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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 1

Section 2

Volume 10

21. परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणः
parīkṣya lokān karamacitān brāhmaṇaḥ
निर्वेदं आयात् नास्ति अकृतः कृतेन ।
nirvedaṁ āyāt nāsti akṛtaḥ kṛtena ।
तत् विज्ञानार्थम् स गुरुम् एव अभिगच्छेत्
tat vijñānāratham sa gurum eva abhigacchet
समित्प्राणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठं ॥ 1 - 2 - 12
samitprāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahmaniṣṭhaṁ ॥

22. तस्मै स विद्वान् उपसन्नाय सम्यक्
tasmai sa vidvān upasannāya samyak
प्रशान्तचित्ताय शमान्विताय ।
praśāntacittāya śamānvitāya ।
येन अक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं
yena akṣaram puruṣam veda satyam
प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम् ॥ 1 - 2 - 13
provāca tāṁ tattvato brahmavidyām ॥

इति प्रथम मुण्डके द्वितीयः खण्डः
iti prathama muṇḍake dvitīyaḥ khaṇḍaḥ

As we may recall again, Saunaka's question to the teacher, Angiras is:

कस्मिन् नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वम् इदं विज्ञातं भवति *kasmin nu bhagavo vijñāte sarvam idaṁ vajñātaṁ bhavati* - Knowing which, recognizing the true nature of which alone. The true nature of every object in this creation, including this creation itself, becomes known, becomes self-evident.

Responding to that question, Angiras points out that all areas of अपर विद्या *apara vidyā* - objective knowledge, involve only knowledge about कर्म *karma* and कर्मफल



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karma phala, actions and their results, means and ends, all of which are limited, transient, and non-eternal by their very nature. And, in order to discover and recognize the answer to Saunaka's question, one must undertake the pursuit of पर विद्या *para vidyā* - which means ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge.

यया तत् अक्षरं अधिगम्यते *yayā tat akṣaram adhigamyate* - by which knowledge अक्षर *akṣara*, meaning अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, is gained, is reached.

Having said that, Angiras then talked about the scope and limitations of कर्मसु *karmas* and कर्मफलसु *karma phalas*, which constitute the content of अपर विद्या *apara vidyā*, objective knowledge, through a brief discourse on Vedic rituals, charitable activities, meditations, acts of self-discipline, etc. and what can be achieved by such कर्मसु *karmas*, from which it is clear that from अपर विद्या *apara vidyā* knowledge, one cannot gain ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge, knowledge of अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, whose very nature is all-inclusive, unlimited, ever-existent and never subject to change.

For every person, the whole life is simply a bundle of कर्मसु *karmas* and कर्मफलसु *karma phalasa* - actions and their results. When that is the case, what should one do to gain ब्रह्म विद्या *brahmavidyā* knowledge, knowledge about अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*? The Upanishad says:

21. परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणः
parīkṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇah
निर्वेदं आयात् नास्ति अकृतः कृतेन ।
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तत् विज्ञानार्थम् स गुरुम् एव अभिगच्छेत्
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समित्प्राणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठं ॥ 1 - 2 - 12
samitprāṇiḥ śrotriyam brahmaniṣṭham ॥

This is one of the famous verses in Vedanta. We have called attention to this verse several times before in our scripture readings.



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परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणः निर्वेदं आयात् *parikṣya lokān karamacitān brāhmaṇah nirvedaṁ āyāt*

ब्राह्मणः *brāhmaṇah* - A ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇ* is any person who has grown to become mature and discerning enough, by virtue of one's preponderance of सत्व गुण *satva guṇa* and विवेक बुद्धि *vivek buddhi*. सत्व गुण *satva guṇa* means ability of one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* to remain alert and focused at all times, to be able to recognize anything one sees, as it really is, and विवेक बुद्धि *vivek buddhi* means a बुद्धि *buddhi* which has the natural ability to recognize what is नित्यं *nityam* and what is अनित्यं *anityam* - what is ever-existent, eternal and never subject to change, and what is transient and hence non-eternal and ever subject to change. Thus, any such mature and discerning person endowed with सत्व गुण *satva guṇa* and विवेक बुद्धि *vivek buddhi* is a ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇa*. Such a ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇa*

