



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

कठोपनिषत्
Katopanishad
Section 6
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ऊर्ध्वमूलः, अवाक् शाखः, एषः अश्वत्थः सनातनः तदेव शुक्रं, तत् ब्रह्म तदेव अमृतं उच्यते ।
ūrdhvamūlah, avāk śākhah, eṣaḥ aśvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ tadeva śukraṁ, tat brahma tadeva amṛtaṁ ucyate ।

तस्मिन् लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन । एतत् वै तत् ॥ 6-1
tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve tadu nātyeti kaścan । etat vai tat ॥

यदिदं किञ्च जगत् सर्वं, प्राणे एजाति निस्सृतम् ।
yadidaṁ kiñca jagat sarvaṁ, prāṇe ejāti nissṛtam ।
महत् भयं वज्रं उद्यतं, ये एतत् विदुः, अमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥ 6-2
mahat bhayaṁ vajraṁ udyataṁ, ye etat viduḥ, amṛtāste bhavanti ॥

भयात् अस्य अग्निः तपति, भयात् तपति सूर्यः ।
bhayāt asya agniḥ tapati, bhayāt tapati sūryaḥ ।
भयात् इन्द्रश्च वायुश्च, मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥ 6-3
bhayāt indraśca vāyuśca, mṛtyurdhāvati pañcamah ॥

इह चेत् अशकत् बोद्धुं, प्राक् शरीरस्य विस्रसः ।
iha cet aśakat boddhum, prāk śarīrasya visrasaḥ ।
ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु, शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥ 6-4
tataḥ sargeṣu lokeṣu, śarīratvāya kalpate ॥

यथा आदर्शे, तथा आत्मनि यथा स्वप्ने, तथा पितृलोके ।
yathā ādarśe, tathā ātmani yathā svapne, tathā pitṛloke ।
यथा अप्सु परीच ददृशे, तथा गन्धर्वलोके छाया आतपयोः इव ब्रह्मलोके ॥ 6-5
yathā apsu parīva dadṛśe, tathā gandharva loke chāyā ātapayoḥ iva brahma loka ॥

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् भावं उदय अस्तमयौ च यत् ।
indriyāṇāṁ pṛthak bhāvaṁ udaya astamayau ca yat ।



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पृथक् उत्पद्यमानानां, मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥

6 – 6

pr̥thak utpadyamānānām, matvā dhiro na śocati ॥

In this final Section of कठोपनिषत् *kāṭhōpaniṣat* Lord यम *yama* opens His Discourse on ब्रह्मज्ञानं *brahma jñānam* – Knowledge on ब्रह्मन् *brahman* – with a description of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* through वृक्षकल्पना *vṛkṣa kalpanā* – the imagery of संसार वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa* – The Tree of Existence.

We have already heard extensively from Sri Krishna (G. 15: 1 – 4) about this imagery and how it is an effective means of communicating Knowledge on ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. This ever-changing world – The संसार *saṁsāra*, is rooted in the never-changing world of Eternity – The ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is the Ultimate Cause (unseen) and संसार *saṁsāra* is the ever changing effects which are seen. The Object here is to recognize the Ultimate Cause through Its effects.

Indicating That ब्रह्मन् *brahman* as the Ultimate cause for this संसार *saṁsāra* – this ever changing world of forms and names, Lord यम *yama* says:

ऊर्ध्वमूलः, अवाक् शाखः, एषः अश्वत्थः सनातनः
ūrdhvamūlah, avāk śākhaḥ, eṣaḥ aśvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ
तदेव शुक्रं, तत् ब्रह्म, तदेव अमृतं उच्यते ।
tadeva śukraṁ, tat brahma, tadeva amṛtaṁ ucyate ।
तस्मिन् लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे, तद् नात्येति कश्चन ।
tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve, tad nātyeti kaścana ।
एतत् वै तत् ॥
etat vai tat ॥

6 – 1

एषः अश्वत्थः सनातनः, ऊर्ध्वमूलः, अवाक् शाखः
eṣaḥ aśvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ, ūrdhvamūlah, avāk śākhaḥ

एषः अश्वत्थः *eṣaḥ aśvatthaḥ* - This अश्वत्थ *aśvatthaḥ* Tree. This संसार वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa* is called अश्वत्थ *aśvatthaḥ*. This Tree of Existence is called अश्वत्थ *aśvatthaḥ*.

