



मुण्डक उपनिषद्

Chapter 1

Section 2

Volume 9

19. इष्टापूर्तम् मन्यमानाः वरिष्ठं

iṣṭāpūrtam manyamānāḥ variṣṭham

न अन्यत् श्रेयः वेदयन्ते प्रमूढाः ।

na anyat śreyah vedayante pramūḍhāḥ ।

नाकस्य पृष्ठे ते सकृते अनुभूत्वा

nākasya pṛṣṭhe te sakṛte anubhūtvā

इमं लोकं हीनतरं वा विशन्ति

imam lokam hīnataram vā viśanti

1 - 2 - 10

20. तपः श्रद्धे ये हि उपवसन्ति अरण्ये

tapah śraddhe ye hi upavasanti aranye

शान्ताः विद्वासः भैश्यचर्याम् चरन्तः ।

śāntāḥ vidvāsaḥ bhaikṣyacaryām carantah ।

सूर्य द्वारेण ते विरजाः प्रयान्ति

sūrya dvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti

य अमृतः स पुरुषः हि अव्ययात्मा ॥

1 - 2 - 11

ya amṛtaḥ sa puruṣaḥ hi avyayātmā ॥

In the verses we saw last time, the Upanishad has pointed out that any Havan कर्म karma, when performed purely as a काम्य कर्म *kāmya karma* - a कर्म karma seeking the help of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* only to gain some objects of one's worldly desires, cannot lead one to the overriding goal of human existence - the परं पुरुषार्थ *param puruṣartha*, namely मोक्ष *mokṣa* - total Fulfillment in life. That such is the case with respect to any कर्म karma performed, with no roots in ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam*, ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānam*, आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* - Self knowledge, is pointed out in today's verses.

The Upanishad says:



19. इष्टापूर्तम् मन्यमानाः वरिष्ठं

*iṣṭāpūrtam manyamānāḥ variṣṭham
न अन्यत् श्रेयः वेदयन्ते प्रमूढाः ।
na anyat śreyaḥ vedayante pramūḍhāḥ ।
नाकस्य पृष्ठे ते सकृते अनुभूत्वा
nākasya prṣthe te sakṛte anubhūtvā
इमं लोकं हीनतरं च विशन्ति 1 - 2 - 10
imam lokam hinatarm vā viśanti*

इष्टापूर्तम् *iṣṭāpūrtam* is a combination of two words, इष्ट *iṣṭa* and पूर्त *pūrta*. Generally speaking, there are two kinds of पुण्य कर्म^s *puṇya karmas* - virtuous deeds, by doing which one can earn पुण्य *puṇya* in one's earthly life. पुण्य *puṇya* is a form of extraordinary wealth, by spending which one can enjoy any kind of pleasure, wealth, power, etc. one may desire, both in one's present life on earth, and also thereafter in one's abode in any of the स्वर्गलोक^s *svarga lokas*, in any of the heavenly regions within this संसार *samsār*, within this world of transient existence.

These two kinds of पुण्य कर्म^s *puṇya karmas* are इष्ट कर्म *iṣṭa karma* and पूर्त कर्म *pūrta karma*. इष्ट कर्म^s *iṣṭa karmas* are वेद विहित कर्म^s *veda vihita karmas* such as all forms of Vedic rituals, including Havan कर्म^s *karmas* of all kinds, learning and teaching Veda mantras, reciting Veda mantras properly on different occasions, and ceremonial hospitalities such as welcoming guests, feeding animals and birds, etc. with proper attitude. पूर्त कर्म *pūrta karma* include all forms of charitable activities, such as building temples, roads, roadside resting places, building schools, hospitals, caring for the sick and the poor, sinking wells and constructing tanks for providing clean water to the public, and distributing food and essentials to the needy every day, etc. All these are पूर्त कर्म^s *pūrta karmas*.

All the Vedas glorify these इष्टापूर्त *iṣṭāpūrta* कर्म^s *karmas* - performance of Vedic rituals and participation in charitable activities as an essential part of one's growing up process.

इष्टापूर्तम् वरिष्ठं मन्यमानाः *iṣṭāpūrtam variṣṭham manyamānāḥ* - there are many people who consider that these इष्टापूर्त कर्म^s *iṣṭāpūrta karmas* - the virtuous deeds of the two kinds mentioned above are



वरिष्ठं *variṣṭham* means श्रेष्ठं *śraṣṭham* - they are the most exalted among कर्म्स *karmas*, and therefore, they are श्रेय साधनं *śreya sādhanam*, मोक्ष साधनं *mokṣa sādhanam* - they are the means for gaining मोक्ष *mokṣa* - total fulfillment in life.

