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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

कठोपनिषत्
Katopanishad
Section 4
Volume 22

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं, शब्दान् स्पर्शान् च मैथुनान् ।

yena rūpaṁ rasaṁ gandhaṁ, śabdān sparśān ca maithunān ।

एते नैव विजानाति, किं अत्र परिशिष्यते ।

ete naiva vijānāti, kiṁ atra pariśiṣyate ।

एतत् चै तत् ॥

4 - 3

etat vai tat ॥

स्वप्नान्तं, जागरितान्तं च, उभौ येन अनुपश्यति ।

svapnāntaṁ, jāgaritāntaṁ ca, ubhau yena anupaśyati ।

महान्तं विभुं आत्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति॥

4 - 4

mahāntaṁ vibhaṁ ātmānaṁ matvā dhīro na śocati ॥

य इमं मध्वदं वेद, आत्मानं जीवं अन्तिकात् ।

ya imaṁ madhvadaṁ veda, ātmānaṁ jīvaṁ antikāt ।

ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य, न ततो विजुगुप्सते ॥

īśānaṁ bhūta bhavyasya, na tato vijugupsate ॥

एतत् चै तत् ॥

4 - 5

etat vai tat ॥

Throughout this Upanishad, as we have already seen – Lord यम *yama* uses simple looking words to communicate profound knowledge. We must take time to understand these words properly, and try to grasp their Upanishadic content.

As we may recall, Lord यम *yama* has been talking about कश्चित् धीर *kaścit dhīrā* – a person of extraordinary wisdom, resolve and discipline, and his heroic feat of आवृत्तचक्षुः *avṛttacakṣuḥ* –turning the senses and the mind inward, and his ultimate Self-discovery - discovery of one's true self, The Immortal SELF – The प्रत्यग आत्मा *pratyaga ātmā* – The Divine SELF – The आत्मा *ātmā* “I”, The परमेश्वर *parmeśvar* within oneself, as ONESELF Itself.



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That आत्मा *ātmā* “I”, the True Self of oneself is what the Upanishad calls ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, which is also The SELF of the entire universe – the ultimate Unity of the universe, both “within” and “without”. What is the nature of That आत्मा *ātmā* “I”, The ब्रह्मन् *brahman* – That which includes everything, and, at the same time, transcends everything in this universe? That is the question which Lord यम *yama* now proceeds to answer, because, that is precisely Nachiketa’s question, as we may recall his words earlier:

“येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्ये अस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके ।

yeyam prete vicikitsā manuṣye astītyeke nāyamastīti caike ।

एतत् विद्यां अनुशिष्टः त्वयाऽहं वराणां एषः वरस्तृतीयः ”

1-20

etat vidyām anuśiṣṭaḥ tvayā'ham varāṇām eṣaḥ varastṛtīyaḥ

“When the body falls, some people say that an आत्मा *ātmā*, which is distinct from the body, which is other than the body, sense organs, mind and intellect, and which gets connected to a new body in one’s next life – such an आत्मा *ātmā* does exist. Some others say that such an आत्मा *ātmā* does not exist. Please teach me the Truth about आत्मा *ātmā*.”

A few verses later, Nachiketa asks the same question in a more direct form:

अन्यत्र धर्मात् अन्यत्र अधर्मात्, अन्यत्र अस्मात् कृत - अकृतात् ।

anyatra dharmāt anyatra adharmāt, anyatra asmāt kṛta - akṛtāt ।

अन्यत्र भूतात् च भव्यात् च, यत् तत् पश्यसि, तत् वद ॥ 2-14

anyatra bhūtāt ca bhavyāt ca, yat tat paśyasi, tat vada ॥

“What you see, what you recognize as That which is different from, which is other than, which transcends धर्म *dharma* and अधर्म *adharma* – virtue and vice, कारण *kāraṇa* and कार्य *kārya*– cause and effect, काल *kāla* and देश *deśa* – time and space, तत् वद *tat vada* – please tell That to me” so asked Nachiketa.

