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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 1

Section 1

Volume 4

6. यत् तत्, अद्रेश्यं, अग्राह्यं, अगोत्रं, अवर्णम्
yat tat, adreśyam, agrāhyam, agotraṁ, avarṇam
अचक्षुः श्रोत्रं, तत् अपाणिपादं ।
acakṣuḥ śrotraṁ, tat apāṇipādaṁ ।
नित्यं, विभुं, सर्वगतं, सुसूक्ष्मं,
nityaṁ, vibhuṁ, sarvagataṁ, susūkṣmaṁ,
तत् अव्ययं, यत् भूतयोनिम्, परिपश्यन्ति धीराः ॥ 1 - 1 - 6
tat avyayaṁ, yat bhūtayonim, paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ ॥

7. यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च,
yathoraṇanābhiḥ sṛjate gṛhnate ca,
यथा पृथिव्यां ओषधयः संभवन्ति ।
yathā pṛthivyāṁ ośadhayaḥ sambhavanti ।
यथा सतः पुरुषात् केशलोमानि,
yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni,
तथा अक्षरात् संभवति इह विश्वम् ॥ 1 - 1 - 7
tathā akṣarat sambhavati iha viśvam ॥

The Upanishad is now talking about परा विद्या *parā vidyā* - The Supreme Knowledge

यया तत्, अक्षरं अधिगम्यते *yayā tat, akṣaram adhigamyate* - by which knowledge, That अक्षरं *akṣaram*, That which is ever existent and never subject to change or decay or disappearance, the knowledge about That अक्षरं *akṣaram* is gained, is reached, is recognized as It is. That अक्षरं *akṣaram* is अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं *akṣaram brahma paramaṁ*, (G 8-3). That अक्षरं ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, The आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I, already in oneself, and, indeed in every self. The स्वरूप *svarūpa* - the nature of That अक्षरं ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* is what is indicated by the words and illustrations in today's verses. The Upanishad says:



ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

6. यत् तत्, अदृश्यं, अग्राह्यं, अगोत्रं, अचर्णम्
yat tat, adreśyam, agrāhyam, agotram, avarṇam
अचक्षुः श्रोत्रं, तत् अपाणिपादं ।
acakṣuḥ śrotram, tat apāṇipādam |
नित्यं, विभुं, सर्वगतं, सुसूक्ष्मं,
nityam, vibhum, sarvagatam, susūkṣmam,
तत् अव्ययं, यत् भूतयोनिम्, परिपश्यन्ति धीराः ॥ 1 - 1 - 6
tat avyayam, yat bhūtayonim, paripaśyanti dhīrah ||

यत् तत् *yat tat* - That which is indicated by the word अक्षरं *akṣaram*, That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* is अदृश्यं *adreśyam*, means अदृश्यं *adreśyam*. It is not seen. It is not available as an object for recognition by any of one's sense organs. It is not any of the sense objects of sound, touch, form, taste or smell.

अग्राह्यं *agrāhyam* - It is not any tangible object that one can grasp by any of one's organs of action. Thus, It is not an object either for one's sense organs or any of one's organs of action, which means, It is neither a ज्ञानेन्द्रिय विषय *jñānendriya viṣaya* nor कर्मेन्द्रिय विषय *karmendriya viṣaya*. Further

अगोत्रं *agotram* - It has no ancestry of any kind. It is not born in any particular family. It has no origin external to itself. It has no beginning. It is unborn and unconnected.

अचक्षुः श्रोत्रं, अपाणिपादं *acakṣuḥ śrotram, apāṇipādam* - It has none of the sense organs such as eyes and ears, and It has none of the organs of action such as hands, legs, etc. It is सर्वेन्द्रिय विवर्जितं *sarvendriya vivarjitam* (G.13 - 14), meaning सर्वकारण रहितं *sarvakāraṇa rahitam*. It is totally free from any instrument of action. It sees without eyes, and It hears without ears. All actions take place only by Its very presence, and only in Its very presence.

अचर्णम् *avarṇam* - It has no color. It has no distinguishable marks, no attributes and no qualities. It is not objectifiable by words.

नित्यं *nityam* - It is सत्यं *satyam*. It is ever existent. It is not something that exists at one time and does not exist at another time. It is not one of transient existence. It is Eternal and Unbound by time and space.



