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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

कठोपनिषत् Katopanishad Section 1 Volume 6

येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्ये अस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके ।
yeyam prete vicikitsā manuṣye astītyeke nāyamastīti caike ।
एतत् विद्यां अनुशिष्टः त्वयाऽहं वराणां एषः वरस्तृतीयः ॥ 1 - 20
etata vidyām anuśiṣṭaḥ tvayā'ham varāṇām eṣaḥ varastrīyaḥ ॥

देवैः अत्रापि विचिकित्सितं पुरा न हि सुविज्ञेयं अणुरेष धर्मः ।
devaiḥ atrāpi vicikitsitam purā na hi suvijñeyam aṇureṣa dharmāḥ ।
अन्यं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व मा मा उपरोत्सीः अति मा सृजैनं ॥ 1 - 21
anyam varaṁ naciketo vṛṇiṣva mā mā uparotsiḥ ati mā sṛjainam ॥

देवैः अत्रापि विचिकित्सितं किल त्वं च मृत्यो यन्न सुज्ञेयं आत्थ ।
devaiḥ atrāpi vicikitsitam kila tvam ca mṛtyo yanna sujñeyam āttha ।
वक्ता चास्य त्वाद्दक् अन्यो न लभ्यो नान्यो वरस्तुल्यः एतस्य कश्चित् ॥ 1 - 22
vakta cāsya tvāddaka anyo na labhyo nānyo varastulyaḥ etasya kaścit ॥

Having granted Nachiketa the first two of the three boons already promised to him, Lord
यम yama says

तृतीयं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व । *trīyam varam naciketo vṛṇiṣva ।*
इति *iti* - O! Nachiketa, ask for the third boon as you wish.

Nachiketa now asks for his third boon in this manner

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 varastrīyaḥ ॥



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Nachiketa says "When a person dies, there is this doubt. Some say "the person exists" and some others say " the person does not exist". The truth about this matter is what I want to know, being taught by you. This is the third boon that I seek".

Nachiketa wants to know whether there is any real entity called आत्मा *ātmā* that survives bodily death, the popular notion on this matter being divided.

Now let us understand the words in this verse.

येयं विचिकित्सा *yeyam vicikitsā* - या इयं विचिकित्सा *yā iyam vicikitsā* - या *yā* - here means, that which is common, and विचिकित्सा *vicikitsā* means doubt. Therefore

या इयं विचिकित्सा *yā iyam vicikitsā* - सा मम विचिकित्सा च *sā mama vicakitsā ca* - This doubt which is very common among people is also my doubt. And the doubt is

प्रेते मनुष्ये, मनुष्ये मृते सति *prete manuṣye, manuṣye mṛte sati* - when a person dies,

मनुष्य *manuṣya* here stands for any living being. When any living being dies

अस्ति इति एके *asti ita eke* - some people say "It exists", which means

आत्मा अस्ति इति एके *ātmā asti ita eke* - when the body has fallen, 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) exists.

न अयं अस्ति इति च एके *na ayam asti iti ca eke* - and some other people say

अयं न अस्ति *ayam na asti* - such an आत्मा *ātmā* does not exist

Since a definite, well ascertained knowledge on this matter - knowledge about आत्मा *ātmā* - is not there, because one cannot verify it either by direct perception or by inference, therefore, one requires a प्रमाण *pramāṇa* - a श्रुति *śruti* knowledge - Upanishad knowledge, as the only authoritative means for gaining such knowledge to clear this doubt.

Such श्रुति *śruti* knowledge can only come from an appropriate enlightened आचार्य *ācārya*- teacher. You are indeed such a teacher to me, and I approach you as my आचार्य *ācārya*. I, as your शिष्य *śiṣya* - as your disciple, seek that knowledge about आत्मा *ātmā* from you. I seek that knowledge from you because the Vedas declare that



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among the four पुरुषार्थs *puruṣārthas*, मोक्ष *mokṣa* is परम-पुरुषार्थ *parama-puruṣārtha* - the supreme goal of human existence, and that gaining मोक्ष *mokṣa* means gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātmā jñānaṁ*. Therefore,

एतत् विद्यां अनुशिष्टः त्वया अहं *etat vidyāṁ anuśiṣṭaḥ tvayaa ahaṁ*

त्वया अनुशिष्टः *tvayā anuśiṣṭaḥ* - being taught by you

अहं एतत् विद्यां *ahaṁ etat vidyāṁ* - I would like to gain this आत्म विद्या *ātmā vidyā* - knowledge about आत्मा *ātmā*

आत्म ज्ञानं *ātmā jñānaṁ* - knowledge about oneself

वराणां एषः वरः तृतीयः *varāṇāṁ eṣaḥ varaḥ tṛtīyaḥ* - Of the boons that you gave me, this आत्म विद्या *ātmā vidyā* - this knowledge about आत्मा *ātmā*, this आत्म ज्ञानं *ātmā jñānaṁ* - Self Knowledge is the third boon which I seek from you.

