

NOTE: Swami Paramarthananda has not verified the transcription of talks. The transcriptions have been done with Swamiji's blessings by his disciple.



महर्षिऋषभ उवाच ॥ अथ कथं ब्रह्म विदुः ॥ इति श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे ॥

Kathopanishad

Class Notes based on Swāmī
Paramārthānandājī's classes
Compiled by Shri V. Badrinath.

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Arsha Avinash Foundation
104 Third Street, Tatabad,
Coimbatore 641012, India
Phone: +91 9487373635
E mail: arshaavinash@gmail.com
www.arshaavinash.in

Contents

Author's Note	4
1. FIRST CHAPTER.....	5
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	5
1.2 Śāntipāṭhaḥ.....	10
1.3 FIRST SECTION -	15
1.4 SECOND SECTION.....	55
1.5 THIRD SECTION.....	98
1.6 Chapter 1 – Summary	128
2. SECOND CHAPTER.....	136
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	136
2.2 FIRST SECTION	138
2.3 SECOND SECTION.....	165
2.4 THIRD SECTION.....	190
2.5 Chapter 2 - Summary.....	220

Author's Note

By the grace of Īśvara and my guru Swami Paramarthananda Saraswati, I have compiled the notes on Kaṭhōpaniṣad based on Swamiji's lectures. Although this is not a word-for-word transcription, I have tried my best to capture all the points and preserve Swamiji's presentation style. This is by no means a substitute to śravaṇam from Swamiji directly, but can serve as a quick guide and a means for continued nididhyāsanam. Any error in content or interpretation is due to my misunderstanding alone.

I wish you all the very best in your spiritual journey.

Hariḥ Om.

V. Badrinath
Newbury Park, CA
November, 2016

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प्रथमाध्यायः

1. FIRST CHAPTER

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Vedas help a person know the four human goals (*puruṣārthas*) and provide the means of attaining them. Vedas are not the creation of the human intellect (*apauraṣeyam*); it is said that they came from the Lord.

Music is not created by the radio, but by the transmitting center. The radio is designed to receive the signals. Similarly, the ṛṣis were designed to receive the Vedas from the Lord.

The first three goals, namely *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* have inherent defects in their results (*karmaphalam*). There is pain associated in pursuing these goals and preserving the *karmaphalam*. The fruits of action also cause attachment and one is never satisfied with them; one always shoots for the next higher thing. Attachment and dissatisfaction lead to higher level of competition, which may cause one to compromise values.

The scriptures say that the only goal that is defect-free is Brahman or mokṣa: *Whatever I seek is defective; the defect-free is Brahman that I alone am*. The *jīva* thinks that he is limited by Body-Mind (B-M) complex. The Upaniṣad says that he is Brahman, the limitless. So, one's job is to resolve this conflict. This can be done only through self-enquiry (*ātma-vicāra*). There is no travel or action involved in self-enquiry in reaching or becoming Brahman. The scriptures say that you are already Brahman; you just need to claim that identity. This can happen only with knowledge.

When Karṇa was informed by Kunti that he was her son, he instantly became a kṣatriya by that knowledge. He did not have to travel or do something to become a kṣatriya. He only needed to verify this information and claim his identity.

The process of self-enquiry evolves in the following way to culminate in knowledge:

viparyaya→*saṁśaya*→*sambhāvanā*→*niścaya*

Mistake due to disbelief→Doubt→Possibility→Conviction

Knowledge does not happen by itself. We need to take the initiative to obtain knowledge by using the right instrument. The instrument used for acquiring knowledge is called *pramāṇa*. *Pramāṇa* leads to the acquisition of *pramā*, the knowledge. The one who uses the *pramāṇa* to acquire *pramā* is called *pramātā* [*pramātā pramāṇena pramā prāpnoti* – *pramātā* obtains *pramā* by using the *pramāṇa*].

The knowledge is always about an object of knowledge called *prameya*. *Pramātā* obtains *pramā* of the *prameya* through the *pramāṇam* [*pramātā pramāṇena prameyasya pramām jānayati*]. Since there are varieties of objects in the world, and the nature of those objects are different, the instrument of knowledge will vary depending upon the object of knowledge. If the sound is the object, the relevant instrument is the ear. No other instrument can be used for this.

The *Vedānta śāstra* places the *pramāṇas* into six categories. An outline is given to get an idea of how our forefathers made a study of everything thousands of years ago:

Pratyakṣa (Direct perception) - the five sense organs are grouped together into one means of knowledge. *Pratyakṣa pramāṇa* is the basic instrument of knowledge through which we learn things from our birth.

Anumāna (Inference) – It is to know something indirectly when it is not in the range of direct perception. When I hear the horn behind me on the street, the ear can only hear the sound, but I infer that there is a car behind me (even though I do not directly see it). For this, I need the knowledge of the connection between the car and the horn. The

knowledge through connection is called *vyāptijñāna*. The horn is known through *pratyakṣa*, but the car knowledge is through *anumāna*.

The sāstras give the example: when there is smoke, we infer that there is fire. Even though I do not see the fire behind the wall, when the smoke enters the room, I know that there is fire somewhere.

Arthāpatti (Presumption) – It is very close to inference. By experiencing one event in the present, I come to know about another event in the past even though I have not experienced it. For example, when I see wet streets in the morning when I wake up, I conclude that it must have rained in the night even though I did not perceive the rain.

Upamāna (Comparison or analogy) – Through comparison you can know other objects. You see a wild animal in the forest and conclude it is a wild buffalo because it looks like your village buffalo. This knowledge of the wild animal is obtained by comparison.

Anupalabdhi (Non-cognition) – This is a special instrument for knowing the absence of things. If I ask you, "Is there a chair behind the wall?" To know that there is a chair or not, you must go behind the wall and see. The presence as well as absence requires seeing. Knowledge of absence is also a specific knowledge and it requires a specific instrument - *anupalabdhi*. Eyes can see only colors and forms, but you saw the absence of the chair. The absence of forms and colors (*abhāva*) cannot be seen; the absence can be known by the peculiar method *anupalabdhi*. Books are written on this topic of non-existence.

Śabda pramāṇa (Communication through words – verbal or written) –You learn about Brexit from the newspaper or internet articles – you learn a lot about it even though you were not in Great Britain personally to witness it.

One must use a *pramāṇa* to gain knowledge - Knowledge is valid only if it is born of one of these six instruments of knowledge; otherwise, it is just speculation or wishful

thinking. No new knowledge can happen by just meditating. In meditation, only the existing knowledge is recycled; any "new" thing that you have generated is imagination because none of these six *pramāṇa* is used during meditation.

One requires an appropriate instrument of knowledge - The *sāstras* say that we do not have choice in the use of an instrument to obtain a specific type of knowledge. To know the color, one must use the eyes.

The knowledge to be acquired (or verified) is whether I am a miserable *jivātmā* (gloom) or the wonderful *paramātmā* (bloom). To seek this knowledge, I need a *pramāṇa*. I must use a relevant means of knowledge out of the above six. On analysis, the first five *pramāṇas* are useless in the acquisition of self-knowledge:

- *Pratyakṣa* is useful for objective knowledge because the sense organs are turned outward towards the objective world (Lord Yama will discuss this in Upaniṣad). They are incapable of objectifying Ātmā that is behind the B-M complex. The observer (perceiver) cannot be observed (perceived) even by using the most powerful instrument. When the most powerful microscope cannot see the eyes themselves, what to talk of Atma who is behind the eyes?
- Once *pratyakṣa* is ruled out, the other 3 *pramāṇas* are ruled out because inference can only operate on perceptual data.

To diagnose a disease, the doctor may use pratyakṣa on what he can see (rash). To diagnose the disease that he cannot directly see (such as stomach ache), he will rely on anumāna (inference), but he needs data through tests. He reads the test report (pratyakṣa) and then infers what the disease is. Presumption (arthapatti) is also based on pratyakṣa because to presume that it rained, you need the experience of water-logged roads. Comparison (upamāna) is also based on pratyakṣam because only if you have seen one thing can you give the comparison with the other. Non-cognition (anupalabdhi) is useful only for studying the absence of things (abhāva), but self-

knowledge deals with Existence which exists (bhāva). Therefore, it is not appropriate for self-knowledge. Therefore, the five pramanams are useless.

Śabda pramāṇa (communication through words) remains and it is the appropriate method for self-knowledge. This *pramāṇa* is classified into two: *laukika śabda* and *vaidika śabda*.

Laukika śabda – words given out by worldly people – on fields of material sciences

Vaidika śabda – Created by the Lord and transmitted to the world by the ṛṣis (*mantra draṣṭāḥ* – they did not invent the mantras, but discovered the already existent mantras).

Laukika śabdās deal with the objective world and therefore, are useless for self-knowledge. These are the study of the observed and not the observers – “the observer cannot be observed.”

We are left with *Vaidika śabda* – it is also divided into two: *Veda-pūrva śabda* (*karma kāṇḍa*) and *Veda-anta śabda* (*jñāna kāṇḍa*). Upon analysis, *karma kāṇḍa śabdās* are not useful for self-knowledge because they deal with the objective world of actions and results (in the field of *anātmā*).

Vedānta śabda pramāṇa is the unique instrument that deals with the subject, the observer. To see my own eyes, the only suitable instrument is the mirror – no other instrument works. *Vedānta pramāṇa* is the “mirror” to reveal myself - which I have never attempted know. *Pūjya Swami Dayananda: there are many who have never seen their backs because they are not interested in seeing their backs!* Similarly, most people are not interested in seeing their self. If you are interested in seeing (knowing), *Vedānta pramāṇa* is the only instrument.

1.2 Śāntipāṭhaḥ

Introduction

Everything about the objective world (14 lokas) can be learned from *Veda-pūrva*. Brahman, the self can only be understood only through the Vedānta. The Vedānta is likened to the mirror, the instrument with which one can see the self. Knowing Brahman is the same as attaining Brahman; there is no more a need to learn anything else.

In all the other fields, one must know the object first and then must work to attain it. In the case of the Vedānta, only knowing is involved and there is no further action required. [That is why the Vedanta is called *jñāna kāṇḍa*]. The effort is required to acquire the knowledge, make it doubt-free (*dr̥ḍha-jñānam*) and then assimilate it so that it is readily available in time to deal with any external situation (crisis). The Upaniṣad is the source of this knowledge. One of the meanings of the word Upaniṣad is *rahasyam* (secret). It is called a secret because:

- It must only be taught to those who are mentally prepared and ready. If this teaching is given to the unprepared people, it will not be understood and worse, will be misunderstood. For the majority, *karma kāṇḍa* may be appropriate; *jñāna kāṇḍa* may even be counter-productive for them.
- Even if this teaching is given to everyone indiscriminately, it will remain a secret because most people will not understand it. It has the inherent capacity to remain secret.

The Upaniṣads occur at the end of each of the Vedas. These Upaniṣads are in the form of dialogs (*samvādaḥ*) between teacher(s) and student(s). This indicates that self-study is discouraged. Śāṅkarācārya states in his commentary on Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad that even the most educated person should not attempt to study it independently. In Chāndogya

Upaniṣad, even Nārada, one of the most educated ṛṣis goes to Sanat Kumāra to study the Vedānta. One or a group of dialogs put together is called an Upaniṣad. Kaṭhopeniṣad is a dialog between one guru (Lord Yama) and one śiṣya (Naciketas). In Praśna Upaniṣad, there are six students and a guru (*Pippalāḍa Muni*). In Chāndogya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads, there are various gurus and śiṣyas and therefore, various dialogues.

The four Vedas have many secondary branches called *śākhās*. The tradition says that originally there were 1,180 *śākhās* of the Vedas of which many of them are lost. Each *śākhā* had an Upaniṣad and so, there were originally 1,180 Upaniṣads. Since no one can study all of them, 108 of them were taken as the *sāra* (essence). Of those 108 Upaniṣads, 10 became popular because of Śaṅkarācārya's commentaries. Most of the other commentaries are based on Śaṅkarācārya's commentaries. The one-ness of *jīvatmā* and *Paramātmā* (*jīvatma-Paramātmā-aikyam*) is the central theme of all these Upaniṣads; only the teaching method may be different. All the Vedas convey the same teaching uniformly.

Kaṭhopeniṣad belongs to the Yajur Veda. Yajur Veda has two divisions (recensions or schools) – *Kṛṣṇa* (black or dark) Yajur Veda and *Śukla* (white or bright) Yajur Veda. Kaṭhopeniṣad belongs to the *kāṭhaka-śākhā* of *Kṛṣṇa* Yajur Veda. Taittirīya Upaniṣad also belongs to the *taittirīya śākhā* of the *Kṛṣṇa* Yajur Veda. Since Kaṭhopeniṣad belongs to the *kāṭhaka śākhā*, it is also called Kāṭhakopeniṣad. The name of the Upaniṣad in this case comes from the branch of the Vedas.

Kaṭhopeniṣad has two chapters (*adhyāyas*) and each chapter has three sections (*vallī*). It has 119 verses. This Upaniṣad also begins with a *śāntipāṭha* which is unique to *Kṛṣṇa* Yajur Veda. The purpose of *śāntipāṭha* is to remove the obstacles to the study. The obstacles are:

- Visible obstacles (*dṛṣṭa-pratibandhāḥ*) – like rain [you may be able to remove the obstacles by changing the venue]

- Hidden or invisible obstacles (*adṛṣṭa-pratibandhāḥ*) – To remove the hidden obstacles, we appeal to the Lord for help. He is omniscient (*sarvajñāḥ*).

Śānti = *vighna-nivṛtti*; *pāṭhaḥ* = chanting. *Śāntipāṭha* is chanting for the removal of obstacles.

शान्तिपाठः

ओं सह नावतु । सहनौ भुनक्तु । सहवीर्यं करवावहै । तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै । ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

śāntipāṭhaḥ

ōm saha nāvavatu | sahanau bhunaktu | sahavīryam karavāvahai | tējasvi nāvadhītamastu mā vidviṣāvahai | ōm śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ||

अवतु – **avatu** - May He protect नौ – **nau** - us both सह – **saha** - together (by giving knowledge). भुनक्तु – **bhunaktu** - May He protect नौ – **nau** - us both सह – **saha** - together (by giving the fruit of knowledge). सह करवावहै – **saha karavāvahai** - May we both put forth वीर्यम् – **vīryam** - (sufficient) effort. नौ अधीतम् अस्तु- **nau adhītam astu** - May our learning be तेजस्वि – **tējasvi** - effective. मा विद्विषावहै – **mā vidviṣāvahai** - Let us not distance each other. ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः - **ōm śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ** - Let there be peace, peace, peace.

May He protect us together (by giving knowledge). May He protect us together (by giving the fruit of knowledge). May we both put forth (sufficient) effort. May our learning be effective. Let us not distance each other. Let there be peace, peace, peace.

This small, but popular *śāntipāṭha* is very relevant for study. In the other *śāntipāṭhas*, the prayers are very general for physical and mental health, long life, wealth etc. – they do not specifically deal with study.

सह – **saha** - *Sa* (सः) means he and *ha* (है)– is for emphasis. Generally, a pronoun is relevant only after using a noun; here the prayer begins with a pronoun – so it means it is Bhagavan. Śaṅkarācārya gives a grammatical explanation in *Gītā Bhāṣyam*: In Sanskrit, a pronoun is called *sarvanāma* because it can be used for anyone. There is only one word that can apply to every name: *Īśvara* [*sarvam viṣṇumayamjagat*]. *Saḥ* = *sarvanāma* = Bhagavan *nāma*.

नौ अवतु – **nau avatu** - (नौ + अवतु = नावतु) – Protect Us both (dual) – guru and *śiṣya*. The *śiṣya* here is interested in himself and the guru (everyone prays)

Protection is in the context of the scriptures; we are not dealing with any other problems in life. We are asking for protection from ignorance and wrong understanding in receiving the knowledge and distractions. It is advisable to arrive at the class early to settle down so that our mind can focus right from the beginning; it gives us the time to come out of the other worldly (*laukika*) matters. The prayer includes the guru also; he must be protected from distractions and he should be able to communicate the teachings effectively without obstacles.

सह नौ भुनक्तु – **saha nau bhunaktu** - *Bhunaktu* means protect. After receiving the teaching without the obstacles, the student should be able to assimilate the teachings and transform his personality. That is why this prayer is repeated asking for protection until the transformation is complete. There is no use being a scholar in the Upaniṣad without such transformation. [Śaṅkarācārya: *prathamam jñānapradhānena avatu anantaram jñānapradhānena avatu*].

सहवीर्यं करवावहै – **saha vīryam karavāvahai** - Let us put forth our effort (*Ātma-prayatnam*). The effort is both on the part of the teacher as well as the student. One cannot put all the responsibility on Bhagavan. Our success depends upon both *Īśvara anugraha* and *Ātma anugraha* (our effort). *Īśvara* can help only if we have decided to transform. Vedānta clearly says that mokṣa is not decided by Bhagavan; it is decided by us and assisted by Bhagavan. That is why mokṣa is a *puruṣārtha* – a human goal.

तेजस्वि नौ अधीतमस्तु – **tejasvi nau adhītamastu** - After receiving the teaching, one must be able to retain it. Both together is called *medhāśaktiḥ* (in Sanskrit it is called *grahaṇa-dhāraṇa-śaktiḥ*). Both receiving and retention are important. May our learning be bright (*tejasvi*) in our mind and green in our memory.

विद्विषावहै – **vidviṣāvahai** - let us not have any strain in our emotional relationship. [*dveṣa* means hatred]. Let the relationship be one of mutual respect and love. Guru's attitude should be one of love and care while the *śiṣya*'s attitude should be that of faith and respect for the guru. The psychologists say that the communication can take place only when there is rapport and relationship. In a strained family, even a small innocent statement (when did you come?) is enough to trigger a quarrel. Where there is emotional strain, communication does not take place. Gurukulam was like a family and they understood that they had to behave harmoniously for effective communication to take place.

ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः – **ōm śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ** - the obstacles from three sources should be removed

- *ādhyātmika vighnaḥ* – physical and mental discomfort
- *ādhibautika vighnaḥ* – factors that we have limited control over (no classroom available)
- *ādhidaivika vighnaḥ* – caused by natural forces (*devatās*) – act of God - we have no control (such as an earthquake).

प्रथमावल्ली

1.3 FIRST SECTION -

INTRODUCTION

The first 1 ½ sections (*vallīs*) consist of introduction that gives the background story (first *vallī* + 17 verses of the second *vallī*). The actual Vedānta teaching starts in verse 18 of the second *vallī* of the first chapter. In the introductory portion, the following topics will be highlighted indirectly through the story:

- The glory of *Brahmavidyā* (*Brahmavidyā mahimā*) – how glorious and rare it is
- The necessity of a guru (*guru apekṣā*) – one cannot get self-knowledge without a guru
- The qualifications or the characteristics of a competent guru (*guroḥ lakṣaṇāni*) – who is fit to be a guru? An unqualified guru will do more disservice
- The qualifications of a student (*śiṣyalakṣaṇāni*) – what are the characteristics of a student who can receive, retain and assimilate self-knowledge?

The Upaniṣad does not deal with these topics systematically; they are strewn all over the story. We do not know if this story is a fact or fiction or a mixture [like the historic movies on World War II or *The Titanic*]. Our focus is not the veracity of the story, but on the teachings, that are implicit in it. Once the values are grasped, the story itself becomes insignificant.

१ उशन्ह वै वाजश्रवसः सर्ववेदसं ददौ ।
तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस ॥

1 **uśanha vai vājaśravaśaḥ sarvavēdasam dadau ।**
Tasya ha nacikētā nāma putra āsa ॥

उशन् ह वै – **uśan ha vai** - Desiring (heaven), वाजश्रवसः – Vājaśravasaḥ ददौ – **dadau** - gave away सर्ववेदसम् – **sarvavedasam** - all his wealth (in *viśvajit-yajña*). तस्य ह आस – **tasya ha āsa** - He had पुत्र – **putra** - a son नाम – **nāma** - named नचिकेताः – **naciketāḥ** - Naciketas.

Desiring (heaven), Vājaśravasa gave away all his wealth (in viśvajit-yajña). He had a son named Naciketas.

The Upaniṣad is introducing a *vaidikabrāhmaṇa* named *Vājaśravasa* (he was the son of *Vājaśravasa*). This name indicates that he was a follower of the Vedic tradition (*Veda-pūrva*). Vedic way of life prepares the mind for the understanding of the Vedānta. *Vājaśravasa* performed numerous *yajñas* (*pañca mahā yajña*). This religious life involves sharing of wealth with the others. His name indicates – *vājaḥ* = *annam* (food); *śravaḥ* = fame or popularity – the one who is famous in the society for *annadānam* (distributing food for charity). His father was also well known for it. *Dānams* such as land, gold, food, clothing etc. are part of *yajñas*.

