



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

कठोपनिषत्

Katopanishad

Volume 15

Section 3

तृतीया वल्ली *ṭṛtīyā vallī*

ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके, गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे ।

ṛtaṁ pibantau sukṛtasya loke, guhāṁ praviṣṭau parame parārdhe ।

छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति, पञ्चाग्नयो ये च त्रिणाचिकेताः ॥

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chāyātapau brahmavido vadanti, pañcāgnayo ye ca triṇāciketāḥ ॥

यः सेतुः ईजानानाम्, अक्षरं ब्रह्म यत् परं ।

yaḥ setuḥ īrjānānām, akṣaram brahma yat paraṁ ।

अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं, नाचिकेतं शकेमहि ॥

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abhayaṁ titīrṣatāṁ pāraṁ, nāciketam śakemahi ॥

As we may recall, Lord यम *yama* has been talking about प्रेयस् *preyas* and श्रेयस् *śreyas* in the last Section.

प्रेयस् *preyas* is exclusive pursuit of transient pleasures of life, and श्रेयस् *śreyas* is exclusive pursuit of मोक्ष *mokṣa*. Both the paths of life are open to every person. प्रेयस् *preyas* is संसार हेतु *saṁsāra hetu*. It serves to keep the जीव *jīva* - the individual person in the world of transient reality, and in a state of perpetual discontent, and श्रेयस् *śreyas* serves to uplift the person from the world of transient reality and lead the person to the world of Absolute Reality and Total Fulfillment in life.

प्रेयस् *preyas* is अविद्या *avidyā* - path of अज्ञानं *ajñānam* - spiritual blindness. It is the world of अपरं ब्रह्म *aparaṁ brahma*, the world of माया *māyā*, the world of कर्म *karma* and कर्म फल *karma phala*, and श्रेयस् *śreyas* is विद्या *vidyā*, path of ज्ञानं *jñānam* - spiritual knowledge. It is the world of परं ब्रह्म *paraṁ brahma*, the world of self-effulgent, ever-existent, all-conscious, all-inclusive परं ब्रह्म *paraṁ brahma*, परमेश्वर *parameśvar* - The Immortal SELF in every self, including oneself.



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Every person with one's own body-vehicle, is free to choose and go through either path of life.

The destination of प्रेयस् *preyas* path of life is repeated birth and death in this ever changing world of सुख *sukha* and दुःख *duḥkha*, and the destination of श्रेयस् *śreyas* path of life is विष्णोः परमं पदं *viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padaṁ* - as Lord यम *yama* says a little later – विष्णोः परमं पदं *viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padaṁ* is The Abode of All-pervading ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, the Immortal world of Being The True Self of oneself.

To talk about these and related matters further, Lord यम *yama* introduces in this section a रथ कल्पना *ratha kalpanā* - an imagery in which one's body vehicle is compared to a chariot vehicle drawn by horses with a driver for the chariot and the Master of the chariot seated inside the vehicle. This imagery is only for ease of understanding of the message that is going to be communicated through the words of the Upanishad.

As an Introduction to this रथ कल्पना *ratha kalpanā* - chariot imagery, Lord यम *yama* says

ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके, गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे ।
ṛtaṁ pibantau sukṛtasya loke, guhāṁ praviṣṭau parame parārdhe ।
छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति पञ्चाग्रयो ये च त्रणाचिकेताः ॥ 3 - 1
chāyātapau brahmavidō vadanti pañcāgnayo ye ca traṇāciketāḥ ॥

Let us understand the context here. Here I am, endowed with a body, capable of doing कर्म *karmas* of various kinds.

This body vehicle can take me through life either in the path of प्रेयस् *preyas* or in the path of श्रेयस् *śreyas*. Through which path this body, by its actions, will take me through in life? That depends on who controls the actions of this body.

Suppose I say " I control the actions of my body" then the question is, Who is that "I"? Is that I the अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* "I" or The आत्मा *ātmā* "I"?

The अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* "I" is one's ego, and the आत्मा *ātmā* I is what the Upanishad has been pointing out as the अन्तर्यामी अमृत आत्मा *antaryāmī amṛta ātmā* -The



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Indwelling पर ब्रह्मन् *para brahman*, परमेश्वर *parameśvar* in oneself - The Immortal SELF in oneself.

