मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 3

Section 2

Volume 24

54. स वेद एतत् परमं ब्रह्म धाम
sa veda etat paramaṁ brahma dhāma
यत्र विश्वं निहितं भाति शुभ्रं ।
yatra viśvaṁ nihitaṁ bhāti śubhraṁ ।
उपासते पुरुषं ये हि अकामाः
upāsate puruṣaṁ ye hi akāmāḥ
ते शुक्रं एतत् अतिवर्तन्ति धीराः ॥ 3 - 2 – 1
te śukraṁ etat ativartanti dhīrāḥ ॥

55. कामान् यः कामयते मन्यमानः
kāmān yaḥ kāmayate manyamānaḥ
स कामभिः जायते तत्र तत्र ।
sa kāmabhiḥ jāyate tatra tatra ।
पर्याप्त कामास्य कृतात्मनस्तु
paryāpta kāmāsya kṛtātmanastu
इहैव सर्वे प्रविलीयन्ति कामाः ॥ 3 - 2 – 2
ihaiva sarve pravalīyanti kāmāḥ ॥

56. नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यः
nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyaḥ
न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena ।
यं एव एष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः
yaṁ eva eṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ
तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनु स्वाम् ॥ 3 - 2 – 3
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanu svām ॥

57. नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः
nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ

न च प्रमादात् तपसो वापि अलिङ्गात् ।
na ca pramādāt tapaso vāpi aliṅgāt |
एतैः उपायैः यतते यस्तु विद्वान्
etaiḥ upāyaiḥ yatate yastu vidvān
तस्य एष आत्मा विशते ब्रह्म धाम ॥ 3 - 2 - 4
tasya eṣa ātmā viśate brahma dhāma ||

In the last verse we saw last time, the Upanishad says भूतिकामः आत्मज्ञं अर्चयेत् *bhūtikāmaḥ ātmajñaṁ arcayet* - Let a भूतिकाम *bhūtikāma*, a person who is after various objects of worldly desire, let such a भूतिकाम *bhūtikāma* develop a reverential attitude (अर्चयेत् *arcayet*) towards an आत्मज्ञ *ātmajña* - a person who is already a ब्रह्मवित् *brahmavit*, an आत्मवित् *ātmavit* - a knower of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, The आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I already in oneself, which means a person who is already an embodiment of आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge. Let a भूतिकाम *bhūtikāma* seek the blessings of such an आत्मज्ञानी *ātmajñānī* - Self-realized, self-recognized person, for the fulfillment of one's worldly desires.

This is the Upanishad's advice to most people in the world, and this is a very important advice, because, even though one may be a भूतिकाम *bhūtikāma* for the time-being, by coming into contact with an आत्मज्ञानी *ātmajñānī* - a Self-realized, Self-recognized person, one knowingly or unknowingly develops also a value and respect for आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge, which has a profound effect on one's subsequent entire life-style, and continuing spiritual growth.

Having talked about भूतिकामः *bhūtikāmaḥ* - people committed to the pursuit of various kinds of worldly desires, the Upanishad now talks about अकामाः *akāmāḥ*. अकामाः *akāmāḥ* are desire-free people, in the sense, they do not have any cravings, longings or bondages to worldly objects, since they have विवेक-वैराग्य बुद्धि *vivek-vairagya buddhi*, and unqualified श्रद्धा *śraddha* in the pursuit of The परमपुरुषार्थ *parama puruṣārtha* - The मोक्ष *mokṣa* - Total Fulfillment in life. What they do not have as yet is the necessary ब्रह्मज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*, आत्मज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge to recognize आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self I, already in every self as ONESELF Itself. They are called मुमुक्षुs *mumukṣus* or जिज्ञासुs *jijñāsus*.