Once he performed a very big *yajña* called *viśvajit yajña*. It was a unique sacrifice where the performer gives everything he possesses, including the house he lived in, to the charity. It is as good as taking up *sannyāsa āśrama*. In the Vedic tradition, all the *sādhanas* (religious rites) can be performed in two different ways:

- *Sakāma* – perform the religious rites for *puṇya* with which one targets better (material) enjoyment – money, children, house, name, fame etc. in this life and the next. When all the *puṇyas* are exhausted, the person returns to the earth (*manuṣya loka*). This is material *puṇya*.
- *Niṣkāma* – perform the religious rites for spiritual *puṇya* targeted for the purification of the mind (*cittaśuddhi*) and the eligibility to pursue self-knowledge (*sādhana-catuṣṭaya-sampatti*). With this spiritual *puṇya*, one gets a good guru, and the ability to absorb the scriptures (*jñāna yoga*). Mokṣa is ultimately targeted.

In this story, *Vājaśravas* is performing the *yajña* to obtain material benefits; his target is heaven (*svarga loka*). The final part of the Vedic *yajña* is *dakṣinā* – the fees given to the priests for services without the latter asking for it. It is an integral part of the sacrifice. The sacrifice is complete only when the *dakṣinā* is given; without it, the performer will not receive the benefit of the sacrifice (*phalam*). Without the appropriate *dakṣinā*, it becomes a *tāmasic yajña* [Krishna defines it in the Bhagavad Gītā verse 17.13].

Naciketas, the son of *Vājaśravasa* is the hero of the story of this Upaniṣad – he is the disciple. Indirectly, the Upaniṣad gives the background that Naciketas has been brought up in a *vaidika* family and is familiar with the rituals. If one does not have faith in *Veda-pūrva*, it is difficult to gain the faith in the *Vedānta*. Faith is something that grows within a person – one cannot develop the faith suddenly.

Naciketas watches his father distribute the *dakṣinās* to the priests and makes his observation in the following verses.

२ तॄ ह कुमारॄ सन्तं दक्षिणासु
नीयमानासु श्रद्धाविवेश सोऽमन्यत ॥

2 *tagr̥ṁ ha kumāragr̥ṁ santar̥ṁ dakṣiṇāsu*
nīyamānāsu śraddhāvivēśa sō' manyata ॥

दक्षिणासु – *dakṣiṇāsu* - When *dakṣiṇās* नीयमानासु – *nīyamānāsu* - were being taken
श्रद्धा – *śraddhā* - faith आविवेश तम् – *āviveśa tam* - took possession of him सन्तं ह
कुमारम् – *santar̥ṁ ha kumāram* - who was just a boy. सः अमन्यत – *saḥ amanyata* - He
thought (thus).

*When dakṣiṇās were being taken, faith took possession of him who was just a boy.
He thought (thus).*

Naciketas is referred to as *kumāra* in this verse. *Kumāra* means a boy below 10 years of age (7-8 years), but Naciketas was informed of rituals and their benefits.

When *sakāma karmas* are done, all the rules must be properly observed; even if a single rule is violated, it may not produce the desired result. If a mistake is committed in a step, the scriptures themselves prescribe remedial steps (*prāyaścitta karma* – extra *dakṣinā*, additional mantras etc.). In *niškāma karma*, if a step is violated inadvertently (not deliberately), it does not matter; it still gives the benefit of *cittaśuddhi*.

Even though he was just a boy, when the *dakṣinās* were being distributed, Naciketas remembered that all rules must be observed strictly for *sakāma karma*. He wondered what the fate of his father will be for distributing the various types of *dakṣinā*.

The thinking process is described in the next verse.

३ पीतोदका जग्धतृणाः, दुग्धदोहा निरिन्द्रियाः ।
अनन्दा नाम ते लोकाः, तान् स गच्छति ता ददत् ॥

3 **pītōdakā jagdhatṛṇāḥ, dugdhadōhā nirindriyāḥ ।**
Anandā nāma tē lōkāḥ, tān sa gacchati tā dadat ॥

पीतोदका – **pītōdakā** - "(These are cows) which have drunk water (for the last time),
जग्धतृणाः - **jagdhatṛṇāḥ** - which have eaten grass (for the last time), दुग्धदोहाः –
dugdhadōhāḥ - which have given milk (for the last time), निरिन्द्रियाः - **nirindriyāḥ** - and
unproductive. ते लोकाः - **tē lōkāḥ** - (There are) those worlds नाम अनन्दाः – **nāma**
anandāḥ - which are verily joyless. ददत् ताः – **dadat tāḥ** - Giving such cows, सः गच्छति –
saḥ gacchati - one goes तान् – **tān** - to those (worlds only)."

"(These are cows) which have drunk water (for the last time), which have eaten grass (for the last time), which have given milk (for the last time), and

unproductive. (There are) those worlds which are verily joyless. Giving such cows, one goes to those (worlds only)."

As we read this Upaniṣad, we should notice the qualifications of Naciketas. Indirectly, the Upaniṣad teaches us that we also should have these qualifications. His *śraddhā* is now evident. He sees that cows are being given as *dakṣinā* (cows were considered wealth just as now). He notices that these cows are miserable and useless. In addition to not deriving any benefit, the receiver will incur expenses just to sustain these cows. He knows that these are not appropriate *dakṣinās*.

The cows are so old and weak that they cannot drink water or eat. They are beyond their milking years and are incapable of reproduction. Naciketas is disturbed that with such deficient *yajña*, his father will not get *svarga loka*. Worse, he wonders kind of *naraka* (lower world) he will get.

4. स होवाच पितरं तत कस्मै मां दास्यसीति ।
द्वितीयं तृतीयं तॄ होवाच मृत्यवे त्वा ददामीति

4 sa hōvāca pitarāṃ tata, kasmai mām dāsyasīti I
dvitīyaṃ tṛtīyaṃ taṅ hōvāca mṛtyavē tvā dadāmīti II

सः ह उवाच – saḥ ha uvāca - He said पितरम् इति – pitaram iti - to (his) father thus – तत – tata - Oh father! कस्मै – kasmai - To whom दास्यसि माम् – dāsyasi mām - will you give me (as dakṣinā)?" (He asked) द्वितीयम् – dvitīyam - for the second time तृतीयम् – tritīyam - and for the third time. उवाच – uvāca - (Father) said तं ह इति – tam ha iti - to him thus ददामि त्वा – dadāmi tvā - "I am giving you मृत्यवे – Mṛtyavē - to Lord Yama."

He said to (his) father thus – "Oh father! To whom will you give me (as dakṣinā)?" (He asked) for the second time and for the third time. (Father) said to him thus – "I am giving you to Lord Yama."

The Upaniṣad does not mention why *Vājaśravasa* gave the useless cows as *dakṣinā*. We can imagine a positive or negative reason. Some say that *Vājaśravasa* was a greedy person who did not want to part with his good cows and so, gave his useless ones as *dakṣinā*. On the other hand, there is no need to think negatively of him. After all, he was performing the non-compulsory *Viśvajit yajña* and he gave away everything he had including the bad cows. [Swami Paramārthānanda-ji gives the latter positive reason].

Naciketas feels that the son is also a property of the parents (no need to debate whether it is right or not). He feels that the parents gave birth to him and gave everything to him and so, he is their property. He is ready to be a *dakṣinā* for any priest. If he is given away as a *dakṣinā*, he can serve that priest better than these miserable cows. [He does not think negatively of his father because he thinks that his father already has planned to give him also as *dakṣinā*]. So, he asks who he will be given as *dakṣinā* to.

As any father, *Vājaśravasa* ignores him. Like any other child, Naciketas asks him again and again. The third time, *Vājaśravasa* gets irritated and tells him that he will give him to Lord Yama [the equivalent of the modern term "Go to hell!"]. *Mṛtyu* or Lord Yama is one of the gods that receives oblations in this *yajña*. Although the father blurts this out in irritation and does not really mean this, Naciketas takes it seriously. This is something every parent should know and be careful with the children when making these types of statements. Even during pregnancy, the child registers the words.

5. बहूनामेमि प्रथमः, बहूनामेमि मध्यमः ।
किञ्च स्वियमस्य कर्तव्यं, यन्मयाद्य करिष्यति ॥

5. bahūnāmēmi prathamah, bahūnāmēmi madhyamah ।
Kiñc svidyamasya kartavyam, yanmayadya kariṣyati ॥

बहूनाम् – bahūnām - Among many (students) एमिप्रथमः – ēmiprathamah - I am the first.
बहूनाम् – bahūnām - Among many (others) एमिमध्यमः – ēmimadhyamah - I am the average. किञ्चित् कर्तव्यम् – kiñsvit kartavyam - What work indeed (is there) यमस्य –

yamasya - for Lord Yama यत् करिष्यति – **yat kariṣyati** - which (my father) will accomplish मया अद्य – **mayā adya** - through me now?

Among many (students) I am the first. Among many (others) I am the average. What work indeed (is there) for Lord Yama which (my father) will accomplish through me now?

Naciketas now thinks of the consequences of going to Lord Yama. He is not worried and is prepared to go to Yamadharmarāja if his father's life would benefit through the *yajña*. This indicates that Naciketas is selfless because he is prepared to sacrifice for his parents. However, he is concerned whether he would be fully utilized by Lord Yama. Per the scriptures, Lord Yama is one of the most important and powerful cabinet members of Indra. He is likely to have many capable helpers and servants – of what use can Naciketas be to him? Sending him to Lord Yama is as redundant as rain in the ocean. If he is sent to some old priest with no son or help, he might at least be fully utilized. This makes him wonder whether his father thinks he is useless and that he is sending him to a place where he will not do any damage by working.

He then answers his own question in this mantra where he observes that he is mostly among the toppers in the class (his father is his guru) and sometimes bit lower, but never at the bottom.

The gradation is based on the student knowing the needs of the guru. The top student infers the needs of the guru from his body language and fulfills them without the guru's request or command (*uttamaḥ cintitam kuryāt*). The middle student needs guru's verbal commands, but he will fulfill the needs once the command is received (*proktakāritu madhyamaḥ*). The bottom of the class student (*adhama śiṣya*) does not fulfill the commands of the guru even after they are clearly verbalized (*na kuryāt adhamah proktam*). Naciketas therefore thinks he has been either *uttamaḥ* or *madhyamaḥ*, but never *adhamaḥ*.

Therefore, he wonders, "What job is there with Yamadharmarāja that can be done by me?" His sadness is not in going to Lord Yama, but in being underutilized.

6. अनुपश्य यथा पूर्वे, प्रतिपश्य तथापरे ।
सस्यमिव मर्त्यः पच्यते, सस्यमिवाजायते पुनः ॥

6. *anupaśya yathā pūrvē, pratipaśya tathāparē |*
Sasyamiva martyaḥ pacyatē, sasyamivājāyatē punaḥ ||

अनुपश्य – *anupaśya* - See यथा पूर्वे – *yathā pūrvē* how the forefathers (lived). तथा प्रतिपश्य – *tathā pratipaśya* - Also see अपरे – *aparē* - (how) the others (of the present generation live). मर्त्यः पच्यते – *martyaḥ pacyatē* - Man decays (and dies) इव सस्यम् – *iva sasyam* - like a plant, आजायते पुनः – *ājāyate punaḥ* - and is born again इव सस्यम् – *iva sasyam* - like a plant.

See how the forefathers (lived). Also see (how) the others (of the present generation live). Man decays (and dies) like a plant, and is born again like a plant.

A family is a group of members, but for it to be harmonious, there should be only one decision maker. The other family members should have the power to make suggestions, but only the head should have the power to make the decision. Whatever the decision, the others must follow [the wrong or right decision is the *prārabdham* of the group]. The leader's duty is also to carefully listen to the followers (family members) when taking the decision. Naciketas accepts his father's "decision" and he is ready to go to *Yamaloka*.

He conveys his intent to his father who has already forgotten this incident. The father explains to him that he did not mean his statement and therefore, there is no need to implement his order. Naciketas says that his father must keep his word to maintain his integrity. [Daśaratha lost his son because of his promise to Kaikeyi]. The Upaniṣad thereby shows that Naciketas is a dhārmic person. Dharma is an important pre-requisite

for mokṣa. Without integrity and honesty, the Vedānta will not be assimilated. He insists on keeping the word (*vākya paripālanam*) especially because the statement was made in *Yāgaśāla*.

The father tries to talk him out of it. Naciketas advises his father that the life is short. Dharma and *satyam* are eternal. For protecting the ephemeral life, one cannot sacrifice dharma – in fact, it should be the other way. Sacrificing one's personal life is better for the sake of *svadharmā*.

He tells his father that his own ancestors preserved the dharma through the *parampara* (lineage) and it will be inappropriate for him to break the tradition. [The same argument was given to Daśaratha by Kaikeyi]. There is no advantage of violating dharma to save his short life.

There is no reference to the following in the Upaniṣad, but we will supply this to complete the context of the story:

Vājaśravasa relents and lets him go. When Naciketas reaches *Yamaloka* (no details as to how he went), he finds out that Yamadharmarāja is away on other business. He discovers that there are no male members there. In our tradition, if no male member is present in the family, a male guest will not stay with them. Although he is just a child, he follows the tradition and remains outside for three days without eating. Although he is offered food, he declines to eat it before meeting Lord Yama and obtaining his permission.

7 वैश्वानरः प्रविशति, अतिथिर्ब्राह्मणो गृहान् ।
तस्यैतां शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति, हर वैवस्वतोदकम् ॥

7 **vaiśvānaraḥ praviśati, atithirbrāhmaṇō gṛhān |**
Tasyaitāgm śāntim kurvanti, hara vaivasvatōdakam ||

वैश्वानरः - **Vaiśvānaraḥ** - Fire-god प्रविशति - **praviśati** enters गृहान् - **gṛhān** - the houses
ब्राह्मणः अतिथिः - **brāhmaṇaḥ atīthiḥ** - (as) a Brahmin guest. कुर्वन्ति - **kurvanti** - (People)
make एतां शान्तिं तस्य - **ētām śāntim tasya** - this peace-offering to him. वैवस्वत -
Vaivasvata - Oh Lord Yama! हर उदकम् - **hara udakam** - Fetch water.

Fire-god enters the houses (as) a Brahmin guest. (People) make this peace-offering to him. Oh Lord Yama! Fetch water.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad emphasizes *manuṣya yajña*, which is properly hosting a guest. It calls the guest a god. Since it is one of the *pañca mahā yajñas*, it is prescribed as a compulsory duty and therefore, failure to perform it will be considered a sin of omission (*pratyavāya pāpam*).

A Brahmin guest is like fire (*vaiśvānaraḥ*). Per the scriptures, Agni *devata* manifests in *bhūloka* (earth) in the form of Brahmins. Fire is powerful and if you know how to handle it, you will be blessed with many benefits. If you don't handle it properly, it can destroy you.

The family (coterie) of Lord Yama is worried about incurring sin by not properly treating the Brahmin boy. They plead with Lord Yama to rectify the situation in this mantra:

Agni enters a house as a Brahmin guest. If treated properly, he can bless you with anything including mokṣa. One must respect the fire because it has the potential to destroy. In this context, the concern is that Naciketas is not being treated properly because he has been waiting for three days without food.

Peace offering to Agni is made with water (to quench the fire). Therefore, they urge Lord Yama to propitiate Naciketas with water (by washing his feet - *pāda-pūja*). [Lord Yama is referred to as *Vaivasvata*, son of *Vivasvān* who is *Sūrya*].

It must be understood that the reference to Brahmin here is made to *guṇa-brāhmaṇa*. [A *jāti Brāhmaṇa* has the advantage of becoming a *guṇa Brāhmaṇa* by being a *karma Brāhmaṇa*. Bhagavad Gita describes the characteristics of a worthy *Brāhmaṇa* in verse 18.42].

Perhaps, Lord Yama was tired and hesitated; the family members further explain why he should do this immediately.

8 आशाप्रतीक्षे संगतः सूनृतां च,
इष्टापूर्ते पुत्रपशूः श्च सर्वान् ।
एतद् वृङ्क्ते पुरुषस्याल्पमेधसः,
यस्यानश्नन्वसति ब्राह्मणो गृहे ॥

8 āśāpratīkṣē saṅgatagm sūnṛtām ca,
iṣṭāpūrtē putrapasūgm śca sarvān ।
ētaḍ vṛṅktē puruṣasyālpamēdhasaḥ,
yasyānaśnavasati brāhmaṇō gṛhē ॥

आशाप्रतीक्षे - *āśāpratīkṣē* - Hopes and expectations, सङ्गतम् – *saṅgatam* (the puṇya of) satsaṅga, सूनृताम् - *sūnṛtām* (the puṇya of) noble speech, इष्टापूर्तेच - *iṣṭāpūrtē* - (the puṇya of) rituals and social service, सर्वान् पुत्रपशून् च – *sarvān putrapasūn ca* - all children and cattle – ब्राह्मणः वृङ्क्ते- *brāhmaṇaḥ vṛṅktē* - the Brahmin (guest) destroys एतत् – *ētat* - (all) this अल्पमेधसः पुरुषस्य- *alpamēdhasaḥ puruṣasya* - belonging to the unintelligent host यस्य गृहे- *yasya gṛhē* - in whose house वसति – *vasati* - he stays अनश्नन् – *anaśnan* - without eating.

Hopes and expectations, (the puṇya of) satsaṅga, (the puṇya of) noble speech, (the puṇya of) rituals and social service, all children and cattle – the Brahmin (guest) destroys (all) this belonging to the unintelligent host in whose house he stays without eating.

As mentioned before, if a Brāhmaṇa is not properly honored (specifically, if he stays as a guest without eating food), the consequence is sin of omission (*pratyavāya pāpam*). It will destroy all the puṇyams that one has acquired. A list of puṇyas that will be denied is given in this mantra:

Āsā - hopes with regards to future – hope is not objective because it is not based on knowledge because no one can know what will happen in the future. Examples: hope that our grandson will be prosperous when the son is not even married; will get the job after the interview before the interview even happens

Pratīkṣā– expectations – this is more objective because it is based on the knowledge of that will happen. Examples: arrival time of the train; good results in the exam after writing well etc.

Saṅgatam– the *puṇya* born out of noble company (*satsaṅga* – association with Mahātmā) - Knowledge and peace of mind attained through *satsaṅga* is the visible benefit or *dṛṣṭa phalam* while the invisible *puṇya* is the *adrṣṭa phalam*.

Sūnṛtaḥ– *puṇya* attained by using our organ of speech properly such as speaking sweet words, truth etc. If organ of speech is not used properly, one incurs *pāpa*. The organ of speech is as powerful as the mind because the words represent the knowledge in the mind. Not only that, it seems superior to the mind because the latter is not accessible to the other human beings. It is not only available to the current generation, but also to the future ones. Therefore, it is very powerful both positively and negatively.

In our culture, it is said that we should learn to control our power of speech. *Vāk tapas* is one of the most important *sādhanas*. It is important to monitor the quality and quantity of words. Śaṅkarācārya in *Viveka Cūdāmaṇi* says that *vān nirodhaḥ* (control of words) is the first *sādhana* that one must observe.

If a person knows how to handle his words, he can succeed in any field. It will remove inauspiciousness from his home. Name and fame come to one who uses the words properly. If proper words are used, even the enemies will become friends. On the contrary, if one does not know how to use the words properly, family, friends and colleagues will become enemies. Proper words are Kāmadhenu – the mother which will give the milk of auspiciousness (*maṅgalam*) and benefits at home. We should teach our children how to talk and therefore, we should be careful with the type of words we use.

Iṣtam – (*puṇyas* from) all the religious activities (*Iṣtam* = *Yajña* or *yāga*). In short, these are *pañca mahāyajñas*. *Iṣtam* consists of six-fold religious activities:

- *Agnihotram* – regular worship of fire god (or God in any form).
- *Tapah* – moderation in activities (austerity)
- *Satyam* – speaking the truth
- *Vedānām anupālanam* – recitation of the scriptures (*pārāyaṇam*)
- *Ātithyam* – honoring the guest (humans)
- *Vaiśvadevasya* – honoring the animals and plants. In homes in Tamilnadu, the food is offered to the crows first before consuming. Another example is watering the plants (Tulasi).

[अग्निहोत्रं तपः सत्यं वेदानं चानुपालानाम् आतिथ्यं वैश्वदेवस्य इष्टामित्याभिधीयते – agnihotram tapah satyam cānupālanam ātithyam vaiśvadevasya iṣtāmityābhidhīyatē]

Pūrta– (*puṇyas* from) all the (secular) social service activities [*iṣtam* refers to religious activities] for the well-being of the society such as digging wells, building temples, schools, rest houses for the pilgrims, giving food to the needy (*anna-pradānam*) etc.

Putra-paśu - children and the owned animals. The destruction in children is spiritual and not necessarily physical. Parents are the model for the children; if the parents do not observe these values, the children will also be ignorant of them and hence, spiritual destruction.

Lord Yama performs *pāda pūja* to Naciketas (It is not explicitly stated here, but we derive this based on the subsequent mantras).