Therefore the question is, which I controls the actions of one's body. Is it the अहंकार *ahaṅkāra* I or the आत्मा *ātmā* I ?

I cannot give a definite answer to that question with respect to the actions of my own body. Why? Because sometimes it is the अहंकार *ahaṅkāra* I, which seems to control the actions of my body. On the other hand, even though I may not recognize आत्मा *ātmā* in myself in the manner indicated by the Upanishad, namely The आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self revealing Itself to oneself as पर ब्रह्मन् *para brahman*, परमेश्वर *parameśvar* as the Immortal Self in oneself, still whenever I do any action totally in accordance with the dictates of my own consciousness, overriding my ego tendencies, I feel particularly uplifted, strong, happy and peaceful, which means I recognize the supremacy of आत्मा *ātmā* - Pure Consciousness in myself.

What does that mean? Does it mean that there are two आत्माs *ātmās*, two "I"s controlling the actions of my body?

While it is clear to my बुद्धि *buddhi* that there really cannot be two "I"s in myself, controlling the actions of my body, there does appear to be two "I"s, the अहंकार *ahaṅkāra* I and the आत्मा *ātmā* I, co-existing in my body.

Generally this is true for all people.

Therefore, the first step in one's spiritual progress is to recognize the apparent co-existence of two I s, the अहंकार *ahaṅkāra* I and the आत्मा *ātmā* I in one's body vehicle. These two I s are variously described as जीवात्मा *jīvātmā* and परमात्मा *paramātmā*, मिथ्या *mithyā* and सत्यं *satyaṁ*, transient I and Eternal I, false I and Real I, etc.

Referring to these two I s in one's body, Lord यम *yama* says:

ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे
ṛtaṁ pibantau sukṛtasya loke guhāṁ praviṣṭau parame parārdhe



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ऋतं *ṛtaṁ* here indicates कर्म फल *karma phala* - Fruits of actions. ऋतं *ṛtaṁ* ordinarily means सत्यं *satyaṁ* - Truth. For any कर्म *karma*, कर्म फल *karma phala* is certain. That is सत्यं *satyaṁ* - Truth, because That is the eternal law of कर्म *karma*. Therefore, here ऋतं *ṛtaṁ* indicates कर्म फल *karma phala* - fruits of one's actions.

पिबन्तौ *pibantau* drink, experience, enjoy

ऋतं पिबन्तौ *ṛtaṁ pibantau* the two co-existing I s exist enjoying the experiences of कर्म फल *karma phala*; कर्म फल *karma phala* of what कर्म *karma*?

सुकृतस्य लोके *sukṛtasya loke* - सुकृतस्य *sukṛtasya* of the good कर्मs *karmas*, पुण्य कर्मs *puṇya karmas* done by oneself, लोके *loke* in one's शरीर *śarīr* in one's body. Therefore,

ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके *ṛtaṁ pibantau sukṛtasya loke* - In one's शरीर *śarīra* - in one's body vehicle, the two co-existing "I"s - the अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* "I" and the आत्मा *ātmā* "I" exist enjoying the experiences of the कर्म फलs *karma phalas* of the good कर्म *karma*, पुण्य कर्मs *puṇya karmas* done by oneself. Actually, only the अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* I is the enjoyer of कर्म फल *karma phala*. The आत्मा *ātmā* "I" is neither a doer nor an enjoyer. It is simply a witness. But the Upanishad uses the dual verb पिबन्तौ *pibantau*, which means because of their apparent co-existence, both अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* I and आत्मा *ātmā* I together appear to enjoy the कर्म फल *karma phala* of the actions done by the person.

गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे *guhāṁ praviṣṭau parama parārdhe*

गुहां *guhāṁ* means गुहायां बुद्धौ *guhāyāṁ buddhau* - in the cave of one's बुद्धि *buddhi*. As we have seen earlier (2-9), while one's बुद्धि *buddhi* includes all that is in one's intellect as वृत्तिस, as accumulated, differentiated and integrated thought forms, the totality of बुद्धि *buddhi* itself is infinitely far more than the content of one's intellect. What is in one's बुद्धि *buddhi*, independent of all वृत्ति *vṛttis* forms is शुद्ध चैतन्यं *śuddha caitanyaṁ* - Pure Awareness, which lies hidden in the बुद्धि गुह *buddhi guha* - cave of the बुद्धि *buddhi*, "cave" meaning beyond the reach of ordinary intellect.