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

सर्वगतं *sarvagataṁ* - It is all pervasive. It is One undivided and indivisible. It is in everything, everywhere, at all times. There is no place where It is not.

सुसूक्ष्मं *susūkṣmaṁ* means अतिसूक्ष्मं *ati sūkṣmaṁ*. It is immeasurably subtle, being far more subtle than time and space. It is the most subtle and hence It has no form.

अव्ययं *avyayaṁ* - It is never subject to any change at any time. It is imperishable and immutable

विभुं *vibhuṁ* - means विविधं भवनशीलं *vividhaṁ bhavanaśīlaṁ*. It is capable of being manifold in expressions, and countless in appearance in forms and names. It is every form and name in this creation, and at the same time, independent of every form and name in this creation, and

भूतयोनिम् *bhūtayonim* means सर्वभूतानां कारणं *sarvabhūtānāṁ kāraṇaṁ*. It is the ultimate cause for every being in this creation. It is that from which every being in this creation has come into existence.

यत् तत्, धीराः परिपश्यन्ति *yat tat, dhīrāḥ paripaśyanti* - It is That अक्षरं *akṣaram*, That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, That पर ब्रह्मन् *para brahman*, That परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, That आत्मा *ātmā*, That Self I, indicated by all the above word pointers, The धीराः *dhīrāḥ*, The धीराः पुरुषः *dhīrāḥ puruṣaḥ*, the ज्ञानीs *jñānīs*, परिपश्यन्ति *paripaśyanti* always see very clearly in everything and everywhere in this creation, including themselves.

Such is the nature of अक्षरं *akṣaram*, That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*.

We may note here that among the pointer words above, indicating अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, the words विभुं *vibhuṁ* and भूतयोनिम् *bhūtayonim* stand distinctly apart from all the other words.

While all the other words indicate ब्रह्मन् *brahman* as निर्गुण ब्रह्मन् *nirguṇa brahman*, ब्रह्मन् *brahman* with no objectifiable form, name, qualities or attributes, the words विभुं *vibhuṁ* and भूतयोनिम् *bhūtayonim* indicate ब्रह्मन् *brahman* as सगुण ब्रह्मन् *saguṇa brahman*, ब्रह्मन् *brahman* with all objectifiable forms, names, qualities and attributes. Hence there is an apparent contradiction between the words विभुं *vibhuṁ* and भूतयोनिम् *bhūtayonim* on the one hand and the words, अद्रेश्यं *adreśyaṁ*, अग्राह्यं *agrāhyaṁ*, अगोत्रं *agotraṁ*, अवर्णम् *avarṇam*, etc. on the other hand. Only



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

when this apparent contradiction is resolved, one can say that by recognizing the स्वरूप *svarūpa* of ब्रह्मन् स्वरूप *brahman*, one naturally recognizes also the स्वरूप *svarūpa* of every objectifiable entity in this creation as that of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, Itself.

We must clearly understand how the Upanishad resolves this apparent contradiction. Let us first consider the word भूतयोनिम् *bhūtayonim*, which means That which is the ultimate cause for this entire creation. Thus, the Upanishad says that ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is the ultimate cause for this entire creation. We still need to understand how this entire creation with all its countless qualities and attributes emerges from निर्गुण ब्रह्मन् *nirguṇa brahman*, ब्रह्मन् *brahman* with no qualities or attributes. We will see that a little later. For the time being, let us accept the Upanishad statement and conclude that ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is the निमित्त कारणं *nimitta kāraṇam* - the efficient cause, meaning the Instrumental cause for this entire creation. If we so conclude, then a question naturally arises, namely, what was there before creation? The Chandogya Upanishad answers that question by saying (6-2-1):

सत् एव, इदं अग्र आसीत् ।

sat eva, idaṁ agra āsīt ।

एकं एव अद्वितीयं ॥

ekam eva advitīyam ॥

In the beginning, before creation, ब्रह्मन् *brahman* alone existed, as One without a second. That means, before creation, other than ब्रह्मन् *brahman* there was nothing else. If that is so, where from did ब्रह्मन् *brahman* get the material for making this creation? The answer to that question comes from the Taittiriya Upanishad, which we have seen already.