9 तिस्रो रात्रीर्यदवात्सीर्गृहे मे,
अनश्नन्नह्यन्नतिथिर्नमस्यः ।
नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन्स्वस्ति मेऽस्तु,
तस्मात्प्रति त्रीन्वरान्वृणीष्व ॥

9 *tisrō rātrīryadavātsīrgr̥hē mē,*
anaśnanbrahmannatithirnamasyaḥ ।
namastē'stu brahamansvasti mē'stu,
tasmātprati trīnvarānvṛṇīṣva ॥

ब्रह्मन् – *brahman* - Oh Brahmin! यद् अवात्सीः – *yad avātsiḥ* - Since you have stayed मे गृहे – *mē gr̥hē* - in my house तिस्रः रात्रीः – *tisraḥ rātriḥ* - for three nights नमस्यः अतिथिः – *namasyaḥ atithiḥ* - as an adorable guest अनश्नन् – *anaśnan* - without eating, नमः अस्तु – *namaḥ astu* - let there be salutations ते – *tē* - unto you. ब्रह्मन् – *brahman* - Oh Brahmin! अस्तु स्वस्ति – *astu svasti* - Let there be well-being मे – *mē* - unto me. तस्मात् – *tasmāt* - Therefore, वृणीष्व – *vṛṇīṣva* - choose त्रीन् वरान् प्रति – *trīn varān prati* - three boons for (three nights).

Oh Brahmin! Since you have stayed in my house for three nights as an adorable guest without eating, let there be salutations unto you. Oh Brahmin! Let there be well-being unto me. Therefore, choose three boons for (three nights).

Lord Yama is not an ordinary person; he has great status and power because he is the Lord of the time principle (Lord of *kālah*). Yet, he is so aware of his duties that he humbly worships the person who is not a god (*devatā*). We learn the lesson of humility from this. Lord Yama feels extremely guilty even though he did not deliberately commit this mistake. Therefore, he asks for forgiveness from Naciketas for causing him to stay at his house without food for three days.

He salutes him again and offers three boons as compensation (*prāyaścittam*), one for each night, for this error so that he can retain his *puṇyas* without losing them.

10 शान्तसङ्कल्पः सुमना यथा स्याद्,
वीतमन्युर्गौतमो माभि मृत्यो ।
त्वत्प्रसृष्टं माभिवदेत्प्रतीतः,
एतत् त्रयाणां प्रथमं वरं वृणे ॥

10 śāntasaṅkalpaḥ sumanā yathā syād,
vītamanyurgautamō mābhi mṛtyō ।
tvatprasṛṣṭaṁ mābhivadētpṛatītaḥ,
ētat trayāṇāṁ prathamam varam vṛṇē ॥

मृत्यो – **Mṛtyō** - Oh Lord Yama! गौतमः – **Gautamaḥ** - May (my father) Gautama यथा स्यात् – **yathā syāt** - be शान्तसङ्कल्पः – **śāntasaṅkalpaḥ** - free from anxiety, वीतमन्युः – **vītamanyuḥ** - free from anger, सुमनाः – **sumanāḥ** - and kind-hearted मा अभि – **mā abhi** - towards me. प्रतीतः – **pṛatītaḥ** - Having recognized (me), अभिवदेत् – **abhivadet** - he should talk मा – **mā** - to me त्वत्प्रसृष्टम् – **tvatprasṛṣṭam** - as I am sent back by you. एतत् – **ētat** - This is प्रथमं वरम् – **prathamam varam** - the first boon वृणे – **vṛṇē** - (that) I choose त्रयाणाम् – **trayāṇām** - among the three.

Oh, Lord Yama! May (my father) Gautama be free from anxiety, free from anger, and kind-hearted towards me. Having recognized (me), he should talk to me as I am sent back by you. This is the first boon (that) I choose among the three.

Naciketas asks for the first boon which consists of a set of benefits:

- Gautama (my father) should be free from anxiety or worries about me.
- He should enjoy peace of mind
- He must not be angry with me (because I argued and convinced him to let me come here)

- After released by you, I should be recognized by my father (he should not dismiss me as a ghost!)
- He should talk to me (free of anger) as before

He chooses this as the first boon among the three [even though it appears that he has asked five of them!]

11 यथा पुरस्ताद्भविता प्रतीतः,
औद्दालकिरारुणिर्मत्प्रसृष्टः ।
सुखं रात्रीः शयिता वीतमन्युः,
त्वां ददृशिवान्मृत्युमुखात्प्रमुक्तम् ॥

11 yathā purastādbhavitā pratītaḥ,
auddālakirāruṇirmatprasṛṣṭaḥ ।
sukhaṁ rātrīḥ śayitā vītamanyuḥ,
tvāṁ dadṛśivānmṛtyumukhātpramuktam ॥

ददृशिवान् त्वाम् – dadṛśivān tvām - Having seen you प्रमुक्तम् – pramuktam - released मृत्युमुखात् – mṛtyumukhāt - from the jaws of death प्रतीतः – pratītaḥ - and having recognized (you), औद्दालकिः – Auddālakīḥ - (your father) Auddālaki, आरुणिः – Āruṇiḥ - the son of Aruṇa, भविता – bhavitā - will be यथा पुरस्तात् – yathā purastāt - (the same towards you) as before. मत्प्रसृष्टः – matprasṛṣṭaḥ - Blessed by me, वीतमन्युः – vītamanyuḥ - (he will be) free from anger शयिता सुखम्- śayitā sukham - (and) will sleep peacefully रात्रीः – rātrīḥ - during the nights.

Having seen you released from the jaws of death and having recognized (you, your father) Auddālaki, the son of Aruṇa, will be (the same towards you) as before. Blessed by me, (he will be) free from anger (and) will sleep peacefully during the nights.

Lord Yama agrees to fulfill the first boon. He states in this mantra:

- Blessed by me, he will be free from anger (towards you)
- He will sleep peacefully without any worry (about you) at nights
- When I release you from the jaws of death, he will recognize you
- He will be the same towards you as before (this incident)

The essence of this verse is "so be it" (*tathāstu*).

From this verse, we deduce the following regarding the character of Naciketas:

- He is not a selfish person – he first thinks of his parents in this boon, then the society and family (in the second boon) and then only himself in the third boon.

This is the indirect indication of what the character of a serious seeker should be.

12 स्वर्गे लोके न भयं किञ्चनास्ति, न तत्र त्वं न जरया बिभेति ।
उभे तीर्त्वाशनायापिपासे, शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥

12 svargē lōkē na bhayam kiñcanāsti, na tatra tvam na jarayā bibhēti ।
Ubhē tīrtvāśanāyāpipāsē, śōkātigō mōdatē svargalōkē ॥

स्वर्गे लोके – **svargē lokē** - In the heavenly world अस्ति – **asti** - there is न भयं किञ्चन – **na bhayam kiñcana** - no fear at all, त्वं न तत्र – **tvam na tatra** - (because) you are not there. न बिभेति – **na bibhēti** - One is not afraid जरया – **jarayā** - of old age. तीर्त्वा – **tīrtvā** - Having crossed उभे – **ubhē** - both अशनायापिपासे – **aśanāyāpipāsē** - hunger and thirst शोकातिगः – **śōkādikah** - and having gone beyond grief, मोदते – **mōdatē** - one rejoices स्वर्गलोके – **svargalokē** - in the heavenly world.

In the heavenly world, there is no fear at all (because) you are not there. One is not afraid of old age. Having crossed both hunger and thirst and having gone beyond grief, one rejoices in the heavenly world.

The discussion on the second boon is in verses 12 through 17. Now his concern is about the welfare of the fellow human beings. The majority wants happy, comfortable, prosperous and enjoyable life. Per the scriptures, the most comfortable life is in the *svarga loka*. He therefore thinks that he should set up the appropriate means for the others to go to heaven. Naciketas describes and glorifies the *svarga loka*:

- He mischievously states that there is no insecurity in *svarga loka* because Lord Yama is not there. Here it means that the time principle (*kālatattvam*) is not as active in *svarga loka*. The time acts much slower in *svarga loka* than on the earth
- There is no fear of old age
- The residents of *svarga loka* are free from hunger and thirst
- They are beyond grief (of fear of old age, death etc.) and so, they rejoice in heaven (*svarga loka*).

13 स त्वमग्निं स्वर्गमध्येषि मृत्यो,
प्रब्रूहि त्वं श्रद्धधानाय मह्यम् ।
स्वर्गलोका अमृतत्वं भजन्ते,
एतद् द्वितीयेन वृणे वरेण ॥

13 sa tvamagnim svargyamadhyēṣi mr̥tyō,
prabrūhi tvagm śraddadhānāya mahyam ।
svargalokā amṛtatvaṁ bhajantē,
ētaḍ dvitīyēna vṛṇē varēṇa ॥

मृत्यो – **Mr̥tyoḥ** - Oh Lord Yama! सः त्वम् अध्येषि – **saḥ tvam adhyēṣi** - You know अग्निं स्वर्ग्यम् – **agnim svargyam** - the fire (ritual) which leads one to heaven. त्वं प्रब्रूहि – **tvam prabūhi** - May you reveal (that) मह्यं श्रद्धधानाय – **mahyam śraddadhānāya** - to me who has faith. स्वर्गलोकाः – **svargalokaḥ** - Heavenly people भजन्ते अमृतत्वम् – **bhajantē amṛtatvam** - enjoy immortality. वृणे एतत् – **vṛṇē ētat** - I seek this द्वितीयेन वरेण – **dvitīya varēṇa** - through the second boon.

Oh, Lord Yama! You know the fire (ritual) which leads one to heaven. May you reveal (that) to me who has faith. Heavenly people enjoy immortality. I seek this through the second boon.

Naciketas asks for the second boon in which he seeks to learn the fire ritual, that leads one to *svarga loka*, where the celestials enjoy immortality. This statement regarding immortality appears to contradict the statements elsewhere in the scriptures that the celestials are not immortal and that they will return to the earth after their *punyas* are exhausted.

We should use the principle of interpretation (*mīmāṃsā*) to resolve this contradiction. Per the science of interpretation, when two Vedic statements are contradictory, the statement supported by logic supersedes the other statement. The statement that the celestials are mortal is more correct because they have attained their celestial status only through the performance of karma. Going to heaven is a result of an action; it is an end-product of a process (*karmaphalam*). Therefore, heaven is also finite. The immortality in the other statement should be interpreted to mean a very long and yet, a finite life; it is not absolute immortality. Even the heavenly pleasures are not absolute; the celestials also have sorrows. Varuṇa may be jealous of Indra because the latter is at a higher position. When compared to the earth, the heavenly pleasure is superior.

For the benefit of the society (not for himself – we will see later), Naciketas wants to learn the means of attaining the heavenly world. In this verse, he is asking Lord Yama to teach him Agni, the religious ritual (*vaidika sādhana*) to accomplish it.

Normally Agni means fire. However, Agni has three different technical meanings:

Specific fire - Agni means that specific fire which is kindled in a specific manner chanting specific mantras and located in a specific place. For a ritual, the fire must be kindled in a specific manner (cannot use a cigarette lighter or match stick or gas lighter to kindle it – one must use *araṇi-mathanam* or lens). When it is being kindled, specific mantras must

be chanted depending upon the type of ritual. Agni must be in a *homa-kuṇḍa* with the specific shape as prescribed by the scriptures for a specific ritual – circular, semi-circular, square etc. Only that fire which fulfills all these three conditions is called Agni

Specific ritual - The ritual which is performed using this specific fire is also called Agni.

Specific deity - Later, Lord Yama will discuss the meditation in which *Virāt devatā* (otherwise called *Vaiśvānara devatā*) is invoked in this fire. Since *Virāt devata* is invoked in this fire, this Agni is called *Virāt devatā*.

Lord Yama uses the word Agni interchangeably in this Upaniṣad and therefore, it requires the understanding of these terms to be able to apply the meaning in the right context. In the context of this verse, Naciketas is asking Lord Yama to teach him Agni, the ritual (meaning #2).

That a ritual will lead to heaven is a matter of faith. In fact, the very existence of heaven itself is a matter of faith. That I will continue to exist after death and that I will go to heaven is a matter of faith. In short, the entire ritualistic portion is faith-based. If one has no faith, the rituals will not mean anything to him. Therefore, Naciketas declares in this verse to Lord Yama that he has faith (in the rituals and heaven).

14 प्र ते ब्रवीमि तद् मे निबोध,
स्वर्ग्यमग्निं नचिकेतः प्रजानन् ।
अनन्तलोकाप्तिमथो प्रतिष्ठाम्,
विद्धि त्वमेतं निहितं गुहायाम् ॥

14 pra tē bravīmi tadu mē nibōdha,
svargyamagniṁ nacikētaḥ prajānan ।
anantalōkāptimathō pratiṣṭhām,
viddhi tvamētaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyām ॥

नचिकेतः – **Naciketaḥ** - Oh Naciketas! प्रजानन् अग्निम् – **prajānan agnim** - Remembering the fire (ritual) स्वर्ग्यम् – **svargyam** - which leads one to heaven, प्रब्रवीमि ते – **prabravāmi tē** - I shall clearly teach you. निबोध तद् उ – **nibōdha tad u** - Learn it from मे – **mē** - me. त्वं विद्धि – **tvam viddhi** - May you know एतम् – **ētam** - this (fire), अनन्तलोकाप्तिम् – **anantalōkāptim** - which is a means to the attainment of heaven अथो प्रतिष्ठाम् – **athō pratiṣṭhām** - and which is the support (of the world), निहितं गुहायाम् – **nihitam guhāyam** - to be located in the heart.

Oh Naciketas! Remembering the fire (ritual) which leads one to heaven, I shall clearly teach you. Learn it from me. May you know this (fire), which is a means to the attainment of heaven and which is the support (of the world), to be located in the heart.

Lord Yama assures Naciketas that he knows Agni (the ritual) that leads one to heaven. He promises to teach him clearly. He also glorifies Agni as follows:

This ritual is indeed a means to attain the heaven. This Agni is the substratum of this entire universe. Here, the meaning of Agni is *Virāt devatā* (*samaṣṭi devatā*, *Viśvarūpa devatā*) as described in Chapter 11 of the Bhagavad Gitā). To use an analogy: the ocean is the substratum or support for the waves. This Agni resides in the heart. In other words, *Virāt devatā* is in the heart of the meditators who invoke their deity in their hearts.

15 लोकादिमग्निं तमुवाच तस्मै,
या इष्टका यावर्तीवा यथा वा ।
स चापि तत्प्रत्यवदद्यथोक्तम्,
अथास्य मृत्युः पुनरेवाह तुष्टः ॥

15 lōkādimagnim tamuvāca tasmai,
Yā iṣṭakā yāvartivā yathā vā ।
Sa cāpi tatpratyavadadyathōktam,
Athāsya mṛtyuḥ punarēvāha tuṣṭaḥ ॥

उवाचतस्मै – **uvācatasmai** - (Lord Yama) revealed to him तम् अग्निम् – **tam agnim** - that fire लोकादिम् – **lokādim** - which is the foremost in the world. याः इष्टकाः – **yāḥ iṣṭakāḥ** - (He taught) what type of bricks (should be used), यावतीः वा – **yāvatiḥ vā** - how many, वा यथा – **vā yathā** - and how. सः च अपि – **saḥ ca api** - He also प्रत्यवदत् तत् – **pratyavadat tat** - repeated that यथोक्तम् – **yathoktam** - as it was taught. अथ – **atha** - Then, तुष्टः अस्य – **tuṣṭaḥ asya** - satisfied with his (repetition), मृत्युः आह – **Mṛtyuḥ āha** Lord Yama said पुनः एव – **punah eva** - once again (thus).

(Lord Yama) revealed to him that fire which is the foremost in the world. (He taught) what type of bricks (should be used), how many, and how. He also repeated that as it was taught. Then, satisfied with his (repetition), Lord Yama said once again (thus).

Lord Yama teaches Naciketas everything related to Agni (the ritual). He teaches the following:

- The type of bricks used to build the *homa kuṇḍa*
- The number of such bricks to be used
- The arrangement of bricks specific to that ritual. The shape depends upon the type of fire. It is said that we developed the entire science of geometry by preparing *homa-kuṇḍa (śulva sūtrāṇi)* while deciding the size and shape

This is just a limited description; there is much more detail for material for oblations. Naciketas, being so brilliant absorbs everything that is orally taught to him. This reflects his memory and intellectual power (*medhāśakti*). This characteristic is required of a Vedic student for *karma kāṇḍa* as well as *jñāna kāṇḍa* [*grahaṇa-dhāraṇa śakti* = reception + retention = *medhāśakti*]. That is why we have prayers to ask for *medhā* (*Medhāsūktam, Samitādānam* etc.). Naciketas plays the whole process back to Lord Yama exactly as was taught to him.

Lord Yama also teaches him how to invoke *Viśvarūpa devata* in that specific fire (the Lord as Consciousness inherent in the macrocosmic universe). The meditation that invokes the *ViśvarūpaĀśvara* is called *virāḍ-upāsanam*. A person has the option of performing the ritual with or without this meditation. The ritual with meditation (*upāsana sahita karma*) brings more benefit than the mere ritual. Mere ritual will result in a lower heaven while the one accompanied by *upāsanā* will give Brahmaloaka.

Lord Yama is satisfied after Naciketas repeats the rituals correctly. So, he decides to give a bonus boon.

16 तमब्रवीत्प्रीयमाणो महात्मा,
वरं तवेहाद्य ददामि भूयः ।
तवैव नाम्ना भवितायमग्निः,
सृङ्गां चेमामनेकरूपां गृहाण ॥

16 tamabravītpriyamāṇō mahātmā,
varaṁ tavēhādyā dadāmi bhūyaḥ ।
tavaiva nāmnā bhavitāyamagniḥ,
sṛṅkāṁ cēmāmanēkarūpāṁ gṛhāṇa ॥

प्रीयमाणः – **priyamāṇaḥ** - Being pleased, महात्मा – **mahātmā** - the generous (Lord)
अब्रवीत् तम् – **abravīt tam** - said to him – भूयः – **bhūyaḥ** - "Once again ददामि तव –
dadāmi tava - I give you वरम् – **varam** - a gift इह अद्य – **iha adya** - here and now. अयम्
अग्निः – **ayam agniḥ** - This fire भविता – **bhavitā** - will be (known) तव नाम्ना एव – **tava**
nāmnā ēva - by your name only." गृहाण – **gṛhāṇa** - Accept इमाम् अनेकरूपाम् – **imām**
anekarūpām - this multifarious सृङ्गां च – **sṛṅkāṁ ca** - necklace also.

Being pleased, the generous (Lord) said to him – "Once again I give you a gift here and now. This fire will be (known) by your name only." Accept this multifarious necklace also.

Pleased with performance of Naciketas, Lord Yama gives him these extra gifts:

- He declares that this Agni (the ritual) will be known by his name as *nāciketāgniḥ*
- He also gives a colorful necklace with various gems.

What Naciketas does with the necklace is not mentioned here. However, from the later verse of the Upaniṣad (1.2.3), it will be evident that he returns the necklace.

17 त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रिभिरेत्य सन्धिं,
त्रिकर्मकृत्तरति जन्ममृत्यू ।
ब्रह्मजज्ञं देवमीड्यं विदित्वा,
निचाय्येमाꣳ शान्तिमत्यन्तमेति ॥

17 *triṇāciketāstribhirētya sandhim,*
trikarmakṛttarati janmamṛtyū ।
brahmajajñam dēvamīdyaṁ viditvā,
nicāyyēmāgṁ śāntimatyantamēti ॥

त्रिणाचिकेतः – *triṇāciketah* - One who invokes the *nāciketa*-fire thrice, त्रिभिः सन्धिम् एत्य – *tribhiḥ sandhim ētya* - who has the three types of relationship, त्रिकर्मकृत् – *trikarmakṛt* - and who performs the three basic rites तरति – *tarati* - crosses over जन्ममृत्यू – *janmamṛtyū* - birth and death. विदित्वा – *viditvā* - Having known ईड्यं देवम् – *īdyaṁ devam* - (this) adorable Lord ब्रह्मजज्ञम् – *brahmajajñam* - who is the omniscient son of Hiraṇyagarbha निचाय्य – *nicāyya* - and having meditated upon (him), अत्यन्तम् एति – *atyantam ēti* - one permanently attains इमां शान्तिम् – *imām śāntim* - this peace.

One who invokes the nāciketa-fire thrice, who has the three types of relationship, and who performs the three basic rites crosses over birth and death. Having known (this) adorable Lord who is the omniscient son of Hiraṇyagarbha and having meditated upon (him), one permanently attains this peace.

In the mantras 1.1.17 and 1.1.18, the Upaniṣad describes the benefits of this ritual especially when performed with *upāsanā* also (*virād-upāsana-sahita-Nāciketa-agniḥ-*

phalam). The results produced by the rituals depend not only on the way the ritual is performed, but also on the general lifestyle of the person performing it. If he is a person of good character, it will produce one type of result; if not, it will produce a different one. In Allopathy, the character of the doctor is not important, but in Āyurveda, it is said that the diagnosis and treatment is more effective when the doctor has *śraddhā*, *bhakti*, *ācāra* etc. It is true not only for medicine, but also for astrology. Character is important to get the maximum result out of the rituals.