सनातनः *sanātanaḥ* – is Eternal, is a perennial flow of existence as cause and effect, without any beginning.



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For example, the tree gives rise to the seed, and the seed gives rise to the tree and thus the tree-seed-tree cycle is **सनातनः sanātanaḥ** – a perennial flow of existence. Similarly, the **शरीर śarīra** gives rise to **कर्म karma** and the **कर्म karma** gives rise to **शरीर śarīra**, and thus the **शरीर-कर्म-शरीर śarīra-karma-śarīra** cycle is **सनातनः sanātanaḥ** – a perennial flow of existence. Such is the nature of **संसार saṁsāra** – this world of Existence.

Further, **एषः अश्वत्थः ऊर्ध्वमूलः eṣaḥ aśvatthaḥ ūrdhvamūlaḥ**, **अवाक् शाखः avāk śākhaḥ** – This **अश्वत्थ aśvatthaḥ** tree, this **संसार वृक्ष saṁsāra vṛkṣa**, has its root above and branches below. Please understand, the Upanishad is not talking about a tree turned upside down. The Upanishad is talking about **संसार saṁsāra** – this World of Existence, this creation. This **संसार saṁsāra** has its root cause above – **ऊर्ध्वमूलः ūrdhvamūlaḥ**, which means the root cause of this **संसार saṁsāra** is above one's comprehension, whereas, its manifestations are below. **अवाक् शाखः avāk śākhaḥ** means that these manifestations are effects and they are available for comprehension in the world of time and space. Thus, the cause is above, and its effects are below.

Now, what is **ऊर्ध्वमूलः ūrdhvamūlaḥ** – the root cause? The immediate cause for this **संसार saṁsāra** – entire creation, is **माया māyā** – the inherent Power of **ब्रह्मन् brahman**. **माया māyā** has no independent existence. **माया māyā** exists because **ब्रह्मन् brahman** exists – **ब्रह्माश्रया माया brahmāśrayā māyā**, **माया māyā** being dependent on **ब्रह्मन् brahman**. The independent entity in all existence is only **ब्रह्मन् brahman**. Therefore **ऊर्ध्वमूलः ūrdhvamūlaḥ** – the ultimate root cause for this entire creation, for this **संसार saṁsāra** – the world of all existence – is only **ब्रह्मन् brahman**. Therefore the Upanishad says:

तत् ब्रह्म tat brahma – That **ऊर्ध्वमूलः ūrdhvamūlaḥ**, the ultimate root cause for this **संसार saṁsāra** – this entire creation is **ब्रह्मन् brahman**. What is the Nature of That **ब्रह्मन् brahman**?

तदेव शुक्रं tadeva śukraṁ – That **ब्रह्मन् brahman** alone is Pure, in the sense it is uncontaminated with anything else, because It is ONE without a second. **ब्रह्मन् brahman** alone is **सत्यं satyaṁ** – everything else is **मिथ्या mithyā**. It alone is



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independent and eternal, and everything else is dependent and transient appearance. Further,

तदेव अमृतं उच्यते *tadeva amṛtaṁ ucyate* - That ब्रह्मन् *brahman* alone is called The Immortal. Immortality is only for ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, not for any object in this संसार *saṁsāra* – in this creation.