The स्वरूप *svarūpa* - the nature of बुद्धि गुह *buddhi guha* is pointed out here as



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परमे परार्थे *parame parārdhe* - परमे *parame* refers to हृदय आकाश *hrdaya ākāśa* - the Divine Heart space, which is the Upanishad expression for शुद्ध चैतन्यं *śuddha caitanyam* - The Infinite All-Inclusive Pure Awareness.

परार्थे *parārdhe* refers to परं ब्रह्म उपलभ्यस्थानं *param brahma upalabhyasthānam* - the place where परं ब्रह्म *param brahma* - the परमेश्वर *parameśvar* - The Indwelling Immortal Self, The आत्मा *ātmā* "I" is available for recognition.

प्रविष्टौ *praviṣṭau* - In that बुद्धि गुह *buddhi guha*, both अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* "I" and आत्मा *ātmā* "I" have entered, which means Pure awareness being All inclusive, both अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* "I" and आत्मा *ātmā* "I" are available for recognition in one's बुद्धि गुह *buddhi guha*.

While अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* "I" is easily recognized by one's intellect, आत्मा *ātmā* "I" can be recognized only in one's बुद्धि गुह *buddhi guha* - in the cave of one's बुद्धि *buddhi*, in the not-easily reachable part of one's बुद्धि *buddhi*.

Thus the Upanishad points out that one need not have to search for परं ब्रह्म परमेश्वर *param brahma parameśvar*, The Immortal Self in oneself, the आत्मा *ātmā* "I", anywhere outside of oneself. It is already available for recognition in one's own बुद्धि *buddhi*. Therefore,

ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्थे

ṛtam pibantau sukṛtasya loke guhāṁ praviṣṭau parame parārdhe

Having entered the शुद्ध चैतन्यं *śuddha caitanyam* - Pure awareness obtained in the बुद्धि गुह *buddhi guha* - in the cave of one's बुद्धि *buddhi*, both अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* I and आत्मा *ātmā* I appear to co-exist in the शरीर *śarīr* - in the body, enjoying the experiences of the कर्म फल *karma phalas* of one's good कर्म *karmas* - पुण्य कर्म *puṇya karmas*.

Thus the Upanishad confirms the apparent coexistence of अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* I and आत्मा *ātmā* I in one's body. But are there really two I s - two selves in one शरीर *śarīr*? No, not really. Then how do they exist together?



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छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति *chāyātapau brahmavido vadanti*

ब्रह्मविदः *brahmavidaḥ* - The knowers of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* - the ज्ञानीs *jñānīs*
- people of wisdom

वदन्ति *vadanti* they describe the two I s, they compare the two I s to

छायातपौ *chāyātapau*, छाया *chāyā* and आतप *ātap* - shadow and light.

Really there are no two selves in one शरीर *śarīr*. The people of wisdom compare the co-existence of अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* "I" and आत्मा *ātmā* "I" to the co-existence of shadow and light. We must understand that shadow is different from darkness. Shadow is when light is, and darkness is not when light is. That is the difference. Not only the ब्रह्मविदः *brahmavidaḥ*, the ज्ञानीs *jñānīs* - the people who have realized the Upanishad knowledge say so, but also,

पञ्चाग्रयो ये च त्रिणाचिकेताः *pañcāgnayo ye ca triṇāciketāḥ* - those who depend upon performing various Vedic rituals, यज्ञ कर्मs *yajña karmas*, Havans such as पञ्चाग्नि *pañcāgni*, नाचिकेताग्नि *nāciketāgni*, etc. in the pursuit of their worldly desires, they also say so. They also compare अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* - "I" and आत्मा *ātmā* "I" to shadow and light, which means अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* "I", The ego "I", has no independent existence at all. Thus

छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति पञ्चाग्रयो ये च त्रिणाचिकेताः

chāyātapau brahmavido vadanti, pañcāgnayo ye ca triṇāciketāḥ

All Vedas, both the Upanishads and the कर्म काण्ड *karma kāṇḍ* of the Vedas, confirm that the relationship between अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* I and आत्मा *ātmā* I is like the relationship between shadow and light. Only आत्मा *ātmā* "I" is real existence and अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* "I" is only a transient appearance.

All this is an introduction to अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* "I" and आत्मा *ātmā* "I", either of which may control the actions of one's body. The next verse is an introduction to the destination of this body vehicle in its path of life.

