



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

मुण्डक उपनिषत्

Chapter 1

Section 2

Volume 6

यं ब्रह्मा चरुणेन्द्ररुद्रमरुतः स्तुन्वन्ति दिव्यैः स्तवैः
yaṁ brahmā varuṇendra rudra marutaḥ stunvanti divyaiḥ stavaiḥ
वेदैः साङ्गपदक्रमोपनिषदैः गायन्ति यं सामगाः ।
vedaiḥ sāṅgapadakramopaniṣadaiḥ gāyanti yaṁ sāmagaḥ ।
ध्यानावस्थित तद्गतेन मनसा पश्यन्ति यं योगिनः
dhyānāvasthita tadgatena manasā paśyanti yaṁ yoginaḥ
यस्यान्तं न विदुः सुरासुरगणाः देवाय तस्मै नमः
yasyāntaṁ na viduḥ surāsuraṅgāḥ devāya tasmai namaḥ
हरिः ॐ
hariḥ om

10. तत् एतत् सत्यं
tat etat satyaṁ
मन्त्रेषु कर्माणि कवयो यानि अपश्यन्
mantraṣu karmāṇi kavayo yāni apaśyan
तानि त्रेतायां बहुधा सन्ततानि ।
tāni tretāyāṁ bahudhā santatāni ।
तानि आचरथ नियतं सत्यकामाः
tāni ācaratha niyataṁ satyakāmāḥ
एष वः पन्थाः सुकृतस्य लोके ॥ 1 - 2 - 1
eṣa vaḥ panthāḥ sukṛatasya loke ॥

As we have seen already in the first section of this chapter, The Upanishad opens with शौनक 's *śaunaka*'s question to Angiras, namely:

"कस्मिन् नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवति इति *kasmin nu bhagavo vijñāte sarvamidaṁ vijñātaṁ bhavati iti* - 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?"



ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

Responding to that question, Angiras starts with the statement:

द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये *dve vidye veditavye* - परा च एव अपरा च *parā ca eva aparā ca* - There are two distinct kinds of knowledge. They are परा विद्या *parā vidyā*, following अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā*. Both these kinds of knowledge must be sought, acquired, understood, appreciated, realized and recognized, clearly and definitely beyond doubt, by every discerning person, in order to gain total fulfillment in life.

All areas of objective knowledge, including knowledge about virtue and vice, means and ends, actions and their results, etc., come under the endless field of अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā*. After gaining adequate proficiency in one's chosen areas of अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā*, one must undertake the pursuit of परा विद्या *parā vidyā*

यया तत् अक्षरं अधिगम्यते *yaya tat akṣaram adhigamyate* - That knowledge by which अक्षरं *akṣaram*, meaning ब्रह्मज्ञानं *brahmajñānam*, is gained. Having said that, the Upanishad then unfolds briefly what is indicated by the word अक्षरं *akṣaram*, namely अक्षर ब्रह्मन् *akṣara brahman*. Here ends Section 1.

The Section 2 now begins with a short discourse on अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā* - objective knowledge. Even though शौनक 's *śaunaka*'s question is concerned only with परा विद्या *parā vidyā*, still the teacher's response starts with a brief discourse on अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā*. Why? Because the teacher wants to make sure that शौनक *śaunaka* fully understands and recognizes the distinction between अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā* and परा विद्या *parā vidyā*, and he is seeking परा विद्या *parā vidyā* with firm conviction, श्रद्धा *śraddha* and devotion.

अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā* is concerned with संसार *saṁsār* - a life in the pursuit of कर्म *karma* and कर्मफल *karmaphala*, which continuously create bondages, and the consequent सुख-दुःख *sukha-duḥkha* experiences of various kinds, and परा विद्या *parā vidyā* which is ब्रह्मविद्या *brahmavidyā*, is concerned with मोक्ष *mokṣa* - total liberation from all such bondages and सुख-दुःख *sukha-duḥkha* experiences.