परीक्ष्य *parikṣya* - by analyzing

कर्मचितान् *karamacitān* (कर्मणा संपादितान् *karmaṇā sampādītān*) लोकान् *lokān*

- all forms of worldly experiences (लोकान् *lokān*), earned by कर्म *karmas* - worldly actions of various kinds

निर्वेदं आयात् *nirvedaṁ āyāt* - should gain, should acquire total dispassion for all of them, total dispassion for all कर्म *karmas* and कर्मफल *karma phalas*, realizing their essential powerlessness for gaining any lasting happiness, total fulfillment in life.

How does a ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇa* come to that realization? The Upanishad says

परीक्ष्य लोकान् *parikṣya lokān* - by analyzing all forms of worldly experiences. If so, how does one do that परीक्षा *parikṣā* - analysis?

कर्म प्रत्यक्ष उपमान अनुमान आगमैः *karma pratyakṣa upamān anumān āgamaiḥ* -

One's own direct experiences, experiences of others, inference born of such experiences, together with the declarations of the Upanishads - these are the means available for everyone to analyze all worldly experiences. For example, in one's own experience, and also in the experience of everyone else, one knows that in this world, every कर्म *karma* produces a result, a कर्मफल *karmaphala*. Every कर्म *karma* is limited, and so is the कर्मफल *karma phala*. Consequently, every कर्म *karma* is अनित्यं *anityam* - non-eternal, which means it perishes and disappears in time, and so is the case with every कर्मफल *karmaphala*. That means,



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यत् कृतं तत् अनित्यं *yat kṛtaṁ tat anityaṁ* - anything produced by a कर्म *karma* in time, is bound by time, and surely it perishes and vanishes in time. This is true of all कर्मसु *karmas*, whether it is a लौकिक कर्म *laukik karma* - a secular action or a वैदिक कर्म *vaidik karma* - Vedic ritual of some kind, which again means, even all कर्मफलसु *karma phalas* experienced by a person in Heaven (स्वर्ग लोक *svarga loka*), by virtue of one's पुण्य कर्मसु *puṇya karmas* done in one's life on earth, they are also अनित्यं *anityaṁ* - transient and non-eternal, and surely, they also perish and vanish in time.

The Chandogya Upanishad says that (C 8 -1- 6)

तत् यथा इह कर्मजितः लोकः क्षीयते
tat yathā iha karmajitaḥ lokah kṣīyate
एवं एव अमुत्र पुण्यजितः लोकः क्षीयते ॥
evaṁ eva amutra puṇyajitaḥ lokah kṣīyate ॥

तत् यथा इह *tat yathā iha* - Just as here on earth

कर्मजितः लोकः क्षीयते *karmajitaḥ lokah kṣīyate* - the world of one's experiences earned by कर्म *karma* of various kinds is अनित्यं *anityaṁ* - non-eternal, and hence perishes in time

एवं एव *evaṁ eva* - in the same manner

अमुत्र *amutra* - in Heaven also (in स्वर्गलोक *svarga loka* also)

पुण्यजितः लोकः क्षीयते *puṇyajitaḥ lokah kṣīyate* - the world of one's experiences, earned by पुण्य कर्म *puṇya karma* of various kinds, is अनित्यं *anityaṁ* - non-eternal, and hence perishes in time

Just as here on earth, all experiences earned as कर्मफल *karmaphala* of one's past कर्मसु *karmas* are अनित्यं *anityaṁ* - they are transient in nature, and hence they disappear in time, similarly, in Heaven also, in स्वर्गलोक *svarga loka* also, all experiences gained as कर्मफल *karma phala* of one's past पुण्य कर्मसु *puṇya karmas* are अनित्यं *anityaṁ* - they are transient, and hence they also disappear in time.



