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4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

कठोपनिषत्
Katopanishad
Section 1
Volume 3

वैश्वानरः प्रविशति अतिथिः ब्राह्मणो गृहान् ।

vaiśvānaraḥ praviśati atithiḥ brāhmaṇo gṛhān ।

तस्यैतां शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति हर वैवस्वतोदकम् ॥

1 - 7

tasyaitāṃ śāntim kurvanti hara vaivasvatodakam ॥

आशा प्रतीक्षे संगतं सूनृतां च इष्टापूरते पुत्र पशूश्च सर्वान् ।

āsā pratikṣe saṅgataṃ sūnṛtāṃ ca iṣṭāpūrte putra paśauśca sarvān ।

एतत् वृङ्क्ते पुरुषस्य अल्पमेधसः यस्य अनश्नन् वसति ब्राह्मणो गृहे ॥ 1 - 8

etat vṛṅkte puruṣasya alpamedhasaḥ yasya anaśnan vasati brāhmaṇo gṛhe ॥

तिस्त्रो रात्रीः यत् अवात्सीः गृहे मे अनश्नन् ब्रह्मन् अतिथिः नमस्यः ।

tastro rātriḥ yat avātsiḥ gṛhe me anaśnan brahman atithiḥ namasyaḥ ।

नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन् स्वस्ति मे अस्तु तस्मात् प्रति त्रीन् वरान् वृणीष्व ॥

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namastae'stu brahman svasti me astu tasmāt prati trīn varān vṛṇiṣva ॥

शान्तसंकल्पः सुमनाः यथा स्यात् वीतमन्युः गौतमो माऽभि मृत्यो ।

śāntasaṅkalpaḥ sumanāḥ yathā syāt vītamanyuḥ gautamo mā'bhi mṛtyo ।

त्वत् प्रसृष्टं मा अभिवदेत् प्रतीतः एतत् त्रयाणां प्रथमं वरं वृणे ॥

1 - 10

tvat prasṛṣṭaṃ mā abhivadet pratītaḥ etat trayāṇāṃ prathamam varam vṛṇe ॥

यथा पुरस्ताद् भविता प्रतीतः औद्दालकिः आरुणिः मत् प्रसृष्टः ।

yathā purastād bhavītaa pratītaḥ auddālakīḥ āruṇiḥ mat prasṛṣṭaḥ ।

सुखं रात्रीः शयिता वीतमन्युः त्वां ददृशिवान् मृत्यु मुखात् प्रमुक्तं ॥

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sukhaṃ rātriḥ śayitā vītamanyuḥ tvāṃ dadṛśivān mṛtyu mukhāt pramuktaṃ ॥

As we saw last time, having heard the words of Nachiketa, and on his own further reflection, Nachiketa's father decided to keep the honour of his own words at the यज्ञ



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कर्म *yajña karma*, and accordingly sent Nachiketa to the abode of Lord यम *yama*. Nachiketa reached the abode of Lord यम *yama*. The Upanishad does not say where Lord यम's *yama's* house was, and how Nachiketa reached यम's *yama's* house. Therefore, we need not dwell on such details. The Upanishad here is concerned only with what happened to Nachiketa at यम's *yama's* house.

At the time Nachiketa reached यम's *yama's* house, Lord यम *yama* was not at home. Therefore, Nachiketa had to wait there until Lord यम *yama* returned after three days. During these three days, Nachiketa chose to live without eating any food, because he felt that since he had already been given to Lord यम *yama*, it would be improper for him to eat any food without Lord यम 's *yama's* permission.

When Lord यम *yama* returned home, the people in the यम *yama* household told Lord यम *yama* about the guest Nachiketa, who had been waiting for him for the past three days, eating no food, and they urged Lord यम *yama* to attend to Nachiketa immediately.

The Upanishad now says exactly what the people in यम's *yama's* household advised Lord यम *yama*. They told Lord यम *yama*

वैश्वानरः प्रविशति अतिथिः ब्राह्मणो गृहान् ।

vaiśvānaraḥ praviśati atithiḥ brāhmaṇo grāhaan ।

तस्यैतां शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति हर वैवस्वतोदकम् ॥

1 - 7

tasyaitā śantiṁ kurvanti hara vaivasvatodakam ॥

वैश्वानरः *vaiśa vānaraḥ* - परमेश्वर *parameśvar* manifested as अग्नि देवता *agni devatā* - Lord Fire is called वैश्वानरः *vaiśvānaraḥ*. Fire is also both Heat and Light. As heat, fire serves to cook the food to make it fit for eating, and the same fire, as the five प्राणाs, serves to digest and assimilate the food eaten by every being. The same fire can also burn and destroy the entire household if not handled properly. As light, fire makes it possible for one to gain, and also spread knowledge, and enlightenment. Such are the powers of अग्नि देवता *agni devatā* called वैश्वानर *vaiśvānara*.