एतत् विद्यां अनुशिष्टः त्वयाऽहं वराणां एषः वरस्तृतीयः ।

etat vidyāṁ anuśiṣṭaḥ tvayā'haṁ varāṇāṁ eṣaḥ varastṛtīyaḥ ।

Thus Nachiketa seeks आत्म ज्ञानं *ātmā jñānaṁ* as the third and the last boon from Lord यम *yama*.

The request for आत्म ज्ञानं *ātmā jñānaṁ* from Nachiketa to Lord यम *yama* in कठोपनिषत् *kāthopaniṣat* is essentially identical with the request for श्रेयस् *śreyas* or मोक्ष *mokṣa* from Arjuna to Lord Krishna in भगवत् गीता *bhagvat gītā*. We may recall the words of Arjuna in Chapter 2 of भगवत् गीता *bhagvat gītā*

यत् श्रेयः स्यात् निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नं ॥ G 2-7

yata śreyaḥ syāt niścitaṁ brūhi tanme śiṣyaste'haṁ śādhi mām tvāṁ prapannaṁ ॥

The context of कठोपनिषत् *kāthopaniṣat* is totally different from that of भगवत् गीता *bhagvata gītā*. The mental disposition of Nachiketa at the time he made his request to Lord यम *yama*, is again totally different from the mental disposition of Arjuna at the time he made his request to Lord Krishna. But the content of Nachiketa's request and that of Arjuna's request are totally identical, and so are the content of Lord यम's



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yama's discourse and the content of गीतोपदेश *gītōpadeśa* which followed the requests of Nachiketa and Arjuna respectively. Again,

येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्ये अस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके ।

yeyam prete vicikitsā manuṣye astītyeke nāyamastīti caike ।

एतत् विद्यां अनुशिष्टः त्वयाऽहं वराणां एषः वर स्तृतीयः ॥

1 - 20

etat vidyām anuśiṣṭaḥ tvayā'ham varāṇām eṣaḥ vara stṛtīyaḥ ॥

This verse, wherein Nachiketa seeks आत्मविद्या *ātmā vidyā* - knowledge about आत्मा *ātmā* for his third boon from Lord यम *yama*, marks the real beginning of this Upanishad, and Lord यम's *yama's* subsequent discourse on आत्म विद्या *ātmā vidyā* (which is same as ब्रह्म विद्या *brahma vidyā*), in response to Nachiketa's request constitutes the real content of this Upanishad.

But Lord यम *yama* commences His discourse on आत्म विद्या *ātmā vidyā* only after making sure that Nachiketa's mental disposition is mature enough to absorb the knowledge he seeks. And Lord यम's *yama's* process of ascertaining the maturity of Nachiketa's mental disposition commences immediately in the next verse, and continues for the next several verses. Along with Nachiketa, we have to be patient until then, to finally listen to Lord यम's *yama's* discourse on आत्म विद्या *ātmā vidyā*.

Before we go to the next verse, let us briefly reflect on the content of the three boons sought by Nachiketa from Lord यम *yama*. For the first boon, Nachiketa asked for peace and happiness for his father. For the second boon, he asked for अग्नि विज्ञानं *agni vijñānam* - knowledge about a यज्ञ कर्म *yajña karma* - Vedic ritual which leads one to स्वर्ग *svarga* - heaven. These two boons together cover the essential content of the entire कर्मकाण्ड *karma kāṇḍa* of the Vedas.