तस्मात् वा एतस्मात् आत्मनः आकाशः

tasmāt vā etasmāt ātmanah ākāśah

संभूतः, आकाशात् वायुः, वायोरग्निः,

sambhūtaḥ, ākāśāt vāyuh, vāyoragniḥ,

अग्नेरापः, अद्भयः पृथिवी etc.

agnerāpaḥ, adbhayaḥ pṛthavī etc.

From That ब्रह्मन् *brahman* alone, this entire creation was born. That means, the material for making this creation also came from ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. Consequently, we



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

have to conclude that ब्रह्मन् *brahman* itself is both the Efficient cause - the निमित्त कारणं *nimitta kāraṇam*, as well as the Material cause – the उपादान कारणं *upādāna kāraṇam*, for this creation. It seems rather difficult to accept this conclusion, because, in this world of objects, we find that the efficient cause and the material cause for any creation are usually not the same. For example, with respect to the creation of clay pot, the pot maker is the efficient cause and clay is the material cause, but the pot maker and the clay are not the same. That being so, how can one conclude that ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is both the efficient cause (the निमित्त कारणं *nimitta kāraṇam*) as well as the material cause (the उपादान कारणं *upādāna kāraṇam*) for this entire manifold creation.

Is that a matter of belief? No. It is a matter of fact, says the Upanishad. That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* is both the निमित्त कारणं *nimitta kāraṇam* as well as the उपादान कारणं *upādāna kāraṇam* - the efficient cause as well as the material cause for this entire creation is an extraordinary fact of nature, the true nature of all existence. To bring clarity and certainty of this knowledge to one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* is the primary focus of this entire Upanishad, starting with the next verse.

7. यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च ।
yathoraṇanābhiḥ sṛjate gṛhnate ca ।
यथा पृथिव्यां ओषधयः संभवन्ति ॥
yathā pṛthivyām oṣadhayaḥ sambhavanti ।
यथा सतः पुरुषात् केशलोमानि,
yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni,
तथा अक्षरात् संभवति इह विश्वम् ॥ 1 - 1 - 7
tathā akṣarat sambhavati iha viśvam ॥

This verse shows that अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* being both the efficient cause as well as the material cause for this entire creation is not in real contradiction to what we actually see in nature, even in this world of objects. While no object in this creation can be totally comparable to ब्रह्मन् *brahman* in every respect it is easy enough to find examples in nature which illustrate that the same one object can be both the efficient cause, as well as the material cause for another object. Three such illustrations are given in this verse.



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

यथा ऊर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च ।
yathā ūṛṇanābhiḥ sṛjate gr̥hnate ca,
तथा अक्षरात् संभवति इह विश्वम् ॥
tathā akṣarāt sambhavati iha viśvam

यथा *yathā* - Just as

ऊर्णनाभिः *ūrṇanābhiḥ* - the spider

सृजते *sṛjate* - creates, spreads out its web of threads from itself, by itself

गृह्णते च *gr̥hnate ca* - and also withdraws its web of threads unto itself at any time

तथा *tathā* - in a similar manner

अक्षरात् *akṣarāt* - from That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* Itself

संभवति *sambhavati* - emerges, in some distinct order

इह *iha* - in this creation

विश्वम् *viśvam* - this entire universe

Just as the spider creates its web of threads from itself, by itself, and also withdraws its web of threads unto itself, at will, in a similar manner, from That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* Itself, emerges, in some distinct order, this entire universe of forms, names, attributes and qualities, constituting this entire creation.

But this illustration is not entirely satisfactory in our present context for two reasons: While it is true that the spider is both the efficient cause as well as the material cause for its web creation, it is also true that the spider is not its web, and it can detach itself from its web at any time. Further, in the creation of its web, some effort is involved on the part of the spider. On the other hand, ब्रह्मन् *brahman* being this creation itself, ब्रह्मन् *brahman* ever remains inseparable from this creation, and the emergence of this creation from ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is natural, involving no effort on the part of ब्रह्मन् *brahman* Itself.