अन्यत् श्रेयः न वेदयन्ते *anyat śreyah na vedayante* - Such people do not know, do not recognize any other kind of कर्म *karma*, capable of leading one to मोक्ष *mokṣa* - Total Fulfillment in Life.

प्रमूढाः *pramūḍhaḥ* - The Upanishad describes such people as प्रमूढाः *pramūḍhaḥ*.
मूढाः *mūḍhaḥ* means deluded. प्रमूढाः *pramūḍhaḥ* means deeply deluded, drowned in delusion born of ignorance of the scope and power of such इष्टापूर्ते कर्म्स *iṣṭāpūrta karmas*, with respect to पर विद्या *para vidyā* - gaining ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam*, ईश्वर ज्ञानं *iśvara jñānam*, आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* - Self-knowledge.

Now, how can that be so. People who are committed to इष्टापूर्ते कर्म्स *iṣṭāpūrta karmas* - Vedic rituals and charitable activities are not ordinary people. They are well-educated people, sincerely motivated to serve the essential needs of themselves and the society at large. They are doing virtuous deeds, which are good for their own mental disposition, and also good for the health and welfare of the society as a whole. When that is the case, how can they be called प्रमूढाः *pramūḍhaḥ* - "deeply deluded"?

As we may recall, Sri Krishna also refers to such people as अविपश्चितः *avipaścitaḥ* - meaning "short sighted" (G 2-42)

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं, प्रवदन्ति अविपश्चितः ।
yāmimāṁ puṣpitāṁ vācam, pravadanti avipaścitaḥ ।
चेदवादरताः पार्थ, न अन्यत् अस्ति, इति वादिनः ॥
vedavādarataḥ pārtha, na anyat asti, iti vādinaḥ ॥

The short sightedness of such people is not with respect to the virtue of their इष्टापूर्ते पुण्य कर्म्स *iṣṭāpūrta puṇya karmas*. पुण्य कर्म्स *puṇya karmas* are indeed पुण्य कर्म्स *puṇya karmas* for everybody. All पुण्य कर्म्स *puṇya karmas* will undoubtedly yield their beneficial and spiritually uplifting results in due course of time, in accordance with the unchanging laws of कर्म *karma* and कर्मफल *karmaphala*.



We must understand clearly that the Upanishad does not in any way undervalue or underestimate the extraordinary need and the benefits of Vedic rituals and charitable activities for the continuing social, material and spiritual progress and upliftment of both, the individuals involved and the society as a whole. The short sightedness involved here arises from one's ignorance of the ONLY means available for gaining परम पुरुषार्थ param puruṣārtha- the overriding goal of human existence, namely मोक्ष mokṣa - Total Fulfillment in life.

Performing पुण्य कर्म puṇya karmas as ईश्वर आराधन ārādhana buddhi - as worship of परमेश्वर parameśvar, with कर्मयोग बुद्धि karma yoga buddhi, for the only purpose of gaining चित्त प्रसादं citta prasādām - restoration of the inherent purity of one's mind and बुद्धि buddhi, is quite different from performing the same पुण्य कर्म puṇya karmas - virtuous deeds simply as a means for gaining the objects of one's धर्म-अर्थ-काम dharma-artha-kāma pursuits, the perceived objects of one's progress in worldly life.

All इष्टापूर्ते पुण्य कर्म istāpūrta puṇya karmas - all पुण्य कर्म puṇya karmas, do deal with कर्म karma and कर्मफल karmaphala associated with one's धर्म-अर्थ-काम dharma-artha-kāma pursuits, pursuits of pleasure, wealth and power in worldly life. Such pursuits are certainly beneficial and uplifting for the time being, and they are naturally appropriate for those who are still in evolving stages of their spiritual development. When one becomes mature enough to assimilate the content of one's deeds, one certainly realizes that the same धर्म-अर्थ-काम dharma-artha-kāma pursuits serve only a transient intermediate purpose in one's continuing spiritual development, unless one uses them as a vehicle for gaining मोक्ष mokṣa, and that is possible only when every कर्म karma is converted into an ईश्वर आराधन कर्म iśvara ārādhana karma, which means कर्मयोग karma yoga with ईश्वर प्रसाद बुद्धि iśvara prasāda buddhi.

