



मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 2

Section 1

Volume 11

23. तत् एतत् सत्यं

tat etat satyam

यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकात् विस्फुलिङ्गाः

yathā sudīptāt pāvakāt visphulingāḥ

सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः ।

sahstraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ ।

तथा अक्षरात् विविधाः सोम्य भावाः

tathā akṣarāt vividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ

प्रजायन्ते तत्र चैवापि यन्ति ॥

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prajāyante tatra caivāpi yanti ॥

24. दिव्यो हि अमूर्तः पुरुषः सबाह्य अभ्यन्तरो हि अजः

dīvyo hi amūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ sabāhya abhyantaro hi ajaḥ

अप्राणो हि अमनाः शुभ्रो हि अक्षरात् परतः परः ॥ 2 - 1 - 2

apraṇo hi amanāḥ śubhro hi akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ ॥

The second chapter of this Upanishad opens with the statement

तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyam*

एतत् सत्यं *etat satyam* - This is true. What is true?

तत् *tat* - That. "That" means what?

As we may recall, the last section (मु *mu* 1 - 2) which we completed reading last time, also started with the statement तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyam*. In the last section the Upanishad was talking about अपर विद्या *apara vidyā* - objective knowledge, in general. With reference to अपर विद्या *apara vidyā*, the word सत्यं *satyam* refers to सामान्य सत्यं *sāmānya satyam* - ordinary truth, that which is ordinarily recognized as true in this world of transient existence. Such सामान्य सत्यं *sāmānya satyam* is आपेक्षिक सत्यं *āpekṣaka satyam*, which means it is all about matters relating to dependent reality. For example, कर्म *karma* and कर्मफल *karmaphala* are matters of



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dependent reality. कर्म *karma* depends on कर्मफल *karmaphala*, and कर्मफल *karmaphala* depends on कर्म *karma*. Neither one is independent. Therefore, that which is true with respect to कर्म *karma* and कर्मफल *karma phala* is आपेक्षिक सत्यं *āpekṣaka satyaṁ* - a matter of dependent reality, transient reality, अपर विद्या *apara vidyā*, which was the subject matter of the last section.

In this section (मु *mu* 2 -1) the Upanishad opens its discourse on पर विद्या *para vidyā* - matters relating to Absolute Reality, that which is independent, ever-existent and never subject to change. Therefore, the word सत्यं *satyaṁ* here refers to Absolute Truth - पारमार्थिक सत्यं *pāramārthika satyaṁ* - That which is Absolute Reality of all existence. Such truth is independently Self-existent. Therefore, the opening statement here तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyaṁ* means, That which is being unfolded here is पर विद्या विषयं *para vidyā viṣayaṁ*. It is about matters relating to परब्रह्मन् *para brahman* - सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma* - The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, The आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I in every Self there is. Thus, the Upanishad now introduces पर विद्या *para vidyā* ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* - by the statement तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyaṁ*. Unfolding That सत्यं *satyaṁ* - That Absolute Reality of all existence, the Upanishad says:

23. तत् एतत् सत्यं

tat etat satyaṁ

यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकात् विस्फुलिङ्गाः

yathā sudīptāt pāvakāt visphuliṅgāḥ

सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः ।

sahstraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ ।

तथा अक्षरात् विविधाः सोम्य भावाः

tathā akṣarāt vividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ

प्रजायन्ते तत्र चैवापि यन्ति ॥

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prajāyante tatra caivāpi yanti ॥

Saunaka, the disciple is listening attentively, and Angiras, the Teacher is teaching. Addressing Saunaka as सोम्य *somya* - O! Young Friend, the teacher opens his discourse on ब्रह्मविद्या *brahmavidyā* as follows:



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(सोम्य *somya* is an endearing way of addressing a disciple by a teacher who is satisfied with his disciple for his श्रद्धा *śraddhā* and devotion to ब्रह्मविद्या *brahmavidyā* knowledge.) The teacher says:

यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकात् सहस्रशः सरूपाः विस्फुलिङ्गाः प्रभवन्ते *yathā sudiptāt pāvakāt sahastraśaḥ sarūpāḥ visphuliṅgāḥ prabhavante*

यथा *yathā* - Just as

सुदीप्तात् पावकात् *sudiptāt pāvakāt* - from a very well burning fire, from a blazing fire

सहस्रशः विस्फुलिङ्गाः *sahastraśaḥ visphuliṅgāḥ* - thousands of sparks of fire

प्रभवन्ते निर्गच्छन्ति *prabhavante nirgacchanti* - arise and come out. All these sparks of fire are

सरूपाः विस्फुलिङ्गाः *sarūpāḥ visphuliṅgāḥ* - meaning दीप्त पावक सरूपाः *dīpta pāvaka sarūpāḥ visphuliṅgāḥ* These sparks of fire are of the nature, identical with the nature of the blazing fire itself, which means, in terms of their स्वरूप *svarūpa* - their inherent nature, each spark of fire is fire itself.