Therefore, before undertaking the pursuit of परा विद्या *parā vidyā*, one must clearly see, one must clearly recognize, through incisive analysis by one's own विवेक बुद्धि



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

vivek buddhi, the distinction between संसार *saṁsār* and मोक्ष *mokṣa*. In संसार *saṁsār* - worldly life, you do कर्म *karma* and experience कर्मफल *karmaphala*, which later produces a new शरीर *śarīr* - a new physical body, with which you do more कर्म *karma* and experience more कर्मफल *karmaphala*, which again later produces a new physical body, etc., which means, through कर्म *karma*, the life in संसार *saṁsār* cannot be brought to an end. What कर्म *karma*, gives is only पुनरपि जननं पुनरपि मरणं *punarapi jananaṁ punarapi maraṇaṁ* - a never ending succession of birth and death.

If, and only when, a person fully realizes that परम पुरुषार्थ *param puruṣārtha*, the overriding purpose of life is to transcend this wheel of संसार *saṁsār*, and gain मोक्ष *mokṣa* - Total Liberation from all सुख-दुःख *sukha-duḥkha* experiences arising from कर्म *karma* and कर्मफल *karmaphala*, only then, the person is fit to undertake the diligent pursuit of परा विद्या *parā vidyā* the ब्रह्म विद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge.

In order to enter into the pursuit of परा विद्या *parā vidyā*, one must have वैराग्य *vairāgya* - dispassion for enjoying the experiences of the fruits of one's actions. Such वैराग्य *vairāgya* is one of the four necessary qualifications for gaining ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge. This वैराग्य *vairāgya* should not be due to any disenchantment of worldly life. A mere disenchantment with worldly life cannot be the basis for वैराग्य *vairāgya*, for seeking ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge. The only basis for such वैराग्य *vairāgya* is one's own विवेक बुद्धि *vivek buddhi*, on the overriding goal of human life.

It is only to point out to शौनक *śaunaka* the scope and limitations of अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā* - objective knowledge, and also that one must have the necessary वैराग्य *vairāgya* for the successful pursuit of परा विद्या *parā vidyā* - ब्रह्मविद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge, the teacher now presents this short discourse on अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā*. Detachment from अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā* is possible only if one clearly recognizes its scope and limitations, its real nature, as it is. Therefore, the Upanishad says:

10. तत् एतत् सत्यं
tat etat satyaṁ



ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

मन्त्रेषु कर्माणि कवयो यानि अपश्यन्
mantraṣu karmāṇi kavayo yāni apaśyan
तानि त्रेतायां बहुधा सन्ततानि ।
tāni tretāyāṁ bahudhā santatāni ।
तानि आचरथ नियतं सत्यकामाः
tāni ācaratha niyataṁ satyakāmāḥ
एष वः पन्थाः सुकृतस्य लोके ॥
eṣa vaḥ panthāḥ sukratasya loke ॥

1 - 2 - 1

एतत् सत्यं *etat satyaṁ* - This is true. What is true?
तत् *tat* - That. That means what?

The Upanishad is now talking about the scope and limitations of अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā*, which is concerned with संसार विषयसु *saṁsār viṣayas* - matters of worldly life. Therefore, here the word सत्यं *satyaṁ* refers to सत्यं *satyaṁ* - ordinary truth, that which is commonly recognized as true in worldly life. The worldly life is one of कर्मसु *karmas* and कर्मफलसु *karma phalas* - actions and their results, for everybody. Every action, whether it is लौकिक कर्म *laukik karma* - a secular action, or वैदिक कर्म *vaidik karma* - a Vedic ritual of some kind, every action does produce some result - तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyaṁ*. That it is so, so is true, says the Upanishad.

