant in the worship of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*. For Nachiketa, everything involved in the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* is परमेश्वर *parameśvar* itself, just as the भगवत् गीता *bhagvat gītā* says:

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविः ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतं ।

brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma haviḥ brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutaṁ ।

ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्म कर्म समाधिना ॥ (G4-24)

brhmaiva tena gantavyaṁ brahma karma samādhinā ॥

which means that his entire personality is now totally immersed in ईश्वर चिन्तनं *īśvara cintanaṁ* - in God consciousness, in the form and name of यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*, and all that it involves in terms of the details of the ritual, in terms of the वेद मन्त्राः *veda mantrās* being recited in the ritual, and all that means for the proper and effective performance of the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* to serve the wishes of his father.



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

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

It is that state of mental disposition of Nachiketa which is indicated by the ॐ कार शब्द *m̄ kāra śabda* - the sound ॐ *m̄* in तै कुमार *taṁ kumāraṁ*. Because such a state of mental disposition is extraordinary for a boy of his age, the Upanishad adds the word सन्तं *santaṁ*, meaning "even while still being a boy of tender age". Now, about the boy Nachiketa himself, the Upanishad says:

तै कुमारं सन्तं *taṁ kumāraṁ santaṁ*, श्रद्धा आविवेश *śraddhā āviveśa* - Into that Nachiketa, श्रद्धा आविवेश *śraddhā āviveśa* - श्रद्धा *śraddhā* entered from within himself, instantly, naturally and fully. What does that mean?

The word श्रद्धा *śraddhā* cannot be, and need not be, translated. Generally, we all understand what श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is. Sri Krishna gives a full discourse on श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in the भगवत् गीता *bhagvat gītā* which we will see a little later. This particular verse in the गीता *gītā* is relevant here.

सत्त्वानुरुपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।

sattvānurupā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata ।

श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषः यो यत् श्रद्धः स एव सः ॥ (G17-3)

śraddhāmayo'yaṁ puruṣaḥ yo yat śraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ ॥

For all people, the श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is determined by सत्त्व अनुरुपा *satva anurupā* - the disposition of one's entire

अन्तः करण *antaḥ karaṇa* - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*. Every individual person is a श्रद्धामयः *śraddhā mayāḥ* - an embodiment of one's own श्रद्धा *śraddhā*. One is exactly what one's own श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is. When you see the श्रद्धा *śraddhā* of a person, you are seeing the person.

In the context here, Nachiketa's श्रद्धा *śraddhā* is आस्तिक्य बुद्धि *āstikya buddhi*, which totally accepts वेद मन्त्र *veda mantras* uttered in the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* as प्रमाण *pramāṇa* - as means for gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānaṁ*, as ब्रह्मणो मुखः *brahmaṇo mukhaḥ* - the very words of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, as ईश्वर आदेश *īśvara aadeśa* - the very command of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* to an ईश्वर भक्त *īśvara bhakt* to perform the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* properly.



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Therefore, every वेद मन्त्र *veda mantra* that Nachiketa hears in the performance of the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* is totally meaningful to him, in the sense of ईश्वर आदेश *īśvara aadeśa* - the very command words of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*. That means, if the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* is not done totally in accordance with the letter and spirit of the वेद मन्त्रs *veda mantras*, the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* will not be fruitful, and his father will not be able to gain what he desires, seeks and expects from the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*.

Further, any यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* improperly done, may even hurt the performer of the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*. Therefore, Nachiketa's present श्रद्धा *śraddhā* arises directly from what he was seeing as happening at the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*, and his immediate concern for what is absolutely good for his father, in terms of the proper performance of the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma*.

In the very first मन्त्र *mantra*, the Upanishad introduces Nachiketa simply as a person, as the son of his father. In the very next मन्त्र *mantra*, the Upanishad introduces the same Nachiketa as a श्रद्धावान् *śraddhāvān* - a person who is the very embodiment of his श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, his आस्तिक्य बुद्धि *āstikya buddhi* - his unqualified faith in the words of the Vedas and the Upanishads, as the प्रमाण *pramāṇ* - as the surest means for gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* - the very source of all knowledge, prosperity, success and happiness in their entirety.

We may recall Sri Krishna's words here

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं *śraddhāvān labhate jñānaṁ* (G 4 -39) - the one who is the very embodiment of श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*, does gain ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*, that is certain.

Therefore, Nachiketa, by virtue of his श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, is now bound to gain ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*.

As we may recall, in our Introduction to Upanishads, we talked about साधन चतुष्टयं *sādhana catuṣṭayam* - the four-fold qualifications needed for a person to become fit



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

for gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam*. Here the word श्रद्धा *śraddhā* stands for all the four fold qualifications.

As we progress in this Upanishad we will discover that Nachiketa has all these four-fold qualifications in full measure, and thus, he is absolutely ready for gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam*. And that is why, what is going to happen to him in this Upanishad is happening to him; it is no accident.

At this moment, Nachiketa's श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam* manifests itself in the form of some spontaneous thoughts within himself. Therefore, the Upanishad says:

सः अमन्यत *saḥ amanyata* - Nachiketa thought within himself (as follows). What thoughts went through Nachiketa's mind at this moment, we will see next time.