Between these two kinds of objective desires, namely the natural desire to make one's father happy, and the कर्म फल *karma phala* prompted desire to go to स्वर्ग लोक *svarga loka*, including ब्रह्म लोक *brahma loka*, are all the other kinds of human desires for which knowledge about a variety of means of accomplishment are obtainable from the कर्मकाण्ड *karma kāṇḍa* of the Vedas. All present day knowledge gained through the arts, sciences, engineering, technology, research and development, etc. belongs to the never-ending, ever-growing कर्मकाण्ड *karma kāṇḍa* of the Vedas. All such knowledge is objective knowledge, knowledge of means and ends, knowledge



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of Do's and Don't's, knowledge of कर्म *karma* and कर्म फल *karma phala* relating to transient realities, infinite in number, each depending on something else.

Nachiketa's third boon is for आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* - self knowledge, knowledge about the truth of one's own self - indeed every self, which is distinctly a different kind of knowledge, obtainable from Vedanta - the Upanishads. This knowledge is आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* - subjective knowledge. In this knowledge, there is no कर्म *karma* or कर्म फल *karma phala* involved. Only "seeing" is involved, seeing what is already there, recognizing what is already there, what always is and what will ever be with no change whatsoever. That is what is involved. It is the knowledge of the only one, ever existent, totally independent absolute reality from which alone arises every kind of objective knowledge of transient reality.

Thus all the three boons sought by Nachiketa together constitute the essential content of the entire Veda, including Vedanta, the totality of all knowledge – पूर्णज्ञानं *pūrṇa jñānam*, knowledge of both transient reality and absolute reality and their inseparable combination. Knowledge of इदं सर्वं *idaṁ sarvaṁ* and ईश्वर *īśvara*, knowledge of क्षेत्र *kṣetra* and क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajña*, प्रकृति *prakṛti* and पुरुष *puruṣa* as we have learnt from the ईशावास्य उपनिषत् *īśāvāsya upaniṣat* and the भगवत् गीता *bhagvat gītā*.

Gaining that पूर्ण ज्ञानं *pūrṇa jñānam*, - totality of knowledge is the means, the only means for gaining total fulfillment in life. The necessary pre-requirements for gaining that पूर्ण ज्ञानं *pūrṇa jñānam*, are त्रिभिरेत्य सन्धिं *tribhiretya sandhim* and त्रिकर्मकृत् *trikarmakṛt* - proper upbringing in one's formative years of life and dedicated practice of यज्ञ *yajña*, दान *dāna*, तपस् कर्मा *tapas karmās* with proper attitude throughout one's life as we saw last time.

That is the first message of what we have already seen so far in this Upanishad.

As we have seen, Lord यम *yama* granted the first two boons to Nachiketa with no hesitation whatsoever, but he does not do so with respect to the third boon. The reason for this arises from a consideration of अधिकारित्वं *adhikāritvaṁ* - which means one's natural and or cultivated fitness for the successful pursuit of any knowledge.

The knowledge contained in the कर्मकाण्ड *karma kāṇḍ* of the Vedas is so varied and infinite in scope that every person is an अधिकारि *adhikāri*. Every person is qualified



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enough to pursue on his own choice, that part of the कर्मकाण्ड *karma kāṇḍ* of the Vedas suited to one's own natural interests and ability. That is not the case with respect to the pursuit of Upanishadic knowledge, which is concerned only with आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* - Self Knowledge, for the successful pursuit of which an अधिकारि *adhikāri* must have four definite pre-requirement qualifications. They are the साधन चतुष्टयं *sādhana catuṣṭayam* we talked about in our Introduction to Upanishads.

Lord यम *yama* wants to make sure that Nachiketa is indeed an अधिकारि *adhikāri* for आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*, and that he has all the necessary pre-requirement qualifications to be fit for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*. Let us briefly recall those pre-requirements with reference to the context here. They are:

1. नित्य अनित्य वस्तु विवेकः *nitya anitya vastu vivekaḥ* - Ability to discriminate between नित्य वस्तु *nitya vastu* that which is eternal and अनित्य वस्तु *anitya vastu* that which is transient.

Even after gaining knowledge about the means of going to ब्रह्म लोक, the very fact that Nachiketa seeks आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* shows that Nachiketa does understand that ब्रह्म लोक *brahma loka* is only an object of transient existence, and only आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* is eternal existence, which indicates that Nachiketa already has नित्य अनित्य वस्तु विवेक बुद्धि *nitya anitya vastu viveka buddhi*.