The Upaniṣad says that the person who is whole (mature with inner growth) will benefit the most. The characteristics of such a person is described in this mantra.

- The person who has had three ideal relationships in life:
 - With the mother – important for mental health from pregnancy to a certain age
 - Relationship with the father
 - Relationship with the teacher – guru becomes a significant factor because of the *gurukulam* tradition. Today, because of the brief contact, there is no scope for the teacher to influence the student's character. The student lived with the guru (*antevāsi*). As a child, the student learned the ways of the guruby observation – speech, behavior, methods to handle adversity etc. The children learn more through non-verbal communication than the verbal ones

- One who performs three basic karmas prescribed in the scriptures:
 - Prayer – *yajña* or *pūjā*
 - *Adhyayanam* – the study of scriptures. It is compulsory for everyone. It is commonly misunderstood that that the paths of *karma* and *bhakti* will lead to mokṣa and that the study of the scriptures is not important.
 - *Dānam* – charity which is very much emphasized in Hinduism

Fulfilling these conditions, if a person performs the Nāciketa ritual three times in his lifetime meditating upon the most adorable *Virāt devata*, he will attain the highest heaven (*Brahmaloka*) where gets permanent peace and happiness. [Permanent is relative because *Brahmaloka*, although the highest heaven, is still a material world].

18 त्रिणाचिकेतास्त्रयमेतद्विदित्वा, य एवं विद्वांश्चिनुते नाचिकेतम् ।
स मृत्युपाशान् पुरतः प्रणोद्य, शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥

18 *triṇācikētāstrayamētadvīdvā, yaēvaṁ vidvāṅśchinute nācikētam ।
Sa mṛtyupāśān purataḥ praṇodya, śokātigō mōdatē svargalōkē ॥*

विदित्वा – *viditvā* - Having known एतत् त्रयम् – *ētat trayam* - these three, त्रिणाचिकेतः – *triṇāciketaḥ* - one should invoke the nāciketa-fire thrice. सः विद्वांश्चिनुते – *saḥ vidvānśchinute* - The upāsaka यः चिनुते – *yaḥ cinute* - who invokes नाचिकेतम् – *nācikētam* - the nāciketa-fire एवम् – *ēvam* - thus शोकातिगः – *śokādigah* - goes beyond sorrow. प्रणोद्य – *praṇodya* - Having destroyed मृत्युपाशान् – *mṛtyupāśān* - the shackles of death पुरतः – *purataḥ* - even before (death), मोदते स्वर्गलोके – *mōdatē svargalokē* - (he) rejoices in Brahmaloka.

Having known these three, one should invoke the nāciketa-fire thrice. The upāsaka who invokes the nāciketa-fire thus goes beyond sorrow. Having destroyed the shackles of death even before (death, he) rejoices in Brahmaloka.

This mantra is almost a repetition of the previous one combining the ritual with meditation.

When one performs Nāciketa-ritual three times in his lifetime observing the three rules for the bricks (described in verse 1.1.15) and kindling the Nāciketa fire, he will break the shackles of death (mortality) and limitations even before death.

After the fall of the body, he will go to *Brahmaloka* (*śukla gati* etc. described in Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad) and rejoice there. It must be remembered that *Brahmaloka* is still a material world, but in which the joys dominate and sorrows are insignificant.

19 एष तेऽग्निर्नचिकेतः स्वर्ग्यः, यमवृणीथा द्वितीयेन वरेण ।

एतमग्निं तवैव प्रवक्ष्यन्ति जनासः, तृतीयं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व ॥

19 *ēṣa tē'gnirnacikētaḥ svargyaḥ, yamavṛṇīthā dvitīyēna varēṇa |*

ētamagniṁ tavaiva pravakṣyanti janāsaḥ, tṛtīyaṁ varam nacikētō vṛṇīṣva ||

नचिकेतः – **Naciketaḥ** - Oh Naciketas! अग्निः स्वर्ग्यः – **agniḥ svargyaḥ** - The fire (ritual) which leads one to heaven ते – **tē** - (has been taught) to you. एषः यम् अवृणीथाः – **ēṣaḥ yam avṛṇītāḥ** - This is the one which you asked द्वितीयेन वरेण – **dvitīyena varēṇa** - through the second boon. जनासः प्रवक्ष्यन्ति – **janāsaḥ pravakṣyanti** - People will speak of एतम् अग्निम् – **ētam agnim** - the fire (ritual) तव एव – **tava eva** - as yours only. नचिकेतः – **Naciketaḥ** - Oh Naciketas! वृणीष्व – **vṛṇīṣva** - Choose तृतीयं वरम् – **tṛtīyaṁ varam** - the third boon.

Oh Naciketas! The fire (ritual) which leads one to heaven (has been taught) to you. This is the one which you asked through the second boon. People will speak of the fire (ritual) as yours only. Oh Naciketas! Choose the third boon.

This mantra concludes the second boon. Lord Yama says he has fulfilled the second boon by teaching him the Agni (the ritual) completely as requested. This ritual, the means to attain the heaven will be known by Naciketas' name (*nāciketāgniḥ*).

Now, Lord Yama asks him to choose the third boon.

20 येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्ये, अस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके ।

एतद्विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयाहं, वराणामेष वरस्तृतीयः ॥

20 **yēyaṁ prētē vicikitsā manuṣyē, astityēkē nāyamastīti caikē I**
ētadvidyāmanuśiṣṭastvayāhaṁ, varāṇāmēṣa varasṭṛtiyaḥ II

या इयं विचिकित्सा – **yā iyaṁ vicikitsā** - Here is a doubt मनुष्ये – **manuṣyē** - regarding a man प्रेते – **prētē** - who is dead. एके – **ēkē** - Some (people say) इति अयम् अस्ति – **iti ayam asti** - that he exists (after death) च एके – **ca ēkē** - and some (others say) इति न अस्ति – **iti na asti** - that he does not exist (after death). अनुशिष्टः त्वया – **anuśiṣṭaḥ** - Instructed by you, अहं विद्याम् – **ahaṁ vidyāṁ** - I would like to understand एतत् – **ētat** - this. वराणाम् – **varāṇām** - Among the boons, एषः तृतीयः वरः – **ēṣaḥ ṭṛtiyaḥ varaḥ** - this is the third boon.

Here is a doubt regarding a man who is dead. Some (people say) that he exists (after death) and some (others say) that he does not exist (after death). Instructed by you, I would like to understand this. Among the boons, this is the third boon.

The second boon was strictly related to *Veda-pūrva*. Through the third boon, Naciketas is asking for *jñāna*. We are now transitioning from *karma kāṇḍa* to *jñāna kāṇḍa*. This is an important mantra. The entire Kaṭhōpaniṣad is the answer to the third boon.

Naciketas expresses his doubt with regards to the dead. In short, what happens after death?

Some say that the individual survives after death. We use the expression that “he is gone” even though the dead body is right there. Therefore, we seem to believe that there is a surviving principle other than the dead body. This surviving principle is mysterious – people call it *Ātmā, jīva*, soul etc.

There are some that do not believe in surviving souls – they consider the death of the body is the death of the individuals. They are *nāstikas*.

We not able to resolve this confusion because the surviving Ātmā is not available for our knowledge. Since Ātmā is not perceptible, it remains outside the scope of scientific investigation (*apauruṣeya viṣayah*).

In summary, is there a principle other than the physical body? As the third boon, Naciketas wants to be instructed by Lord Yama on this subject so that he shall know the truth.

We have seen in Tattva Bodha that an individual consists of four factors: *sthūla, sūkṣma* and *kāraṇa śarīrams* and *Ātmā*. Of these, the physical body alone perishes at the time of death. Per the *śāstras*, the others survive, but are not perceptible. We cannot say that anything that is not perceptible is non-existent. Per the *śāstras*, Ātmā is invisibly existent. The *sūkṣma śarīra* along with *kāraṇa śarīra* travels and acquires another body but Ātmā itself does not travel.

Is Naciketas asking about *sūkṣma-kāraṇa śarīra* or Ātmā? Naciketas himself clarifies his question in the next section (1.2.14): What is that Ātmā other than the physical body that continues to exist even after the fall of the body?

21 देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं पुरा, न हि सुविज्ञेयमणुरेष धर्मः ।

अन्यं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व, मा मोपरोत्सीरति मा सृजैनम् ॥

21 **dēvairatrāpi vicikitsitaṃ purā, na hi suvijñēyamaṇurēṣa dharmaḥ |**
anyaṃ varam nacikētō vṛṇīṣva, mā mōparōtsīrati mā sṛjainam ||

अत्र – **atra** - Regarding this, **विचिकित्सितम् - vicikitsitaṃ** - doubts have been entertained
अपि देवैः- **api devaiḥ** - even by gods पुरा – **purā** - long ago. न हि सुविज्ञेयम् – **na hi suvijñēyam** - It cannot be easily understood. एषः धर्मः- **eṣaḥ dharmah** - This Ātmā अणुः
– **aṇuḥ** - is subtle. नचिकेतः – **Naciketāḥ** - Oh Naciketas! वृणीष्व – **vṛṇīṣva** - Choose अन्यं
वरम्- **anyaṃ varam** - another boon. मा उपरोत्सीः – **mā uparōtsiḥ** - Do not compel मा –
mā - me. अतिसृज एनम् – **atisṛja ēnam** - Give up this (question) मा – **mā** - (directed) to
me.

Regarding this, doubts have been entertained even by gods long ago. It cannot be easily understood. This Ātmā is subtle. Oh Naciketas! Choose another boon. Do not compel me. Give up this (question directed) to me.

In mantra 1.1.20, Naciketas asks Lord Yama for the self-knowledge. Lord Yama is a *jñāni* who also possesses the skill to communicate this knowledge (to a qualified student). He is a *śrotriya-brahmniṣṭhaḥ*. He is ready to give this wisdom, but is Naciketas ready to receive it? There is a risk in teaching an unqualified student. If the knowledge gets in the wrong hands, a wrong tradition will be formed and the misunderstood teaching will be transmitted down that tradition. This is the reason the teaching was kept in tight wraps by the brahmins, but their intent was misunderstood by the others. Their misunderstanding was further reinforced by the later brahmins who mishandled the intent. There can be only one right tradition and many wrong ones. If not controlled properly, over time, one cannot distinguish the right from the wrong.

A person fit to receive knowledge is called an *adhikārī* in the *śāstras*. The gurus are instructed to give the teachings only to an *adhikārī* (Bhagavad Gītā - verse 18.67). The *adhikārī* must possess the four-fold qualifications specified in Tattva Bodha (*sādhana catustaya sampannah*):

- **Discrimination** (*viveka*) that self-knowledge alone can give complete freedom and everything else will not.
- **Dispassion** (*vairagya*) is a natural consequence of *viveka*. Once *viveka* sets in, a person will develop *vairagya* for impermanent things. Any goal other than self-knowledge becomes secondary. It is not hatred towards the worldly things, but it is the understanding that worldly things cannot solve human problems.
- **Discipline** consists of integration of the personality. The physical body, sense organs of knowledge and actions, the mind and the intellect should be healthy and function in an integrated manner.

- **Desire** for self-knowledge is intense just as a person underwater has the desire to come out and breathe.

In the following verses, Lord Yama will attempt to verify whether Naciketas has these four qualifications. He first tests whether Naciketas has the desire (*tīvra mumukṣatvam*). The teacher deliberately poses obstacles to the students; if the student is not serious, he will use these obstacles as excuse and drop his pursuit of *jñāna*. If the desire is intense, one will persevere at all costs. Lord Yama tests Naciketas' desire by first discouraging him from gaining this knowledge.

Ātmā is referred to as *dharmah* in this verse. The word *dharmah* etymologically means that which sustains the creation. It is derived from the root *dhṛ* – to sustain. (*Dhāraṇāt iti dharmah*). Ethics and morality are also called *dharmah* because only they keep the society together. If the value system breaks down, that society cannot survive. Ātmā is also called *dharmah* because it is the ultimate substratum of the creation; it sustains the creation as *śṛṣṭi*, *sthiti* and *laya kāraṇa*. Bhagavan can be called *dharmah* (one of the names in *Viṣṇusahasranāma*). We take *dharmah* = Ātmā because, in the previous verse, Naciketas asked for *Ātmavidyā*.

Ātmā is analogous to atom because both are subtle and not available for experience by sense organs. Therefore, it cannot be easily grasped. Even the gods are not able to understand Ātmā even though they have a much better environment to pursue knowledge. In Kenopaniṣad, Agni, Vāyu and Indra could not recognize Brahman even in the *saguṇa* form; how can anyone recognize him in the *nirguṇa* form? Lord Yama tries to discourage Naciketas from pursuing this boon and urges him to choose another one (that is more practical).

22 देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं किल,
त्वं च मृत्यो यन्न सुज्ञेयमात्थ ।
वक्ता चास्य त्वाद्गन्यो न लभ्यः,

नान्यो वरस्तुल्य एतस्य कश्चित् ॥

22 **dēvairatrāpi vicikitsitaṁ kila,**
tvam ca mṛtyō yanna sujñēyamāttha ।
vaktā cāsyā tvādr̥ganyō na labhyaḥ,
nānyō varastulya ētasya kaścit ॥

अत्र किल – **atra kila** - Regarding this indeed, विचिकित्सितम् – **vicikitsitam** - doubt has been entertained अपि देवैः – **api dēvaiḥ** - even by gods. मृत्यो – **Mṛtyō** - Oh Lord Yama! त्वं च आत्थ – **tvam ca āttha** - You also say यद् न सुज्ञेयम् – **yad na sujñēyam** - that this cannot be easily understood. च – **ca** - Moreover, त्वादृक् – **tvādr̥k** - like you, अन्यः वक्ता – **anyaḥ vaktā** - another teacher अस्य – **asya** - of this (subject) न लभ्यः – **na labhyaḥ** - cannot be found. न कश्चिद् अन्यः वरः – **na kaścid anyāḥ varaḥ** - No other boon तुल्यः एतस्य – **tulyaḥ ētasya** - is equal to this.

Regarding this indeed, doubt has been entertained even by gods. Oh Lord Yama! You also say that this cannot be easily understood. Moreover, like you, another teacher of this (subject) cannot be found. No other boon is equal to this.

Naciketas replies to Lord Yama in this mantra. We see the evidence of Naciketas' brilliance because he uses the same reason that Lord Yama used to discourage him as the one to pursue jñāna as the only worthy boon. The reason for discouragement becomes the encouragement.

Even the gods are not clear about this knowledge and therefore, it is extremely rare. Since it is rare, it must be valuable and therefore it is worth seeking. So Naciketas wants it.

This teaching is not easily accessible which means that Naciketas cannot acquire this knowledge by himself. He needs a qualified guru. Compared to a human guru, a celestial guru is better. Even among gods, Lord Yama is the best choice because the question is centered on life after death. Lord Yama's duty is to destroy living beings and

so, he should know what is destroyed and what is not. Naciketas asserts that he can never get another (great) guru like Lord Yama on this subject.

Naciketas concludes in this verse that there no other boon equal to this.

Here Naciketas displays his *tīvra mumukṣatvam* in his response in this verse.

At the end of the Bhagavad Gītā, Krishna lists four qualifications required to study the Vedānta. He emphasizes one of them *śuśrūṣa (śrotum icchā)* – the intense desire to listen to the teachings coming from a competent guru. This should be as intense as it is for breathing.

23 शतायुषः पुत्रपौत्रान्वृणीष्व, बहून्पशून्हस्तिहिरण्यमश्वान् ।
भूमेर्महदायातनां वृणीष्व स्वयं च जीव शरदो यावदिच्छसि ॥

23 śatāyusaḥ putrapautrānvṛṇīṣva, bahūnpaśūnhstihiraṇyamāśvān ।
bhūmērmahadāyātanāṃ vṛṇīṣva svayaṃ ca jīva śaradō yāvadicchasi ॥

वृणीष्व - Choose पुत्रपौत्रान् - sons and grandsons with शतायुषः - hundred years of life, बहून् पशून् many animals, हस्तिहिरण्यम् - elephants, gold अश्वान् - and horses. वृणीष्व - Choose महद् आयतनम्- a vast kingdom भूमेः - on earth. स्वयं च जीव- May you yourself live यावत् शरदः - for as many year as इच्छसि - you want.

Choose sons and grandsons with hundred years of life, many animals, elephants, gold and horses. Choose a vast kingdom on earth. May you yourself live for as many year as you want.

Now Lord Yama gives the second test in this mantra. He is testing whether Naciketas has dispassion (*vairāgya*) for material wealth and comfort. The intensity of the desire is indicated by what one is willing to sacrifice for fulfilling that desire. The level of sacrifice is directly proportional to the intensity of desire. Lord Yama is tempting Naciketas by offering various worldly gifts in place of *Ātmajñāna*.

Lord Yama offers gold, cattle, horses and elephants along with a great kingdom to house them. The Lord of Death also offers to give him many children and grandchildren and a very long life for everyone to enjoy together.

This is a self-examination *śloka* - to know the intensity of your desire, you can read it and measure your *vairagya*.

24 एतत्तुल्यं यदि मन्यसे वरं, वृणीष्व वित्तं चिरजीविकां च ।

महाभूमौ नचिकेतस्त्वमेधि, कामानां त्वा कामभाजं करोमि ॥

24 *ētattulyaṁ yadi manyasē varaṁ, vṛṇiṣva vittaṁ cirajīvikāṁ ca ।*

Mahābhūmau nacikētastvamēdhi, kāmānāṁ tvā kāmabhājaṁ karōmi ॥

यदिमन्यसे- If you think of वरम् - (any other) boon एतत्तुल्यम् - equal to this, वृणीष्व - choose (that) वित्तम् - (along with) wealth चचिरजीविकाम्- and long life. त्वमेधि- May you become (an emperor) महाभूमौ - on this great earth. नचिकेतः - Oh Naciketas! करोमित्वा - I shall make you कामभाजम् - the enjoyer कामानाम् - of all the pleasures.

If you think of (any other) boon equal to this, choose (that along with) wealth and long life. May you become (an emperor) on this great earth. Oh Naciketas! I shall make you the enjoyer of all the pleasures.

Lord Yama continues with his temptations to cover more options in case the times have changed and the needs are different. He encourages Naciketas to ask for anything equivalent to what he has offered and add more to it to meet the needs of the current times. For example, these days we don't travel by horses and elephants, but by BMW, Ferrari etc.

The indirect teaching is that to gain *Ātmajñāna*, one should be mentally ready to sacrifice these things. This does not mean it is necessary to sacrifice them immediately,

but he should be prepared to sacrifice if needed. The one who is prepared has *tīvra vairāgyam*.

25 ये ये कामा दुर्लभा मर्त्यलोके, सर्वान्कामश्छन्दतः प्रार्थयस्व ।

इमा रामाः सरथाः सतूर्याः, न हीदृशा लम्बनीया मनुष्यैः ।

आभिर्मत्प्रत्ताभिः परिचारयस्व, नचिकेतो मरणं मानुप्राक्षीः ॥

25 *yē yē kāmā durlabhā martyalōkē, sarvānkāmagṃ śchandataḥ prārthayasva ।*

Imā rāmāḥ sarathāḥ satūryāḥ, na hīdṛśā lambhaniyā manuṣyaiḥ ।

ābhirmatprattābhiḥ paricārayasva, nacikētō maraṇam mānuprākṣiḥ ॥

छन्दतः प्रार्थयस्व – *chandataḥ prārthayasva* - Freely choose सर्वान् कामान् – *sarvān kāmān* - all (those) pleasures ये ये कामाः दुर्लभाः – *yē yē kāmāḥ durlabhāḥ* - whichever be the pleasures not attainable मर्त्यलोके – *martyalōkē* - in the world of mortals. इमाः रामाः – *imāḥ rāmāḥ* - Here are the (celestial) women सरथाः – *sarathāḥ* - with (their) vehicles सतूर्याः – *satūryāḥ* - and musical instruments. ईदृशाः – *īdṛśāḥ* - Such (women) न लम्बनीयाः हि- *na lambhaniyāḥ hi* - cannot be attained at all मनुष्यैः – *manuṣyaiḥ* - by human beings. परिचारयस्व – *paricārayasva* - May you get (yourself) served आभिः मत्प्रत्ताभिः – *abhi matprattābhiḥ* - by them who are offered by me. नचिकेतः – *Naciketaḥ* - Oh Nacikatas! मा अनुप्राक्षीः – *mā anuprākṣi* - Do not ask मरणम् – *marāṇam* - (about) death.

Freely choose all (those) pleasures whichever be the pleasures not attainable in the world of mortals. Here are the (celestial) women with (their) vehicles and musical instruments. Such (women) cannot be attained at all by human beings. May you get (yourself) served by them who are offered by me. Oh Nacikatas! Do not ask (about) death.

Lord Yama continues to tempt Naciketas in this mantra by offering additional free gifts (*iha loka sukham*). He offers sense objects (*kāmāḥ* – sense pleasures) that are extremely rare on the earth and that require extraordinary wealth or power to acquire and enjoy them.