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Again, कठोपनिषत् *kāthopaniṣat* also communicates the same message in these words (कठ *kāṭha* 4 - 10)

यदेव इह तत् अमुत्र यत् अमुत्र तदनु इह ॥
yadeva iha tat amutra yat amutra tadanu iha ॥

Just as it is here, in this मनुष्य लोक *manuṣya loka* - in this world of human beings, so it is in स्वर्गलोक *svargaloka* - in Heaven also. That means

कर्मणा संपादितः लोकः इह मनुष्य लोके अनित्यः
karmaṇā saṁpāditaḥ lokaḥ iha manuṣya loke anityaḥ
तथा पुण्य कर्मणा संपादितः लोकः स्वर्गलोक अनित्यः एव ॥
tathā puṇya karmaṇā saṁpāditaḥ lokaḥ svargaloka anityaḥ eva ॥

Just as in this world of human beings, experiences earned by one's past कर्म *karmas* of every kind are non-eternal, and hence disappear in time, in a similar manner, experiences earned in Heaven by one's past पुण्य कर्म *puṇya karmas* are also non-eternal, and hence they also disappear in time. By so analyzing the nature of all of one's worldly experiences, a mature person gains वैराग्य *vairagya* - total dispassion, to the exclusive pursuit of कर्म *karma* and कर्मफल *karmaphala* as one's Goal of Life, as one's परमपुरुषार्थ *parama puruṣārtha*. Gaining such dispassion - वैराग्य *vairagya*, to the exclusive pursuit of कर्म *karma* and कर्मफल *karmaphala* is indeed the process of waking up to the reality of Eternal Existence.

What is Eternal Existence? That which always IS, is Eternal Existence. Such Eternal Existence is not something one can gain or reach by any कर्म *karma*, because It is not the result of any कर्म *karma*, It is not a कर्मफल *karma phala*. The Upanishad says that:

नास्ति अकृतः कृतेन *nāsti akṛtaḥ kṛtena* - If there is a Being which is Eternal, That Being is not a created Being at all. This whole creation, including all Heavens in this creation is कृतः *kṛtaḥ* - is created existence. All achievements in this creation are कृतस *kṛtas*, they are achievements created by some कर्म *karmas* as कर्मफल *karma phalas*, as the result of such कर्म *karmas*. They are all अनित्यं *anityam* - non-eternal. They are sure to disappear in time.



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That which always is, is अकृतः *akṛtaḥ* - not created. It is not created by any कर्म *karma*. It is not an effect of some cause. It is Eternal Existence never subject to change.

अकृतः कृतेन न अस्ति *akṛtaḥ kṛtena na asti* - Such Eternal Existence never subject to change, is अक्षरं *akṣaram*. Such अक्षरं *akṣaram* is not born of any created existence. The कठोपनिषत् *kāthopaniṣat* also communicates the same message in the following words (कठ *kātha* 2 - 10)

न हि अध्रुवैः प्राप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत् *na hi adhruvaiḥ prāpyate hi dhruvaṁ tat*

अध्रुवैः *adhruvaiḥ* meaning अनित्यैः *anityaiḥ* - Through means which are transient in nature

तत् ध्रुवं *tat dhruvaṁ* - That which is Eternal, That which is अक्षरं *akṣaram*, That which is Ever Existent and never subject to change, That अक्षरं *akṣaram*

न हि प्राप्यते *na hi prāpyate* - certainly cannot be obtained, cannot be reached

The nature of That अक्षर *akṣara* has already been pointed out by the Upanishad in the last 4 verses in the last section (मु *mu* 1 -1 - 6 to 9) as , which is not only Ever-existent and never subject to change, It is also all-inclusive, being both the efficient cause, as well as the material cause for all created existence in this universe, including the universe itself. Such अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* is अदृश्यं *adṛśyaṁ* - not seen, not available as an object for recognition by any of one's sense organs.

What is not available for perception by any of one's sense organs, cannot be seen at all, which means अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* can never be seen by any of one's sense organs. If अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* is Ever-existent, and still can never be seen by one's sense organs, it is clear that अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* can be recognized only by Knowledge - ज्ञानेन एव *jñānena eva*. By ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* only can one recognize अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*. Therefore

तत् विज्ञानार्थम् *tat vijñānārtham* - for gaining That ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*, in order to recognize That all-inclusive, ever-existent and never subject to change अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*

सः ब्राह्मणः *saḥ brāhmaṇaḥ* - that mature person, endowed with सत्त्व गुण *satva guṇa* and वैराग्य *vairāgya* - total dispassion for the worldly pursuits of कर्म *karma* and



