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4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

कठोपनिषत्  
**Katopanishad**  
Section 2  
Volume 8

अन्यत् श्रेयः अन्यत् उतैव प्रयः ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः ।

*anyata śraeyaḥ anyata utaiva prayah te ubhe nānaathe puruṣaṁ sinītaḥ ।*

तयोः श्रेयः आददानस्य साधु भवति हीयते अर्थात् य उप्रेयः वृणीते ॥ 2 - 1

*tayoḥ śreyaḥ ādadānasya sādhu bhavata hīyate athāta ya upreayaḥ vṛṇīte ॥*

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यं एतः तौ सम्परीत्य विचिनक्ति धीरः ।

*śreyaśca preyaśca manuṣyaṁ etaḥ tau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ ।*

श्रेयो हि धीरः अभि प्रेयसो वृणीते प्रेयो मन्दः योगक्षमात् वृणीते ॥ 2 - 2

*śreyo hi dhīraḥ abhi preyaso vṛṇīte preyo mandaḥ yogakṣemāt vṛṇīte ॥*

स त्वं प्रियान् प्रियरूपांश्च कामान् अभिध्यायन् नचिकेतो अत्यस्त्राक्षीः ।

*sa tvam priyaṁ priyarūpāṁśca kāmān abhidhyāyan naciketō atyastrākṣīḥ ।*

नैतां सृङ्गां वित्तमयीं अवाप्तः यस्यां मज्जन्ति बहवो मनुष्याः ॥ 2 - 3

*naitāṁ sṛṅgāṁ vittamayīṁ avāptaḥ yasyāṁ majjanti bahavo manuṣyāḥ ॥*

दूरमेते विपरीते विषूची अविद्या या च विद्या इति ज्ञाता ।

*dūramete viparīte viṣūcī avidyā yā ca vidyā iti jñātā ।*

विद्याभीप्सिनं नचिकेतसं मन्ये न त्वा कामाः बहवः अलोलुपन्त ॥ 2 - 4

*vidyaabhīpsinaṁ naciketasaṁ manye na tvā kāmāḥ bahavaḥ alolupanta ॥*

As we saw last time, the first section of this Upanishad concluded with the statement

योऽयं वरो गूढमनुप्रविष्टो नान्यं तस्मात् नचिकेता वृणीते ।

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*yo'yaṁ varo gūḍhamanupraviṣṭo nānyaṁ tasmāt naciketā vṛṇīte ।*

Apart from this वर *vara* relating to the inscrutable आत्मा *ātmā*, apart from आत्मविद्या *ātmavidyā* - knowledge about आत्मा *ātmā*, Nachiketa does not ask for any other वर *vara* from Lord यम *yama*. Nachiketa's insistence on आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* -



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Knowledge of आत्मा *ātmā* for the third वर *vara* is not due to his adavance, but it is due to his विवेक बुद्धि *vivek buddhi*, his व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धि *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi* (G 2-4), his cultivated, well ascertained mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* with respect to gaining आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* as his overriding goal in life. Lord यम *yama* is therefore very pleased to discover that Nachiketa is indeed an अधिकारि *adhikāri*, and he is indeed a worthy disciple for him to teach आत्मविद्या *ātma vidyā*.

Accordingly, Lord यम *yama* now begins his teachings with an Introduction to Vedanta, which takes the extraordinary form of giving generous compliments to Nachiketa for his विवेक बुद्धि *vivek buddhi*, and firmly rooted and unshakable commitment to the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*, and thereby welcoming Nachiketa as a worthy disciple for his teachings.

Through such introduction to Vedanta, Lord यम *yama* also commends Nachiketa's श्रद्धा *śraddhā* in आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self Knowledge as worthy of emulation by all seekers of ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā*. Throughout this Upanishad, Lord यम *yama* uses simple looking words to communicate messages of profound significance - We must listen to understand. This is how Lord यम *yama* opens his discourse on Vedanta:

अन्यत् श्रेयः अन्यत् उतैव प्रेयः ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः ।  
तयोः श्रेयः आददानस्य साधु भवति हीयते अर्थात् य उ प्रेयः वृणीते ॥ 2 - 1  
*anyat śreyah anyat utaiva preyaḥ te ubhe nānārthe puruṣam sinītaḥ |*  
*tayoḥ śreyah ādadānasya sādhu bhavati hīyate arthāt ya u preyaḥ vṛṇīte ||*