From blazing fire arise and come out thousands of sparks of fire, all of which have the same essential nature as fire itself. They are therefore सरूपाः *sarūpāḥ*, meaning स्वप्रकाश स्वरूपाः अग्निलक्षणाः - all sparks of fire are self-effulgent and have identical characteristics and potentialities as fire itself

तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyam* - That all sparks of fire are of the nature of fire itself is सत्यं *satyam*, is true, a truth that is never subject to change. That सत्यं *satyam* being an easily recognized fact of nature, the Upanishad uses this fact as illustration to communicate another important fact of nature in the next line. Before we go to the next line, let us briefly reflect on the fact of nature involved in the illustration itself, namely

सुदीप्तात् पावकात् सहस्रशः सरूपाः
sudiptāt pāvakāt sahastraśaḥ sarūpāḥ
विस्फुलिङ्गाः प्रभवन्ते ॥
visphuliṅgāḥ prabhavante ॥

From a blazing fire, thousands of sparks of fire, all having the same essential nature as fire itself, arise and come out. If each spark of fire is fire itself, then why call it spark? The spark is so called because of its उपाधि *upādhi* - difference in form, limited by time and space. But differences born of one's उपाधि *upādhi* - form and name, do not and



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cannot change the स्वरूप *svarūpa* - the true nature, the inherent nature of the spark of fire being fire itself.

Now, suppose, just imagine, the spark says: "I am only a miserable tiny spark. I exist only for a few seconds. I am mortal, etc." The Upanishad now wakes up the spark and teaches: "O! spark, you are not spark at all. Spark is only your name and form. You are in fact fire itself. You are indeed hot, self-effulgent, sparkling fire, with all the characteristics and potentialities of fire itself. Please recognize your true nature. You are indeed fire itself".

Contemplating on the above teachings of the Upanishads, suppose the spark is able to recognize its true nature as fire itself. Now, let us understand what the Upanishad actually did. The Upanishad did not make "spark" into fire. The spark was already fire, and it has been so all along. The spark was only ignorant of its own true nature all along, ever since its birth, until it was awakened by the Upanishad by its teaching "You are indeed fire itself". That Upanishad teaching removed self-ignorance in spark. When self-ignorance was removed, the spark gained अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं *aparokṣa jñānam* - immediate knowledge of its own true nature, as It is.

That is exactly what the Upanishad teaching does. Upanishad teaching removes self-ignorance, and gives a person अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं *aparokṣa jñānam* - immediate knowledge of oneself, as one really is, provided the person is both emotionally and intellectually ready for such awakening.

Now, let us continue with the Upanishad. The Upanishad says: Just as , from a blazing fire, thousands of sparks, all having the same essential nature as fire itself, arise and come out

तथा अक्षरात् विविधाः सरूपाः भावाः प्रजायन्ते *tathā akṣarāt vividhāḥ sarūpāḥ bhāvāḥ prajāyante*

तथा *tathā* - in a similar manner

अक्षरात् *akṣarāt* - from that अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, whose nature has already been indicated earlier (मु *mu* 1-1 - 6 to 9) as अद्रेश्यं *adreśyam*, अग्राह्यं *agrāhyam*, अगोत्रं *agotram*, अवर्णम् *avarṇam*, अचक्षुः *acakṣuḥ*, श्रोत्रं *śrotram*, अपाणिपादं *apāṇipādām*, नित्यं *nityam*, विभुं *vibhum*, सर्वगतं *sarvagatam*, सुसूक्ष्मं *susūkṣmam*, अव्ययं *avyayam* and भूतयोनिम् *bhūtayonam* (we have already seen the content of these pointer words in detail in verses 6 to 9 in Chapter 1, Section 1)

- from that अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, whose nature is सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म



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satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma, as we have seen in Taittiriya Upanishad. From that अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*

विविधाः *vividhāḥ* (सर्वे *sarve*) भावाः *bhāvāḥ* - all the different varieties and multitudes of beings in this entire creation, all having different उपाधिस *upādhis* - different forms, names and distinguishing characteristics

सरूपाः *sarūpāḥ* - still all of them having the same essential nature as अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* itself

प्रजायन्ते *prajāyante* - arise and come out, manifesting themselves as they are

That means, the स्वरूप *svarūpa* of each भाव *bhāva* - the true nature of every Being in this creation is अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* itself, is सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma* itself. The true nature of myself, yourself, everyone else, and everything else in this creation is that अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* itself. All the differences among us are only with respect to नाम-रूप-काल-देश उपाधि भेद *nāma-rūpa-kāla-deśa upādhi bheda* - differences in name, form, time, space and related consequences, which do not, and cannot change the true nature of every Being in this creation, including the creation itself.