In order to meet the above source of dissatisfaction with the first illustration, the Upanishad provides this second illustration

यथा पृथिव्यां ओषधयः संभवन्ति ॥
yathā pṛthivyāṁ ośadhayaḥ sambhavanti ।



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

तथा अक्षरात् संभवति इह विश्वम् ॥

tathā akṣarāt sambhavati iha viśvam

यथा *yathā* - Just as

पृथिव्यां *pṛthivyām* - from the earth

ओषधयः संभवन्ति *ośadhayaḥ sambhavanti* - plants and trees of all kinds spring up and grow naturally in some order

तथा अक्षरात् संभवति इह विश्वम् *tathā akṣarāt sambhavati iha viśvam* - in a similar manner, from That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* Itself emerges, in some distinct order, in this creation, this entire universe of forms, names, attributes and qualities.

Just as plants of all kinds emerge naturally from the earth, in a similar manner, this creation emerges naturally from That अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*, without any effort on the part of ब्रह्मन् *brahman*.

संभवन्ति *sambhavanti* means सम्यक् भवन्ति *samyak bhavanti* - (They) become manifest in a definite natural order. Any kind of seed emerges from the earth only as a specific kind of plant, and that is the natural order. Similarly, with reference to the creation, संभवन्ति *sambhavanti* means सम्यक् भवन्ति *samyak bhavanti* - there is a natural order with respect to all that happens in this creation, which is why all science is possible, and all cause-effect relationships become predictable.

Now, when a particular seed manifests itself as a particular plant, there is a peculiarity. That is why it is called creation. If the peculiarity is not there, there is no creation. How this peculiarity happens, we will see later.

Further, the seeds fall on earth, and they come back manifesting themselves as plants. Therefore for the entire plant kingdom, the earth is the efficient cause.

Now consider any particular seed. The earth and the seed together manifest as the plant, and, so long as the plant exists as a plant, it remains inseparable from the earth naturally, involving no effort on the part of the earth.

Now, where from did the seed come in the first place? It also came some time ago from a plant born on earth only. Consequently, both the seed and the plant are born of



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

earth only, which makes the earth the material cause for both the seed and the plant. (Recall, पृथिव्यां ओषधयः *prthivyām oṣadhayaḥ* from Taittiriya Upanishad).

Thus it is clear that earth is both the efficient cause as well as the material cause for the entire plant kingdom, and the earth remains inseparable from the plant kingdom naturally, involving no effort on part of the earth, just as it is for ब्रह्मन् *brahman* and the entire creation.

Thus the source of dissatisfaction from the first illustration is resolved.

Still, one more question may arise. ब्रह्मन् *brahman* by its very nature is चित् स्वरूप *cit svarūpa* - all-conscious and ever sentient, whereas the creation that emerges from ब्रह्मन् *brahman* includes many insentient objects also. One may question how insentient objects can arise from the ever-sentient ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. The answer to this question is that the natural emergence of both the sentient and insentient objects from ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is in the very order of this creation itself, as the Taittiriya Upanishad says: विज्ञानं च अविज्ञानं च *vijñānaṁ ca avijñānaṁ ca*, meaning चेतनं च अचेतनं च *cetanaṁ ca acetanaṁ ca* together is in the very order of creation, as it is evident from the following illustration.

यथा सतः पुरुषात् केशलोमानि,
yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni,
तथा अक्षरात् संभवति इह विश्वम् ॥
tathā akṣarat sambhavati iha viśvam ॥

यथा *yathā* - Just as

सतः पुरुषात् *sataḥ puruṣāt* - from a conscious person

केशलोमानि संभवति *keśalomāni sambhavati* - (insentient) hairs and nails emerge in some natural order

तथा अक्षरात् संभवति इह विश्वम् *tathā akṣarat sambhavati iha viśvam* - similarly, from अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* itself, emerges, in some natural order, in this creation, this entire universe of both sentient and insentient objects of varied forms, names, attributes and qualities.



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Thus all possible objections to the knowledge about the entire creation emerging from अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman* are eliminated. Thus, in the vision of the Upanishad, ब्रह्मन् *brahman* is both the creator as well as the creation in ONE. ब्रह्मन् *brahman* The परमेश्वर *parameśvara*, The आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I, is both the efficient cause as well as the material cause for this entire creation.

If I am the creator as well as the creation, is there really a creation independent of Myself? No. Whatever I perceive as creation is really Myself only. That is why the Upanishad महावाक्य *mahāvākya* says:

ब्रह्मैवाहं अस्मि *brahmaivāhaṁ asmi* - I am indeed ब्रह्मन् *brahman*. That also means, if I know Myself, I become the knower of every object in this creation. We will talk about this a little more next time.