Lord Yama offers more in the form of celestial pleasures (*paraloka sukham*) that are *dharma-puruṣārtha* (acquired through *puṇyam*). *Paraloka sukham* is also *artha-kāma-puruṣārtha* (wealth and pleasures), but of the higher worlds – here he offers beautiful celestial women serving and entertaining him with sweet voices, with their vehicles and musical instruments.

In summary, Lord Yama asks Naciketas to choose between sense pleasures and self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is abstract to most of the people and therefore, it will be difficult for them to choose it.

26 श्वोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तकैतत्, सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः ।

अपि सर्वं जीवितमल्पमेव, तवैव वाहास्तव नृत्यगीते ॥

26 *śvōbhāvā martyasya yadantakaitat, sarvēndriyāṇām jarayanti tējaḥ ।*

Api sarvaṁ jīvitamalpamēva, tavaiva vāhāstava nṛtyagītē ॥

अन्तक - Oh Yama! श्वोभावाः - All these ephemeral (things) जरयन्ति - weaken यद् एतत् तेजः - the power सर्वेन्द्रियाणाम् - of all the sense organs मर्त्यस्य - of the mortal (human being). अपि - Moreover, सर्वं जीवितम् - every form of life अल्पम् एव - is short only. तव वाहाः - Let all your vehicles, नृत्यगीते - dance and music तव एव - be yours only.

Oh Yama! All these ephemeral (things) weaken the power of all the sense organs of the mortal (human being). Moreover, every form of life is short only. Let all your vehicles, dance and music be yours only.

Naciketas expresses disinterest in all the sense pleasures offered by Lord Yama and declines them. So far, he has demonstrated that he has two qualities required to pursue *jñāna* – *mumukṣatvam* (desire) and *vairāgyam* (dispassion).

Naciketas is a boy of 8 or 9 years; we may think that he rejected because he is not mature enough to appreciate these sense pleasures. [A child chooses a candy bar over a \$100 note – he does not know the value of money]. True renunciation is born out of

discrimination; only this will stand the test of time. Naciketas rejects them because he is mature enough to understand the limitations of sense organs and their inability to enjoy pleasures forever.

The longevity of ephemeral things is unpredictable. If one's happiness depends on the unpredictable, it will only cause anxiety and not complete enjoyment. The Time Principle (*kālatattvam*) puts an end to everything. Even if the sense pleasures are permanent, the sense organs weaken over time and lose the capacity to enjoy. Every form of life is limited. Even in *Brahmaloka*, one may have a longer life, but not permanence.

It is evident in this verse that Naciketas is rejecting these out of discrimination (*nitya-anitya-vastu viveka*) and not out of immaturity. He demonstrates in this verse that he has the third required qualification, *viveka*.

27 न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यः, लप्स्यामहे वित्तमद्राक्ष्म चेत्त्वा ।

जीविष्यामो यावदीशिष्यसि त्वं, वरस्तु मे वरणीयः स एव ॥

27 **na vittēna tarpaṇīyō manuṣyaḥ, lapsyāmahē vittamadrākṣma cēttvā |**
jīviṣyāmō yāvadīśiṣyasi tvam, varastu mē varaṇīyaḥ sa ēva ||

मनुष्यः – **manuṣyaḥ** - Man न तर्पणीयः – **na tarpaṇīya** - cannot be satisfied वित्तेन – **vittēna** - with wealth. चेद् अद्राक्ष्म त्वा – **chēd adrākṣma tvā** - Since I have seen you, लप्स्यामहे – **labhsyāmahē** - I shall get वित्तम् – **vittam** - wealth. यावत् – **yāvat** - As long as त्वम् ईशिष्यसि – **tvam īśisyasi** - you rule, जीविष्यामः – **jīviṣyāmaḥ** - I shall live. सः वरः एव – **saḥ varaḥ ēva** - That boon alone वरणीयः – **varaṇīyaḥ** - is to be chosen मे तु – **mē tu** - by me indeed.

Man, cannot be satisfied with wealth. Since I have seen you, I shall get wealth. As long as you rule, I shall live. That boon alone is to be chosen by me indeed.

Naciketas is displaying his discrimination further. Even though he is not chronologically aged, he is intellectually mature.

One cannot be satisfied by money. Money cannot buy happiness, fullness, peace, security or immortality. Otherwise all the rich will be uniformly happy and poor will be uniformly unhappy; this we know is not true. There is no cause-effect relationship between wealth and happiness. *Happiness does not depend upon what I have, but on what I am. I must therefore concentrate on what I am.*

Even though money cannot happiness, Naciketas recognizes that money is required to conduct life. Money can give food, clothing, etc. Health, wealth and wisdom are equally required in life. That is why we worship Durga for health, Lakshmi for wealth and Saraswati for wisdom. He says intelligently that he needs money, but he does not want to waste his boon on it. After all, he will get money as gift (or salary) from Lord Yama any way; why would he send him back empty-handed?

28 अजीर्यताममृतानामुपेत्य जीर्यन्मर्त्यः क्वधःस्थः प्रजानन् ।

अभिधायन्वर्णरतिप्रमोदान्, अतिदीर्घे जीविते को रमेत ॥

28 **ajīryatāmamṛtānāmupētya jīryanmartyaḥ kvadhaḥsthaḥ prajānan |**
abhidhyāyanvarṇaratipramōdān, atidīrghē jīvitē kō ramēta ||

अभिधायन् – **abhidhyāyan** - Closely examining **वर्णरतिप्रमोदान्** – **varṇaratipramodān** - the pleasures born of music and sport **प्रजानन्** – **prajānan** - (and) being aware of (their limitations), **कः जीर्यन् मर्त्यः** – **kaḥ jīryan martyaḥ** - which decaying mortal, **क्वधःस्थः** – **kvadhaḥ sthaḥ** - living down on the earth, **रमेत** – **ramēta** - will delight **अतिदीर्घे जीविते** – **atidīrgha jīvitē** - in a long life, **उपेत्य** – **upētya** - after approaching the **अजीर्यताम् अमृतानाम्** – **ajīryatām amṛtānām** - undecaying immortal ones?

Closely examining the pleasures born of music and sport (and) being aware of (their limitations), which decaying mortal, living down on the earth, will delight in a long life, after approaching the undecaying immortal ones?

Naciketas further argues that he now has the rarest and ideal opportunity for self-knowledge. As one living on the earth, he will be afflicted with old age and death (*jarā* and *maraṇam*). He has closely examined the sense pleasures born of music and sport and has clearly understood their limitations. He is certain that they cannot free him from these afflictions.

He now has access to the person who has conquered mortality (Lord Yama is a *jñānī*) and who has the remedy for this disease (*jarā-maraṇam*). After this, which intelligent person will choose the so-called long life in heaven or on the earth? Naciketas does not want to pass up this rare opportunity.

29 यस्मिन्निदं विचिकित्सन्ति मृत्यो,
यत्साम्पराये महति ब्रूहि नस्तत् ।
योऽयं वरो गूढमनुप्रविष्टः,
नान्यं तस्मान्नचिकेता वृणीते ॥

29 *yasminnidam vicikitsanti mṛtyō,*
Yatsāmparāyē mahati brūhi nastat ।
Yō'yaṁ varō gūḍhamanupraviṣṭaḥ,
nānyam tasmānnacikētā vṛṇītē ॥

मृत्यो – *Mṛtyō* - Oh Lord Yama! ब्रूहि नः – *brūhi naḥ* - Tell me तत् – *tat* - that यस्मिन् – *yasmin* - regarding which विचिकित्सन्ति – *vicikitsanti* - (people) entertain doubt इदम् – *idam* - in this manner यत् – *yat* - and which is महति साम्पराये – *mahati sāmparāyē* - dealing with the great life after death. नचिकेताः – *Naciketāḥ* - Naciketas न वृणीते – *na vṛṇīte* - does not choose (any boon) अन्यं तस्मात् – *anyam tasmāt* - other than that. यः अयं वरः – *yaḥ ayam varah* - This boon अनुप्रविष्टः गूढम् – *anu praviṣṭaḥ gūḍham* - has become inaccessible.

Oh, Lord Yama! Tell me that regarding which (people) entertain doubt in this manner and which is dealing with the great life after death. Naciketas does not choose (any boon) other than that. This boon has become inaccessible.

Naciketas concludes in this verse that he does not want any boon other than *Ātmavidyā*. He gives the reasons for his choice:

- This boon (of self-knowledge) is not ordinary; it is a hidden wisdom that is not easily accessible. Lord Yama himself pointed out that even the Devas are not sure about that.
- Everyone has doubts regarding this self-knowledge; confusion prevails everywhere. We have twelve systems of philosophy of which six accept the authority of the Vedas (*āstika darśanam*) and the others do not (*nāstika darśanam*). Each philosophy has its own concept of *Ātmā*.
- This knowledge deals with life after death. This great *Ātmā* is beyond the body and empirical life and even beyond science (*apauruṣeya viśayaḥ*)

Naciketas will not settle for anything else, especially when he has such a rare qualified guru who can teach him the vaguest of vague subjects: Who am I?

All these mantras (1.1.21 through 1.1.29) reveal *viveka*, *vairāgya* and *tīvra mumukṣatvam* of Naciketas. What about discipline? He has displayed that characteristic by listening to Lord Yama in a focused manner (he even replayed the Agni ritual perfectly). He waited for Lord Yama without food for three days (*titikṣā*). [He is a *śamādi-ṣatka-sampannaḥ*].

Before teaching, Lord Yama will glorify the student in the next verses.

॥ इति काठकोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये प्रथमा वल्ली ॥

Thus (ends) the first section of first chapter

द्वितीयावल्ली

1.4 SECOND SECTION

INTRODUCTION

Naciketas passes the tests given by Lord Yama, thereby establishing that he has the right qualifications to pursue *jñāna*. Just as a student is happy to get a competent teacher, the latter is also happy to get a competent student like Naciketas. In this section, the first 13 verses, Lord Yama glorifies the student in general and then Naciketas particularly (*śiṣya-stutiḥ*). This will be followed by glorification of the teacher (*ācārya-stutiḥ*) and then of the teaching itself (*vidyā-stutiḥ*). The teaching between a rare teacher and a rare student is also rare (*sarvam āścaryam*). This will be the topic in the first half of the second section. *Brahmavidyā* introduction starts in verse 14.

१ अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यदुतैव प्रेयः, ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषश्च सिनीतः ।
तयोः श्रेय आददानस्य साधु भवति, हीयतेऽर्थाद्य उ प्रेयो वृणीते ॥

1 **anyacchrēyō'nyadutaiva prēyaḥ, tē ubhē nānāarthē puruṣaḥ sinītaḥ ।
tayōḥ śrēya ādadānasya sadhu bhavati, hīyatē'rthādya u prēyō vṛṇītē ॥**

श्रेयः अन्यत् – **śrēyaḥ anyat** - Śreyas is one (path) उत – **uta** - and प्रेयः एव अन्यत् – **prēyaḥ ēva anyat** - preyas is quite another. ते उभे – **tē ubhē** - Those two, नानार्थे – **nānāarthē** - with different destinations, सिनीतः पुरुषम् – **sinītaḥ puruṣam** - bind a person. भवति साधु – **bhavati sādhu** - There is felicity आददानस्य – **ādadānasya** - for one who chooses श्रेयः – **śrēyaḥ** - śreyas तयोः – **tayōḥ** - between the two. यः वृणीते – **yaḥ vṛṇītē** - One who chooses प्रेयः – **prēyaḥ** - preyas उ हीयते - **u hīyate** - is indeed deprived अर्थात् – **arthāt** - of the (supreme) goal.

Śreyas is one (path) and preyas is quite another. Those two, with different destinations, bind a person. There is felicity for one who chooses śreyas between the two. One who chooses preyas is indeed deprived of the (supreme) goal.

In this verse, Lord Yama is glorifying the Vedantic student in general. *Veda-pūrva* deals with varieties of karmas – physical (*kāyika*), verbal (*vācika*) and mental (*mānasa*). *Veda-pūrva* is the voluminous collection of prescriptions for action (karma). These karmas are performed for gaining sense pleasures by improving the sense objects, sense organs and the environment. By improving these factors, one can improve life with respect to worldly pleasures (*anātma-sukham*).

In contrast, the *Vedānta* does not deal with karma, but with knowledge (*jñāna*) and its benefits (*jñānaphalam*); the latter is in the form of *Ātma-sukham*. In *anātma-sukham*, the focus is on what I have; in the case of *Ātma-sukham*, the focus is not on what I have, but on what I am. One deals with the transformation of the surroundings and the other with the transformation of the self. *Anātma-sukham* makes one an extrovert, while *Ātma-sukham* draws one inward.

Lord Yama names the path of action (*karma mārga*) as *preyaḥ* and the path of knowledge (*jñāna mārga*) as *śreyaḥ*. They are also called *pravṛtti mārgaḥ* and *nivṛtti mārgaḥ* respectively. The *karma mārga* is called *preyaḥ* because it appeals to the common man's intellect which is instinctive (natural). *Preyaḥ* literally means naturally liked by one. Possessing objects is instinctive since birth and our happiness depends upon what we possess. It depends upon the external factors. *Jñāna mārga* is called *śreyaḥ* because it is good for everyone.

Preyaḥ is attractive and therefore is desired while *śreyaḥ* is good and therefore is desirable. One cannot follow both as primary goals simultaneously. By going towards one, you will move away from the other. The one who follows *preyaḥ* will be deprived of the supreme goal (Brahman). On the other hand, while following *śreyaḥ*, the secondary material goals may be fulfilled.

There are only two paths. Bhakti yoga is not a separate path. If bhakti is expressed in the form of *pūja*, *japa* and meditation, it falls under *karma mārga*. If it is expressed in the form of enquiring into the nature of God, it is *jñāna mārga*.

२ श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतः, तौ सम्परीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः ।
श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभी प्रेयसो वृणीते, प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षेमाद् वृणीते ॥

2 śrēyaśca prēyaśca manuṣyamētaḥ, tau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ ।
Śrēyō hi dhīrō'bhī prēyasō vṛṇītē, prēyō mandō yōgakṣēmād vṛṇītē ॥

श्रेयः च प्रेयः च - śrēyaḥ ca prēyaḥ ca - Śreyas and preyas एतः मनुष्यम् - ētaḥ manuṣyam - approach the human being. सम्परीत्य तौ - samparītya tau - Having very clearly considered them, धीरः - dhīraḥ - the discriminative (person) विविनक्ति - vivinakti - distinguishes (them). हि धीरः - hi dhīraḥ - Indeed, the discriminative one अभिवृणीते - abhivṛṇītē - chooses श्रेयः - śrēyaḥ - śreyas प्रेयसः - prēyasah - rather than preyas. मन्दः - mandah - The indiscriminate one वृणीते प्रेयः - vṛṇītē prēyaḥ - chooses preyas योगक्षेमाद् - yōgakṣēmād - for the sake of acquisition and preservation.

Śreyas and preyas approach the human being. Having very clearly considered them, the discriminative (person) distinguishes (them). Indeed, the discriminative one chooses śreyas rather than preyas. The indiscriminate one chooses preyas for the sake of acquisition and preservation.

Lord Yama further clarifies the same topic to glorify the student. *Preya* and *Śreya mārgas* present themselves to the human beings. Only the humans have the freewill to choose between them. Because the humans have the choice, they also have the conflict.

The intelligent and discriminative human being, having clearly considered them, understands the limitations of *karmaphalam* that has the three inherent defects: pain, dissatisfaction and attachment. He understands that the defect is not with the sense objects, but with his own attitude towards them. Such a person chooses *śreyaḥ* over *preyaḥ*.

On the other hand, the dull-minded one (*aviveki*) spends all his life focusing on acquiring and protecting his possessions. Such a person has no time to lead a worthy

life. The intelligent one leaves the responsibility of acquisition and protection of possessions to the Lord (*yogakṣema*) as instructed by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gītā (verse 9.22).

Note: An intelligent person chooses *jñāna mārga*. Karma yoga comes under *jñāna mārga* because it is not for material acquisition, but for the preparation for self-enquiry (*ātma vicāra* or *śāstra-vicāra*). *Karma mārga* consists of all *sakāma karmas* that are meant for sense pleasures only. Any karma meant for the purification of the mind (*citta śuddhi*) comes under *jñāna mārga*.

३ स त्वं प्रियान्प्रियरूपाः च कामान्,
अभिधाययन्नचिकितोऽत्यसाक्षीः ।
नैताः सृङ्गं वित्तमयीमवाप्तः,
यस्यां मज्जन्ति बहवो मनुष्याः ॥

3 sa tvam priyānpriyarūpāḥ ca kāmān,
abhidhyāyannacikitōstyasrākṣīḥ ।
naitāḥ sṛṅgāṃ vittamayīmavāptaḥ,
yasyām majjanti bahavō manuṣyāḥ ॥

नचिकेतः – **Naciketaḥ** - Oh Naciketas! अभिधायन् – **abhidhyāyan** - Having considered प्रियान् – **priyān** - the pleasing च प्रियरूपान् – **ca priyarūpān** - and attractive कामान् – **kāmān** - sense-objects, सः त्वम् अत्यसाक्षीः – **saḥ tvam atyasrākṣīḥ** - you discarded (them). न अवाप्तः – **na avāptaḥ** - (You) did not accept एतां वित्तमयीम् – **ētām vittamīyam** - this precious सृङ्गाम् – **sṛṅgām** - necklace यस्याम् – **yasyām** - in which बहवः मनुष्याः – **bahavaḥ manuṣyāḥ** - many people मज्जन्ति – **majjanti** - get immersed.

Oh Naciketas! Having considered the pleasing and attractive sense-objects, you discarded (them). (you) did not accept this precious necklace in which many people get immersed.

In the previous two verses, Lord Yama glorified the seekers of mokṣa in general. Now in this verse, he praises Naciketas as a *dhīraḥ*. He gives the following reasons for such a praise:

- Naciketas rejected the pleasing and attractive sense objects that was offered as free gifts
- He did this after careful consideration and not like a child who does not know the value of these. Naciketas is a mature person who displayed discretion-based dispassion and not suppression-based rejection.
- He did not accept the additional gift, the precious necklace (verse 1.1.16). We did not then see Naciketas' response in that verse; we are seeing it here through Lord Yama's words.
- Most people get carried away by these expensive material possessions. Naciketas is not interested and therefore he has dispassion born of discrimination (*viveka-janya-vairāgyam*).

४ दूरमेते विपरीते विषूची, अविद्या या च विद्येति ज्ञाता ।
विद्याभीप्सिनं नचिकेतसं मन्ये, न त्वा कामा बहवोऽलोलुपन्त ॥

4 *dūramētē viparītē viṣūcī, avidyā yā ca vidyēti jñātā |*
vidyābhīpsinaṁ nacikētasam manyē, na tvā kāmā bahavo'lolupanta ||

एतेविषूची – *ētē viṣūcī* - These two diverse courses, या ज्ञाता – *yā jñātā* - which are known इति अविद्या – *iti avidyā* - as ignorance च विद्या – *ca vidyā* - and knowledge, दूरं विपरीते – *dūram viparītē* - are far divergent. मन्ये नचिकेतसम् – *manyē Nacitketasam* - I consider Naciketas विद्याभीप्सिनम् – *vidyābhīpsinam* - to be a seeker of knowledge. बहवः कामाः – *bahavaḥ kāmāḥ* - Numerous sense-objects न अलोलुपन्त – *na alolupanta* - did not tempt त्वा – *tvā* - you.

These two diverse courses, which are known as ignorance and knowledge, are far divergent. I consider Naciketas to be a seeker of knowledge. Numerous sense-objects did not tempt you.

Lord Yama describes the problem that most people face. The paths of *preyaḥ* and *śreyaḥ* present themselves to a human being. One may wonder why he should make a choice; why not pursue both paths? Unfortunately, it is not possible because they are diagonally opposite. One must reject one to follow the other [going north means going away from south]. *Preyaḥ* or *karma mārga* perpetuates *avidyā* and *jñāna mārga* promotes *vidyā*. *Karma mārga* is *avidyā mārga* for the following reasons:

- Self-ignorance implies that one identifies with the body-mind complex. *Kartā* performs karma due to self-ignorance. This is the main technical reason.
- When a person takes to *karma mārga*, his objective is to increase his possessions. Such a person relies on external support (wealth, people, status etc.) to be secure and happy. This sense of incompleteness is the fundamental reason for karma. Since *karma mārga* leads from dependence to dependence and insecurity to insecurity, it is called *avidyā mārga*. *Jñāna mārga* questions the basic assumption that one needs external support. *Jñāna mārga* is strengthening your legs while *karma mārga* is procuring a variety of crutches. The more walking sticks you have, the weaker your legs are (and will get).

One should gradually train himself to be independent of external support. One may take the (cautious) risk initially and grow into it. Any growth causes pain. The baby is comfortably in the womb dependent on the mother. However, at the end of nine months, it has no choice but to come out and face the world. There is a tremendous feeling of insecurity when the baby comes out because the mother's heartbeats that it is used to is no longer audible. [That is why they recommend the mother to hold the baby close to the chest so that it can hear the heartbeat]. There is pain when the child goes out to look for a job after graduating, but he/she must do it. In *preyomārgaḥ*, one avoids risks by being dependent on things, while in *śreyomārgaḥ*, one faces the challenge and get freedom as its benefit.