In the absence of such ईश्वर आराधन बुद्धि iśvara ārādhana buddhi - कर्मयोग बुद्धि karma yoga buddhi, what happens to those who take delight in their इष्टापूर्ते पुण्य कर्म istāpūrta puṇya karmas - Vedic rituals and charitable activities as their goal of life? The Upanishad says:

नाकर्त्य पृष्ठे ते सुकृते अनुभूत्वा



nākasya pr̄ṣṭhe te sakṛte anubhūtvā

इमं लोकं हीनतरं वा विशन्ति

1 - 2 - 10

imam lokam hinatarm vā viśanti

ते सुकृते *te sukṛte* - Those people (ते *te*), those इष्टापूर्तवन्तः *iṣṭāpūrtavantah* - those people who take delight in their Vedic rituals and charitable activities with no ईश्वर आराधन बुद्धि *iśvara ārādhana buddhi* - no कर्मयोग बुद्धि *karma yoga buddhi*, such people, by virtue of their पुण्य कर्म *puṇya karmas* (सुकृते *te sukṛte*) go to Heaven (नाकं *nākam*) when they die. नाकं *nākam* is a place where one experiences consistently unobstructed pleasure of one's choice at all times. Only in Heaven such experience of pleasure is possible. Therefore Heaven is called नाकं *nākam*.

नाकस्य पृष्ठे *nākasya pr̄ṣṭhe* - The enjoyment of such pleasure to the peak of one's ability to enjoy is called नाकस्य पृष्ठे *nākasya pr̄ṣṭhe*.

As we saw in Taittiriya Upanishad, there are several regions of Heaven in this संसार *samsār*, such as पितृ लोक *pitṛ loka*, गन्धर्व लोक *gandharva loka*, देव लोक *deva loka*, इन्द्र लोक *indra loka*, ब्रह्म लोक *brahma loka* etc. Even though the absolute level of happiness available anywhere is unlimited, still there is a limit to the level of happiness one can enjoy any form of pleasure, because of the limitations of one's own mental disposition and cultivated level of awareness. Therefore,

ते सुकृते नाकस्य पृष्ठे *te sukṛte nākasya pr̄ṣṭhe* - means those people who go to any region of Heaven by virtue of their इष्टापूर्त पुण्य कर्म *iṣṭāpūrta puṇya karma karmas*, experience consistent unobstructed pleasures of whatever kind they want to the peak of their ability by spending their accumulated पुण्य कर्म *puṇya karma* currency. Then what happens to those people? The Upanishad says:

अनुभूत्या *anubhūtvā* - having experienced all such pleasures in Heaven - that means the last penny of their पुण्य कर्म *puṇya karma* currency has already been spent, there is no more पुण्य *puṇya* left, and hence, they cannot remain in Heaven any longer. Therefore, what is it they have to do?

इमं लोकं विशन्ति *imam lokam viśanti* - They enter, they have to re-enter this world, this मनुष्य लोक *manuṣya loka*. They are re-born in this world of human beings again; but the Upanishad hastens to add:



वा vā - or

हीनतरं लोकं विशन्ति *hīnatarm̄ lokam̄ viśanti* - they are reborn in a still lower world. This मनुष्य लोक *manuṣya loka* - this world of human beings is itself already हीनं *hīnam* - a lower world compared to Heaven, because in this world of human beings, one can never experience consistent unobstructed pleasure. One can experience some form of pleasure, only now and then. On the other hand, in a हीनतरं लोकं *hīnatarm̄ lokam̄* - in a world still lower than this मनुष्य लोक *manuṣya loka*, for example, in any of the पाताल लोकs *pātāla lokas*, life is said to be even more miserable.

Whether one's rebirth is in this मनुष्य लोक *manuṣya loka*, or in any of the lower worlds, is there at least some surety that the person will be reborn again as a human being? No, there is no such surety. The Upanishad leaves the question open.