2. इह आमुत्र अर्थफल भोग विरागः *iha āmutra arthaphala bhoga varāgaḥ* - Total dispassion to the enjoyment of the fruits of one's own actions, here and hereafter. Nachiketa has already shown his interests in the enjoyments of heavenly life – स्वर्ग लोक *svarga loka* through the second boon he sought. Whether or not he has total dispassion for all such enjoyments still needs to be ascertained by some means.
3. शमादि षट् संपत्तिः *śamādi ṣaṭ saṃpattiḥ* - One must be endowed with the six-fold virtues of शम *śama*, दम *dama*, उपरम *uparama*, तितिक्षा *titikṣā*, श्रद्धा *śraddhā* and समाधान *samādhāna* - control over one's mind, control over all levels of external physical expressions, strict observance of one's duties, happy endurance of whatever comes one's way, and at the same time, doing whatever needs to be done,



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श्रद्धा *śraddhā* - absolute faith in the words of the teacher, in the words of the Vedas and the Upanishads, and absolute faith in oneself, and चित्त एकाग्रता *citta ekāgratā* - capacity of the mind to abide in the pursuit of knowledge without distractions.

From the ease with which Nachiketa could grasp the अग्नि विज्ञानं *agni vijñānaṁ* from Lord यम *yama*, it is obvious that Nachiketa has the above attributes in full measure. Finally

4. मुमुक्षुत्वं *mumukṣutvaṁ* - which is मोक्षः मे भूयात् इति इच्छा *mokṣaḥ me bhūyāt iti icchā*. One must have the overriding desire for gaining मोक्ष *mokṣa* – gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*. There is no surety that Nachiketa has this qualification. He may have many desires, of which one of them may be gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*. Whether gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* is the overriding desire for him still needs to be ascertained in some way.

That is why Lord यम *yama* has some hesitation to grant him his third boon immediately. Lord यम *yama* is going to test Nachiketa about his fitness for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*. How Lord यम *yama* does that, we will see in the next several verses.

The four-fold qualifications needed for being fit to gain आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* have been more explicitly pointed out by Sri Krishna as the 20 personal attributes one has to cultivate, namely अमानित्वं *amānitvaṁ*, अदम्भित्वं *adambhitvaṁ*, etc. all the way up to अध्यात्म ज्ञान नित्यत्वं, तत्त्व ज्ञान अर्थ दर्शनं *adhyātma jñāna nityatvaṁ, tatva jñāna artha darśanaṁ* in Chapter 13 of भगवत् गीता *bhagavata gītā* (13 - 7 to 11) which we saw some time ago. With these pointers, we can, every one of us can test ourselves to ascertain our own fitness for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*, for gaining total fulfillment in life.

If we do so, we will find that most of us do not yet have all the necessary prerequisite qualifications needed for being fit to gain आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*, to gain मोक्ष *mokṣa* - to gain total fulfillment in life. This finding is no reason either to be discouraged or to despair, but it is reason enough to continue to try. The process of endeavor for gaining maturity in आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* is a continuous one. This



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process of endeavour is sustained, strengthened and accelerated by श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*.

So long as one has unqualified श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*, one will continue to progress every day in one's endeavour, and one will certainly gain maturity in आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* some day, because Sri Krishna assures that श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं *śraddhāvān labhate jñānam* (G 4-39) The one who is the very embodiment of one's श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*, ultimately gains आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*, as we have already seen in the life of भृगु *bṛgu* in Taittiriya Upanishad, and we will see again in the life of Nachiketa in this Upanishad.

Now, how long will it take for one's श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* to mature into one ultimately gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*? That one cannot say, but Sri Krishna says:

बहूनां जन्मनां अन्ते ज्ञानवान् मां प्रपद्यते ।

bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate ।

वासुदेवः सर्वं इति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

(G 7-19)

vāsudevaḥ sarvaṁ iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ ॥

After passing through a series of life times in which one has acquired all the necessary pre-requirement qualifications, which means one has acquired the necessary mental maturity to commit oneself totally to the pursuit of ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānam* through श्रवणं *śravaṇam*, मननं *mananam*, and निदिध्यासनं *nididhyāsanam*, the ज्ञानवान् *jñānavān*, the श्रद्धावान् *śraddhāvān* - the person endowed with the overriding श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* ultimately reaches ME, the परमेश्वर *parameśvar*. By recognizing वासुदेवः सर्वं इति *vāsudevaḥ sarvaṁ iti*, वासुदेव परमेश्वर *vāsudeva parameśvar* is indeed all ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं पूर्णम् अदः पूणम् इदं *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇamam idaṁ*, which recognition is gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānam*, आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* - total fulfillment in life.