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कर्मफल *karmaphala* - actions and their results, such an intellectually and emotionally mature person

गुरुं एव अभिगच्छेत् *guruṁ eva abhigacchet* - should certainly (एव *eva*) go to an appropriate teacher (एव *eva*- certainly), seeking ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*. The use of the word एव *evameaning* "certainly" here indicates that one cannot gain ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* simply by reading some books independently, because, Upanishad words are pointer words, and they need to be unfolded properly to bring out exactly what they indicate, for which one needs the initial help of a teacher who has already gone through that discipline through an earlier teacher. (To wake up a person who is fast asleep, there is need for a person who is already awake). Even for such initiation by a teacher to be fruitful, there are two essential conditions, one with respect to the student, and the other with respect to the teacher. With respect to the student, the Upanishad says:

समित् पाणिः *samit pāṇiḥ* - The student should approach the teacher with *samit* (twigs of wood) in his hands. Just as we go to the temple with some fruits or flowers or offerings in our hand, so also a seeker of ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* approaches a teacher with *samit* in his hands, which simply means, the student must approach the teacher with proper attitude, with some visible manifestation of one's attitude of sincerity, devotion and dedication conducive to gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* - Upanishad knowledge, through श्रवणं *śravaṇaṁ* - listening, मननं *mananaṁ* - analysis and reflection, and निदिध्यासनं *nididhyāsaṇaṁ* - absorption and integration. Proper attitude is very important for gaining any knowledge, and it is all-important for gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ* - Upanishad knowledge.

With respect to the teacher, the Upanishad says:

श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठं *śrotriyaṁ brahmaniṣṭhaṁ* - The teacher should be श्रोत्रियं *śrotriyaṁ* - learned and well-qualified to teach, and he should also be ब्रह्मनिष्ठं *brahmaniṣṭhaṁ* - already well established, well rooted in ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*, आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*, ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge.

One may now ask, where to find such a qualified teacher for ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge in the world of today. Fortunately that is not a problem for us. There is no need for anyone to go anywhere in search of such a teacher. When one is ready for ब्रह्म



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विद्या *brahmavidyā* knowledge, the teacher is already there in some Form and Name. Whatever be that Form and Name, please understand this clearly, that Form and Name is NOT one's real teacher. One's real teacher is ONLY परमेश्वर *paramēśvar*, as Sri Krishna Himself. That Sri Krishna सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि संनिविष्टः *saravasya cāham hṛdi sanniviṣṭha* - That Sri Krishna - वेदान्त कृत् वेदविदेह चाहं *vedānta kṛt vedavideh cāham* - That Sri Krishna, is already in every one of us, as चित् स्वरूपं *cit svarūpam* - as Pure Consciousness, as All Knowledge. If one directs one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* towards That Sri Krishna, already in oneself, with श्रद्धा *śraddhā*, भक्ति *bhakti* and ध्यानयोग *dhyāna yoga*, and ardently seeks ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge, one can hear and listen to the teachings of Sri Krishna, loud and clear, through the words of the Bhagvat Gita and the Upanishads at all times. Now, let us continue with the Upanishad here. When a person with proper attitude approaches an appropriate teacher seeking ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam*, what does the teacher do? The Upanishad says:

22. तस्मै स विद्वान् उपसन्नाय सम्यक्
tasmai sa vidvān upasannāya samyak
प्रशान्तचित्ताय शमान्विताय ।
praśāntacittāya śamānvitāya ।
येन अक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं
yena akṣaram puruṣam veda satyam
प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम् ॥
provāca tāṁ tattvato brahmavidyām ॥

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तस्मै *tasmai* (शिष्याय *śiṣyāya*) - To that person, endowed with the necessary pre-required qualifications needed to be a शिष्य *śiṣya* - a disciple for ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge, to that person who has approached an appropriate teacher seeking ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge.