In essence, Nachiketa's question is “What is आत्मा *ātmā* ?” Lord यम *yama* has been answering that question in different ways in the second and the third sections of the Upanishad which we have seen already, and He is going to answer that question again in this and the next 2 sections in a more focused manner through a variety of pointer words, starting from the next verse. Lord यम *yama* says:



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येन रूपं रसं गन्धं, शब्दान् स्पर्शान् च मैथुनान् ।

yena rūpaṁ rasaṁ gandhaṁ, śabdān sparśān ca maithunān ।

एतेनैव विजानाति, किमत्र परिशिष्यते ।

etenaiva vijānāti, kimatra pariśiṣyate ।

एतत् वै तत् ॥

4-3

etat vai tat ॥

Before we take up this verse, let us be clear about two things with respect to आत्मा ātmā. आत्मा ātmā means अहं ahaṁ - "I", The Self – "oneself". Is आत्मा ātmā – am I – known to me, directly or indirectly? Is "I" the आत्मा ātmā – The SELF, oneself, direct knowledge (अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं aparokṣa jñānaṁ) to me, or indirect knowledge (परोक्ष ज्ञानं parokṣa jñānaṁ) to me?

आत्मा ātmā the Self is always अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं aparokṣa jñānaṁ) – direct knowledge, immediate knowledge to me, because, even in pitch darkness, I recognizes myself, I know that I exist – and I do not need any प्रमाण pramāṇa – any means of knowledge such as the eyes or ears to confirm the fact that I do exist. In fact, the only thing in this creation which is अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं aparokṣa jñānaṁ – Self established knowledge, direct and immediate knowledge to me, is अहं ahaṁ – I, The SELF – The आत्मा ātmā. I do not need any Vedanta to establish that I exist, The Self – The आत्मा ātmā exists.

But Vedanta always talks only about आत्मा ātmā. If आत्मा ātmā is already a matter of direct and immediate knowledge to me, what for is Vedanta? Vedanta is needed only because, I have some confusion in my knowledge about myself. I have no definite, doubt-free knowledge about आत्मा ātmā. It is obvious to me, that an indefinite knowledge, a confused knowledge is no knowledge at all. Even though I think I know myself, it is clear to me that I do not know myself well enough, definite enough and full enough.

My knowledge about आत्मा ātmā is just like my knowledge about rope-snake. I see an object, directly with my eyes, which looks like a snake. With a little further examination, I recognize that my knowledge about that object is erroneous. In reality, the object is only a rope. Similarly, I see myself directly indeed, in terms of my forms, names, body, mind, intellect, accomplishments and other attributes and possessions, but then, that knowledge of myself goes on changing, unpredictably and uncontrollably.

Herein comes The Vedanta, The Upanishad. Vedanta points out that there is an error in my vision of myself. I am really NOT anything that I see by my eyes or other sense



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organs including my mind. My real SELF – आत्मा *ātmā* “I”, is never subject to change, and Vedanta also points out why I appear to be changing all the time. Through the words of Vedanta, I recognize, by myself, the error and confusion in my vision of myself, and ultimately I gain doubt-free, direct and immediate knowledge – अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं *aparokṣa jñānaṁ* about आत्मा *ātmā* – The SELF “I”. Thus Vedanta is needed not to confirm “I am”, but to know, clearly and definitely, who I am, and who I am not, and why I am what I am.

By listening to Vedanta, either one gains अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं *aparokṣa jñānaṁ* – direct, definite, doubt-free, immediate knowledge about oneself, or one gains no knowledge at all about oneself. About आत्मा *ātmā* “I”, there can be erroneous knowledge, but there can never be indirect knowledge; that is the first thing we must understand about आत्मा *ātmā* – The Self “I”.