As we may recall, कठोपनिषत् *kathopaniṣat* is more specific on this matter, and says:

योनिं अन्ये प्रपद्यन्ते शरीरत्वाय देहिनः ।
yonam̄ anye prapadyante śarīratvāya dehinah ।
स्थाणुं अन्ये अनुसंयन्ति, यथा कर्म यथा श्रुतम् ॥ 5 - 7
sthāṇum̄ anye anusamiyanti, yathā karma yathā śrutiṁ ॥

What form one will take on rebirth in any of the लोकs *lokas*, depends on यथा कर्मs *yathā karmas* and cultivated knowledge and awareness. One may even be born as a स्थाणु *sthāṇu* - a जीव *jīva* in the form of even a tree on earth, or in any of the lower worlds, only to go through the ups and downs of life all over again. That simply means, इष्टापूर्त पुण्य कर्मs *iṣṭapūrta puṇya karmas* by themselves cannot lead anyone to मोक्ष *mokṣa* - Total Fulfillment in life. One's पुण्य कर्मs *puṇya karmas* do not cancel one's पाप कर्मs *pāpa karmas*. The कर्मफल *karmaphala* of every कर्म *karma* has to be experienced until one gains ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānam* through पराविद्या *parā vidyā*. Therefore, what is the net accomplishment of one's इष्टापूर्त पुण्य कर्मs *iṣṭapūrta puṇya karmas* themselves - only a succession of birth and death, and no मोक्ष *mokṣa* - no real fulfillment in life. Continuing the same message, the Upanishad says:

20. तपः श्रद्धे ये हि उपवसन्ति अरण्ये



tapaḥ śraddhe ye hi upavasanti aranye
शान्ताः विद्वासः भैक्ष्यचर्याम् चरन्तः ।
śāntāḥ vidvāsaḥ bhaikṣyacaryām carantah ।
सूर्य द्वारेण ते विरजाः प्रयान्ति
sūrya dvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti
य अमृतः स पुरुषः हि अव्ययात्मा ॥ 1 - 2 - 11
ya amṛtaḥ sa puruṣaḥ hi avyayātmā ॥

Here, the Upanishad talks about two other group of people, people who are in the वानप्रस्त आश्रम vānaprasta āśram and संन्यास आश्रम saṁnyāsa āśram - the third and fourth stages of life. We talked briefly about these stages of life, not too long ago.

After many years of active work life, with all its experiences of ups and downs, one formally retires from work life, and moves one's residence deliberately to a more peaceful place, away from the pressures of one's past work life. The person is not yet totally free from the bondages of one's past work life, but still does try to live a more self-disciplined life. This is the वानप्रस्त आश्रम vānaprasta āśram - the third stage of life for the person. In olden days, such a person naturally set one's residence in some forest area with perfect surroundings away from the demands of crowded community life. Being in वानप्रस्त आश्रम vānaprasta āśram, what does a person do? The Upanishad says:

तपः श्रद्धे ये हि उपवसन्ति अरण्ये tapaḥ śraddhe ye hi upavasanti aranye
ये हि अरण्ये ye hi aranye - Those who naturally live in a forest, taking to a life of वानप्रस्त आश्रम vānaprasta āśram
(ते te) तपः श्रद्धे उपवसन्ति tapaḥ śraddhe upavasanti - they deliberately resort to a life of तपस् tapas and श्रद्धा śraddha. We must clearly understand what the words तपस् tapas and श्रद्धा śraddha here indicate. तपस् tapas and श्रद्धा śraddha are both कर्म्म karmas - actions of two mutually distinct kinds. तपस् tapas कर्म्म karmas are simply acts of personal discipline. They are three-fold in nature. They are

- शारीर तपस् śārīr tapas - discipline at the body level in general
- वाक् तपस् vāk tapas - discipline at the level of speech, and
- मानस् तपस् mānas tapas - discipline at the level of mind, meaning faculty of thinking and judgment



Sri Krishna talks about these aspects of तपस् tapas karmas in Chapter 17 (14, 15, 16) which we will see a little later. All these three aspects of self-discipline are not mutually exclusive. They always go together. One cannot have one without the other, naturally, because body, speech and mind are all components of one and the same person.

Now about श्रद्धा śraddha. In the context here, श्रद्धा śraddha indicates देवता उपासन devatā upāsana - meditation on one's इष्ट देवताः iṣṭa devatāḥ - different forms of ईश्वर īśvara power. Every form of self-discipline involves श्रद्धा śraddha, concentration of one's mind. Meditation on any form of इष्ट देवता iṣṭa devatā requires even more such concentration. The highest form of देवता उपासन devatā upāsana is meditation on हिरण्यगर्भ hiranyaśagarbha - परमेश्वर parameśvar as the creator, ब्रह्माजी brahmājī. Any form of देवता उपासन devatā upāsana, any form of such meditation is also a कर्म karma, a मानस कर्म mānas karma - an activity of the mind on an object in one's mind.