The Upanishad here advises them also to approach an आत्मज्ञानी *ātmajñānī* with a worshipful attitude and seek and follow his teachings, and thereby receive ज्ञान प्रसादं *jñāna prasādaṁ* as the very blessings from परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself. This is how the Upanishad communicates this message:

54. स वेद एतत् परमं ब्रह्म धाम
sa veda etat paramaṁ brahma dhāma
यत्र विश्वं निहितं भाति शुभ्रं।
yatra viśvaṁ nihitaṁ bhāti śubhraṁ |
उपासते पुरुषं ये हि अकामाः
upāsate puruṣaṁ ye hi akāmāḥ
ते शुक्रं एतत् अतिवर्तन्ति धीराः ॥ 3 - 2 – 1
te śukraṁ etat ativartanti dhīrāḥ ||

स एतत् वेद *sa etat veda*
(यस्मात् *yasmāt*) सः *sah* (आत्मज्ञः *ātmajñaḥ*) एतत् *etat* (आत्मानं *ātmānaṁ*) वेद *veda*

यस्मात् *yasmāt* - because

सः *sah* आत्मज्ञः *ātmajñaḥ* - That knower of आत्मा *ātmā*, The आत्मज्ञानी *ātmajñānī* whose blessings the भूतकाम *bhūtakāma* was able to seek for the fulfillment of one's worldly desires, That आत्मज्ञानी *ātmajñānī*

वेद *veda* - knows clearly and absolutely

एतत् *etat* आत्मानं *ātmānaṁ* - That आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I in oneself

What does an आत्मज्ञ *ātmajña* know about आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self I? He knows that आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self I in oneself is

परमं ब्रह्मधाम *paramaṁ brahmadhāma* - The abode of परब्रह्म *parabrahma*, The सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma*, The Abode of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*

यत्र विश्वं *yatra viśvaṁ*, समस्त जगत् *samasta jagat*, निहितं समर्पितं *nihitaṁ samarapitaṁ* - where this entire universe of forms and names are naturally, inseparably and indistinguishably held together as शुभ्रं शुद्धं भाति *śubhraṁ śuddhaṁ bhāti*, स्वतेजसा भाति *svatejasā bhāti*, the ज्योति स्वरूप शुद्ध चैतन्य आत्मा *jyoti svarūpa śuddha caitanya ātmā* - as the undifferentiated, all-inclusive Self-effulgent Pure Consciousness in oneself. That is what an आत्मज्ञ *ātmajña* knows about आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self I in oneself.

Because an आत्मज्ञ *ātmajña*, The knower of आत्मा *ātmā* knows, clearly recognizes that fact as the very nature of all existence, therefore

ये अकामाः *ye akāmāḥ* - those who are devoid of all worldly desires, the मुमुक्षुs *mumukṣus*

ये हि अकामाः *ye hi akāmāḥ*, तं आत्मज्ञं पुरुषं उपासते *taṁ ātmajñaṁ puruṣaṁ upāsate* - worshipfully approach That आत्मज्ञ *ātmajña*, that Self-realized, Self-recognized person and receive from him ज्ञान प्रसादं *jñāna prasādaṁ*, आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge as the very blessings of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* already in themselves. By so receiving the आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*

ते धीराः भवन्ति *te dhīrāḥ bhavanti* - they become wise, and

एतत् शुक्रं अतिवर्तन्ति हि *etat śukraṁ ativartanti hi* - naturally transcend

एतत् शुक्रं नृबीजं *etat śukraṁ nṛbījaṁ* - the seed that causes rebirth

शुक्रं *śukraṁ* means नृबीजं *nṛbījaṁ* - the seed that causes birth, namely अविद्या काम कर्म बन्धनs *avīdyā kāma karma bandhanas* - desires, actions and bondages rooted in self-ignorance. By receiving ज्ञानप्रसादं *jñānaprasādaṁ*, by following the teachings of an आत्मज्ञानी *ātmajñānī*, an अकामः *akāmaḥ*, a मुमुक्षु *mumukṣu* naturally becomes wise, transcending Self-ignorance and naturally becomes an आत्मज्ञानी *ātmajñānī* oneself.

There is also another significant message here.