तस्मिन् सर्वे लोकाः श्रिताः *tasmin sarve lokāḥ śritāḥ* - In That ब्रह्मन् *brahman* rest all लोकाः *lokās* – all worlds, all objects and all experiences. That ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is Infinite Awareness which is the abode of all existence, all worlds, all knowledge, all objects and all experiences.

तत् उ न अत्येति कश्चन *tat u na atyeti kaścana* - Nothing in this creation can ever transcend That ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. Nothing in this creation exists apart from That ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. That ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is all-inclusive.

एतत् वै तत् *etat vai tat* - That ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is indeed The आत्मा *ātmā* – The Self “I” you asked about, so says Lord यम *yama* to Nachiketa. The ऊर्ध्वमूलः is ब्रह्मन् *brahman*;

तस्मिन् सर्वे लोकाः श्रिताः तद् नात्येति कश्चन, *tasmin sarve lokāḥ śritāḥ tadu nātyeti kaścana*, एतत् वै तत् *etat vai tat* - That ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is आत्मा *ātmā*. That is the central Message here.

ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is the Unity of all existence, and no part of the manifested creation can exist apart from ब्रह्मन् *brahman* – just as no part of the tree can exist apart from its root.

The World-Tree – The संसार वृक्ष *saṁsāra vṛkṣa*, is in the sphere of time, bound by time. It is ever subject to change, in the never ending cycle of birth and death. By attaching oneself to this world of changes and by being engaged in the incessant pursuits of its transient attractions, one ever remains ignorant of one’s own true dimensions and in the grip of bondage to the never ending ups and downs of life. That is false life.

One’s true life begins only when one develops the spirit of total detachment to one’s sense-bound life and embarks on a search for the ultimate root of the world of existence – namely ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, through a penetration into the spiritual core of one’s own being. That is the central Message here.



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Having pointed out That **ब्रह्मन् brahman** as the root-cause for this creation, Lord **यम yama** now presents That **ब्रह्मन् brahman** as The cosmic Order and The Rhythm in the creation which fall within the bounds of human experience as the Eternal Laws of Nature, just as the invisible root of the tree manifests itself as the Law governing the growth of the visible tree.

यदिदं किञ्च जगत् सर्वं, प्राणे एजति निस्सृतम् ।

yadidaṁ kiñca jagat sarvaṁ, prāṇe ejati nissṛtam ।

महत् भयं वज्रं उद्यतं, ये एतत् विदुः, अमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

6-2

mahat bhayaṁ vajraṁ udyataṁ, ye etat viduḥ, amṛtāste bhavanti ॥

भयात् अस्य अग्निः तपति, भयात् तपति सूर्यः ।

bhayāt asya agniḥ tapati, bhayāt tapati sūryaḥ ।

भयात् इन्द्रश्च वायुश्च, मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥

6-3

bhayāt indraśca vāyuśca, mṛtyardhāvati pañcamah ॥

यत् इदं किञ्च जगत् सर्वं *yat idaṁ kiñca jagat sarvaṁ*

यत् किञ्च इदं *yat kiñca idaṁ*, जगत् सर्वं *jagat sarvaṁ* - Whatever there is in this entire creation

प्राणे एजति निस्सृतं *prāṇe ejati nissṛtam* - प्राण *prāṇa* here stands for **ब्रह्मन् brahman** as the Lord of this entire creation, therefore, प्राणे निस्सृतं *prāṇe nissṛtam* means प्राणे निर्गतं *prāṇe nirgataṁ* - having come out of That **ब्रह्मन् brahman**, एजति प्रचलति नियमेन *ejati pracalati niyamena* moves according to a certain ORDER, which means because of **ब्रह्मन् brahman** being there, this entire creation behaves in a certain ORDER in accordance with Unchanging and Unchangeable "Laws of Nature". Thus, even though this entire creation is a **मिथ्या mithyā** - a transient appearance, all the infinite ever changing elements in this entire creation cannot behave haphazardly at random as they please, because,