Further, suppose I say: “I know something”. That means I am The Knower, and that “something” is an object of my knowledge. In particular, I am not that “something”. I am distinct from, and independent of what I know. Thus with respect to any knowledge I am aware of, I am the Knower, which means I am Awareness Itself, because of which alone I am aware of the object of my knowledge. Thus, the real nature of “I” The आत्मा *ātmā* – The SELF, is विज्ञान स्वरूपं *viñāna svarūpaṁ* – Pure Awareness, Pure Consciousness Itself, and NOT any object I am aware of, or conscious of. Therefore, let us be clear in our understanding:

1. “I” The आत्मा *ātmā* – The SELF, is a matter of अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं *aparokṣa jñānaṁ* - direct, doubt-free, immediate knowledge about oneself, never subject to change ; and
2. The real nature of “I” The आत्मा *ātmā* – The SELF, is Pure Awareness, not any object one is aware of.

With this understanding, let us now see what the Upanishad verse says:

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं, शब्दान् स्पर्शान् च मैथुनान् ।

yena rūpaṁ rasam gandham, śabdān sparśān ca maithunān |

एते नैव विजानाति, किं अत्र परिशिष्यते ।

ete naiva vijānāti, kiṁ atra pariśiṣyate |

एतत् वै तत् ॥

4 – 3

etat vai tat ||

येन एतेनैव *yena etenaiva* - येन एतेन एव *yena etena eva*- That by which alone, meaning



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येन विज्ञान स्वरूपेण *yena vijñāna svarūpeṇa* - चैतन्य स्वरूपेण *caitanya svarūpeṇa* - एव *eva*- That Pure Consciousness, That Pure Awareness because of which alone

विजानाति *vijānāti*- a person knows, recognizes, gains, clear, direct and immediate knowledge of -

रूपं *rūpaṁ* - form and color

रसं *rasaṁ* - taste

गन्धं *gandhaṁ* - Smell

शब्दान् *śabdān* - sounds

स्पर्शान् *sparsān* - all senses of touch

मैथुनान् *maithunān* - and also all pleasures of sexual contacts, and indeed, all kinds of sense enjoyments; and also,

किं अत्र परिशिष्यते *kiṁ atra pariśiṣyate* - किं अत्र लोके परिशिष्यते *kiṁ atra loke pariśiṣyate* - what is left over in this world, which is unknowable to That Pure Consciousness? Obviously nothing, meaning, nothing in this world is beyond the scope

of That Pure Consciousness, Pure Awareness - शुद्ध चैतन्यं *śuddha caitanyaṁ*. That शुद्ध चैतन्यं *śuddha caitanyaṁ* - एतत् वै तत् *etat vai tat* - That is indeed The

आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self "I"

That Pure Consciousness, That Pure Awareness - That शुद्ध विज्ञान स्वरूप चैतन्यं *śuddha vijñān svarūp caitanyaṁ* because of which alone, because of whose presence and power alone a person recognizes, a person gains clear, direct and immediate knowledge of रूपं *rūpaṁ* - form and color, रसं *rasaṁ* - taste, गन्धं *gandhaṁ* - smells, शब्दान् *śabdān* - sounds, स्पर्शान् *sparsān* - all sense of touch and also मैथुनान् *maithunān* - all pleasures of sense enjoyments, and also everything else in this creation without exception, That Pure Awareness - एतत् वै तत् *etat vai tat*, That is indeed तत् *tat* - The आत्मा *ātmā* - The SELF I - about which you wanted to know when you asked me "तत् वद *tat vada* - Please tell that to me" in your opening question, so says Lord यम *yama*.

Lord यम *yama* repeats the expression एतत् वै तत् *etat vai tat* again and again, focusing Nachiketa's attention on आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self "I".



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Now, for the sake of argument suppose you say “I recognize, I gain Knowledge of रूपं, रसं, गन्धं ... form, taste, smell etc., by my sense organs - mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*. Where does आत्मा *ātmā* come into the picture?” If you ask such a question, the answer is: “You are NOT your sense organs, mind or बुद्धि *buddhi*. They are also only objects you are aware of. They themselves gain their powers to function as they do, only because of the presence and powers of आत्मा *ātmā* - your True SELF, already within yourself. This we have already seen in केनोपनिषत् *kenopaniṣat*.