अतिथिः *atithiḥ* - Nachiketa is an अतिथि *atithi* - a guest, a temporary visitor to यम's *yama's* household, because Nachiketa's human life time is not yet over, and hence, he



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cannot normally be admitted to the abode of death. Having somehow come to Lord यम *yama* Nachiketa can be welcomed properly only as a guest.

ब्राह्मणः *brāhmaṇaḥ* - Nachiketa is also a ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇa* both by गुण *guṇa* and कर्म *karma*

By virtue of his parentage (which means पूर्व कर्म संस्काराः *pūrva karma saṁskārās*, स्वभाव गुणाः *svabhāva guṇās*, born of one's own कर्म *karmas* in one's past lives) and also, by virtue of his natural commitment to ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam* and लोक संग्रहं *loka saṁgrahaṁ* - welfare of the world in his present life, Nachiketa is a ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇa* in the true sense of the word, which makes Nachiketa a highly respected guest to Lord यम's *yama's* household at this time. Therefore the Upanishad says

वैश्वानरः प्रविशति अतिथिः ब्राह्मणो गृहान् *vaiśvānaraḥ praviśati atithiḥ brāhmaṇo gṛhān* - This is a statement of general Vedic knowledge which says

वैश्वानरः (इव) ब्राह्मणः अतिथिः गृहान् प्रविशति *vaiśvānaraḥ (iva) brāhmaṇaḥ atithiḥ gṛhān praviśati* - Like अग्नि देवता *agni devatā* - Lord Fire, a ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇa* guest enters into households. Therefore the knowledgeable householders तस्य एतां शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति *tasya etā śāntim kurvanti* - pacify him, make his visit auspicious

एतां शान्तिं *etā śāntim* - with this kind of peace offering. The Upanishad refers to that शान्ति *śānti* as

एतां शान्तिं *etā śāntim* - the ~ कार ~ *kāra* indicates that the kind of शान्ति *śānti* appropriate for the guest is proper अतिथि पूजा *atithi pūjā* - a worshipful way of receiving a ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇ* guest

Advising Lord यम *yama* to do such अतिथि पूजा *atithi pūjā* to Nachiketa, the people in the household of यम *yama* told Lord यम *yama*

वैवस्वत, उदकं हर *vaivasvata, udakam hara* - O! Lord यम *yama*, take water (उदकं *udakam*) with you to do the अतिथि पूजा *atithi pūjā* to Nachiketa.

Here उदकं *udakam* - water, stands for everything necessary to attend to the immediate needs of Nachiketa, which means make Nachiketa feel welcome and



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comfortable, give him a proper seat to sit, water to drink, food to eat, etc. All this is part of अतिथि पूजा *atithi pūjā*. Therefore, the advice given to Lord यम *yama* is:

A ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇ* guest has come to our house. He has not eaten for the past three days. His coming to our house is like अग्नि देवता *agni devatā* - Lord अग्नि *agni* itself, entering into our house. Therefore, please honour him with अतिथि पूजा *atithi pūjā*, attend to all his immediate needs, and do everything possible to make his visit to our house auspicious. That is the right thing to do. If you neglect to do the right thing, it is a wrong action, which will certainly have many undesirable consequences because

आशा - प्रतीक्षे संगतं सूनृतां च इष्टापूरते पुत्रपशूश्च सर्वान् ।

āśā - pratikṣe saṅgatam sūnṛtāṁ ca iṣṭāpūrte putrapaśūśca sarvān |

एतत् वृङ्क्ते पुरुषस्य अल्पमेधसः यस्य अनश्नन् वसति ब्राह्मणो गृहे ॥ 1 - 8

etat vṛṅkte puruṣasya alpamedhasaḥ yasya anaśnan vasati brāhmaṇo gr̥he ||

This verse is again general Vedic knowledge, which is immediately relevant to the particular context here. The verse says:

यस्य गृहे, ब्राह्मणः अनश्नन् वसति *yasya gr̥he, brāhmaṇaḥ anaśnan vasati* - In whose house a ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇ* guest stays without eating

(तस्य) अल्पमेधसः पुरुषस्य (*tasya*) *alpamedhasaḥ puruṣasya* - of that person, whose knowledge of धर्म *dharma* and अधर्म *adharma* is indeed poor, whose knowledge of what is proper and what is improper is indeed अल्पं *alpaṁ* - trivial, of that person of very limited knowledge

सर्वान् एतत् वृङ्क्ते *sarvān etat vṛṅkte* - all this is degraded or destroyed.

सर्वान् एतत् *sarvān etat* - "all this" means what? "All this" includes all the following

आशा प्रतीक्षे - आशा *āśā* and प्रतीक्षा *pratikṣā* hopes and expectations. आशा *āśā* means hopes, hopes for the gain of unknown objects such as heaven and heavenly enjoyments and प्रतीक्षा *pratikṣā* means expectations for the gain of known objects such as wealth and worldly enjoyments of various kinds, and

संगतं *saṅgatam* - संगतं *saṅgatam* means all merits one has already acquired by

सत् सङ्ग *sat saṅg*, by associations with good people. With the addition of ~ कार ~ *kāra*, संगतं *saṅgatam* includes also merits gained through



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ईश्वर ध्यानं *īśvara dhyānam*, ईश्वर भजनं *īśvara bhajanam* - meditations, prayers, etc. and also

सुनृतां च *sūnṛtām ca*- whatever intellectual upliftments one has already gained by listening to learned discourses such as discourses on Vedas, Upanishads, etc. and also

इष्टापूरते *iṣṭāpūrte* - means इष्टं च पूरते च *iṣṭam ca pūrtaṁ ca* - whatever results

one has already gained through the proper performance of इष्ट-कर्मसु *iṣṭa-karmas* -

Vedic rituals – यज्ञ कर्मसु *yajña karmas* and also पूरते कर्मसु *pūrta karmas*, proper performance of charitable activities for the general welfare of the community or society as a whole, all such results as well as

पुत्र पशू च *putra paśūmca* - the word पुत्र *putra* meaning son, stands for all children

in the family and the word पशु *paśu* stands for wealth of all kinds. With कार *m̄ kāra*,

the word पशू *paśūm* indicates that all such wealth has been earned through proper and legitimate means. Therefore

पुत्र पशू च *putra paśūm ca* means all children and all the well-earned wealth in the family

सर्वान् एतत् वृद्धिक्ते *sarvān etat vṛṅkte* - all this is degraded or destroyed

All hopes and expectations, all merits already gained by association with good people, by meditations and prayers, all gains already made by listening to learned discourses, the पुण्य *puṇya* already gained through properly performed यज्ञ कर्मसु *yajña karmas* and charitable deeds, all the children and wealth earned in the family - all this is degraded or destroyed for a person in whose house a ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇ* guest is left to stay without food. This is Vedic knowledge.

We must understand the degradation and destruction indicated in the above verse is not brought about by the ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇ*. It is the natural result of the act of obvious negligence, disrespect or disregard shown to the ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇ*, and hence to the ब्रह्म विद्या *brahma vidya* itself, by a person of अल्पमेध *alpamedha* - poor knowledge of धर्म *dharma* - proper behaviour.

That being Vedic knowledge, Lord यम *yama* was advised to do अतिथि पूजा *atithi pūjā* for Nachiketa and attend to all his immediate needs in accordance with धर्म *dharma* to ward off any ill-effects in the context of what happened.



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Accordingly, Lord यम *yama* approached Nachiketa and offered him the traditional reception with अतिथि पूजा *atithi pūjā* in the proper manner. After making sure that Nachiketa was fully at ease with himself, Lord यम *yama* said this to Nachiketa

तिस्त्रो रात्रीः यत् अवात्सीः गृहे मे अनश्नन् ब्रह्मन् अतिथिः नमस्यः ।
tistro rātrīḥ yat avātsīḥ gr̥he me anaśnan brahman atithiḥ namasyaḥ ।
नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन् स्वस्ति मे अस्तु तस्मात् प्रति त्रीन् वरान् वृणीष्व ॥ 1 - 9
namaste'stu brahman svasti me astu tasmāt prati trīn varān vṛṇīṣva ॥