Now, what are the pre-required qualifications for a person to be a शिष्य *śiṣya* - a disciple for ब्रह्मविद्या *brahmavidyā* knowledge? The Upanishad says:



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उपसन्नाय सम्यक् *upasannāya samyak* - One must first have the necessary विवेक वैराग्य बुद्धि *vivek vairāgya buddhi* for gaining ब्रह्मविद्या *brahmavidyā* knowledge. Having cultivated such बुद्धि *buddhi*, the person must approach an appropriate teacher, in the proper manner, with श्रद्धा *śraddhā* and devotion to such knowledge, as indicated by the word समित् पाणिः *samit pāṇiḥ* (said earlier). That means the person must naturally exhibit some visible manifestation of one's sincere interest in gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*. Further

प्रशान्त चित्ताय *praśānta cittāya* - by virtue of one's विवेक वैराग्य बुद्धि *vivek vairāgya buddhi*, the person must also naturally have प्रशान्त चित्तं *praśānta cittam* - peace and tranquility of mind, totally free from conflicts, agitations and anxieties. This means the person must already have cultivated the qualities of अमानित्वं *amānitvaṁ*, अदम्भित्वं *adambhitvaṁ*, अहिंसा *ahimsā*, etc. - all the 20 qualities Sri Krishna talked about in Chapter 13 of भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā* as ज्ञान साधनं *jñāna sādhanam*. Further

शमन्विताय *śamānvitāya* - besides such Peace and Tranquility of mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, the person must naturally have शम-दम *śama-dama* qualities, qualities of self-control and single-minded devotion to ब्रह्मविद्या *brahmavidyā* knowledge, as indicated by the four-fold qualifications - साधन चतुष्टयं *sādhana catuṣṭayam* (we talked about in our Introduction to Upanishads) needed for gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*.

तस्मै *tasmai* (शिष्याय *śiṣyāya*) - To such a disciple

सः विद्वान् *saḥ vidvān* - that learned ब्रह्मविद्या *brahmavidyā* teacher, who is both श्रोत्रिय *śrotriya* and ब्रह्मनिष्ठ *brahmaniṣṭha*, well versed in ब्रह्मविद्या *brahmavidyā* knowledge, and well-qualified to teach that knowledge

तां ब्रह्मविद्याम् तत्त्वतः प्रोवाच *tām brahmavidyām tattvataḥ provāca* - प्रोवाच *provāca* does teach, should teach, will certainly teach

तां ब्रह्मविद्याम् *tām brahmavidyām* - That Knowledge of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*

तत्त्वतः *tattvataḥ* - in Its very essence, just as It is



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

स्वरूपतः *svarūpataḥ* - just as truly as ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is

येन अक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं जानाति *yena akṣaram puruṣam veda satyam*

येन *yena* - By such teaching

वेद *veda* = जानाति *jānāti* - the disciple gains the knowledge, recognizes

सत्यं अक्षरं पुरुषं *satyam akṣaram puruṣam* - That Ever Existent, never subject to change

पुरुषं *puruṣam* - The ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, The all-inclusive सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma*.

Thus, when a qualified disciple approaches a qualified teacher, with proper attitude, seeking ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam* knowledge of अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, the teacher naturally teaches That knowledge. Why naturally? Because that is the nature of the spontaneous flow of ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge from a teacher to a disciple. As the Taittiriya Upanishad says:

आचार्यं पूर्वरूपं अन्तेवासी उत्तररूपं विद्या सन्धिः प्रवचनं सन्धानं *ācārya pūrvarūpaṁ antevāsī uttararūpaṁ vidyā sandhiḥ pravacanaṁ sandhānam* - The teacher comes first, because, when one is ready for this knowledge, the teacher is already there. The disciple comes next to hear, listen, reflect, and absorb that knowledge. That which connects the teacher and the disciple is That ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge itself. That which brings about that connection is the extraordinary method of teaching that knowledge. By such teaching, the disciple recognizes सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma* - That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, clearly as It is, says the Upanishad.

Here ends Chapter 1 of मुण्डक उपनिषत् *muṇḍaka upaniṣat* with its short discourse on अपर विद्या *apara vidyā* - objective knowledge. The discourse on पर विद्या *para vidyā*, ब्रह्मविद्या *brahmavidyā*, आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* - Self-knowledge, commences in the next chapter, which we will take up next time.