Lord यम's *yama's* discourse on ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* starts with a clear statement on पुरुषार्थ *puruṣārtha* - the goal of human existence. Lord यम *yama* says:

अन्यत् श्रेयः अन्यत् उत एव प्रेयः *anyat śreyah anyat uta eva preyaḥ*  
श्रेयः अन्यत् एव *śreyah anyat eva* - Indeed, श्रेयस् *śreyas* is distinctly different and प्रेयः उत (=अपि) अन्यत् एव, *preyaḥ uta (=api) anyat eva*, प्रेयस् *preyas* is also distinctly different  
श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas* are mutually exclusive, one different from the other, each leading to different ends.



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Now, what is प्रेयस् *preyas* and what is श्रेयस् *śreyas*? Every person naturally seeks happiness. All endeavours for gaining happiness are grouped under four broad headings, namely धर्म *dharma*, अर्थ *artha*, काम *kāma* and मोक्ष *mokṣa* as पुरुषार्थ *puruṣārthās* - as "Goals of human existence"

Happiness gained through धर्म *dharma*, अर्थ *artha*, काम *kāma* pursuits - which means happiness gained through living a life governed by धर्म *dharma* - propriety, law and order, अर्थ *artha* - gaining wealth of all kinds through proper and legitimate means, and काम *kāma* - accomplishing one's objects of desire, again through proper and legitimate means, such धर्म *dharma*, अर्थ *artha*, काम *kāma* pursuits of happiness are, together called the pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas* or simply प्रेयस् *preyas* in life, which means कर्तृत्वं *karṭṛtvam* and भोक्तृत्वं *bhokṭṛtvam* - doing कर्म *karmas* and enjoying कर्म फल *karma phalas*.

प्रेयस् *preyas* means प्रियतरं *priyataram* - that which brings a sense of pleasure for the time being. That pleasure is however a temporary one, and hence it can never give any sense of total fulfillment in life.

On the other hand, श्रेयस् *śreyas* is the pursuit of मोक्ष *mokṣa* - the परम पुरुषार्थ *parama puruṣārtha* - The supreme Goal of Life, which is total fulfillment in life, independent of any कर्म *karma* or कर्म फल *karma phala*, Absolute Happiness, never subject to change, gained through कर्मयोग बुद्धि *karma yoga buddhi* and ज्ञान लक्षण ईश्वर भक्ति *jñāna lakṣaṇa īśvara bhakti*, as we have learnt from the भगवत् गीता *bhagvat gītā*.

Since every human being is born of कर्म *karma* and कर्म फल *karma phala*, every person, from the moment of birth, finds oneself naturally in the pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas* - transient happiness, by every means available to oneself. Only when the person grows up to sufficient maturity in mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* that प्रेयस् *preyas*, as a goal of life, becomes meaningless and one deliberately resorts to श्रेयस् *śreyas* as one's overriding goal of life.

Lord यम *yama* points out here:

अन्यत् श्रेयः अन्यत् उत एव प्रेयः *anyat śreyah anyat uta eva preyah*



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श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas* are mutually exclusive and distinctly different from each other. One cannot gain श्रेयस् *śreyas* through प्रेयस् *preyas*. Simply by living a life of धर्म *dharma*, अर्थ *artha*, काम *kāma* pursuits one cannot gain मोक्ष *mokṣa*. श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas* are mutually exclusive, one different from the other, which means that they mutually lead to divergent ends. Yet

ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः *te ubhe nānārthe puruṣam sinītaḥ*

ते उभे *te ubhe* - both of them

नानार्थे *nānārthe* - leading to divergent ends as they do,

पुरुषं सिनीतः *puruṣam sinītaḥ* - bind the person in whichever pursuit the person is in.

पुरुषं *puruṣam* refers to the person in the pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas* and पुरुषं *puruṣam* refers to the person in the pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas*. Lord यम *yama* says "Both प्रेयस् *preyas* and श्रेयस् *śreyas*, each leading to different ends, bind the person in either pursuit. The person in the pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas* - pursuit of transient happiness, gets bound to प्रेयस् *preyas* and the person in the pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas* - gets bound to श्रेयस् *śreyas* - pursuit of total fulfillment in life.