तिस्त्रः रात्रीः *tistraḥ rātrīḥ* - For three nights

यत् अवात्सीः मे गृहे (मम गृहे) अनश्नन् *yata avātsīḥ me gr̥he (mama gr̥he)*
anaśnana- since you have lived in my house without eating, and also (अवात्सी =
वसितवान् असि) (*avātsī = vasitavān asi*)

यत् ब्राह्मन् अतिथिः नमस्यः *yat brahman atithiḥ namasyaḥ-* since you are a ब्राह्मण
brāhmaṇ guest, entitled to veneration, which means fit for worship

नमः ते अस्तु ब्राह्मन् *namaḥ te astu brāhmaṇ* - O! ब्राह्मण, नमः ते अस्तु *brāhmaṇ,*
namaḥ te astu - I do नमस्कार *namaskār* to you. I seek your blessing.

ब्राह्मन् *brāhmaṇ*, स्वस्ति मे अस्तु *svasti me astu* - भद्रं मे अस्तु *bhadraṁ me astu*
- O! ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇ* may your visit to my house be auspicious. I realize that your
spending 3 nights in my house without eating is a दोष *doṣa* - is a blemish to my
household, which happened because I was away. Therefore

नमः ते अस्तु ब्रह्मन्, स्वस्ति मे अस्तु *namaḥ te astu brahman, svasta me astu* -
O! ब्राह्मण *brahman*, I seek your blessings, and by your blessings, let me be released
from all blemishes to my household. May your visit to my household be auspicious.

Even though by your very blessings, I will be released from all दोष *doṣa* - from the
lapse of धर्म *dharma* that happened in my household, still I wish to make amends and
compensate for the दोष *doṣa*.

तस्मात् *tasmāt*, प्रति *prati*, त्रीन् वरान् वृणीष्व *trīn varān vṛṇīṣva* - Therefore I
give you three वर *varās*, three boons, प्रति *prati* one for each night that you spent in
my household without taking any food. वृणीष्व *vṛṇīṣva* - Please ask me for any three
boons you wish, according to your own desires.



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Since you have lived in my house for three nights without taking any food, and since you are a ब्राह्मण *brahman* guest fit to be worshipped, O! ब्राह्मण *brahman* - I do नमस्कार् *namaskār* to you. I seek your blessings. May your visit to my household be auspicious. I realize that your spending three nights in my household without eating is a दोष *doṣa*, a lapse of धर्म *dharma*. That happened in my house because I was away. O! ब्राह्मण *brahman*, I seek your blessings for the release of all दोष *doṣa* to my household on this account. Even though by your very blessings, I will be naturally released from the lapse of धर्म *dharma* that happened in my household, I wish to make amends for the दोष *doṣa*. Therefore, I give you three वरs *varas* - three boons, one for each night that you spent in my house without taking any food. Please ask me any three boons you wish according to your own desires.

So said Lord यम *yama* to the young boy Nachiketa, and thus begins the dialogue between Lord यम *yama* and Nachiketa which constitutes this Upanishad.

Nachiketa is obviously happy at the turn of events. He finds that he is only a guest in the house of Lord यम *yama*, which means that he has already escaped the jaws of death and would soon be able to return home to his father. In addition, he got three boons from Lord यम *yama* which he can use as he likes. In the manner in which he uses these boons we will also see the extraordinary maturity of Nachiketa. Accepting the offer of Lord यम *yama*, Nachiketa responded to Lord यम *yama* by saying:

शान्त संकल्पः सुमनाः यथा स्यात् वीतमन्युः गौतमो माऽभि मृत्यो ।

śānta saṅkalpaḥ sumanāḥ yathā syāt vītamanyuḥ gautamo mā'bhī mṛtyo ।

त्वत् प्रसृष्टं मा अभिवदेत् प्रतीतः एतत् त्रयाणां प्रथमं वरं वृणे ॥

1 - 10

tvat prasṛṣṭam mā abhivadet pratītaḥ etat trayāṅām prathamam varam vṛṇe ॥

मृत्यो *mṛtyo*

हे मृत्यो *he mṛtyo* - O! Lord of Death, O! Lord यम *yama*

गौतमः *gautamaḥ* - My father गौतम *gautama*. In this Upanishad Nachiketa's father is referred to by four different names वाजश्रवस *vājaśravasa*, गौतम *gautama*, औद्दालकि *auddālaki* and अरुणि *āruṇi*. Nachiketa says here