महत् भयं वज्रं उद्युतं (इव) *mahat bhayaṁ vajraṁ udyutaṁ (iva)* - **ब्रह्मन् brahman** is a Great Terror like the upraised thunderbolt, which means **ब्रह्मन् brahman** as the Universal Law of Nature totally controls all that happens in this entire ever changing universe at all times

ये एतत् विदुः *ye etat viduḥ* - Those who know this fact, namely That **ब्रह्मन् brahman** is the sole cause for the cosmic manifestation of the universe, and **ब्रह्मन्**



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brahman is The Unbreakable Law governing every change in this creation, including all our mental activities, those people who clearly recognize this fact

ते अमृताः भवन्ति *te amṛtāḥ bhavanti* – they become Immortal, which means those who recognize the true nature of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* become Immortal, and ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is in every self including oneself, as ONESELF Itself. Illustrating how the world behaves out of “fear” of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* the Upanishad says:

अस्य भयात् अग्निः तपति *asya bhayāt agnih tapati* – Out of Fear of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, which means Under the Overriding Law of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, Fire burns as it does

अस्य भयात् सूर्यः तपति *asya bhayāt sūryaḥ tapati* – Under the Law of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, The Sun is hot as it is and it shines as it does

इन्द्रः च *indraḥ ca*, वायुः च *vāyuḥ ca*, पञ्चमः मृत्युः च अस्य भयात् धावति *pañcamaḥ mṛtyuḥ ca asya bhayāt dhāvati* – इन्द्र *indra*, वायु *vāyu* and fifthly मृत्यु *mṛtyu* – The Lord of Death, all of them perform their respective functions unerringly and without fail at all times under the overriding and unchanging Law of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. Even though all the देवताs *devatās* have their own extraordinary powers, they limit themselves to their own duties as ordained by परमेश्वर *parameśvar*.

In the next 2 verses, Lord यम *yama* earnestly urges Nachiketa, and through him every human being, to gain ब्रह्मज्ञानं *brahma jñānam* and realize one’s identity with ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, in this very life itself. Lord यम *yama* says:

इह चेत् अशक्तं बोद्धुं, प्राक् शरीरस्य विस्रसः ।

iha cet aśakat boddhum, prāk śarīrasya visrasaḥ ।

ततः सर्गेषु, लोकेषु, शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥

6 – 4

tataḥ sargeṣu, lokeṣu, śarīratvāya kalpate ॥

इह चेत् अशक्तं बोद्धुं प्राक् शरीरस्य विस्रसः *iha cet aśakat boddhum prāk śarīrasya visrasaḥ*

इह *iha* – Here, in this very life itself, even while living

(तत् ब्रह्म *tat brahma*) बोद्धुं अशक्तं *boddhum aśakat* (शक्नोति *śaknoti*) चेत् *cet* – if a person is able to recognize That ब्रह्मन् *brahman* in oneself as ONESELF Itself, that person,



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संसार बन्धनात् विमुच्यते *saṁsār bandhanāt vimucyate* – becomes free from the bondages of संसार *saṁsāra* – this ever-changing world as said before

ते अमृताः भवन्ति *te amṛtāḥ bhavanti* – such people become Immortal

न चेत् *na cet* – if not, if a person continues to be governed by Self ignorance

ततः *tataḥ* – then, that person

सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते *sargeṣu lokeṣu śarīratvāya kalpate* – becomes fit only for taking another body in this created world

सर्गेषु लोकेषु *sargeṣu lokeṣu* – which means, he is fit only to get reborn again in some form in this created world. After death, there is no मोक्ष *mokṣa* – there is no Liberation for that person. There is only further travel for that person in this created world in some form

यथा कर्म यथा श्रुतं *yathā karma yathā śrutam* – in accordance with one's past कर्म *karma* and mental disposition

Hence, one must make every effort in this very life itself, to gain ब्रह्मज्ञानं *brahma jñānam* and SELF-Realization, because,

यथा आदर्शे तथा आत्मनि यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके ।

yathā ādarśe tathā ātmani yathā svapne tathā pitṛloke ।

यथा अप्सु परीच ददृशे, तथा गन्धर्वलोके छाया आतपयोः इव ब्रह्मलोके ॥ 6 – 5

yathā apsu parīva dadṛśe, tathā gandharvaloke chāyā ātapayoḥ iva brahma loke ॥

The Glory of Life in human body is that it is in this body, Self-Realization – the vision of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* in oneself as ONESELF Itself – is achievable most clearly and fully in every respect.