The bondage here arises from one's स्वभाव *svabhāva* - the impelling force within the person which makes the person remain in, or resort to, one or the other pursuit – प्रेयस् *preyas* or श्रेयस् *śreyas*, according to one's own mental disposition. Since श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas* lead to opposite ends, if a person is in one of them, he is automatically away from the other.

Pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas* is bondage to कर्म *karma* and कर्म फल *karma phala*, governed by one's राग-द्वेष *rāga-dveṣa* forces - forces of likes and dislikes, leading ultimately to repeated births and deaths. Whereas pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas* is commitment to कर्म योग बुद्धि *karma yoga buddhi* and ज्ञान लक्षण ईश्वर भक्ति *jñāna lakṣaṇa īśvara bhakti*, leading ultimately to मोक्ष *mokṣa* - total release from birth and death.

ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः *te ubhe nānārthe puruṣam sinītaḥ* - Both प्रेयस् *preyas* and श्रेयस् *śreyas*, each leading to divergent ends, bind a person in either



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pursuit. Every person has a choice between, and only between, प्रेयस् *preyas* and श्रेयस् *śreyas* governing one's life. One can choose to remain in प्रेयस् *preyas*, or reject प्रेयस् *preyas* and take to श्रेयस् *śreyas* as one's way of life. But one cannot simultaneously be in the pursuits of both प्रेयस् *preyas* and श्रेयस् *śreyas* at the same time.

प्रेयस् *preyas* is अविद्या रूपं *avidyā rūpaṁ*. It is the form of one's ignorance of आत्मा *ātmā* - one's inability to recognize the true nature of oneself, and श्रेयस् *śreyas* is विद्या रूपं *vidyā rūpaṁ*. It is the form of आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self Knowledge. Since अविद्या *avidyā* and विद्या *vidyā* are opposed to each other, प्रेयस् *preyas* and श्रेयस् *śreyas* are also opposed to each other. Therefore Lord यम *yama* says:

तयोः श्रेयः आददानस्य साधु भवति *tayoḥ śreyaḥ ādadānasya sādhu bhavati*

तयोः *tayoḥ* - Of the two

श्रेयः आददानस्य *śreyaḥ ādadānasya* - the one who has undertaken the pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas*, deliberately rejecting the pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas*, that person साधु भवति *sādhu bhavati* - becomes a साधु *sādhu*. That person was not a साधु *sādhu* before, while he was in the pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas*. But after becoming committed to the pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas*, that person progressively evolves into a साधु *sādhu*. The person becomes the very embodiment of auspiciousness and purity पूर्णं ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *pūrṇa brahma jñānaṁ*, ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānaṁ*, आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*, leading ultimately to मोक्ष *mokṣa* - total fulfillment in life. On the other hand

हीयते अर्थात् यः उ प्रेयः वृणीते *hiyate arthat yaḥ u preyah vṛṇīte*

यः प्रेयः वृणीते *yaḥ preyah vṛṇīte* - the one who chooses to continue to remain in प्रेयस् *preyas*, the one who chooses to live in the pursuit of transient pleasures as one's way of life, the one who is overpowered by अविद्य रूपं *avidyā rūpaṁ*, self ignorance - ignorance of आत्मा *ātmā*, that person

उ *u* - certainly

अर्थात् हीयते *arthat hiyate* - falls away from the true goal of life, the supreme goal of life, which is श्रेयस् *śreyas* - मोक्ष *mokṣa* - total fulfillment in life.



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That person who chooses to remain bound to प्रेयस् *preyas*, completely misses one's opportunity to achieve total fulfillment in life, which is possible only by the pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas*, so says Lord यम *yama*.

If both श्रेयस् *śreyas* - the path leading to मोक्ष *mokṣa*, and प्रेयस् *preyas* - the path leading to only transient pleasures in life, are open to every person, then why do most people in the world stick to प्रेयस् *preyas* only, and do not seek श्रेयस् *śreyas*? The reason is, both श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas* appear together in daily life, as though they are inter-mixed, and most people do not have the बुद्धि *buddhi*, mature, disciplined, cultivated enough to discriminate between them with respect to means and ends. Consequently, only those few, who have the capacity for such discrimination, reject प्रेयस् *preyas* and choose श्रेयस् *śreyas*. The others stick to प्रेयस् *preyas* for the sake of योग क्षेम *yoga kṣema* - which means they are interested only in acquisition and preservation of their material needs for their continued worldly life. Lord यम *yama* gives this message in the next verse.