Lord यम *yama* says:

यः सेतुः ईजानानाम्, अक्षरं ब्रह्म यत् परं ।

yaḥ setuḥ ījānānām, akṣaram brahma yat param |

अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं, नाचिकेतां शकेमहि ॥

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abhayaṃ tatirṣatāṃ pāraṃ, nāciketāṃ śakemahi ॥

The destination for this body vehicle can be अपरं ब्रह्म *aparaṃ brahma* or परं ब्रह्म *paraṃ brahma*. अपरं ब्रह्म *aparaṃ brahma* means any destination one wants within संसार *saṃsār* – this creation; all achievements, all kinds of prosperity, success, pleasure, objects of desire, etc. indeed, anything one wants within this creation comes under the scope of अपरं ब्रह्म *aparaṃ brahma*. Thus the destinations in अपरं ब्रह्म *aparaṃ brahma* are infinite in number, and the highest and the farthest destination in अपरं ब्रह्म *aparaṃ brahma* is ब्रह्म लोक प्राप्ति *brahma lok prāpti* – reaching ब्रह्म लोक *brahma lok*.

Every destination in अपरं ब्रह्म *aparaṃ brahma* is reached only by doing some कर्म *karma*, and the destination reached is कर्म फल *karma phala* - the result of कर्म *karma*. The कर्म काण्ड *karma kāṇḍ* of the Vedas and all pursuits of objective knowledge which are only extensions of कर्म काण्ड *karma kāṇḍ* of the Vedas, give information on कर्मs *karmas* and their possible कर्म फलs *karma phalas*.

For example, on the basis of what Lord यम *yama* has said already, performance of नाचिकेताग्नि *nāciketāgni* Havan ritual with understanding and devotion, three times, together with विराट उपासन *virāṭ upāsana* can lead one to ब्रह्म लोक *brahma lok*. Since that knowledge is already available, if one's ultimate destination is to reach ब्रह्म लोक *brahma lok*, one can choose to do the कर्म *karma* of नाचिकेताग्नि *nāciketāgni* ritual in the prescribed manner. Such option, with respect to any destination in अपरं ब्रह्म *aparaṃ brahma* is open to everybody. That is what Lord यम *yama* says here:

यः सेतुः ईजानानां नाचिकेतुं शक्यमहि *yaḥ setuḥ ijānānāṃ nāciketāṃ śakemahi*

यः सेतुः *yaḥ setuḥ* - that which is the bridge. सेतु *setu* is bridge, not only in a physical sense but also in a functional sense. That which serves to connect one with one's chosen destination in life is a सेतु *setu* - a bridge. For example



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ईजानानां *ijānānām* - for those who are qualified enough to perform Vedic Havans of various kinds such as

नाचिकेतं *nāciketam* - the exalted नाचिकेताग्नि *nāciketāgni* Havan कर्म *karma* in the prescribed manner, which serves as a bridge for one to reach ब्रह्म लोक *brahma lok*

शक्यमिह *śakemahi* - sure, we can, says Lord यम *yama*. For those who choose reaching ब्रह्म लोक *brahma lok* as their ultimate destination in life, and who are qualified enough to perform the नाचिकेताग्नि यज्ञ कर्म *nāciketāgni yajña karma* in the prescribed manner, surely they can reach ब्रह्म लोक *brahma lok* using नाचिकेतं *nāciketam* - that नाचिकेताग्नि *nāciketāgni* Havan कर्म *karma* as the bridge to reach ब्रह्म लोक *brahma lok*.

The above statement is likewise applicable to all other destinations within this creation, because here नाचिकेतं *nāciketam* - stands for any कर्म *karma* capable of leading one to the desired destination in अपरं ब्रह्म *aparam brahma* in this entire creation, and ईजानानां *ijānānām* - stands for those who are qualified enough to know, and then, to do, the कर्म *karma* that needs to be done, to reach the desired destination. Therefore,

यः सेतुः ईजानानां नाचिकेतं शक्यमिह *yaḥ setuḥ ijānānām nāciketam śakemahi* - If any destination in अपरं ब्रह्म *aparam brahma* in this creation is the ultimate choice in one's life, one can certainly reach that destination by knowing and then doing what needs to be done to reach that destination. But one must also understand the implications of the choice of अपरं ब्रह्म *aparam brahma* as one's ultimate destination in life. The implications are two-fold.