भूतिकामः परमेश्वरं अर्चयते *bhūtikāmaḥ parameśvaraṁ arcayate*
मोक्ष कामः परमेश्वरं उपासते *mokṣa kāmaḥ parameśvaraṁ upāsate*

One can do ईश्वर पूजा *īśvara pūjā* - any act of worship of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, either as an अर्चना *arcanā* or उपासन *upāsana*. The difference between अर्चना *arcanā* and उपासन *upāsana* must be appreciated. In an अर्चना *arcanā*, one prays for the fulfillment of some objects of worldly desires. In an उपासन *upāsana*, one prays only for ज्ञानप्रसादं *jñānaprasādaṁ*, आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge and nothing else. That is the difference between अर्चना *arcanā* and उपासन *upāsana*. The Upanishad continues.

55. कामान् यः कामयते मन्यमानः
kāmān yaḥ kāmayate manyamānaḥ
स कामभिः जायते तत्र तत्र ।
sa kāmabhiḥ jāyate tatra tatra |
पर्याप्त कामास्य कृतात्मनस्तु
paryāpta kāmāsya kṛtātmanastu
इहैव सर्वे प्रविलीयन्ति कामाः ॥ 3 - 2 – 2
ihaiva sarve pravalīyanti kāmāḥ ||

यः कामान् कामयते *yaḥ kāmān kāmayate* - The one who desires various objects of desire, how does one desire?
यः मन्यमानः सन् कामयते *yaḥ manyamānaḥ san kāmayate* - the one who desires those objects, thinking, craving, longing and brooding over those objects again and again, and thereby developing a bondage with those objects of desire. As Sri Krishna says:

सङ्गात् सञ्जायते कामः *saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmaḥ* (G 2-62) - The person develops a passion for those objects of desire. Then what happens to the person? In his efforts to accomplish or gain those objects of desire
स कामभिः तत्र तत्र (कर्मसु) जायते *sa kāmabhiḥ tatra tatra (karmasu) jāyate* - that person, goaded by those very desires, finds himself in various types of actions, good and bad, and ultimately

कामभिः जायते तत्र तत्र *kāmabhiḥ jāyate tatra tatra* - he is born again amidst those very objects, impelled by those very desires

Thus the bondages created by the passion for one's objects of desire constitute the very basis for one's good and bad actions, which, in turn, form the basis for one's future births in various wombs.

तु *tu* - on the other hand

पर्याप्तकामस्य कृतात्मनः *paryāpta kāmasya kṛtātmanaḥ* - for a person who is a पर्याप्तकामः *paryāpta kāmah* - one who is totally fulfilled in all desires, कृतात्मनः *kṛtātmanaḥ* - one who is totally fulfilled in all actions, for such a person there is still nothing left to be done to fulfill oneself. Such a person is indeed an आत्मज्ञः *ātmajñaḥ* - a ज्ञानी *jñānī* who recognizes one's true nature as पूर्ण आत्मा *pūrṇa ātmā*- The Self I as Fullness Itself. For that person

इह एव सर्वे कामाः प्रविलीयन्ति *iha eva sarve kāmāḥ pravilīyanti*

इह एव - here itself, in this body itself, while one is still alive, in this life itself

सर्वे कामाः प्रविलीयन्ति *sarve kāmāḥ pravilīyanti* - all desires enter and disappear in ONESELF itself

As Sri Krishna says:

आपूर्यमाणं अचलप्रतिष्ठं समुद्रं आपः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।
āpūrya māṇaṁ acala pratiṣṭhaṁ samudraṁ āpaḥ praviśanti yadvat |
तद्वत् कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिं आप्नोति न कामकामी ॥ 2 - 70
tadvat kāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve sa śāntiṁ āpnoti na kāmakāmī ||

Just as waters from all the rivers enter the ocean, which is already full, which still welcomes all waters, and still does not move or change in any way, in a similar manner, the one in whom all desires joyfully enter and disappear, that person gains peace. That is indeed the mark of a स्थितप्रज्ञ *sthitaprajña*, पर्याप्त कामस्य कृतात्मनः *paryāpta kāmasya kṛtātmanaḥ*, a पूर्ण पुरुष *pūrṇa puruṣa*, an आत्मज्ञः *ātmajñaḥ*, a ज्ञानी *jñānī*.

56. नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यः
nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyaḥ

न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena |
यं एव एष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः
yaṁ eva eṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ
तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनु स्वाम् ॥ 3 - 2 – 3
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanu svām ||

We have already seen this verse in detail in कठोपनिषत् *kaṭhopaniṣat* (कठ *kaṭha* 2-23)

न अयं आत्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यः *na ayam ātmā pravacanena labhyaḥ* - This आत्मा *ātmā*, The उत्तलक्षण आत्मा *uttalakṣaṇa ātmā*, The आत्मा *ātmā* about which the Upanishad has been talking all along, This आत्मा *ātmā* cannot be recognized simply by listening to discourses on आत्मज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge, which means, simply listening to such discourses alone will not give one the ability to recognize The आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I already in oneself as ब्रह्मन् *brahman* Itself, as परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself, as Pure Consciousness Itself

न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन *na medhayā na bahunā śrutena* - nor मेधा *medhā* - memory, and sharp intellect or listening to Veda-Upanishad mantras repeatedly, can give one that ability. One can gain आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge, only when one is ready for such knowledge by mental disposition. That means

यं एषः आत्मा एव वृणुते *yaṁ eṣaḥ ātmā eva vṛṇute* - only when a person seeks and ardently prays for आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* only and nothing else, only when a person is totally and exclusively committed to the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge, with unqualified श्रद्धा *śraddha* and reverential devotion

तेन एव एषः आत्मा लभ्यः *tena eva eṣaḥ ātmā labhyaḥ* - by that person only, it is possible to gain आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*

तेस्य एषः आत्मा विवृणुते तनुं स्वा *tesya eṣaḥ ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svā*, स्व आत्मरूपं *sva ātmarūpaṁ* - only to that person, The आत्मा *ātmā*, already in oneself, shines forth, revealing Its true nature as ब्रह्मन् *brahman* Itself, as परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself, as The Immortal Self I Itself. Further,

57. नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः

nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ
न च प्रमादात् तपसो वापि अलिङ्गात् ।
na ca pramādāt tapaso vāpi aliṅgāt |
एतैः उपायैः यतते यस्तु विद्वान्
etaiḥ upāyaiḥ yatate yastu vidvān
तस्य एष आत्मा विशते ब्रह्म धाम ॥ 3 - 2 - 4
tasya eṣa ātmā viśate brahma dhāma ||

अयं आत्मा बलहीनेन न लभ्यः *ayam ātmā balahīnena na labhyaḥ* - This आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I already in oneself, cannot be gained, cannot be reached, cannot be recognized by a person who is weak in the required strength (बलहीनेन *balahīnena*). बलहीनं *balahīnam* means बलरहितं *balarahitaṁ* - lack of strength. For achieving different objectives, different kinds of strength are needed. Now, what kind of strength one needs for recognizing The आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I, already in oneself? First, one must educate oneself on आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* - Self-knowledge, and then one must pursue That Knowledge diligently to its ultimate end.

Generally speaking, for the successful pursuit of any knowledge, one must be in reasonably good health, enjoying good physical, mental, intellectual and emotional strength. This general requirement applies equally to the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* as well. In addition, diligent and successful pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* requires, in full measure, what we saw earlier as साधन चतुष्टयं *sādhana catuṣṭayaṁ* - the four fold requirements, namely:

1. नित्य-अनित्य विवेक *nitya-anitya viveka* - ability to discriminate between नित्यं *nityam* - That which is eternal existence, and अनित्यं *anityam* - that which is transient existence
2. वैराग्य *vairāgya* - total dispassion towards all कर्मs *karmas* and कर्मफलs *karmaphalas*. We must understand that विवेक *viveka* and वैराग्य *vairāgya* always go together. One without the other is ineffective.
3. The six-fold virtues of शम *śama*, दम *dama*, उपरम *uparama*, तितिक्षा *titikṣā*, श्रद्धा *śraddhā* and समाधान *samādhāna*