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यं एतः तौ सम्परीत्य विचिनक्ति धीरः ।

*śreyaśca preyaśca manuṣyaṁ etaḥ tau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ ।*

श्रेयो हि धीरः अभि प्रेयसो वृणीते प्रेयो मन्दः योगक्षेमात् वृणीते ॥

2 - 2

*śreyo hi dhīraḥ abhi preyaso vṛṇīte preyo mandaḥ yogakṣemāt vṛṇīte ॥*

श्रेयः च प्रेयः च मनुष्यं एतः *śreyaḥ ca preyaḥ ca manuṣyaṁ etaḥ*

श्रेयः च प्रेयः च *śreyaḥ ca preyaḥ ca* - Both श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas* together

मनुष्यं एतः *manuṣyaṁ etaḥ* - reach a person, come to a person. The pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas* and the pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas* are both available for every person. Every person is free to choose either श्रेयस् *śreyas* pursuit of मोक्ष *mokṣa* - total fulfillment in life or प्रेयस् *preyas* - pursuits of various kinds of pleasures, transient happiness in life.

For one who has not cultivated विवेक बुद्धि *vivek buddhi*, the capacity for discrimination through enquiry, analysis and clarity of understanding with respect to means and ends, श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas*, appear to be so intermixed that one thinks that the pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas* leads to श्रेयस् *śreyas*, which is impossible. One can never get total fulfillment in life through pursuits of various kinds of transient



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pleasures in life. One needs wisdom, one needs चिवेक बुद्धि *viveka buddhi* to recognize this fact. Therefore, the Upanishad says:

तौ सम्परीत्य विचिनक्ति धीरः *tau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ*

धीरः *dhīraḥ* - A धीमान् *dhīmān* - संस्कृत बुद्धिमान् *saṁskṛta buddhimān* - A wise person, the one who has चिवेक बुद्धि *viveka buddhi*, the one whose बुद्धि *buddhi* has undergone the discipline of gaining clarity of understanding and vision, that person

तौ सम्परीत्य *tau samparītya* - properly analyzing and clearly understanding the nature and implications of both श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas*

तौ विचिनक्ति *tau vivinakti* - he separates, he distinguishes clearly in his mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* what is श्रेयस् *śreyas* and what is प्रेयस् *preyas*, and then

श्रेयो हि धीरः अभि प्रेयसो वृणीते *śreyo hi dhīraḥ abhi preyaso vṛṇīte*

धीरः *dhīraḥ* - that धीर पुरुष *dhīra puruṣa*, that wise person

हि *hi* - naturally, indeed

अभिवृणीते श्रेयः प्रेयसः *abhi vṛṇīte śreyaḥ preyaśaḥ* - chooses deliberately, enthusiastically and unhesitatingly (अभि वृणीते *abhi vṛṇīte*) the pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas* instead of प्रेयस् *preyas*, rejecting प्रेयस् *preyas* as one's overriding Goal of Life.

Having clearly understood the nature and implications of the pursuits of श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas*, a धीरः *dhīraḥ* - a wise person, the one who has चिवेक बुद्धि *viveka buddhi*, naturally, deliberately, enthusiastically and unhesitatingly chooses the pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas* in preference to प्रेयस् *preyas* as one's overriding Goal of Life. On the other hand

प्रेयो मन्दः योगक्षमात् वृणीते *preyo mandāḥ yoga kṣemāt vṛṇīte*

मन्दः *mandāḥ* - the one who has only मन्द बुद्धि *manda buddhi*, the one who has only असंस्कृत बुद्धि *asaṁskṛta buddhi*, uncultivated बुद्धि *buddhi*, the one whose बुद्धि *buddhi* has not undergone the discipline of enquiry, analysis and clarity of vision, the one who lacks discrimination, such a person



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प्रेयः वृणीते *preyah vṛṇīte* - chooses the pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas* for one's way of life. Why? Because

योग क्षेमात् *yoga kṣemāt* - that person is interested only in योग क्षेम, which means the pursuits of acquisition and preservation of one's material needs of worldly life. He cannot think of anything higher. That shows that the one who has only मन्द बुद्धि *manda buddhi* - uncultivated बुद्धि *buddhi*, simply does not understand clearly the nature and implications of श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas*. He is still immature, and he has to grow up before he becomes fit for the pursuit of total fulfillment in life.