By the above statement, the Upanishad unfolds अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं *aparokṣa jñānaṁ* - immediate knowledge of the true nature of every Being in this creation, including the creation itself as:

ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वम् *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam* - which means, अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* is the true nature of आत्मा *ātmā* - the Self I in oneself, and indeed, in every self there is. That also means that the स्वरूप *svarūpa* - the true nature of what was indicated earlier as अक्षरं *akṣaram*, and the स्वरूप *svarūpa* of आत्मा *ātmā* - the Self I, are indeed identical सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma*. Further, the Upanishad continues:

विविधाः (सर्वे) भावाः
vividhāḥ (sarve) bhāvāḥ
तत्र एव अपि यन्ति च
tatra eva api yanti ca



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All Beings in this creation, with their varieties and multitude of उपाधिस *upādhis* - body limitations, on the dissolution of their transient existence

अपि यन्ति च *api yanti ca* - also merge into, also get resolved into

तत्र एव *tatra eva* - That Same ONE अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* Itself. As we have seen in the Taittiriya Upanishad:

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते
yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante
येन जातानि जीवन्ति
yena jātāni jīvanti
यत् प्रयन्ति अभिसंविशन्ति
yat prayanti abhisamviśanti
तत् ब्रह्म इति विजिज्ञासस्य ।
tat brahma iti vijijñāsasva ।

- ◇ That from which, all that exists in this creation are born
- ◇ That by which, those which are born, live and grow, and
- ◇ That, into which, all those which live and grow, ultimately go back into, entirely merge into, giving up their forms and names, and become ONE with That from which they came

That is indeed the लक्षण *lakṣaṇa* of अक्षर ब्रह्मन् लक्षण *akṣara brahman*, the सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma* that one must learn to appreciate and recognize. That is also the content of the famous verse

पूर्णम् अदः पूर्णम् इदं पूर्णात् पूर्णम् उदच्यते
pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṁ pūrṇāt pūrṇam udcyate
पूर्णस्य पूर्णम् आदाय पूर्णम् एव अवाशिष्यते
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādaya pūrṇam eva avaśiṣyate

Recalling the entire verse again:

यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकात् विस्फुलिङ्गाः
yathā sudīptāt pāvakāt visphulingāḥ
सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः ।
sahstraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ ।



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तथा अक्षरात् विविधाः सोम्य भावाः

tathā akṣarāt vividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ

प्रजायन्ते तत्र चैवापि यन्ति ॥

2 - 1 - 1

prajāyante tatra caivāpi yanti ॥

Thus, in this opening verse on the discourse on परविद्या *paravidyā* - ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā*, the Upanishad communicates three distinct messages:

1. The Upanishad removes Self-ignorance, and unfolds अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं *aparokṣa jñānam* - immediate knowledge on the true nature of oneself as अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* Itself
2. The Upanishad calls attention to the eternal fact ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वम् *īśāvāsyam idam sarvam* - the true nature of every Being in this creation, including the creation itself, is अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*
3. Every Being in this creation, including the creation itself, arises from, is sustained by and ultimately resolves into That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* Itself, which means, That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, while Itself being causeless, is both the efficient instrumental cause as well as the material cause for every Being in this creation, including the creation itself.

तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyam* - All this knowledge is सत्यं *satyam*, पारमार्थिक सत्यं *pāramārthika satyam* - Absolute truth, never subject to change. That is the content of the opening verse.

While it is easy enough for any one to recognize that true nature of a spark of fire is fire itself, it is not that easy to recognize that true nature of oneself is अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* Itself. Therefore, the Upanishad commences to unfold the nature of That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, again through another set of pointer words in the next verse.

दिव्यो हि अमूर्तः पुरुषः सबाह्य अभ्यन्तरो हि अजः

divyo hi amūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ sabāhya abhyantaro hi ajaḥ

अप्राणो हि अमनाः शुभ्रो हि अक्षरात् परतः परः ॥ 2 - 1 - 2

aprāṇo hi amanāḥ śubhro hi akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ ॥



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That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* is pointed out here as पुरुषः *puruṣaḥ*. पुरुषः *puruṣaḥ* means पूर्ण *pūrṇa* the ONE who is all-inclusive, and हृदि सर्वस्य विष्टितम् *hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam* - The ONE who is the heart and बुद्धि *buddhi* of all Beings as ONESELF Itself, as the आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self I in oneself, and in every self there is. That पुरुष *puruṣa*, That आत्मा *ātmā*, That Self I, is अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma* Itself. The nature of That आत्मा *ātmā* is

दिव्यः *divyah* means द्योतनवान्, स्वयं ज्योति स्वरूपः *dyotanavān, svayaṁ jyoti svarūpaḥ*, the ONE whose very nature is all-inclusive Self-effulgence, lighting up every object in this creation. As the कठोपनिषत् *kāthopaniṣat* says:

तमेव भान्तं अनुभाति सर्वम् *tameva bhantaṁ anubhāti sarvam*

तरय भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति *kāthopaniṣat taraya bhāsā sarvamidaṁ vibhāti* -

That आत्मा *ātmā* not only shines by Itself, It also shines as every object in this creation, including the creation itself, as Pure Awareness.