Let us recall briefly the words of केनोपनिषत् *kenopaniṣat* here:

यत् वाचा अनभ्युदितं *yat vācā anabhyuditaṁ*, येन वाग् अभ्युध्यते *yena vāg abhyudhyate* - That which is not revealed by words, but That, by which, words reveal their meanings

यन्मनसा न मनुते येन आहुः मनो मतं *yanmanasā na manute yena āhuḥ mano mataṁ* - That which cannot be comprehended by the mind but That by which the mind is able to comprehend the world of objects and changes.

यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति येन चक्षुषि पश्यति *yaccakṣuṣā na paśyati yena cakṣuṁṣi paśyati* - That which cannot be seen by the eyes, but That by whose grace the eyes are capable of seeing

यत् श्रोत्रेण न श्रुणोति येन श्रोत्रं इदं श्रुतम् *yat śrotreṇa na śrṇoti yena śrotraṁ idaṁ śrutam* - That which is not heard by the ear, but That by which the ear is able to hear this sound

यत् प्राणेन न प्राणिति येन प्राणः प्रणीयते *yat prāṇena na prāṇiti yena prāṇaḥ praṇīyate* - That which is not sustained by प्राण *prāṇa*, but that by which प्राण *prāṇa* is sustained.

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि *tadeva brahma tvam viddhi* - Please understand – That alone is ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. That alone is आत्मा *ātmā*. That alone is the Self “I”. Lord यम ‘s *yama*’s message here is the same.

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं, शब्दान् स्पर्शान् च मैथुनान् ।

yena rūpaṁ rasaṁ gandhaṁ, śabdān sparśān ca maithunān |

एते नैव विजानाति, किं अत्र परिशिष्यते ।

ete naiva vijānāti, kiṁ atra pariśiṣyate |



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एतत् वै तत् ॥
etat vai tat ॥

That is indeed आत्मा *ātmā*. Further, the Upanishad continues:

स्वप्नान्तं, जागरितान्तं च, उभौ येन अनुपश्यति ।
svapnāntam, jāgaritāntam ca, ubhau yena anupaśyati ।
महान्तं विभुं आत्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ 4 - 4
mahāntam vibhum ātmānam matvā dhīro na śocati ॥

Again, pointing attention to अपरोक्ष आत्म दर्शनं *aparokṣa ātma darśanam* – clear, direct and immediate vision of the unchanging and the unchangeable eternal आत्मा *ātmā* – The Self, Pure Consciousness in oneself as ONESELF, Lord यम *yama* says:

येन अनुपश्यति *yena anupaśyati* – That because of which, That by whose presence and blessings alone a person sees, as they truly are, namely
स्वप्नान्तं जागरितान्तं च उभौ *svapnāntam jāgaritāntam ca ubhau* – the events and objects known and seen in both of one's dream state and the waking state. That same one pure consciousness by whose presence and blessings alone a person sees, whatever he sees, in one's dream state and also in one's waking state. That pure consciousness शुद्ध चैतन्यं *śuddha caitanyam* is एतत् वै तत् *etat vai tat*, is indeed the आत्मा *ātmā* – The Self that you asked about. What one sees in one's dream state and waking state is only a manifestation of one's माया गुण वासना *māyā guṇa vāsanās* – the lingering effects of one's past and present सत्त्व *satva*, रजस् *rajas*, तमस् *tamas* गुण *guṇas* born of माया *māyā*. Being so, they are all only objects of one's pure awareness. That pure awareness itself is आत्मा *ātmā*.