Nachiketa is listening. Lord यम *yama* continues:

स त्वं, प्रियान् प्रियरूपांश्च कामान् अभिध्यायन् नचिकेतो अत्यस्त्राक्षीः ।

*sa tvam, priyaṅ priyarūpāṁśca kāmān abhidhyāyan naciketo atyastrākṣiḥ ।*

नैतां सृङ्गां वित्तमयीं अवाप्तः यस्यां मज्जन्ति बहवो मनुष्याः ॥

2 - 3

*naitāṁ sṛṅgāṁ vittamayīm avāptaḥ yasyāṁ majjanti bahavo manuṣyāḥ ॥*

नचिकेतः *naciketaḥ* - O! Nachiketa

सः त्वं *saḥ tvam* - You are that kind of a person. What kind?

प्रियान् प्रियरूपान् च कामान् अभिध्यायन् अत्यस्त्राक्षीः *priyaṅ priyarūpān ca kāmān abhidhyāyan atyastrākṣiḥ* - Even though you were tempted by me, again and again, by offering you

प्रियान् कामान् *priyaṅ kāmān* - various commonly sought objects of desire such as long and healthy life, wealth of all kinds, vast kingdom on earth, children, grandchildren, etc., and also

प्रियरूपान् कामान् च *priyarūpān ca kāmān ca* - pleasures of various kinds involving celestial girls, heavenly chariots, music, dance, entertainment, etc., still

अभिध्यायन् *abhidhyāyan* - not being infatuated by any of them, but clearly analyzing and understanding their real worth and their limitations and fully recognizing their ephemeral nature

अत्यस्त्राक्षीः *atyastraakṣiḥ* - you rejected every one of them. You renounced all of them which were within your reach

सः त्वं *saḥ tvam* - Such a person you are. You are indeed a wise and intelligent person. It may have been easy for you to do what you did, but that is not easy for most people, because most do not recognize श्रेयस् *śreyas*, and waste their lives in the





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pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas*, seeking transient wealth and ephemeral pleasures throughout their lives.

न एतां सृङ्गां वित्तमयीं अवाप्तः *na etām sṛṅkāṁ vittamayīm avāptaḥ*

न अवाप्तः *na avāptaḥ*- You have not taken

एतां वित्तमयीं सृङ्गां *etām vittamayīm sṛṅkāṁ* - that endless road leading nowhere, that endless path of ephemeral wealth and pleasures, commonly resorted to by ignorant people

यस्यां मज्जन्ति बहवो मनुष्याः *yasyām majjanti bahavo manuṣyāḥ* - in which way of life many people get drowned, and come to grief. After due deliberation, you have wisely renounced the pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas*, the pursuit of everything that is अनित्यं *anityam* - transient existence, and you have wisely chosen the pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas* - That which is Eternal Existence. What a wise person you are! So exclaims Lord यम *yama* in appreciation of the glory of Nachiketa's wisdom.

We may recall here the words of Sri Krishna singing the glory of such wisdom.

शक्नोतीहैव यः सोढुं प्राक् शरीर विमोक्षणात् ।

*śaknotihaiva yaḥ soḍhuṁ prāk śarīra vimokṣaṇāt ।*

काम क्रोधोद्भवं वेगं स युक्तः स सुखी नरः ॥

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*kāma krodhodbhavaṁ vegaṁ sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ ॥*

The one who is able to control the power of the forces of काम *kāma* desires, the tendency to go after transient pleasures, and क्रोध *krodha* - the anger born of non-fulfillment of such काम *kāma* desires, the one who is able to control the power of such काम *kāma* - क्रोध *krodha* forces, all through one's life, only that person is a युक्तः, सुखी, नरः *yuktaḥ sukhī naraḥ*. Only that person knows the art of living, can discover happiness in oneself, and is fit to be called a human being.