हि *hi* - Because of that reason

अमूर्तः *amūrtaḥ* means सर्व मूर्ति वर्जितः *sarva mūrti varjitaḥ*. Being all-inclusive आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I, has no form. आत्मा *ātmā* is Formless. All forms are only for objects and not for the Subject I Itself.

सबाह्य अभ्यन्तरः *sabāhya abhyantaraḥ* - यत् बाह्यं अभि अन्तरं च *yat bāhyaṁ abhi antaraṁ ca* - आत्मा *ātmā* is both inside and also outside of all that exists.

आत्मा *ātmā* is inside and also outside of this physical body. आत्मा *ātmā* is inside of all of one's thoughts, words and deeds, and also outside of all of them, which means आत्मा *ātmā* is Limitless, Limitlessness Itself.

हि *hi* - Further

अजः *ajāḥ* - आत्मा *ātmā* is Unborn. Anything that is born from something has only dependent reality and no independent reality. आत्मा *ātmā* exists as Independent Reality, Absolute Reality. Being Itself Limitless, आत्मा *ātmā* is सर्वात्मकं *sarvātmakam*, आत्मा *ātmā* is the basis for everything in this entire creation, including the creation itself. आत्मा *ātmā* being अजः *ajāḥ* - unborn, is causeless, and totally free from all the six-fold modifications, namely जायते अस्ति *jāyate asti*, वर्धते *vardhate*,



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विपरिणमते *vipariṇamate*, अपक्षीयते *apakṣiyate*, विनश्यति च *vinaśyati ca* - birth, is, grows, undergoes change, decays and death. आत्मा *ātmā* is free from these modifications.

अप्राण *aprāṇah* - आत्मा *ātmā* is independent of प्राण *prāṇa*. As केनोपनिषत् *kenopaniṣat* says:

यत् प्राणेन न प्राणिति, येन प्राणः प्राणीयते *yat prāṇena na prāṇiti, yena prāṇaḥ prāṇīyate* - That which is not sustained by प्राण *prāṇa*, but That by which प्राण *prāṇa* is sustained, That is indeed आत्मा *ātmā*. अप्राण *aprāṇah* should not be understood simply as " आत्मा *ātmā* is not प्राण *prāṇa* ", because that would mean आत्मा *ātmā* is other than प्राण *prāṇa*. If आत्मा *ātmā* is other than प्राण *prāṇa*, then प्राण *prāṇa* becomes another independent reality. It is not so. प्राण *prāṇa* has no separate existence. The Truth is: प्राण *prāṇa* is आत्मा *ātmā*, but आत्मा *ātmā* is not प्राण *prāṇa*, just as pot is clay, but clay is not pot. Therefore, the pointer word अप्राण *aprāṇah* indicates that आत्मा *ātmā* is independent of प्राण *prāṇa*, while प्राण *prāṇa* is dependent on आत्मा *ātmā*, exactly as pointed out by केनोपनिषत् *kenopaniṣat*.

हि *hi* - Similarly

अमनाः *amanāḥ* - again, as the केनोपनिषत् *kenopaniṣat* says

यत् मनसा न मनुते येन आहुः मनो मतं ।

yat manasā na manute yena āhuḥ mano mataṁ ।

आत्मा *ātmā* is That which cannot be comprehended by the mind, but That by which mind is able to comprehend the world of objects and changes. Therefore, आत्मा *ātmā* is independent of mind. Again, while mind is आत्मा *ātmā*, आत्मा *ātmā* is not mind.

शुभ्रः *śubhraḥ* means शुद्धः *śuddhaḥ* - Absolutely Pure, because आत्मा *ātmā* is पूर्णः *pūrṇaḥ* - all-inclusive, and ONE without a second. There is nothing else in this creation to cause any impurity to आत्मा *ātmā*. आत्मा *ātmā* being अकर्ता *akartā* - does no कर्म *karma*. Therefore, आत्मा *ātmā* is totally free from पुण्य *puṇya*, पाप *pāpa*, etc. Therefore, आत्मा *ātmā* is Absolutely Pure.

अक्षरात् परतः परः *akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ* - आत्मा *ātmā* is even beyond अक्षरं *akṣaram*.

We will talk about this pointer expression next time.