तं महान्तं विभुं आत्मानं मत्वा *tam mahāntam vibhum ātmānam matvā* – That आत्मा *ātmā* is महान्तं *mahāntam*, देश-काल अपरिच्छिन्नं *deśa-kāla apiriccinnam* – not bound by space and time, which means that आत्मा *ātmā* is Infinite, limitless, ever existent and also that आत्मा *ātmā* is विभुं *vibhum* (विविदं भवति इति विदुः *vividam bhavati iti viduḥ*) – the one who manifests oneself in an endless variety of forms and names. All varieties of names and forms in this creation are only manifestations of That One आत्मा *ātmā* which is the अधिष्ठान *adhiṣṭhān* – the basis,



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the root for everything in this creation. As the basis for this entire creation, आत्मा *ātmā* is all-pervasive. That आत्मा *ātmā* is विभुं *vibhum*, सर्व व्यापक स्वरूपं *sarva vyāpaka svarūpaṁ*, which means विष्णु स्वरूपं *viṣṇu svarūpaṁ*.

That is why in our सहस्रनाम अर्चन *sahstranām arcana*, we worship विष्णु *viṣṇu* as ओं विभवे नमः *om vibhave namaḥ*. Thus

तं आत्मानं मत्वा *taṁ ātmānaṁ matvā* – Knowing that limitless all-pervading आत्मा *ātmā* – the self,

मत्वा *matvā* means ज्ञात्वा *jñātvā* – knowing; how does one know that आत्मा *ātmā*?

तं आत्मानं आत्म भावेन मत्वा *taṁ ātmānaṁ ātma bhāvena matvā* – ज्ञात्वा *jñātvā* – Recognizing that limitless all-pervading आत्मा *ātmā* – The Self as Oneself itself, which means

साक्षात् अहं ब्रह्मेति ज्ञात्वा *sākṣāt ahaṁ brahmeti jñātvā* – Recognizing clearly, directly and immediately through the words of the Upanishads that “I am indeed that limitless all-pervading ब्रह्मन् *brahman* – the आत्मा: *ātmāh*. So recognizing oneself as ब्रह्मन् *brahman* itself, as आत्मा *ātmā* itself, as pure consciousness itself, as परमेश्वर *parameśvar* itself.

धीरः न शोचति *dhīraḥ na śocati* – a धीर पुरुष *dhīr puruṣa*, a विवेकि *viveki* never comes to grief. A धीर पुरुष *dhīr puruṣa*, a wise person gains freedom from the hold of every kind of sorrow and distress arising from संसार *saṁsār* – life in this ever-changing world.

In the above verse, Lord यम *yama* essentially points out:

1. In the deep sleep state, there is only Pure Awareness – there is no object awareness. That pure awareness is one and the same in all the three states of existence, namely the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state.
2. That pure awareness is the limitless, all-pervading, all-inclusive, ever-existent, unchanging and unchangeable आत्मा *ātmā* – the self.
3. The person who recognizes beyond doubt one’s identity with that आत्मा *ātmā* is naturally uplifted from all the सुख दुःखः *sukha dukhaḥ* inherent in this संसार *saṁsār* – ever-changing world.



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In addition, any person who recognizes clearly, directly and immediately one's identity with the आत्मा *ātmā* – The परमेश्वर *parameśvar* already in oneself as oneself itself, that person gains freedom from hatred and fear of every kind, so says Lord यम *yama* in the next verse.

य इमं मध्वदं वेद, आत्मानं जीवं अन्तिकात् ।

ya imam madhvadam veda, ātmānam jīvam antikāt ।

ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य, न ततो विजुगुप्सते ॥

īśānam bhūta bhavyasya, na tato vijugupsate ॥

एतत् वै तत् ॥ 4 – 5

etat vai tat ॥

य इमं मध्वदं वेद *ya imam madhvadam veda* – Any person who recognizes clearly, directly and immediately this आत्मा *ātmā* . The nature of this आत्मा *ātmā* is indicated here by the three words मध्वदं *madhvadam*, जीवं *jīvam* and भूतभव्यस्य ईशानं *bhūta bhavyasya īśānam*

मध्वदं *madhvadam* – मधु *madhu* literally means honey. Here मधु *madhu* stands for इष्ट कर्मफल *iṣṭa karma phala* – the desirable results of one's कर्म *karmas*, which means one's पुण्य कर्मफल *puṇya karma phalas*. Therefore मध्वदं *madhvadam* – means पुण्य कर्मफल भुजं *puṇya karma phala bhujam*