Thus Lord यम *yama* is now satisfied that Nachiketa is a proper अधिकारि *adhikāri*, fit for receiving the knowledge he is seeking. Confirming this conclusion, Lord यम *yama* says:

दूरमेते विपरीते विषूची अविद्या या च विद्या इति ज्ञाता ।

*dūramete viparīte vaṣūcī avidyā yaa ca vidyā iti jñātā ।*



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विद्याभीप्सिनं नचिकेतसं मन्ये न त्वा कामाः बहवः अलोलुपन्त ॥

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*vidyābhīpsinam naciketasam manye na tvā kāmāḥ bahavaḥ alolupanta ॥*

दूरं एते विपरीते विषृची *dūram ete viparīte viṣrūcī*

एते *ete* - These two, namely श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas*

दूरं एते *dūram ete* - these two remain far apart, far distant from each other. It is not merely a matter of physical distance, but they are

विपरीते *viparīte* - mutually exclusive, mutually contradictory, mutually opposed to each other like light and darkness, because they are of the nature of विवेक *vivek* and अविवेक *avivek* - ability to discriminate and inability to discriminate. Further

विषृची *viṣrūcī* - they have divergent paths, leading to opposite ends. प्रेयस् *preyas* is संसार हेतु *saṁsāra hetu*. It serves to keep the person in संसार *saṁsāra* - in the world of birth and death - सुख *sukha* and दुःख *duḥkha* - perpetual discontent, whereas श्रेयस् *śreyas* is मोक्षहेतु *mokṣa hetu*. It serves as the means for one's emancipation from संसार *saṁsāra*. It leads to मोक्ष *mokṣa* - total fulfillment in life.

अविद्या या च विद्या इति ज्ञाता *avidyā yā ca vidyā iti jñātā*

या ज्ञाता *yā jñātā* - These two, namely श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas* are well known and well-understood by truly learned people as (इति *iti*)

विद्या अविद्या च *vidyaa avidyaa ca* - as विद्या *vidyaa* - knowledge and

अविद्या *avidyaa* - ignorance

Lord यम *yama* identifies श्रेयस् *śreyas* with विद्या *vidyaa*, meaning आत्म विद्या *ātma vidyā* - Self-knowledge and प्रेयस् *preyas* with अविद्या *avidyā*, meaning Self ignorance. Self-ignorance is not the ordinary ignorance of facts and formulae, but it is spiritual blindness, which cannot recognize the most primary datum of all personal experiences, namely the SELF.

"I know everything about myself except myself" - that is अविद्या *avidyā* - self-ignorance, the world of darkness described in the ईशावास्य उपनिषत् *īśāvāsya upaniṣat* as असुर्या नाम ते लोकाः अन्धेन तमसा आवृताः *asuryā nām te lokāḥ andhena tamasā āvṛtāḥ*. The path of अविद्या *avidyā* - spiritual blindness, leads to bondage, to the finite everchanging world, and the path of विद्या *vidyā* - self knowledge leads to the infinite eternal changeless world of oneself.



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After identifying श्रेयस् *śreyas* and प्रेयस् *preyas* with विद्या *vidyā* and अविद्या, *avidyā* Lord यम *yama* says:

विद्याभीप्सितं नचिकेतसं मन्ये *vidyābhīpsitaṁ naciketasam manye*  
नचिकेतसं (त्वां अहं) मन्ये विद्या अभीप्सितं *naciketasam (tvām ahaṁ) manye*  
*vidyā abhīpsitaṁ* - I consider you, Nachiketa, as विद्या अभीप्सितं *vidyā*  
*abhīpsitaṁ* - as a true lover of विद्या *vidyā*, as a true seeker of आत्म विद्या *ātma*  
*vidyā* - Self Knowledge, because

न त्वा कामाः बहवः अलोलुपन्त *na tvā kāmāḥ bahavaḥ alolupanta*

बहवः कामाः *kāmāḥ bahavaḥ kāmāḥ* - the very many objects of desire, pleasure and enjoyment which attract the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* of people in the pursuit of प्रेयस् *preyas*

त्वां न अलोलुपन्त *tvām na alolupanta* - did not shake, confuse and distract your mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* from your firm pursuit of श्रेयस् *śreyas* - pursuit of आत्म विद्या *ātma vidyā*.

Therefore, I consider your बुद्धि *buddhi* an appropriate receptacle, a proper container, a proper उपाधि *upādhi* for receiving and holding आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* - Self Knowledge that you seek.

Lord यम 's *yama*'s Introduction to Vedanta continues, which we will see next time.