Sri Krishna hastens to add "Such a person, such a श्रद्धावान् *śraddhāvān*, such a महात्मा *mahātmā* is difficult to find, which means finding such a person is not a



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common occurrence, because for most people it does take a very long time to cultivate the pre-required attributes to become fit for gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*. No matter how long it takes for a person to gain आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*, it is still far better than never being able to gain आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* - total fulfillment in life.

The story of भृगु *bṛgu* in Taittiriya Upanishad and that of Nachiketa in this Upanishad are not just stories for entertainment. They are stories only in the sense that the events happened a long, long time ago, but they are authoritative and outstanding illustrations of the very process by which a mortal being gains immortality.

This is the second message of what we are currently witnessing in this Upanishad. Keeping these two messages clearly in our minds, let us now proceed with the Upanishad verses. Following Nachiketa's request for आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* for his third boon, Lord यम *yama* commences to test the fitness of Nachiketa for gaining the knowledge that he seeks. First, Lord यम *yama* tries to distract Nachiketa's mind away from आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam*, and then he offers many alternatives which are usually more attractive to less mature minds. Lord यम *yama* says:

देवैः अत्रापि विचिकित्सितं पुरा न हि सुविज्ञेयं अणुरेष धर्मः ।
devaiḥ atrāpi vicikitsitam purā na hi suvijñeyam aṇureṣa dharmah |
अन्यं वर नचिकेतो वृणीष्व मा मा उपरोत्सीः अति मा सृजैनं ॥ 1 - 21
anyaṁ vara naciketo vṛṇiṣva mā mā uparotsiḥ ati mā sṛjainam ||

Seeing Nachiketa simply as a very young boy, Lord यम *yama* tells Nachiketa

"What you are asking is

देवैः अपि अत्र पुरा विचिकित्सितं *devaiḥ api atra purā vicikitsitam*

देवैः अपि *devaiḥ api* even by the देवास *devās* like अग्नि *agni*, वायु *vāyu*, इन्द्र *indra* etc. even by such देवास *devās*

अत्र *atra* - एतस्मिन् विषये *etasmin viṣaye* in this matter

पुरा *purā* in olden times, long time ago

विचिकित्सितं *vicikitsitam* - doubts were entertained

Even the देवास *devās*, the celestial beings entertained doubts on this matter in olden times.



ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

न हि सुविज्ञेयं *na hi suvijñeyam* - It is not something easy to understand. आत्मा *ātmā* is not something that can be known easily by प्राकृत जनाः *prākṛta janāḥ* - by worldly people, by people who are committed to worldly matters involving कर्म *karma* and कर्म फल *karma phala*. Even though they may hear all about आत्मा *ātmā*, nothing happens to them inside. Why? Because

अणुः एष धर्मः *aṇuḥ eṣa dharmah*

एषः धर्मः *eṣa dharmah* - This धर्म *dharma* known as आत्मा *ātmā*. धर्म *dharma* is called आत्मा *ātmā* because

धार्यते अनेन इति धर्मः *dhāryate anena iti dharmā* - that by which everything is sustained is धर्म *dharma*, and that indeed is आत्मा *ātmā*. Therefore,

एषः धर्मः अणुः *eṣaḥ dharmah aṇuḥ* - the आत्मा *ātmā* about which you are asking is अणुः *aṇuḥ* is so subtle that it has no forms, and hence not easy to understand. Therefore

नचिकेतः *naciketaḥ* - O! Nachiketa

अन्यं चर वृणीष्व *anyam vara vṛṇiṣva* - Ask for some other boon. The आत्म विज्ञानं *ātma vijñānam* even when told, it cannot be understood by you. Then what is the use of it? Do not fritter away the boon I gave you. Ask for a boon for which there is no doubt in its result. Please ask for a doubt-free boon.

मा मा उपरोत्सीः *mā mā uparotsiḥ* - Please do not repeatedly insist on this चर *vara*, because it is practically useless for you.

अति मा सृजैनं, मां (प्रति) अतिसृज एनं *ati mā sṛjainam, māṁ (prati) atisṛja enam*

अतिसृज *atisṛja* - Give up, मां *mām* (प्रति *prati*) एनं *enam* (चरं *varam*) the चर *vara* - the boon demanded of me.