यथा आदर्शे तथा आत्मनि *yathā ādarśe tathā ātmani* – just as one sees oneself clearly and fully in a mirror

यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके *yathā svapne tathā pitṛloke* – in पितृलोक *pitṛloke*, which means in the disembodied State, the vision of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is hazy as in a dream

यथा अप्सु परिददृशे इव तथा गन्धर्वलोके *yathā apsu paridadṛśe iva tathā gandharva loke* – in the world of celestial beings, the vision of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is like one's reflection in water; and



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छाया आतपयोः इव ब्रह्मलोके *chāyā ātapayoḥ iva brahma loke* - In ब्रह्मलोक *brahma loka* the vision of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is like shade and light

How ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is perceived differently in different planes of consciousness is described above through similes. In human embodiment alone, ब्रह्मन् *brahman* can be perceived clearly and distinctly as an image in a mirror. This distinctness becomes less and less in the worlds like those of manes, Gandarwas etc. But in the ब्रह्मलोक *brahma loka* which is reached by persons who follow क्रम मुक्ति *krama mukti*, ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is no doubt realized clearly – as distinctly as Light is separated from darkness – but it is extremely difficult to reach ब्रह्मलोक *brahmaloka* because it involves an extraordinary level of Pure Vedic Knowledge, Meditations, and Rituals etc. Therefore, every effort should be made to gain Self-Realization in this very human life itself – that is the easiest Means for realizing one's identity with ब्रह्मन् *brahman* – The परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* – already within oneself.

We may recall the words of Sri Krishna here

वीत राग भयक्रोधाः मन्मया मां उपाश्रिताः ।

vīta rāga bhaya krodhāḥ manmayā māṁ upāśritāḥ ।

बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भाव आगताः ॥

G. 4 – 10

bahavo jñāna tapasā pūtā madbhāvaṁ āgatāḥ ॥

Releasing oneself from the forces of passion, fear, and anger and identifying oneself with ME – the परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* in all of one's actions, with the mind totally directed towards परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* at all times, very many people have gained identity with ME – The परमेश्वर *paramēśvar*, when their minds are purified by आत्मज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*, ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānaṁ*, ब्रह्मज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* – says Sri Krishna.

Therefore, कर्मयोग *karma yoga*, ध्यानयोग *dhyāna yoga*, भक्तियोग *bhakti yoga* and ज्ञानयोग *jñāna yoga* together is the Best and the only surest Means of Self Discovery for all of us. In the remaining verses of this Upanishad, Lord यम *yama* sums up His Teachings, repeating some of His earlier Teachings and also adding some more by way of explanation or emphasis.



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In the next verse, Lord यम *yama* points out that while आत्मा *ātmā* is everywhere in one's शरीर *śarīra* at all times, आत्मा *ātmā* is distinctly separate from one's body and body-components – the इन्द्रियाः *indriyās* – all organs of perception and action. Lord यम *yama* says:

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् भावं, उदय, अस्तमयौ च यत् ।

indriyāṇāṃ pṛthak bhāvaṃ, udaya, astamayau ca yat ।

पृथक् उत्पद्यमानानां, मत्वा, धीरो न शोचति ॥

6 – 6

pṛthak utpadyamānānām, matvā, dhīro na śocati ॥

यत् मत्वा *yat matvā*, यत् ज्ञात्वा *yat jñātvā* – Knowing which, Understanding which, Recognizing which, Fully realizing which. What is that “which” – we will see. Fully realizing that, what happens?