The भोक्ता *bhokta* is the nourisher and enjoyer of one's पुण्य कर्मफल *puṇya karma phalas*. The आत्मा *ātmā*, the परमेश्वर *parameśvar* is the real nourisher and enjoyer of all कर्म *karmas* and कर्मफल *karma phalas* of a धीर पुरुष *dhīra puruṣa*, a wise person, who alone can gain आत्म दर्शनं *ātma darśanam*. For a धीर पुरुष *dhīra puruṣa* – a wise person with resolve and discipline totally committed to the pursuit of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* within, every कर्म *karma* is indeed ईश्वर कर्म *īśvara kama*. And one is only an instrument to serve the will of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, and consequently, परमेश्वर *parameśvar* is indeed the भोक्ता *bhokta* – the nourisher and enjoyer of all of one's कर्म *karmas* and कर्मफल *karma phalas*. Therefore, a धीर पुरुष *dhīra puruṣa* – a wise person recognizes परमेश्वर *parameśvar* within as मध्वदं *madhvadam*, meaning भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां *bhoktaram yajña tapasām* (G.5-29) as the nourisher and enjoyer of all his कर्म *karmas* and कर्मफल *karma phalas*.



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

जीवं *jīvaṁ* – The धीर पुरुष *dhīra puruṣa* – the wise person recognizes the आत्मा *ātmā* – the परमेश्वर *parameśvar* within as जीवं *jīvaṁ*, meaning प्राणस्य प्राणः *prāṇasya prāṇaḥ* – as the sustainer of one's प्राण *prāṇa* – the breath of life.

भूतभव्यस्य ईशानं *bhūta bhavyasya īśānaṁ* means सर्वलोक महेश्वरं *sarvaloka maheśvaraṁ*. The धीर पुरुष *dhīra puruṣa* the wise person recognizes the आत्मा *ātmā* – the परमेश्वर *parameśvar* within oneself as भूतभव्यस्य ईशानं *bhūta bhavyasya īśānaṁ* – The Lord of the past and the future, which naturally includes the present as well, because all past and future are with reference to the present. Therefore, भूतभव्यस्य ईशानं *bhūta bhavyasya īśānaṁ* means सर्वलोक महेश्वरं *sarva loka maheśvaraṁ* – the Lord of all the three periods of TIME, the Lord of the three worlds, The Absolute Reality transcending TIME itself. Therefore,

यः मध्यदं जीवं भूतभव्यस्य ईशानं इमं आत्मानं वेद *yaḥ madhvadaṁ jīvaṁ bhūta bhavyasya īśānaṁ imaṁ ātmānaṁ veda* – the person who recognizes this आत्मा *ātmā* within oneself as the nourisher and enjoyer of one's कर्मफलस्य *karma phalas*, as the sustainer of one's प्राण *prāṇa*, and as the Lord of all the three worlds, as the Lord of all the three periods of time, transcending time itself

यः इमं आत्मानं अन्तिकात् वेद *yaḥ imaṁ ātmānaṁ antikāt veda* – the person who knows, who recognizes this आत्मा *ātmā* within oneself as the ONE nearest to oneself, which means as ONESELF itself

ततः *tataḥ* – on such recognition

न विजुगुप्सते *na vijugupsate* – that person does not, and cannot suffer from any kind of hatred or fear. न विजुगुप्सते *na vijugupsate* – literally means does not hate, does not fear and does not seek any defense, protection, or a place to hide. All notions of hatred, self-protection, self-defense, etc. arise only from fear. Recognizing oneself as the आत्मा *ātmā* – The परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself, there is absolutely nothing, no scope for any kind of hatred or fear.

एतत् वै तत् *etat vai tat* – Such absolute freedom from hatred and fear is indeed the nature of आत्मा *ātmā* – about which you wanted to know, so says Lord यम *yama*. The Upanishad continues, which we will see next time.