Lord Yama considers Naciketas to be a seeker of knowledge because he chose *vidyā* without allowing the temptations to distract him.

५ अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानः, स्वयं धीराः पण्डितं मन्यमानाः ।
दन्द्रम्यमाणाः परियन्ति मूढाः, अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥

5 avidyāyāmantarē vartamānaḥ, svayaṁ dhīrāḥ paṇḍitaṁ manyamānāḥ ।
dandramyamāṇāḥ pariyaṁti mūḍhāḥ, andhēnaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ ॥

अन्तरे वर्तमानाः – **antarē vartamānāḥ** - Steeped in अविद्यायाम् – **avidyāyām** - ignorance
मन्यमानाः – **manyamānāḥ** - (and) considering स्वयं धीराः – **svayaṁ dhīrāḥ** - themselves
to be wise पण्डितम् – **paṇḍitam** - (and) learned, मूढाः – **mūḍhāḥ** - the deluded ones
परियन्ति – **pariyaṁti** - move about, दन्द्रम्यमाणाः – **dandramyamāṇāḥ** - wandering all
over यथा – **yathā** - like अन्धाः – **andhāḥ** - the blind नीयमानाः – **nīyamānāḥ** - led अन्धेन
एव – **andhēna ēva** - by the blind.

Steeped in ignorance (and) considering themselves to be wise (and) learned, the deluded ones move about, wandering all over like the blind led by the blind.

To glorify the discriminative student (*viveki*), Lord Yama contrasts him with an indiscriminative one (*aviveki*). The *avivekis* continue to exist in their delusion because they are afraid of dropping their dependence (crutches). They consider the ones who provide support as worthy of following. They are not convinced of the benefits of dropping the crutches. Lord Yama strongly criticizes the ignorant:

- They are steeped in ignorance and delusion. These people are neither capable of discerning this fact themselves nor they are willing to expose themselves to the teachings.
- They think that they are intelligent and learned. Even though they are ignorant, they have this ego or intellectual arrogance that stops them from going to the learned. They pay the price for their misconceptions.
- They wander from dependence to dependence [Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad calls them tormented].

- They wander about not only in one birth (*janma*), but from *janma* to *janma*. A human birth is rare and these people waste it
- They are deluded
- They are like the blind led by the blind because they follow only the materialistic people

Science or reasoning can help in revealing objective truth and not the subjective truth. If I want to see my eyes, I must surrender to the mirror; similarly, if I want to see my own nature, I must surrender to the scriptures. The *aviveki's* arrogance does not allow him to do this.

Verse 1.2.8 of Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad elaborately discusses this.

६ न साम्परायः प्रतिभाति बालं, प्रमाद्यन्तं वित्तमोहेन मूढम् ।
अयं लोको नास्ति पर इति मानी, पुनः पुनर्वशमापद्यते मे ॥

**6 na sāmparāyaḥ pratibhāti bālaṁ, pramādyantaṁ vittamōhēna mūḍham ।
ayaṁ lōkō nāsti para iti mānī, punaḥ punarvaśamāpadyatē mē ॥**

साम्परायः – **sāmparāyaḥ** - Scriptural discipline न प्रतिभाति – **na pratibhāti** - does not appeal बालम् – **bālam** - to the indiscriminate, प्रमाद्यन्तम् – **pramādyantam** - negligent one मूढम् – **mūḍham** - who is deluded वित्तमोहेन – **vittamōhēna** - due to (his) infatuation for wealth. अयं लोकः – **ayaṁ lokaḥ** - “This world (alone) is; अस्ति न परः – **asti na paraḥ** - there is none beyond” – इति मानी – **iti mānī** - thus thinking, आपद्यते – **āpadyatē** - he comes मे वशम् – **mē vaśam** - under my grip पुनः पुनः – **punaḥ punaḥ** - again and again.

Scriptural discipline does not appeal to the indiscriminate, negligent one who is deluded due to (his) infatuation for wealth. “This world (alone) is; there is none beyond” – thus thinking, he comes under my grip again and again.

All the instruments of knowledge at our disposal are perceptive instruments (*pauruṣeya pramāṇam*) that provide data. We use our intellect to analyze the data. Although we cannot see gravity when an apple is falling, our intellect can discern the law of gravitation. The amount of knowledge acquired through the intellect is greater than that through the perceptive instruments. Perception and intellect together produce a vast amount of objective knowledge.

Each *pramāṇa* has its own unique field and it can operate only in that field. This is the fundamental law. Perception and intellect can operate only within the objective world (*pauruṣeya viśayaḥ*). The things that are outside of the *pauruṣeya pramāṇa* are called *apauruṣeya viśayāḥ*. The *apauruṣeya viśayāḥ* are classified into two:

- The laws of karma – the laws that govern the universe – *punya* and *pāpa* topics
- Brahman – Truth or Reality

Therefore, for these two, one should not rely upon the sense organs and intellect, but upon the *apauruṣeya pramāṇa*– the scriptures. Use the appropriate *pramāṇa* for the knowledge sought. The unintelligent fail to do this.

Lord Yama describes the characteristics of the unintelligent one and his fate:

- The indiscriminate one does not learn the scriptures. Therefore, he does not introspect and has wrong priorities in life
- He is careless or negligent because he does not know the value of the rare human life (no other life offers mokṣa). The first and last part of life are practically useless where we are immature in the former and infirm and incapable in the latter. We only have a few years in between. If we are careless in these years, there is no greater foolishness.
- He is negligent because he is carried away (deluded) by the infatuation of wealth that gives him physical comfort and entertainment. He has no time for introspection.
- Therefore, he believes only in this world; he does not believe in the next *janma*, *punya/pāpa*, *mokṣa* etc. In his vision, there are only two *puruṣārthas* – *artha* and

kāma. This is called *cārvāka* philosophy (materialistic). He proudly claims to be a rationalist.

- Since he does not believe in dharma and mokṣa, he does not believe in the *vaidika sādhanas* (the *vaidika* way of life) that lead to higher *puruṣārthas*. Since dharma and mokṣa do not produce visible, tangible and concrete benefits, he refuses to invest his time and resources.

Lord Yama says that such people will come under his grip (old age and death). In time, they will lose everything including the capacity to enjoy *artha-kāma*. They will be unable to find a worthy replacement to what they have lost. They would not even be able to share their feelings with the others because the others are also busy chasing *artha-kāma*.

To such people, death will not give permanent relief because they will be born again and die again...

७ श्रवणायापि बहुभिर्यो न लभ्यः,
शृण्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विद्युः ।
आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धा,
आश्चर्यो ज्ञाता कुशलानुशिष्टः ॥

7 śravaṇāyāpi bahubhiryō na labhyaḥ,
śṛṇvantō'pi bahavō yaṁ na vidyuḥ ।
āścaryō vaktā kuśalō'sya labdhā,
āścaryō jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ ॥

यः – **yaḥ** - This Ātmā न लभ्यः – **na labhyaḥ** - is not available अपि श्रवणाय – **api śravaṇāya** - even for listening बहुभिः – **bahubhiḥ** - to many. अपि शृण्वन्तः – **api śṛṇvantaḥ** - In spite of listening, बहवः – **bahavaḥ** - many न विद्युः – **na vidyuḥ** - do not understand यम् – **yam** - this (Ātmā). वक्ता – **vaktā** - The one who reveals (the Ātmā) आश्चर्यः – **āścaryaḥ** - is a wonder. लब्धा अस्य – **labdhā asya** - The one who discovers this (Ātmā) कुशलः – **kuśalaḥ** - is a wonder. कुशलानुशिष्टः – **kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ** - Instructed by a (spiritual) master, ज्ञाता – **jñātā** - the one who knows (this Ātmā) आश्चर्यः – **āścaryaḥ** - is a wonder.

This Ātmā is not available even for listening to many. In spite of listening, many do not understand this (Ātmā). The one who reveals (the Ātmā) is a wonder. The one who discovers this (Ātmā) is a wonder. Instructed by a (spiritual) master, the one who knows (this Ātmā) is a wonder.

Until now Lord Yama has glorified the Vedāntic student contrasting him with the ordinary people. In this verse, Lord Yama is glorifying the very teaching itself. *Vedānta śravaṇam* is rare. It is rare because even to get interested in the Vedānta, one must graduate to a certain level. Of the four *puruṣārthas*, the majority is only interested in *artha-kāma* because they are busy acquiring and protecting possessions. A small fraction of the rest may understand the limitations of *artha-kāma* and pursue dharma. Even among them a smaller percentage understand that dharma can only give *svarga* and not *mokṣa*. The latter group enter the first stage of the Vedānta with the desire for *mokṣa*.

Among those who desire *mokṣa*, many do not know the way because they are presented with many paths - *karma*, *bhakti*, *rāja*, *kuṇḍalinī* etc. They get confused and hop from one path to another. Only a few among these follow the path of *jñāna* which alone can liberate them. The desire for *mokṣa* (*mokṣa icchā*) should be converted to the desire for *jñāna* (*jñāna icchā*)– this is a big step. [The diagnosis of the disease must be followed up with the right treatment].

Even for the path of *jñāna*, many methods (do your duty, silence etc.) are presented. Among these, only a few seekers accept *Vedānta śāstras* as the means to get knowledge. Desire for knowledge (*jñāna-icchā*) should be converted to the desire for *śāstric* enquiry (*śāstra-vicāra-icchā*)

When one tries to do *śāstra-vicāra* by himself, he is unable to grasp it fully and worse, he misunderstands it. The scriptures use an extraordinary method of communication because the subject is extraordinary. Therefore, only a few seekers recognize the need for the assistance from a guru who knows the method of communication used by the

scriptures. The guru has the key to open the scriptures to reveal the teachings. The desire for *śāstric* enquiry should be converted to the desire to learn from a guru (*guru-upadeśa-śravaṇa-icchā* or *śravaṇa-icchā*).

Lord Yama says that the desire for *śravaṇam* may be there, but the opportunity may not be there or the opportunity may be there, but the desire may not be there. All these must happen to result in *śravaṇam*. Even when *śravaṇam* takes place, one may not understand – he may have enjoyed the talk, but may have missed the central teaching.

Wherever the successful communication takes place, the glory belongs to the teacher as well as the student. Therefore, the teacher is a wonder because of his ability to communicate something that is uncommunicable. The student is a wonder because of his ability to receive something that is not receivable.

We tend to objectify everything that we are introduced to. Then we form a concept of something. The student comes to the class with the tendency to objectify. When Brahman is described in the class, the student tends to objectify Brahman (*parokṣa jñānam*). Even after listening to the lectures for years, he is still looking to the (objective) experience of Brahman (*brahma-darśanam*). Very few understand that Brahman is the observer and not the observed. Brahman should not be sought as a special experience because Brahman is evident in every experience. This requires a very subtle mind as opposed to sharp mind of a scientist who differentiates between subtle objects. The mind of the *vedāntin* should drop the tendency to objectify. Such a student is rare. The teacher who makes a student receive Brahman without objectification is also rare. The teacher has a greater share of responsibility because he needs to keep on hammering not to seek the experience of Brahman, but to identify with Brahman.

८ न नरेणा वरेण प्रोक्त एषः,
सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः ।
अनन्यप्रोक्तेऽगतिरत्र नास्ति,
अणीयान्द्यतर्क्यमणुप्रमाणात् ॥

8 na narēṇā varēṇa prōkta ēṣaḥ,
Suvijñeyō bahudhā cintyamānaḥ I
Ananyaprōktē'gatrātra nāsti,
aṇīyānhyatarkyamaṇupramāṇāt II

एषः – **ēṣaḥ** - This (Ātmā) चिन्त्यमानः – **cintyamānaḥ** - is imagined बहुधा – **bahudhā** - variously (by various thinkers). प्रोक्तः – **proktaḥ** - (When it is) revealed अवरेण नरेण – **avarēṇa narēṇa** - by an incompetent person, न सुविज्ञेयः – **na suvijñeyaḥ** - (it) cannot be understood clearly. अनन्यप्रोक्ते – **ananyaproktē** - When (the Ātmā) is revealed by one who is not different (from it), अस्ति न अगतिः – **asti na agatiḥ** - there is no misunderstanding अत्र – **atra** - about (it). हि अणीयान् – **hi aṇīyān** - Being smaller अणुप्रमाणात् – **aṇupramāṇāt** - than the size of an atom, अतर्क्यम् – **atarkyam** - (it is) beyond reason.

This (Ātmā) is imagined variously (by various thinkers). (When it is) revealed by an incompetent person, (it) cannot be understood clearly. When (the Ātmā) is revealed by one who is not different (from it), there is no misunderstanding about (it). Being smaller than the size of an atom, (it is) beyond reason.

In this mantra, Lord Yama is glorifying the teacher. This *Ātmājñānam* requires an extraordinary teacher who is an expert in communicating the uncommunicable.

Ātmā is the subtlest of the subtle. In the *śāstras*, subtlety is inversely proportional to the number of properties an object has. Of the five elements, the earth has five properties – sound, touch, form, taste and smell (*śabda-sparśa-rūpa-rasa-gandha*). It is accessible to all the sense organs and therefore, it is the grossest. Water is the next grossest because it has that has all properties except smell. Fire, air and space are next in the order of subtlety. Space has only one property, which is sound and therefore, it is the subtlest among all. *Ātmā* is even subtler than space because it has no property. It cannot be studied by any instrument because the instruments can only study the property. In fact, we never study the substance, we only study the properties.

Ātmā is not even available for logical reasoning. Logic is developed through the analysis of data collected through perception. *Tarka* (logic) works only in fields where data is available. Since Ātmā is not at all available for perception, data collection is not possible and therefore, one cannot give logical conclusions about It. Whatever presented without data is imagination or speculation. Neither of them is a valid means of knowledge.

Ātmā is variously speculated or imagined by various philosophers. Speculations about Ātmā are infinite. Some speculate that there is no Ātmā; some accept the existence of Ātmā, but they speculate variously about its nature – limited in time and space, all-pervading, size, number etc. Is the *Paramātmā* different from individual Ātmā? Is Ātmā inert or sentient? Some claim that Ātmā is Consciousness and some others say it is a mixture.

Ātmā cannot be convincingly and doubtlessly grasped if revealed by an incompetent person (guru). Naciketas can know this Ātmā only if he is taught by someone who is not different from Ātmā (*Brahmaniṣṭhaḥ*). The guru must know that he is Ātmā; only then he can confidently tell every *śiṣya* that he/she is Ātmā (*tat tvam asi*). Secondly, the guru must be *śrotriyaḥ* – the one who knows the method of revealing Brahman (how not to objectify Brahman). The method of teaching the *śāstras* is as important as the *śāstras* themselves.

Whenever an object is mentioned, the thought about that object resolves into that object. Any description about Ātmā should not resolve into an object, but in me alone. The scriptures use several methods to communicate this; it is called *sampradāyaḥ* which is the secret key that one can get only through tradition. The one who possesses this key is called a *śrotriya* or *sampradāya-vit*. (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad calls this person *śrotriya-brahmaniṣṭhaḥ*. He is called *ananyaḥ* here). He enjoys talking about Brahman – who does not enjoy talking about himself? When such a guru teaches, the *śiṣya* will certainly understand. This is the glory of the *ācārya*.

The problem is we do not know whether our *ācārya* is *śrotriya-brahmaniṣṭhaḥ*. The only thing we can do is to pray that our *ācārya* is one.

९ नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया,
प्रोक्तान्येनैव सुज्ञानाय प्रेष्ठ ।
यां त्वमापः सत्यधृतिर्बतासि,
त्वादङ्गो भूयान्नचिकेतः प्रष्टा ॥

9 naiṣā tarkēṇa matirāpanēyā,
Prōktānyēnaiva sujñānāya prēṣṭha ।
yām tvamāpaḥ satyadhṛtirbatāsi,
tvādṛṅgō bhūyānnacikētaḥ praṣṭhā ॥

एषामतिः – eṣāmatiḥ - This knowledge न आपनेया – na āpanēyā - cannot be attained तर्केण – tarkēṇa - by reasoning, प्रेष्ठ – prēṣṭha - oh dear one! प्रोक्ता – prōktā - Taught अन्येन एव – anyēna ēva - by someone else alone, सुज्ञानाय – sujñānāya - (does it come) to (one's) comprehension. त्वम् आपः – tvam āpaḥ - You have attained याम् – yām - that knowledge. असि बत – asi bata - You are indeed सत्यधृतिः – satyadhṛtiḥ - a resolute one. नचिकेतः – Nacikētaḥ - O Naciketas! नः भूयात् – naḥ bhūyāt - May we have प्रष्टा त्वादङ्ग – praṣṭhā tvādṛṅk - seekers like you.

This knowledge cannot be attained by reasoning, oh dear one! Taught by someone else alone, (does it come) to (one's) comprehension. You have attained that knowledge. You are indeed a resolute one. O Naciketas! May we have seekers like you.

Why do we emphasize ācārya and not the śāstras? The śāstras are the source of knowledge and can exist without the ācārya. If the śāstras are emphasized, a person may engage in self-study. There is a high risk of misunderstanding of the śāstras which may bring more harm than good. Ācārya is one who communicates through the śāstras. Therefore, when ācārya is mentioned, the śāstras are included, while when śāstras are mentioned, the ācārya is not included. One should be careful about a guru who teaches without the śāstras; he will come up with his own philosophy.

Ātmajñāna (*matih*) cannot be gained by logical reasoning because the latter is always based on perceptual data. Science is based on objectification and therefore, it cannot reveal the subject. Consciousness will be eternally inaccessible to science because it can deal only with observed phenomena and not the observer. Every means of knowledge can function only in its own field.

This knowledge cannot be negated by logic also. Science deals with *anātmā* and so, it cannot confirm or negate *Ātmā*. Science is important in the material field and the Vedānta is important in the spiritual field. A true seeker is one who uses both appropriately.

Ātmā must be revealed by someone else, namely, the guru. There is a common misconception that meditation produces knowledge. Meditation has its own purpose but the clear comprehension of this knowledge is possible only through *guru-śāstra-upadeśa*. That is why obtaining a guru (*guru-prāpti*) is considered a great blessing. Three things are important for *mokṣa* – being born as a human being, having the desire for *mokṣa* and getting a competent guru to guide. It is all in *Īśvara*'s hands.

Lord Yama declares that Naciketas has the knowledge although he is yet to give him *Ātmajñāna*. He is certain of this because there is an ideal combination of a qualified student and a competent teacher. Naciketas is qualified to receive the instruction, and Lord Yama is confident that he is a competent teacher.

As a teacher, he hopes to have more students like Naciketas. The teachers get inspired by good (responsive) students. What is *śravaṇam* for the students is *nididhyāsanam* for the teacher.

१० जानाम्यहं शेषधिरित्यनित्यं,
न ह्यध्रुवैः प्राप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत् ।
ततो मया नचिकेतश्चितोऽग्निः,
अनित्यैर्दिव्यैः प्राप्तवानस्मि नित्यम् ॥

10 jānāmyahagm̄ sévadhīrīṭyanityam̄,
na hyadhruvaiḥ prāpyatē hi dhruvam̄ tat |
tatō mayā nacikētaścītō'gñiḥ,
anityairdavyaiḥ prāptavānasmi nityam̄ ||

अहं जानामि – **aham jānāmi** - I know इति शेवधिः – **iti sévadhīḥ** - that (any) product अनित्यम् – **anityam** - is impermanent, हि – **hi** - because तद् ध्रुवम् – **tad dhruvam** - that permanent one न प्राप्यते हि – **na prāpyatē hi** - cannot be attained at all अध्रुवैः – **adhruvaiḥ** - by impermanent (means). नचिकेतः – **Nacikētaḥ** - Oh Naciketas! ततः अग्निः चितः- **tataḥ agni citaḥ** - Yet, the fire was invoked मया – **mayā** - by me अनित्यैः द्रव्यैः – **anityaiḥ dravyaiḥ** - with impermanent materials अस्मि प्राप्तवान् – **asmi prāptavān** - (and) I have attained नित्यम् – **nityam** - (this) permanence.

I know that (any) product is impermanent, because that permanent one cannot be attained at all by impermanent (means). Oh Naciketas! Yet, the fire was invoked by me with impermanent materials (and) I have attained (this) permanence.

Lord Yama's admiration for Naciketas is so high that he even calls him to be superior to himself. Lord Yama was a human being once and he chose *svarga loka* first (every *devatā* is in *svarga* because of *karmaphalam*). Even though he knew the limitations of *karmaphalam*, instead of asking for mokṣa, he performed various karmas to attain *svarga loka* and the position of Lord Yama. He gained self-knowledge only after coming to this position [In *Kenopaniṣad*, Indra teaches the *devatās*]. He admires Naciketas' maturity for choosing *Ātmajñāna* instead of *svarga*.