1. By such choice, one is only seeking happiness and security in something external to oneself. All such happiness and security is always limited, because
2. Such destination, however exalted it may be, can never give a person total freedom from fear of some kind or other, some time or other, in life.

On the other hand, the destination for this body vehicle can also be the परं ब्रह्म *param brahma* itself.



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The destination of परं ब्रह्म *param brahma* is विष्णोः परमं पदं *viṣṇoḥ paramam padam* - The Abode of All-pervading, All-inclusive, अक्षरं *akṣaram* - Imperishable ब्रह्मन् *brahman* - The Infinite Immortal world of being the True Self of oneself, recognition of परं ब्रह्मन् *param brahman* - the परमेश्वर *parameśvar* - The अमृत आत्मा *amṛta ātmā* - The Immortal Self as oneself, in oneself, and in every self there is. This destination is पूर्णं *pūrṇam* - ONE and all-inclusive, there is nothing higher or lower in this destination. There is no कर्म *karma* or कर्म फल *karma phala* involved in this destination. This destination is अभयं *abhayam* - Fearlessness Itself, संसारस्य पारं *saṁsārasya pāram* - beyond the shores of all transient existence. It is पुराणं *purāṇam*, सनातनं *sanātanam*, सत्यं *satyam*, ज्ञानं अनन्तं *jñānam anantam* - ever-new, ever-ancient, never subject to change, all-knowledge and all-inclusive. It is not a place to reach. It is knowledge to be gained (ज्ञातव्यं *jñātavyam*). Is it possible for everyone to gain that knowledge?

शक्यमहि *śakemahi* - sure, we can, says Lord यम *yama*. This is how He says that

अक्षरं ब्रह्म यत् परं अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं शक्यमहि
akṣaram brahma yat param abhayam tatīrṣatām pāram śakemahi

पारं तितीर्षतां *param tatīrṣatām* means संसारस्य पारं तितीर्षतां *saṁsārasya param tatīrṣatām*. For those who wish to cross the world of transient realities, for those who wish to be liberated from the bondages of संसार *saṁsār*

यत् परं *yat param* means यत् आश्रयं *yat āśrayam*, यत् आलम्बनं *yat ālambanam* the means for such liberation is

अक्षरं परं ब्रह्म *akṣaram param brahma* - Knowledge of, recognition of that imperishable परं ब्रह्म *param brahma*, सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*, The परमेश्वर *parmeśvar* - The अमृत आत्मा *amṛta ātmā* - The Immortal Self in oneself, which is

अभयं *abhayam* - Fearlessness Itself, because it is पूर्णं *pūrṇam* - Totality of all existence.



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

That परं ब्रह्म *param brahma* - That परमेश्वर *parameśvar* - That – अमृत आत्मा *amṛta ātmā* - is not a place to go - It is ज्ञातव्यं *jñātavyam* Knowledge to be gained. Can anyone gain that knowledge?

शक्यमहि *śakemahi* - Yes we can, says Lord यम *yama*, meaning that anyone who is ready for that knowledge can gain that knowledge by Self-revelation - The Immortal Self in oneself revealing Itself to oneself as oneself, as Lord यम *yama* said earlier (2-23):

यं एव एषः वृणुते, तेन लभ्यः, तस्य एषः आत्मा, विवृणुते तनूं स्वाम् ॥
yam eva eṣaḥ vṛṇute, tena labhyaḥ, tasya eṣaḥ ātmā, vivṛṇute tanūm svām ॥

When a qualified person seeks and ardently prays for आत्मज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* only, and nothing else, which means when a qualified person is totally and exclusively committed to the pursuit of आत्मज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*, with unqualified श्रद्धा *śraddhā* and भक्ति *bhakti* - devotion, for that person, the आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self already in oneself, shines forth revealing Itself to oneself as ब्रह्मन् *brahman* Itself - as परमेश्वर *parmeśvar* Itself, as the Immortal Self in oneself.

With the above Introduction to the "I" - the Self in oneself, and the destination to be reached in one's journey to fulfillment in life through one's body vehicle, Lord यम *yama* now continues His discourse on ब्रह्म विद्या *brahma vidyā* in terms of the रथ कल्पना *ratha kalpanā* - chariot imagery in which one's body -vehicle is compared to a chariot vehicle - which we will see next time.