गौतमः यथा स्यात् *gautamaḥ yathā syāt* - May my father गौतम *gautama* be so that



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शान्त संकल्पः *śānta saṅkalpaḥ* - he is totally free from anxieties about myself, such as what will happen to me when I reach you, etc. and

सुमनाः *sumanāḥ* means प्रीतमनाः *prītamānāḥ* - he is cheerful and happy as a fulfilled person, and also

वीतमन्युः मा अभि *vītamanyuḥ mā abhi* - meaning मां प्रति *mām prati* he is free from anger towards me.

त्वत् प्रसृष्टं *tvat prasṛṣṭam* - When I am released by you and am allowed to return home

मा (मां) अभिवदेत् *mā (mām) abhivadet* - may my father welcome me and talk to me

प्रतीतः (सन्) *pratītaḥ (san)* - recognizing me that I am his son, which means, please let me go home, not as a ghost emerging from death, but in the same form as I came here, so that when I return home, my father may welcome me and talk to me, recognizing me, naturally as his son.

त्रयाणां *trayāṇām* - Of the three boons that you gave me

एतत् प्रथमं वरं वृणे *etat prathamam varam vṛṇe* - I ask for this, peace and happiness for my father, as the first boon. Having said that, Nachiketa waited for Lord यम 's *yama's* reply.

Granting the first boon that Nachiketa asked for, Lord यम *yama* replied

यथा पुरस्ताद् भविता प्रतीतः औद्दालकिः आरुणिः मत् प्रसृष्टः ।

yathā purastād bhavitā pratītaḥ auddālakīḥ āruṇiḥ mat prasṛṣṭaḥ |

सुखं रात्रीः शयिता वीतमन्युः त्वां ददृशिवान् मृत्यु मुखात् प्रमुक्तं ॥

1 - 11

sukham rātrīḥ śayitā vītamanyuḥ tvām dadraśivān mṛtyu mukhāt pramuktaḥ ||

मत् प्रसृष्टः *mat prasṛṣṭaḥ* means मया अनुग्रह संपन्नः सन् *mayā anugraha saṁpannaḥ san* Being blessed by me

औद्दालकिः *auddālakīḥ*- The आरुणि *āruṇi* - your father

त्वां ददृशिवान् *tvām ddraśavān* means त्वां तत् दृशिवान् *tvām tat draśavān* - दृष्टवान् सन् *draṣṭavān san* seeing you on your return, that

मृत्यु मुखात् प्रमुक्तं त्वां *mṛtyu mukhāt pramuktaḥ tvām* (दृष्टवान् सन् *draṣṭavān san*) तत् *tat* - seeing you on your return, that you have been released from the jaws of death, being blessed by me



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

यथा पुरस्तात् भविता *yathā purastāta bhavatā* (भविता *bhavatā* - will become) your father will be full of affection for you as he was before. Your father will become शान्त संकल्पः *śānta saṅkalpaḥ* - as you desire, also

प्रतीतः भविता *pratītaḥ bhavitā* - Your father will recognize you in the same form you left him to come here, just as you desire. Also

सुखं रात्रीः शयिता भविता *sukhā rātriḥ śayitā bhavitā* - your father will sleep peacefully and happily for many nights. He will live happily and peacefully for a long time. Again, by the क्कार शब्द *m kār śabd* added to the word सुखं *sukham* Lord यम *yama* assures also that Nachiketa's father will live सुमनाः *sukham* - happily and peacefully as a fulfilled person, fulfilled in the यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* he did. Further, Lord यम *yama* assures Nachiketa

वीतमन्युः भविता *vītamanyuḥ bhavitā* - Your father will be totally free from any sense of anger towards you, again, just as you desire.

Thus responding positively to all of Nachiketa's wishes in the choice of his first वर *vara*, Lord यम *yama* blessed Nachiketa's father with शान्त संकल्पः *śānta saṅkalpaḥ*, सुमनाः *sumanāḥ*, वीतमन्युः *vītamanyuḥ* and प्रतीतः *pratītaḥ* - all that Nachiketa asked, for peace and happiness and fulfillment of his father.

Then Nachiketa proceeded to ask for his second boon, which we will see next time.