Thus, people in the third stage of life - वानप्रस्त आश्रम vānaprasta āśram, spend their lives dedicated to तपस् tapas - self-discipline and श्रद्धा śraddha, meditation on one's इष्ट देवताः iṣṭa devatāḥ, all of which also constitute कर्म karma, and hence अपराविद्या aparā vidyā. In time, some of the above people uplift themselves to the fourth stage of life, called संन्यास आश्रम samnyāsa āśram. Being in that stage, what do they do? The Upanishad says:

शान्ताः विद्वांसः भैक्ष्यचर्याम् चरन्तः sāntāḥ vidvāṁsaḥ bhaikṣyacaryām carantaḥ¹
शान्ताः sāntāḥ - They now enjoy a higher level of tranquility of mind and बुद्धि buddhi, born of their earlier practices in self-discipline and meditation
विद्वांसः vidvāṁsaḥ - they now become more well-informed in अपराविद्या aparā vidyā - in worldly matters. They now have time and inclination to study various kinds of philosophy, and thus become better informed householders in family life.

भैक्ष्यचर्याम् चरन्तः bhaikṣyacaryām carantaḥ - some of them may also choose to adopt the life style of आश्रम संन्यासीs āśram samnyāśīs, which means they may take some additional vows of self-discipline, and make some changes in their daily life style, such as changing one's name, dress and other forms of external appearance. They may



also give up certain kinds of activities deliberately, and decide to live on भिक्षा bhikṣā - alms, relinquishing most of their personal possessions.

We must understand clearly that such आश्रम संन्यास āśram sanyāsa is only कर्म संन्यास karma samnyāsa, and not कर्म योग karma yoga or ज्ञान कर्म संन्यास jñāna karma sanyāsa, which Sri Krishna talked about in Chapter 4 of भगवत् गीता bhagavat gītā, but it is simply renunciation of certain actions as a matter of further self-discipline, accomplished purely by the force of will, devoid of any ब्रह्म ज्ञानं brahma jñānam, ईश्वर ज्ञानं iśvara jñānam, आत्म ज्ञानं ātma jñānam - Self knowledge.

What happens to the above two groups of people when they die? The Upanishad says:

सूर्य द्वारेण ते विरजाः प्रयान्ति
sūrya dvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti
यत्र अमृतः स पुरुषः हि अव्ययात्मा ॥
yatra amṛtaḥ sa puruṣaḥ hi avyayātmā ॥

ते te - Those people who have been in चानप्रस्त आश्रम vānaprasta āśram and/or संन्यास आश्रम samnyāsa āśram as described above

विरजाः virajāḥ (सन्तः: santaḥ) - having become freed from the hold of their रजस् गुणः rajas guṇas, by the power of the cultivated self-discipline

प्रयान्ति prayānti - they have naturally gained the ability to move forward, to move up, in their spiritual ladder. How?

सूर्य द्वारेण sūrya dvāreṇa - through the bright path of the sun, which means, by virtue of their cultivated पुण्य कर्म puṇya karmas, they have gained the ability to go to Heaven, even up to ब्रह्मलोक brahma loka

यत्र सः अमृतः अव्ययात्मा पुरुषः yatra sah amṛtaḥ avyayātmā puruṣaḥ (अस्ति asti) - where is the One Immortal never changing आत्मा ātmā - The पुरुष puruṣa, The परमेश्वर parameśvar, manifested as हिरण्यगर्भ hiranyaśarīra, ब्रह्माजी brahmājī The Creator.

That means, one can go to Heaven, even up to ब्रह्मलोक brahma loka, without any ब्रह्म ज्ञानं brahma jñānam - simply through तपस् tapas - self-discipline and meditation on



any form of ईश्वर isvara power. But we must understand that even ब्रह्मलोक brahma loka is within this संसार samsār, and reaching ब्रह्मलोक brahma loka is not gaining मोक्ष mokṣa - Total Fulfillment in life for any जीव jīva. Sri Krishna makes that clear (G. 8-16)

आब्रह्मभुवानाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ॥
ābrahmabhuvānāllokāḥ punarāvartino'arjuna ॥

All लोकs lokas, and naturally all जीवs jīvas in all these लोकs lokas, including ब्रह्म लोक brahma loka, are by nature, subject to appearance, disappearance and reappearance, which means all जीवs jīvas in this entire संसार samsār are ever subject to a never ending succession of birth and death. That is the nature of life in this संसार samsār, in this world of transient existence. If that is so, what can one do to gain मोक्ष mokṣa - Total Fulfillment in life? We will see next time.