The truth of this statement with respect to the लौकिक कर्मसु *laukik karmas* - secular actions, is a commonly and easily recognized fact of life. For example, everybody knows that a car vehicle can take a person from place to place. One may not know, and one need not know, how the car works, but if the components of the car are chosen and assembled properly, and if the person drives the car properly, the action certainly yields the intended result.

तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyaṁ* - That it is so, is true. On the other hand, if the assembly of the car itself is defective, the result also is defective, or if one's driving mode is defective, the result also is defective in the sense one cannot get the intended result, and one may even get an unintended and undesirable result.

तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyaṁ* - That it is so, is true. The same is the case with respect to वैदिक कर्मसु *vaidik karmas* also. A Vedic ritual, whether it is some simple



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

form of उपासन *upāsana*, or an exalted Havan of some kind, it is still a कर्म *karma*, and it will certainly yield the prescribed result, but only when the कर्म *karma* is done, and done properly. तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyam* - That it is so, is true, says the Upanishad.

The Vedas prescribe various वैदिक कर्म *vaidik karma* - Vedic rituals involving Veda mantras and strict performance details for the कर्म *karma* ritual involved, capable of giving certain specific results. One may or may not know the meaning of the Veda mantras, and the connection between the mantras and the mode of performing the ritual on one hand, and the ultimate result expected on the other hand. Still, if only the *mantras* are uttered properly, and the mode of performing the कर्म *karmas* is strictly as prescribed by the Vedas, the prescribed result will certainly happen

तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyam* - That it is so, is true, says the Upanishad. If the Veda mantras are not uttered properly, and/or, if the कर्म *karma* itself is not done strictly as prescribed by the Veda, the prescribed result not only will not happen, it may even yield an undesirable result. तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyam* - That it is so, is also true, says the Upanishad.

The purpose of this Upanishad statement here is to point out the scope, the validity, and the limitations of अपरा विद्या *aparā vidyā*, in terms of कर्म *karma* and कर्मफल *karmaphala*. वैदिक कर्म *vaidik karma* - Vedic rituals are taken here for illustration, mainly because शौनक *śaunaka* is already familiar with Vedic rituals, and at this time, before he enters into the pursuit of ब्रह्म विद्या *brahma vidyā* knowledge, he must clearly recognize the powers and limitations of Vedic rituals.

This illustration also serves to educate those among us, who tend to be skeptical about the powers of Veda Mantras and Vedic rituals in general. Talking about Veda Mantras and Vedic rituals, the Upanishad says:

कवयः मन्त्रेषु यानि कर्माणि अपश्यन् *kavayaḥ mantreṣu yāni karmāṇi apaśyan* -

Every Veda Mantra is a discrete quantum manifestation of knowledge and power, with infinite dimensions for potential utilization in worldly life, just like any scientific and engineering principle. Just as researchers in the field of present day objective knowledge perceive, in their mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, unique assemblage of different scientific and engineering principles in the form of unique कर्म *karmas*, capable of producing unique results, in a similar manner,



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

through विचार *vicār* - contemplative research on Veda mantras, the enlightened Rishis of olden days perceived in their mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, unique assemblage of different Veda mantras, in the form of unique कर्मs *karmas*, capable of yielding unique कर्मफलs *karmaphalas*. That is how a wide variety of वैदिक कर्म *vaidik karma* - Vedic rituals, enjoined in the कर्मकाण्ड *karma kāṇḍ* of the Vedas, had come into existence, and they have been in worldly utilization since then. The Upanishad says here:

यानि कर्माणि कवयः मन्त्रेषु अपश्यन् *yāni karmāṇi kavayaḥ mantreṣu apaśyan* - Those Vedic rituals seen by the enlightened Rishis in the form of Veda Mantras
तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyaṁ* - all that, is true, in the sense those Vedic rituals, when performed properly, will certainly yield their intended results.

तानि त्रेतायां बहुधा सन्ततानि *tāni tretāyām bahudhā santatāni*

तानि *tāni* means तानि कर्माणि *tāni karmāṇi*, वेद विहितानि *veda vihitāni*, ऋषि दृष्टानि कर्माणि *ṛṣi dṛṣṭāni karmāṇi*.