On this matter about आत्मा *ātmā*, even the देवास *devās* in olden times had their doubts. Very subtle is this subject, and not easy to comprehend. Therefore, O! Nachiketa, choose some other boon. Do not insist on this boon. Please let me off this boon". So says Lord यम *yama* to Nachiketa.

Now Nachiketa responds by saying



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ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

देवैः अत्रिापि विचिकित्सितं किल त्वं च मृत्यो यन्न सुज्ञेयं आत्थ ।

devaiḥ atripi vicikitsitaṁ kila tvaṁ ca mṛtyo yanna sujñeyam aattha ।

वक्ता चास्य त्वादृक् अन्यो न लभ्यो नान्यो वरस्तुल्यः एतस्य कश्चित् ॥ 1 - 22

vakta cāsya tvādr̥ka anyo na labhyo nānyo varastulyaḥ etasya kaśvit ॥

मृत्यो *mṛtyo* O! Lord मृत्यु *mṛtyu*, यम *yama* !

त्वं आत्थ *tvaṁ āttha* - त्वं कथयसि *tvaṁ kathayasi* -You say that

देवैः अपि अत्र विचिकित्सितं किल (पुरा) *devaiḥ api atra vicikitsitaṁ kila (purā)*

- Even the देवास *devas* had entertained doubts on this matter - the Truth about आत्मा *ātmā*, once upon a time. Again, you say

यत् (आत्मतत्त्वं) न सुज्ञेयं *yat (ātmatatvaṁ) na sujñeyam*-The truth about आत्मा *ātmā* is not easily comprehended. That is why even the पण्डिताः *paṇḍitās* among human beings, those who are well versed in the words of the Vedas have doubts on this matter. Some say "आत्मा *ātmā* exists" and some others say "आत्मा *ātmā* does not exist". All this only emphasizes the precious nature of this knowledge, and the need for an enlightened teacher to teach this knowledge.

वक्ता च त्वादृक् अन्यः न लभ्यः *vakta ca tvādr̥k anyaḥ na labhyaḥ*- Also, it is clear to me that

अस्य, अस्य आत्म ज्ञान धर्मस्य *asya, asya ātma jñāna dharmasya* - For unfolding this knowledge of आत्मा *ātmā*,

अन्यः त्वादृक् (त्वत् तुल्यः) वक्ता *anyaḥ tvādr̥k (tvat tulyaḥ)akta*- another enlightened teacher like you, equal to you

न लभ्यः *na labhyaḥ* - it is not possible to get

Even if I go about searching for one to teach this knowledge, there can be none like you, equal to you, who can teach this knowledge, because you are the Lord of Death itself. You being the Lord of Death, you know all about आत्मा *ātmā*, and it is best for me to gain this knowledge directly from you.

This वर *vara* for आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* that I am seeking from you is मोक्ष साधनं *mokṣa sādhanam* - the means for gaining मोक्ष *mokṣa*, which is the highest पुरुषार्थ *puruṣārtha* - the supreme goal of life for a human being. That being so, anything else for me to ask you is going to be of far less significance to me, because there is nothing higher than मोक्ष *mokṣa*.



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

न अन्यः वरः तुल्यः एतस्य कश्चित् *na anyah varah tulyah etasya kascit*
एतस्य कश्चित् अन्यः वरः *etasya kascit anyah varah* - Any वर *vara* I may ask you
other than this वर *vara*

न तुल्यः *na tulyah* - cannot be equal to this, because every other वर *vara* can only
be

अनित्यः *anityah*- transient in nature. This is the only वर *vara* that is नित्यः *nityah*,
eternal in nature.

By fulfilling this वर *vara* for आत्मज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*- Self Knowledge, if I gain this
knowledge, by your teaching, everything else is gained as well. Gaining that knowledge,
जीवः मुक्तो भवति *jīvaḥ mukto bhavati* this individual जीव *jīva* is liberated from all
limitations. When that happens, no वर *vara* is then required. Therefore,

अन्यः वरः एतस्य तुल्यः नास्ति *anyah varah etasya tulyah nāsti* - Another वर
vara equal to आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* does not exist. Similarly another teacher equal
to you to teach this knowledge also does not exist. I therefore seek only आत्म ज्ञानं
ātma jñānaṁ from you, and nothing else as my third and final वर *vara*."

So saying Nachiketa stands firm on his choice for the third वर *vara*. Now Lord यम
yama speaks up again, which we will see next time.