शम *śama* is मनोनिग्रहं *manonigrahaṁ* - control over one's ways of thinking

दम *dama* is बाह्य इन्द्रिय निग्रहं *bāhya indriya nigrahaṁ* - control over one's external organs of perception and action
उपरम *uparama* is स्वधर्म अनुष्टानं *svadharma anuṣṭānaṁ* - ability to do one's duties, whatever they are, at all times
तितिक्षा *titikṣā* is happy endurance of whatever comes one's way, and at the same time, doing whatever needs to be done
श्रद्धा *śraddha* is absolute faith in oneself, absolute faith in one's ability to gain that knowledge and reach one's goal; and
समाधानं *samādhānama* is चित्त एकाग्रतं *citta ekāgrataṁ* - capacity to keep one's mind steadily in the pursuit of the knowledge being sought, without any distractions
4. मुमुक्षुत्वं *mumukṣutvaṁ* is the pursuit of मोक्ष *mokṣa* - Total Freedom, freedom from the hold of transient appearances in worldly life.

Pursuit of मोक्ष *mokṣa* is pursuit of सत्यस्य सत्यं *satyasya satyaṁ* - The Truth of all truths, through सत्यधृति *satyadhṛti* (कठ *kaṭha* 2-9) - one's will yoked to That सत्यस्य सत्यं *satyasya satyaṁ*. Being in सत्यधृति *satyadhṛti* is possible only with अग्रय बुद्धि *agraya buddhi* (कठ *kaṭha* 3-12) - a बुद्धि *buddhi* whose sole commitment is the pursuit of ब्रह्म-आत्मऐक्यं *brahma-ātma aikyaṁ* - recognition of the ONENESS of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* and The Self I in oneself. Being in सत्यधृति *satyadhṛti* for the recognition of ब्रह्म-आत्मऐक्यं *brahma-ātma aikyaṁ* - is indeed अध्यात्म योग *adhyātma yoga* (कठ *kaṭha* 2-12). Contemplation on ब्रह्मन् *brahman* as प्रत्यग आत्मा *pratyaga ātmā* - as one's innermost Self I Itself, accomplished through withdrawing the mind totally from external objects, and directing it towards ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, already available for recognition in one's बुद्धि गुह *buddhi guha* - in the ब्रह्मपुरि *brahmapuri* region of one's own बुद्धि *buddhi*.

It is that kind of strength of mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* that one needs for recognizing The आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self I, already in oneself. If one is weak in that kind of strength, one cannot reach, one cannot recognize The आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I, though It is already in oneself. That is what is indicated by the Upanishad statement अयं आत्मा बलहीनेन न लभ्यः *ayaṁ ātmā balahīnena* Again,

प्रमादात् च अयं आत्मा न लभ्यः *pramādāt ca ayaṁ ātmā na labhyaḥ* - Through प्रमाद *pramād* also, आत्मा *ātmā* The Self I cannot be recognized. प्रमाद *pramād* is a kind of indifference to the pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*, resulting from a lack of वैराग्य *vairāgya* - dispassion towards all other worldly pursuits. If वैराग्य *vairāgya* is not in full measure, then विवेक *vivek* also is not in full measure, and hence exclusive pursuit of आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ* is not possible, and, as a consequence, आत्मा न लभ्यः *ātmā na labhyaḥ* - The Self I in oneself cannot be recognized, cannot be reached. Further, the Upanishad says:

अलिङ्गात् तपसा वा आत्मा न लभ्यः *aliṅgāt tapasā vā ātmā na labhyaḥ* - Through तपस् *tapas* without लिङ्ग *liṅga*, also, आत्मा *ātmā* The Self I cannot be recognized, cannot be reached by a person.

As we may recall, earlier, the Upanishad said (3-1-5)

तपसा हि एष आत्मा लभ्यः *tapasā hi eṣa ātmā labhyaḥ* - Through तपस् *tapas*, through being self-disciplined in body, mind and intellect at all times, with single pointed devotion to the pursuit of Self-knowledge, one can certainly recognize and reach आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self I already in oneself. Now the Upanishad says:

अलिङ्गात् तपसा वा आत्मा न लभ्यः *aliṅgāt tapasā vā ātmā na labhyaḥ* - If that तपस् *tapas* has no लिङ्ग *liṅga* then one cannot recognize, one cannot reach The आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I already in oneself.

What this statement means, we will see next time.