त्रेतायां *tretāyām* means त्रयी संयोग लक्षणयां *trayī saṁyoga lakṣaṇāyām*, अधिकरण भूतायां *adhikaraṇa bhūtāyām*.

बहुधा *bahudhā* means बहुप्रकारं *bahuprakāraṁ*, सन्ततानि *santatāni* meaning प्रवृत्तानि *pravṛttāni*. Those Vedic rituals are elaborately described in all the three Vedas (Rig, Sama and Yajur Vedas), along with full details on what materials are needed for those कर्मs *karmas*, and how exactly those कर्मs *karmas* should be performed, etc. in order to get the intended results. (Only *mantras* in Rig, Sama and Yajur Veda are used in performing Vedic rituals.) The Atharva Veda Mantras are used for performing लौकिक कर्मs *laukik karmas* - secular activities only. Most of Atharva Veda Mantras are now said to have been lost forever. The Upanishad here authenticates the fact that वैदिक कर्मs *vaidik karmas* - Vedic rituals enjoined in the Vedas, when performed properly as prescribed, do certainly yield the intended results.

By saying तत् एतत् सत्यं *tat etat satyaṁ* - the Upanishad points out, when the वैदिक कर्म *vaidik karma* is done, the corresponding कर्मफल *karmaphala* is सत्यं *satyaṁ*, the result is certain. Therefore, the Upanishad says:

तानि *tāni* (कर्माणि *karmāṇi*) आचरथ *ācaratha*, नियतं सत्यकामाः *niyataṁ satyakamāḥ*



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

ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

सत्यकामाः *satyakamāḥ* means कर्मफलकामाः *karmaphala kamāḥ* - Those who seek कर्मफलs *karmaphalas* - worldly experiences of different kinds by doing वैदिक कर्मs *vaidik karmas* - Vedic rituals of different kinds. Addressing all such people as सत्यकामाः *satyakamāḥ* - the Upanishad advises them saying नियतं *niyatam*, नित्यं *nityam* - always, every day तानि *tāni* (कर्माणि *karmāṇi*) आचरथ *ācaratha* - may you follow properly the वैदिक कर्मs *vaidik karmas*, the Vedic rituals enjoined in the Vedas for your station in life, in order for you to experience the desired कर्मफलs *karmaphalas*, because

एष (एव) वः पन्थाः, सुकृतस्य लोके *eṣa (eva) vaḥ panthāḥ sukratasya loke* सुकृतस्य लोके *sukratasya loke* - स्वयं कृतस्य कर्मणः फलनिमित्तं *svayam kṛtasya karmaṇaḥ phalanimittam* - for the sake of experiencing the कर्मफलs *karmaphalas* of your वैदिक कर्मs *vaidik karmas*, the results of your Vedic rituals

वः युष्माकं एषः एव पन्थाः (मार्गः) *vaḥ (yuṣmākaṁ) eṣaḥ eva panthāḥ (mārgaḥ)* - for you, this alone is the means for achieving what you want. This is indeed the way for you to experience the कर्मफल *karmaphala* that you seek through performance of Vedic rituals. If you want to fulfill your worldly desires by performing Vedic rituals, the means to fulfill them is only through performing appropriate Vedic rituals, strictly as prescribed in the Vedas. That means, कर्मफल *karmaphala* is सत्यं *satyam*. Every वैदिक कर्म *vaidik karma*, Vedic ritual, will certainly yield its intended result, but then, only when one does the कर्म *karma* properly in all details.

Thus, the first verse in this section glorifies कर्मs *karmas* in general, and वैदिक कर्मs *vaidik karmas*, Vedic rituals in particular.

But one must also understand that doing Vedic rituals properly, in all details is not easy. There are limitations both with respect to proper performance of Vedic rituals, and also with respect to what one can get from them. Some of these limitations are pointed out in the next few verses, with particular reference to some Havan कर्मs *karmas*, just for illustration.