Note: Lord Yama says that he attained permanence with impermanent materials. In this context, it must be understood that *svarga* is permanent only relative to earthly life. It is still impermanent compared to mokṣa.

११ कामास्याप्तिं जगतः प्रतिष्ठां,
क्रत्तोरनन्त्यमभयस्य पारम् ।
स्तोममहदुरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां,
दृष्ट्वा धृत्या धीरो नचिकेतोऽत्यस्राक्षीः ॥

**11 kāmāsyāptim jagataḥ pratiṣṭhām,
Krattōranantyaṃ abhayasya pāram |
stōmamahadurugāyaṃ pratiṣṭhām,
dṛṣṭvā dhṛtyā dhīrō nacikētō' tyasrākṣiḥ ||**

नचिकेतः – **Nacikētaḥ** - Oh Naciketas! दृष्ट्वा – **dṛṣṭvā** - Having considered उरुगायं
स्तोममहत् – **urugāyaṃ stōmamahat** - the vast, adorable, and glorious प्रतिष्ठाम् –
pratiṣṭhām - state (Hiraṇyagarbha) आप्तिं कामस्य – **āptim kāmasya** - which is the limit
of pleasure, प्रतिष्ठां जगतः – **pratiṣṭhām jagataḥ** - which is the support of the universe,
अनन्त्यं क्रतोः – **ananyam kratōḥ** - which is the infinite result of meditation, पारम् अभयस्य
– **pāram abhayasya** - (and) which is the highest state of fearlessness, धीरः – **dhīrah** -
(you), the discriminative one, अत्यस्राक्षीः – **atyasrākṣiḥ** - discarded (it) धृत्या – **dhṛtyā** -
firmly.

Oh Naciketas! Having considered the vast, adorable, and glorious state (Hiraṇyagarbha) which is the limit of pleasure, which is the support of the universe, which is the infinite result of meditation, (and) which is the highest state of fearlessness, (you), the discriminative one, discarded (it) firmly.

Lord Yama glorified Naciketas' *viveka* in mantras 9 and 10. In this mantra, he glorifies Naciketas' *vairāgyam* (dispassion). He admires how Naciketas disregards the sensory (material) pleasures. In *Brahmaloka*, the sense objects, the sense organs and the environment are the finest in nature. It was offered to Naciketas, but he rejected it.

The highest material position is that of Brahmaji in the world of sense pleasures. Brahmaji is the substratum of the entire creation (*Hiraṇyagarbha*). Brahmaji's post is the pinnacle of pleasure; it is the most secure and adorable post with power over the vast universe. Its high-quality tenure is (relatively) infinite (2000 catur yugas = 1 day; 1 catur yuga = 4,320,000 years and Brahmaji lives 100 years). Naciketas, being highly discriminative, carefully considered it and rejected it because, however long, Brahmaji's post is still finite.

१२ तं दुर्दर्शं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं, गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणम् ।
अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं, मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति ॥

12 taṁ durdarśaṁ gūḍhamanupraviṣṭhaṁ, guhāhitaṁ gahvareṣṭhaṁ purāṇam ।
Adhyātmayogādhiḡamēna dēvaṁ, matvā dhīrō harṣaśōkau jahāti ॥

मत्वा – **matvā** - Having known तं देवम् – **taṁ devam** - that effulgent (Ātmā) गुहाहितम् – **guhāhitam** - which is located in the heart, अनुप्रविष्टं गूढम् – **anupraviṣṭaṁ gūḍham** - which has become hidden, दुर्दर्शम् – **durdarśam** - which is incomprehensible, गह्वरेष्ठम् – **gahvareṣṭham** - which is amidst misery, पुराणम् – **purāṇam** - (and) which is ancient अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन – **adhyātmayogādhiḡamēna** - by resorting to adhyātmayoga, धीरः – **dhīraḥ** - the discriminative one जहाति – **jahāti** - gives up हर्षशोकौ – **harṣaśōkau** - happiness and sorrow.

Having known the effulgent (Ātmā) which is located in the heart, which has become hidden, which is incomprehensible, which is amidst misery, (and) which is ancient by resorting to adhyātmayoga, the discriminative one gives up happiness and sorrow.

Having appreciated the glory of the student and then the teacher and the teaching, Lord Yama is summarizing the *jñāna-sādhanas* in mantras 12 and 13. He names these *sādhanas* as *adhyātma yoga* (same as *jñāna yoga* in the Bhagavad Gītā and *asparśa yoga* in Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad). Through *adhyātma yoga*, one comes to know the Ātmā. Here, the nature of the Ātmā is described:

- Ātmā is not perceptible to the sense organs (*indriya agoacaram*). So, it is also not available for inference [*aprameyam*]
- Ātmā is in the heart (the mind) as a witness of both the thoughtful and thoughtless state of the mind. The mind is called *guhā* (cave) because it is enveloped in ignorance just as the cave is enveloped in darkness. Lord Subrahmanya has a philosophical name *Guhāḥ* – the one who resides in the mind.

- Ātmā is hidden in the darkness (ignorance) of the mind. This is a figurative expression. Ātmā cannot be hidden because it is infinite and all-pervading. Some have this misconception that Ātmā is covered by the five *kośas* and removing them (especially the thoughts) will physically expose Ātmā. Thoughts can never cover Ātmā.

The thoughts distract the mind from the ever evident Ātmā. Distraction is a form of covering. For example, while listening to the lecture, your mind may be distracted by someone's movements. Although your ears are still open and the words are still spoken, you do not hear the lecturer (the words are "covered"). Consciousness is "as though" covered because we are always focused on something other than Consciousness. We are focused on external things and the thoughts, but not on the witness of these. Once we lose sight of our true nature, we develop misconceptions. Because of our identification with the body-mind complex, we have all the relationships and the associated ups and downs. Thus, Ātmā is "surrounded" by problems (*saṁsāra*).

Saṁsāra can be overcome by resorting to jñāna yoga with the help of the *śāstras* and guru. Having known the self-fulgent Ātmā as the self, the qualified student (*viveki*) transcends the relative worldly pleasures and pain.

Pleasure and pain are two sides of the same coin (*dvandva*). There is no question of accepting one and rejecting the other. You must accept or reject both. The one who rejects both is *āśrama sannyāsī* – he renounces all material wealth and relationships. If one chooses to be a *gṛhastha*, he must accept both. Accepting or rejecting both completely is possible only through self-knowledge. This is *jñānayoga phalam*.

१३ एतच्छ्रुत्वा सम्परिगृह्य मर्त्यः,
प्रवृह्य धर्म्यमणुमेतमाप्य ।
समोदते मोदनीयं हि लब्ध्वा,
विवृतं सद्य नचिकेतसं मन्ये ॥

**13 ētacchrutvā samparigr̥hya martyaḥ,
prav̥hya dharmyamaṇumētamāpya I
samōdatē mōdanīyagr̥ṃ hi labdhvā,
vivṛtagr̥ṃ sadma nacikētasam̐ manyē II**

श्रुत्वा – śrutvā - Having listened to एतत् – ētat - this, मर्त्यः – martyaḥ - the mortal (human being) सम्परिगृह्य – samparigr̥hya - clearly grasps एतम् अणुं धर्म्यम् – ētam aṇuṃ dharmyam - this subtle Ātmā, प्रवृह्य – prav̥hya - separates (it from the body), आप्य – āpya - and claims (it). लब्ध्वा – labdhvā - Having obtained मोदनीयम् – mōdanīyam - the source of joy, सः मोदते हि – saḥ mōdatē hi - he rejoices indeed. मन्ये – manyē - I consider सद्म – sadma - the abode (of Brahman) विवृतम् – vivṛtam - to be open नचिकेतसम् – Nacikētasam - to Naciketas.

Having listened to this, the mortal (human being) clearly grasps this subtle Ātmā, separates (it from the body), and claims (it). Having obtained the source of joy, he rejoices indeed. I consider the abode (of Brahman) to be open to Naciketas.

The same ideas as mantra 12 is expressed in this mantra. In the previous mantra, *adhyātma yoga* was presented as the means to self-knowledge. *Adhyātma yoga* is defined here as Vedanta śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsanam - systematic consistent study of the scriptures under the guidance of a competent guru.

When the seeker goes through śravaṇam of the Vedantic teaching and clearly grasps the extremely subtle Ātmā as the Consciousness principle through mananam, he separates it from the body (intellectually) and claims the identity of Ātmā. Having attained the source of ānanda, he enjoys fulfillment (pūrṇatvam) regardless of what āśrama he is in.

Lord Yama assures Naciketas that he will certainly attain mokṣa.

Note: Ātmā is referred to as dharma in this verse. One interpretation is that Ātmā is not separate from dharma, the sustainer. The second meaning: that which is attained through dharma – it is not possible to attain Ātmā without following dharma.

१४ अन्यत्र धर्मादन्यत्राधर्माद्, अन्यत्रास्मात् कृताकृतात् ।
अन्यत्र भूताच्च भव्याच्च, यत्तत्पश्यसि तद्वद ॥

**14 anyatra dharmādanyatrādharmād, anyatrāsmāt kṛtākṛtāt ।
Anyatra bhūtācca bhavyācca, yattatpaśyasi tadvada ॥**

वद तत् – **vada tat** - Tell (me) that यत् तत् पश्यसि – **yat tat paśyasi** - which you see as
अन्यत्र धर्मात् – **anyatra dharmāt** - different from dharma, अन्यत्र अधर्मात् – **anyatra
adharmāt** - different from adharma, अन्यत्र – **anyatra** -different अस्मात् कृताकृतात् –
asmāt kṛtākṛtāt - from this cause and effect, अन्यत्र – **anyatra** - (and) different भूतात् च
भव्यात् च – **bhūtāt ca bhavyāt ca** - from past and future.

***Tell (me) that which you see as different from dharma, different from adharma,
different from this cause and effect, (and) different from past and future.***

In this mantra, it is evident that Naciketas has become impatient because he asked for *Ātmajñānam* in verse 20 of the last chapter. Lord Yama then gave entrance exams and then started glorifying the teaching, the teacher and the student. Naciketas interrupts Lord Yama and re-presents the same boon he asked in 1.1.20.

It is an important and significant mantra worth memorizing even though it is a question from Naciketas. Śaṅkarācārya quotes it very often. In the first three lines, Naciketas himself defines Ātmā – it has deep philosophical significance.

Ātmā is beyond dharma and adharma (beyond good and bad). It is a significant expression. Many corollaries can be derived, but we will present two of them here as discussed by Śaṅkarācārya in *samanvaya sūtra*:

- Many theologies present God as free from evil and that He is full of good virtues. Even in *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, the Lord is presented as one who possesses all good qualities (*sakala-kalyāna-guṇa-sampannaḥ*). Even when we say *nirguṇa*, people interpret as free from negative characteristics (*durguṇa-rahitaḥ*). Śaṅkarācārya says that the virtues and vices are part of the pair belonging to the empirical world like two sides of a coin. If we reject the evil from the Lord, we must also reject the virtues. In the absolute world, the Lord is beyond both. *Vyāvahāra Īśvara* is full of virtues (*kalyāna*), but *Pāramārthika Īśvara* is *nirguṇaḥ*. The verse 18.66 of the Bhagavad Gītā (*sarva dharmān parityajya*) means the same: one must give up adharma first, follow dharma for a length of time during *gṛhasthāśrama* and then can give up dharma also in *sannyāsāśrama*.
- Dharma and adharma are both *karmaphalam* – the result of good and bad actions respectively. The Upaniṣad says that Ātmā is not a *karmaphalam* of dharmic or adharmic actions. Only *jñāna* will give Ātmā.

Ātmā is beyond both the cause (*akṛtam*) and the product or effect (*kṛtam*). Cause and effect exist within time; cause modified is effect (seed modified is tree; milk modified is yogurt). The cause at present becomes the effect later. Ātmā is beyond time (*kāla-atītaḥ*). Therefore, Ātmā is beyond past, present and future.

Naciketas implores Lord Yama to reveal that Ātmā that he sees (knows).

१५ सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति,
तपाः सि सर्वाणि च यद्वदन्ति ।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति,
तत्ते पदः संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्यमित्येतत् ॥

**15 sarvē vēdā yatpadamāmananti,
Tapāḡm si sarvāṇi ca yadvadanti ।
yadicchantō brahmacaryam caranti,
tattē padagm saṅgrahēṇa bravīmyōmityētāt**

सङ्ग्रहेण ब्रवीमि – *saṅgrahēṇa bravīmi* - I shall briefly introduce ते – *tē* - to you तत् पदम् – *tat padam* - that goal यत् पदम् – *yat padam* - which goal सर्वे वेदाः – *sarvē vedāh* - all the Vedas आमनन्ति – *amānanti* - propound, यत् – *yat* - for which वदन्ति – *vadanti* - (they) prescribe सर्वाणि तपांसि – *sarvāṇi tapāṁsi* - all the austerities, च इच्छन्तः यत् – *ca icchantah yat* - and desiring which चरन्ति ब्रह्मचर्यम् – *caranti brahmacaryam* - (the seekers) practice brahmācārya. एतद् – *ētaḍ* - It is ओम् इति – *Ōm iti* - Om.

I shall briefly introduce to you that goal which goal all the Vedas propound, for which (they) prescribe all the austerities, and desiring which (the seekers) practice brahmācārya. It is Om.

Lord Yama begins his response to Naciketas' question.

Brahman (Ātmā) requires a subtle intellect (*sūkṣma buddhi*) to understand. Lord Yama prescribes a *sādhana* for those who are not mentally prepared to comprehend Brahman. He prescribes *Oṁkāra upāsanā* in verses 15, 16 and 17. In this *upāsanā*, *Oṁkāra* can be the symbol for meditating on *saguṇa* (*kārya*) as well as *nirguṇa* (*kāraṇa*) Brahman. Through these *upāsanās*, a person can choose between the two paths to mokṣa:

- Meditate upon *saguṇa* brahman through *Oṁkāra* symbol and then graduate to *nirguṇa* Brahman. This gives liberation here and now.
- Practice *Oṁkāra upāsanā* on *saguṇa* Brahman throughout his life including at the time of his death. He can go to *Brahmaloka* after death and obtain *nirguṇa jñāna* from Brahmaji and gain mokṣa.

The first method is *jīvanmukti* while the second method is called *kramamukti*. *Oṁkāra upāsanā* is a versatile *sādhana*. In this verse, he introduces *Oṁkāra* as a symbol for Brahman just as *Śivaliṅga* and *Śaligrāma* are the symbols for Shiva and Vishnu respectively.

All the Vedas (both *karma* and *jñāna kāṇḍas*) declare that Brahman is the primary goal (*padam*) for a human being. *Veda-pūrva bhāga* has rituals to attain the intermediate

goals of wealth, name, fame and even *svarga*. The Vedas encourage us to seek the intermediate goals, but they also expect us to see their limitations in due course. Rare intelligent people know the limitations of the worldly pleasures without going through these enjoyments and relationships. Many see the value of *vairāgyam* only after experiencing the worldly pleasures. Thus, the purpose of *Veda-pūrva* is eventually to acquire *vairāgyam*; then *jñāna* and Brahman.

The Vedas prescribe austerities for the sake of reaching the goal of Brahman (*yad*). Initially, we don't recognize the destination. Knowing what we want itself is a great achievement. After going through *dharma-artha-puruṣārthas* in life, one recognizes their limitations and develops *mumukṣatvam*. Lord Yama is prescribing the austerities for such people. [*Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*: acquiring values, performing rituals and activities are all *tapas* for the seeker]. The earlier part of *gṛhasthāśrama* is oriented towards *artha-kāma*, but the latter part should be oriented towards *dharma-mokṣa puruṣārtha* dominated by karma yoga, prayers, and service to humanity.

The seeker then discovers that Brahman requires *jñānam*. He recognizes that self-knowledge cannot be attained without dedicated study. He requires quality time where he can plunge into the studies. Then the *śāstras* say: *Yadicchanto brahmacaryam caranti* – these seekers take to student's life once again. *Sannyāsa āśrama* is dedicated to the study of the Vedānta as opposed to *Veda-pūrva* in *Brahmacarya*. The second gurukula begins. The benefit derived from the Vedānta is proportional to the seriousness with which you study.

Lord Yama will briefly introduce *Om* that represents Brahman [*Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad* elaborately discusses Brahman. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* also discusses *Omkāra*].

१६ एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म, एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं परम् ।
एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा, यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥

**16 ētaddhyēvākṣaram brahma, ētaddhyēvākṣaram param ।
ētaddhyēvākṣaram jñātvā, yō yadicchati tasya tat ॥**

एतद् अक्षरम् एव - This syllable हि ब्रह्म - is indeed the (lower) Brahman. एतद् अक्षरम् एव - This syllable alone हि परम् - is indeed the higher (Brahman). ज्ञात्वा - After meditating upon एतद् एव अक्षरम् - this very syllable, यत् तत् - whatever यः इच्छति - one desires तस्य हि - (becomes) his indeed.

This syllable is indeed the (lower) Brahman. This syllable alone is indeed the higher (Brahman). After meditating upon this very syllable, whatever one desires (becomes) his indeed.

Mantras 16 and 17 talk about the glory of *Oṃkāra*. *Oṃkāra* can represent both *param* and *aparam* *Brahma*. *Param* *Brahma* is *Īśvara*, who is the cause (*kāraṇam* *Brahma*) and *aparam* *Brahma* is the product, the macrocosmic universe consisting of *Hiraṇyagarbha* and *Virāt* (*kāryam* *Brahma*).

By invoking either *Hiraṇyagarbha* or *Īśvara* in *Oṃkāra*, one can accomplish any goal in life. *Hiraṇyagarbha* is the total mind and *Īśvara* is the total cause (of the mind). In this verse, *jñātvā* should be interpreted as *dhyātvā* (having meditated upon) because it is not the *nirguṇa* Brahman.

This *upāsanā* can be *sakāma* as well as and *niskāma*. *Sakāma upāsanā* is meant for material well-being (*aṣṭa-mahā-siddhi*). With this, he obtains the power and position of *Hiraṇyagarbha*. These are also finite. However, the very same *upāsanā* can also help you attain *mokṣa* (*kramamukti*) as described in the previous verse.

१७ एतदालम्बनं श्रेष्ठम्, एतदालम्बनं परम् ।
एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा, ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥

17 ***ētaḍālambanagṃ śrēṣṭham, ētaḍālambanagṃ param ।
ētaḍālambanagṃ jñātvā, brahmalōkē mahīyatē ॥***

एतद् – **ētaḍ** - This is श्रेष्ठम् आलम्बनम् – **śrēṣṭham ālambanam** - the best symbol. एतद् आलम्बनम् – **ētaḍ ālambanam** - This is the symbol परम् – **param** - (for) the higher (and lower Brahman). ज्ञात्वा – **jñātvā** - Having meditated on एतद् आलम्बनम् – **ētaḍ ālambanam** - this symbol, महीयते – **mahīyatē** - one becomes adorable ब्रह्मलोके – **brahmalōkē** - in Brahmaloaka.

This is the best symbol. This is the symbol (for) the higher (and lower Brahman). Having meditated on this symbol, one becomes adorable in Brahmaloaka.

This verse repeats the same idea from the previous verse.

Oṃkāra is the best symbol (*ālambanam*) because it is versatile. *Pratimā ālambanam* is the human representation such as Rama, Krishna, Ganesha etc. *Pratīka ālambanam* is the non-human representation such as *Śivaliṅgam*, *Śāliḡrāmam*, lump of turmeric, flame (Devi) etc. *Oṃkāra* is a *pratīka ālambanam*.

By meditation on *Oṃkāra*, one attains *Brahmaloka*. This must be read twice. If it is *sakāma* meditation, he will reach the *Brahmaloka*, the 7th heaven. If it is *niskāma* meditation, he will reach *nirguṇa* Brahma (*kramamukti*).

१८ न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चित्, नायं कुतश्चिन्न बभूव कश्चित् ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणः, न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ।

**18 na jāyatē mriyatē vā vipaścid, nāyaṃ kutaścinna babhūva kaścit ।
Ajō nityaḥ śāśvatō'yaṃ purāṇaḥ, na hanyatē hanyamānē śarīrē ।**

अयं विपश्चित् – **ayaṃ vipaścit** - This omniscient one न जायते – **na jāyatē** - does not originate वा म्रियते – **vā mriyatē** - or die. न बभूव – **na babhūva** - It did not originate कुतश्चित् – **kutaścit** - from anything. न – **na** - It did not (become) कश्चित् – **kaścit** - anything. अयं अजः – **ayaṃ ajaḥ** - It is birthless, नित्यः – **nityaḥ** - deathless, शाश्वतः – **śāśvataḥ** - decayless पुराणः – **purāṇaḥ** - and growthless. न हन्यते – **na hanyate** - It is not afflicted शरीरे हन्यमाने – **śarīrē hanyamāne** - when the body is afflicted.

This omniscient one does not originate or die. It did not originate from anything. It did not (become) anything. It is birthless, deathless, decayless and growthless. It is not afflicted when the body is afflicted.