धीरः न शोचति *dhīraḥ na śocati* – a धीर पुरुष *dhīra puruṣ*, a ज्ञानी *jñānī* – one who recognizes one's identity with The आत्मा *ātmā* – The Self “I” in oneself as ONESELF Itself, such a धीर पुरुष *dhīra puruṣa* never comes to grief.

(न शोचति *na śocati*) – never experiences any kind of sorrow and distress. That means:

Sorrow and distress disappear when आत्मा *ātmā* The Self “I” is realized, by knowing, by fully realizing the nature of one's इन्द्रियाः *indriyās* – instruments of perception and action, with respect to the following:

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् उत्पद्यमानानां, मत्वा,

indriyāṇāṃ pṛthak utpadyamānānām, matvā,

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् उदय अस्तमयौ च मत्वा

indriyāṇāṃ pṛthak udaya astamayau ca matvā

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् उत्पद्यमानानां मत्वा (ज्ञात्वा) *indriyāṇāṃ pṛthak utpadya mānānām matvā (jñātvā)*– knowing that the nature of the sense organs, for example, is such that they are created individually and separately, each one having its own cause and its own function, the sense organs namely the ear, the skin the eye, the tongue and the nose are created from the सत्त्व गुण *satva guṇa* of the Five Great Elements – आकाश *ākāśa*, वायु *vāyu*, अग्नि *agni*, आपः *āpaḥ* and पृथ्वी *pṛthivī* respectively, for the sole purpose of perceiving each individual and separate sense object, namely Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell. Each sense organ is limited in its



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origin, individuality and purpose, recognizing fully the above nature of the sense organs, and further.

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् भावं मत्वा *indriyāṇām pṛthak bhāvaṁ matvā* – also recognizing fully that the individuality of each sense organ is distinct and separate both from that of each other, and also from the स्वरूप *svarūp* of आत्मा *ātmā* whose nature is Pure consciousness – which is ONE, totally independent, unlimited and all-inclusive; further, इन्द्रियाणां पृथक् उदय अस्तमयौ च मत्वा *indriyāṇām pṛthak udaya astamayau ca matvā* – also recognizing fully the उदय *udaya* and अस्तमय *astamaya* – the rising and setting, the activity and inactivity, the appearance and disappearance-nature of sense organs, individually and separately. For example, these sense organs function only in one's waking state of existence, and they cease to function in one's deep sleep and dream states of existence. Even in the waking state of existence, these sense organs have their moments of black-out. Thus the उदय *udaya* and अस्तमय *astamaya* – rising and setting – is only for the इन्द्रियाः *indriyās* – not for आत्मा *ātmā*, which is always awake, in all the three states of existence, namely the waking, the deep sleep and the dream states of one's existence.

What is said above with respect to the sense organs, is applicable to all इन्द्रियाः *indriyās* – all organs of perception and actions in one's शरीर *śarīr*. Thus, realizing fully that all the individual and separate attributes of all the इन्द्रियाः *indriyās* are only अध्यास *adhyāsa* – super impositions on आत्मा *ātmā* and the Absolute Reality behind all the इन्द्रियाः *indriyās* is only the आत्मा *ātmā* – The SELF “I” which is ONE, limitless, changeless, all-pervasive all-inclusive, ever-existent Pure Consciousness – The ब्रह्मन् *brahman* – The परमेश्वर *parmeśvar* – already in oneself as ONESELF itself, realizing That – यत् मत्वा *yat matvā*

धीरः न शोचति *dhīraḥ na śocati* – a धीर पुरुष *a dhīra puruṣa* – a ज्ञानी *jñānī* never experiences sorrow and distress of any kind.

Lord यम 's *yama*'s Discourse continues, which we will see next time.