In order to understand and appreciate the content of the next few verses, one must be aware of a few common details about Vedic rituals, and Havan कर्मs *karmas* in particular. There are many Vedic rituals (वैदिक कर्मs *vaidik karmas*) described in the



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Vedas. Each Vedic ritual is a unique form of worship of परमेश्वर *paramēśvara*, manifested as an अधिष्ठान देवता *adhiṣṭhān devatā* - presiding Deity, endowed with some specific and limited aspect of ईश्वर *īśvara* power.

We must understand that all देवताs *devatās* derive their power only from परमेश्वर *paramēśvar*. Consequently, any prayer to any देवता *devatā* at any time, in any form, is really a prayer to, or worship of परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* only, whether it is so recognized or not.

Through unique assemblage of Veda *mantras*, people seek the Grace of different देवताs *devatās* through Vedic rituals of some form and name, seeking fulfillment of their objects of desire in worldly life. The Vedic rituals themselves are of different kinds, performed by different people, on different occasions, either individually or collectively, for different purposes. Those Vedic rituals, which involve fire as the Alter for worship, are collectively called होम कर्मs *homa karmas* or Havan कर्मs *karmas*. The Upanishad here talks about Havan कर्मs *karmas* in particular, just for communicating the essential message involved.

Chanting appropriate Veda *mantras*, with श्रद्धा *śraddhā* and devotion, one invokes the desired देवता *devatā* in the fire, properly lighted in the Havan Kund, and offers some materials such as ghee, grains, fruits, food, etc. as oblations into the fire, in order to seek the grace of the देवता *devatā* being worshipped. That which is offered, or which is to be offered as oblations is called हव्यं *havyam* and the fire itself is called हव्यवाहन *havyavāhana* - that which carries the oblation to the देवता *devatā* being worshipped. Thus the fire in the Havan Kund is the connecting link between the देवता *devatā* and the person who performs the Havan कर्म *karma*. Further, all oblations are to be offered into the very mouth of the fire (as Agni Devata) and no oblation should be offered when the fire is smoldering in the Havan Kund.

Among various Havan कर्मs *karmas*, the Agnihotra ritual is the foremost as well as the simplest, but it has to be performed by every householder, every married person every day, throughout one's life, twice daily, one in the morning immediately after sunrise, and one in the evening, immediately after sunset. In the morning ritual, the oblations are directed towards सूर्य देवता *sūrya devatā* and प्रजापति देवता *prajāpati devatā* chanting mantras ॐ सूर्याय स्वाहा *om sūryāya svāhā* and ॐ प्रजापतये स्वाहा



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

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

om prajāpataye svāhā. In the evening ritual, the oblations are directed towards अग्नि देवता *agni devatā* and प्रजापति देवता *prajāpati devatā* chanting the mantras ॐ अग्नये स्वाहा *om agnaye svāhā* and ॐ प्रजापतये स्वाहा *om prajāpataye svāhā*

The Agnihotra ritual is usually followed by some other rituals such as दर्श *darśa* and पूर्ण मास *pūrṇa māsa*, which are rituals performed on the new moon day and the full moon day respectively. Similarly, there are also many other rituals to be performed by every householder on special days such as the beginning of each month, change of seasons, new year's day, etc., and also some peculiar rituals which some people must do, or must not do, etc. All these details, together with details on mantras to be used, materials needed for the rituals, how exactly they should be performed by whom, when, etc. , all these details are given in the कर्मकाण्ड *karmakāṇḍ* of the Vedas.

Whatever be the rituals involved, there are rules governing their proper performance details which have to be followed very strictly. Otherwise, the rituals will not yield the desired result, and they may yield even some undesirable and unexpected results.

The Upanishad talks about Havan कर्म *karmas* in general and Agnihotra related rituals in particular in the next few verses, which we will see next time.