The previous three mantras were preparatory steps for mediocre (*manda*) *upāsakas*. For one who is ready (*uttama adhikāri*), this verse is the beginning of the teaching of this Upaniṣad. Most of the definitions of Ātmā in the Bhagavad Gītā have been borrowed from Kaṭhōpaniṣad. This very mantra has been lifted and only slightly modified in verse 2.20 of the Bhagavad Gītā. From here onwards, *Ātmalakṣana-śloka*s (definitions of Ātmā) will be taught.

The nature of Ātmā, the all-illuminating Consciousness (*sarva-prakāśaka-caitanyam = vipaścit*) can be described as:

- *Consciousness is not a part or property or a product of the body – it is a separate entity that enlivens the body.*
- *Consciousness is an independent entity which pervades and enlivens the body – it is not dependent on the body to exist, but the body requires Consciousness to exist.*
- *Consciousness is not bound by the limitations of the body– it is not bound by the spatial limitations of the body.*
- *Consciousness does not die when the body perishes –Consciousness is not limited by time*
- *The surviving Consciousness is not recognized because of the absence of the medium and not because it is not there – So long as the body is there, the Consciousness is present in the manifest form (*vyakta caitanyam*). When the body is dead, the Consciousness is not in a detectable form (*avyakta caitanyam*).*

This Consciousness is not subject to modification (*ṣaḍ-vikāra-rahitaḥ*) unlike the body which has 6 modifications (*asti, jāyate, vardhate, vipariṇamate, apakṣiyate and vinaśyati*).

- It is birthless
- It is deathless

- It is decayless
- It is growthless – it can neither increase or decrease in size because it is infinite
- It does not undergo any deformation even when the body is afflicted by disease or old age (*na vipariṇamate*)
- (It is eternal as opposed to temporary existence in the womb - we can supply this sixth change)
- It does not arise out of anything. Therefore, it is not a product (*kāryam*)
- it does not become anything. Therefore, it is not a cause of anything (*kāraṇam*).
Naciketas asked the question – what is beyond cause and effect? Lord Yama answers that Consciousness is beyond cause and effect. The full significance of this is explained in Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad (chapter 3 – in 48 verses called *ajāti-vādaḥ*)

Lord Yama does not term Consciousness as a property or attribute of the body. He calls Consciousness as the noun itself. Normally we tend to differentiate the dead body from the sentient one by the attribute "conscious". In a "tall man", the term "tall" is an adjective and "tallness" does not have independent existence. However, Consciousness is an independent entity which we misuse as an adjective as in "conscious" body. Consciousness is an independent substance without any attributes; therefore, it is not perceptible. This *caitanya* is our real nature (*Ātmasvarupam*). It is not subject to modification – Lord negates all the different stages of modifications. This changeless Consciousness is Ātmā.

१९ हन्ता चेन्मन्यते हन्तुं, हतश्चेन्मन्यते हतम् ।
उभौ तौ न विजानीतः, नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

19 **hantā cēnmanyatē hanturñ, hataścēnmanyatē hatam I**
Ubhau tau na vijānītaḥ, nāyaṁ hanti na hanyatē II

चेत् – **cēt** - If हन्ता मन्यते – **hantā manyatē** - a killer thinks हन्तुम् – **hantum** - (that the Ātmā) kills चेद् हतः – **cēt hataḥ** - and if the one who is being killed मन्यते हतम् – **manyatē hatam** - thinks (that the Ātmā is) killed, उभौ तौ – **ubhau tau** - both of them न

विजानीतः – **na vijānītaḥ** - do not know. अयम् – **ayam** - This Ātmā न हन्ति – **na hanti** - does not kill न हन्यते – **na hanyatē** - (and) is not killed.

If a killer thinks (that the Ātmā) kills and if the one who is being killed thinks (that the Ātmā is) killed, both of them do not know. This Ātmā does not kill (and) is not killed.

Lord Yama is introducing two more features of Ātmā: *akartā* (*karma-sambandha rahitaḥ*) and *abhoktā* (*karma-phala-sambandha-rahitaḥ*) - not a doer of action or reaper of fruits of action.

The agent performing an action (*kartā*) undergoes change. Change happens spatially (movement) as well as in time. All karmas (*kāyika*, *vācika* and *mānasa*) require change. Change of mind is because of a change in thought. In the last verse, it was said that Ātmā is changeless. It is free from karma and therefore, it is also free from the results (*abhoktā*). It is free from *sañcita*, *āgami* and *prārabdha* karma and therefore, it is free from the cycle of birth and death. It is *nitya-mukta-svarūpaḥ*. In short, it is free from *saṁsāra*. This is the essence of this mantra. Lord Yama presents it in a different manner:

He presents that Ātmā is not the subject of any action (*akartā*). Then he presents Ātmā as not a victim (object) of any action (*abhoktā*). How do we experience *karmaphalam*? If we get *puṇya karma*, we become objects of good experience. If we get *pāpa karma*, we become objects of negative experiences. To be a *bhoktā* means to be a victim of pleasurable and painful experiences. In summary, Ātmā is never the subject or object of any action.

Among all the actions, killing is the most powerful one; Lord Yama takes this example: Ātmā is neither the killer nor the killed. Ātmā is never a participant in any worldly transactions either as a subject or an object (*sarva-vyavahāra-agocaraḥ*). He presents in a different way: some people consider Ātmā to be a killer (actor) and some others consider Ātmā to be killed (victim) –both groups are wrong.

If we extend it psychologically, we find that most of our pain are in the form of hurt and guilt. The role of a *bhoktā* (victim) produces hurt and the role of a *kartā* (doer) produces guilt. So long as one is a *kartā* and *bhoktā*, he will be assailed by hurt and guilt – this is *samsāra*. The *jñānī* transcends guilt and pain by transcending *kartṛtvam* and *bhoktṛtvam*. As a body, one will ever be a *kartā* and *bhoktā*; to transcend these, one should identify with the Consciousness. Krishna emphasizes this in verse 2.19 of the Bhagavad Gitā – the second line of this verse says the same.

२० अणोरणीयान्महतो महीयान्, आत्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।

तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोकः, धातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥

20 aṅōraṇīyānmahatō mahīyān, ātmāsya jantōrnihitō guhāyām ।
tamakratuḥ paśyati vītaśōkaḥ, dhātuprasādānmahimānamātmanaḥ ॥

आत्मा – **Ātmā** - Ātmā अणीयान् अणोः – **aṅīyān aṅōḥ** - is smaller than the smallest महीयान् महतः – **mahīyān mahataḥ** - (and) bigger than the biggest. निहितः – **nihitah** - It is located गुहायाम् – **guhāyām** - in the heart अस्य जन्तोः – **asya jantōḥ** - of this being. अक्रतुः – **akratuḥ** - The desireless one पश्यति – **paśyati** - sees तं महिमानम् – **taṁ mahimānam** - that glory आत्मनः – **ātmanaḥ** - of the Ātmā धातुप्रसादात् – **dhātuprasādāt** - through the serenity of the organs वीतशोकः – **vītaśōkaḥ** - (and becomes) free from grief.

Ātmā is smaller than the smallest (and) bigger than the biggest. It is located in the heart of this being. The desireless one sees that glory of the Ātmā through the serenity of the organs (and becomes) free from grief.

This is another important *śloka* that describes *Ātma-lakṣana*. Here Lord Yama says that *Ātma-caitanyam* is inherent in the creation and it is all-pervading. It is somewhat incorrect to say that Consciousness is in the body; the correct expression is that Consciousness is in the body also. The former statement would imply that Consciousness is finite and located in the body while the latter means that Consciousness exists beyond the body also. The only difference is that Consciousness is

recognizable in the body (mind) while it is in the unrecognizable in the non-manifest form outside of it. It is like a thread in an invisible form in and through the necklace (verse 7.7 of the Bhagavad Gītā). Just as the thread holds the beads together, the invisible Consciousness holds the creation together. The superiority or inferiority of the beads do not affect the thread. When the beads are gone, the thread continues to exist. Śāṅkarācārya gives the example of flower garland that is held by a string. When the flowers wither away, the thread remains. The thread is also not affected by the fresh or the withered flowers.

Consciousness pervades sentient as well as insentient beings. What is the nature of that Ātmā that is in and through every being and thing? When you describe an object – there is a clip, there is a car etc. - the common factor is "is". Existence is the thread that is in and through everything. Ātmā is *sad-rūpam* (Existence) that is in and through everything. It is inherent in every object because it is the very substance that all the objects are made up of. Ātmā is like water in a wave, bubble, foam or ocean – only water appears as these. Smallness and bigness belong to name and form (*nāma-rūpa*), but Ātmā alone is the substance. Remove name and form from the wave and ocean, and only water remains.

Ātmā is the substance that appears as the smallest atom (microcosm) and as the biggest object (macrocosm). By itself, Ātmā is neither small or big, but with the association of an object with name and form, it appears small (*aṇu*) or big (*mahat*).

Where is Ātmā to be found?

This is a meaningless question – it is like the wave searching for water. The wave in search of water, the cloth in search of thread and the *jīva* in search of Ātmā are all filtered fools (Tamil: *vadikattina muttāl*).

Ātmā is in the mind (*guhā*) of every living being. One will not find Ātmā through meditation even within oneself. Meditation may take only up to the blank mind. I am that Ātmā who is aware of even that blankness. Ātmā is the witness of the mind whether

blank or with thoughts. Just as the arrival of the wave cannot displace water, the arrival of thoughts cannot displace Ātmā. I am eternally present as the witness of the thoughtful as well as the thoughtless mind. Ātmā is something that is owned up as I am (not something to be found).

What is the condition for owning up?

A mind with expectations is ever restless. The desires distract the mind away from Ātmā. During the day time, the tick of the clock is not heard even though it is there; it is overpowered by noise. Similarly, the mind loses sight of the witness Consciousness when the mind is noisy with expectations. A person with a quiet mind, without expectations (one with *vairāgyam*) is not distracted. He (*akratuḥ*) sees the glories of his higher nature by the grace of his organs (*dhātu*): sense organs of knowledge and action, mind, intellect and the physical body.

Such a person who owns up to his higher nature will be free from grief and sorrow.

२१ आसीनो दूरं व्रजति, शयानो याति सर्वतः ।
कस्तं मदामदं देवं, मदन्यो ज्ञातुमर्हति ॥

21 āsīnō dūraṁ vrajati, śayānō yāti sarvataḥ ।
kastaṁ madāmadam dēvaṁ, madanyō jñātumarhati ॥

आसीनः – āsīnō - Sitting, व्रजति दूरम् – vrajati dūram - it goes far. शयानः – śayānaḥ - Lying, याति सर्वतः- yāti sarvataḥ - it goes everywhere. कः – kaḥ - Who, मदन्यः – madanyah - other than me, अर्हति ज्ञातुम् – arhati jñātum - can know तं देवम् – tam devam - that effulgent one मदामदम् – madāmadam - which is joyful and joyless?

Sitting, it goes far. Lying, it goes everywhere. Who, other than me, can know that effulgent one which is joyful and joyless?

This is a subtle verse that needs to be carefully studied and understood. Lord Yama talks about two aspects of Ātmā.

- The all-pervading Consciousness (*sāmānya caitanya*) has no specific location. We experience *sāmānya caitanyam* during sleep. This is our real nature. The sense of localization is present only when we are awake.
- When we wake up, the mind becomes functional and reflects this all-pervading Consciousness. The Reflected Consciousness (RC) is in Reflecting Medium (RM), the mind. This RC is called *viśeṣa caitanyam*. This can be experienced only when the mind is functional.

RC overpowers the *sāmānya caitanyam* during the waking state, but not displace it. *Sāmānya caitanyam* is still present in the waking state. In Pañcadaśī, Vidyāranya Swāmi gives an analogy:

In the daytime, we experience the sunshine all over. If we take a mirror and reflect the sun on the wall, a patch of reflected light appears on the wall. In that area, there are two sunlights – the original and the reflected sunlight. The general sunlight continues to exist, but is overpowered by the reflected sunlight. Behind the viśeṣa sūrya prakāśa (VSP), there is a sāmānya sūrya prakāśa (SSP). When we remove the mirror, VSP disappears and we experience the SSP.

Similarly, this body has *sāmānya* and *viśeṣa caitanyam* (SC and VC). VC is formed because of the active mind (analogous to mirror). In the active condition of the mind, VC is localized and SC is all-pervading. Because of the movement of RC, VC also travels. Because of this, Ātmā appears to travel. Truly speaking, Ātmā is the non-traveling *sāmānya caitanyam*.

At the time of death, the mind travels along with VC. Therefore, it appears that Ātmā (the soul) is also travelling from one body to another. The travelling soul is because of the *viśeṣa caitanyam*. When you understand that *viśeṣa caitanyam* is caused by the mind

and that your true nature is *sāmānya caitanyam* you will not wonder where you are located, but where you are not.

What should one do to experience *sāmānya caitanyam* in the waking state? SC can be experienced only when VC goes away which means that the mind (RM) should also go away. For this, let the mind resolve that you are no longer VC and that you are SC without any boundaries. [So, caitanyam has *sāmānya-viśeṣa-aṁśadvayam* caused by the presence of mind. VC = *sopādhika caitanyam* and SC = *nirupādhika caitanyam*].

Sitting in the waking state, Ātmā travels (as it were) far and wide. For example, when I look at an object, the mind travels and pervades that object. This is the Vedāntic theory of perception. [In the scientific theory of perception, the light travels to the mind through the sense organs]. When the mind travels and pervades the object, the VC also travels and pervades it. When the VC pervades an object, the object is known.

When one goes to sleep, the mind resolves. The mind is not functional and therefore, VC is not available. In the absence of VC, SC becomes dominant.

The scientists constantly study the VC and try to find the relationship between Consciousness and the brain. They have misunderstood that Consciousness is the property of the brain. The Vedānta says that Consciousness is not a property of the brain, but the brain entraps it. For example, when the bulb entraps the electricity, we discern it; outside the bulb we are unable to appreciate the electricity. Body is like the bulb and the mind is like the filament. When we die, we are like the fused bulb. The electricity is not absent, but it is unable to manifest in the fused bulb. Just as the electricity is not the property of the filament, Consciousness is not the property of the mind or the brain, but it enables the mind or the brain.

Devam in this context means *caitanyam* (*sāmānya-viśeṣa-svarupaḥ-Ātmā*). Ātmā is both with and without pleasure. Mind alone experiences pleasure (or pain) in the waking state. When the mind is resolved in sleep, the experience of a specific pleasure is absent. Pleasure is a thought modification – when the mind fluctuates, the pleasure also

fluctuates. Since the VC is in the mind, it appears to experience pleasure. From the point of view of the VC, Ātmā seems to have pleasure. From the standpoint of the SC, Ātmā is without pleasure. Ignorant people take themselves as the VC (I am now happy or unhappy). The *jñānī* identifies with the SC – he neither has pleasure or sorrow or any negative or positive emotions. This shift in identification from the VC to the SC is liberation.

Who can understand this Ātmā? Since Ātmā has these contradictory features (with and without something), understanding Ātmā is difficult. This is the essence of this verse. The mind must be trained and become subtle to be able to receive this teaching.

Lord Yama poses the rhetorical question as a *jñānī*: who other than me can understand Ātmā?

If Lord Yama is sure that no one else can understand Ātmā, what is the use of this teaching? Sankarācārya's interpretation: nobody other than the people "like" Lord Yama can understand. In other words, only the ones with subtle mind will understand (*durvijñeyatvam* of Ātmā is pointed out).

२२ अशरीरं शरीरेषु, अनवस्थेष्ववस्थितम् ।
महान्तं विभुमात्मानं, मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥

22 **aśarīragṃ śarīreṣu, anavasthēṣvavasthitam ।**
mahāntaṃ vibhumātmānaṃ, matvā dhīrō na śocati ॥

मत्वा – **matvā** - Having known आत्मानम् – **ātmānam** - the Ātmā अशरीरम् – **aśarīram** - which is bodiless, अवस्थितम् – **avasthitam** - which is the permanent one अनवस्थेषु – **anavasthēṣu** - in the impermanent शरीरेषु – **śarīreṣu** - bodies, महान्तम् – **mahāntam** - which is big, विभुम् – **vibhum** - and which is all-pervading धीरः – **dhīrah** - the discriminative one न शोचति – **na śocati** - does not grieve.

Having known the Ātmā which is bodiless, which is the permanent one in the impermanent bodies, which is big, and which is all-pervading the discriminative one does not grieve.

In this verse, the all-pervasiveness of Ātmā is pointed out. The intelligent person does not grieve when he understands the following:

- Ātmā is all-pervading and therefore cannot be contained within a body. Sometimes, the scriptures say that Ātmā is in the body– we should add the word “also” to make the meaning complete.
- It exists in all the bodies (even though it does not have a body). Just as space is contained within every vessel.
- The permanent all-pervading Consciousness is present in every impermanent physical body. Relatively permanent space is present in every impermanent container. When the pot is broken, the space survives.
- Ātmā is infinitely big – it is all-pervading

If I say that I have an Ātmā, I claim to be the miserable dying body and create the distance from Ātmā – this knowledge is useless.

The intelligent person claims: I am Ātmā. I am the SC; the VC comes and goes bringing glory only to the body-mind complex and I am not it. This is *aparokṣa jñānam*.

२३ नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यः, न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।
यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः, तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूꣳ स्वाम् ॥

23 nāyamātmā pravacanēna labhyaḥ, na mēdhayā na bahunā śrutēna ।
yamēvaiṣa vṛṇutē tēna labhyaḥ, tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇutē tanūḡṃ svām ॥

अयम् आत्मा – **ayam ātmā** - This Ātmā लभ्यः – **labhyaḥ** can be attained न प्रवचनेन – **na pravacanēna** - neither through (mere) recitation (of the Vedas), न मेधया – **na medhayā** - nor through (mere) memory, न बहुना श्रुतेन – **na bahunā śrutēna** - nor through (mere)

repeated listening. लभ्यः तेन एव – **labhyaḥ tēna ēva** - (It is) attained by him only यम् – **yam** - whom एषः वृणुते – **ēṣaḥ vṛṇutē** - this (Ātmā) chooses. एषः आत्मा – **ēṣaḥ ātmā** - This Ātmā विवृणुते – **vivṛṇutē** - reveals स्वां तनूम् – **svām tanūm** - its nature तस्य – **tasya** - to him.

This Ātmā can be attained neither through (mere) recitation (of the Vedas), nor through (mere) memory, nor through (mere) repeated listening. (It is) attained by him only whom this (Ātmā) chooses. This Ātmā reveals its nature to him.

Now Lord Yama is switching to the topic of *jñāna sādhana*. A very similar mantra is in Muṇḍaka Upanishad also (3.2.3). Here, Lord Yama highlights the most important value: the desire for self-knowledge. If this knowledge is acquired only as an academic exercise, it will not be assimilated to bring full benefits. The blessing from this knowledge is proportional to the sincerity (desire) we have. The *śāstras* give various examples to illustrate this desire.

When a person's hair catches on fire, he will desperately look for water and jump into it without caring what type of water. He will also not look for proper time to jump into it (Rāhukālam, Yamakaṇḍam etc.). Similarly, the sincere seeker intensely feels and recognizes the fire of saṁsāra (ādhyātmika, ādhibhautika and ādhidaivika tāpaḥ). To get out of this, he will seek the cool Ganges water of Brahmavidyā to quench the fire. It is called tīvra jijñāsa or tīvra mumukṣatvam.

An internal test whether you have *tīvra mumukṣatvam*: imagine that God comes in front of you and grants one boon. Ask yourself what you will choose. If you will choose *Ātmajñānam*, you have *tīvra mumukṣatvam*. This does not mean that you will neglect other things in life, but they become subservient to *Ātmajñānam*. It is called *Ātmavaraṇam* in this mantra. This is like a *svayamvara* of the old times. The princess chooses the desired prince as the mate. Similarly, we have a lot of goals and choices in this world. If we choose *Ātmajñānam* as the "mate", it is called *Ātmavaraṇam*. Only with this intense desire, all the other *sādhana*s will fructify. All the other *sādhana*s are made meaningful only by *mumukṣatvam*.

The secondary sādhanas are enumerated first:

Pravacanam (*veda adhyayanam*) - Sankarācārya calls it *veda-svīkaraṇam* – learning to chant Vedas. This *sādhana* can uplift a person spiritually. Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad considers *veda-adhyayanam* as the first spiritual practice. Taittirīya Upaniṣad also stresses the importance of *svādhyāya* which means Vedic chanting. It can be any vedic scripture.

Medhā– This consists of memorizing the vedic text with the understanding of the meaning. This gives the ability to receive and retain the Vedas. The whole teaching is a thought build up. In each class, the lesson is built on the previous class; therefore, one should be able to remember the previous lessons. [In our tradition, the student is supposed to summarize what the teacher taught in the previous class]. In the verses describing the second boon, Naciketas listened to Lord Yama and then demonstrated the ability to repeat the entire ritual from memory.

Śravaṇam – This consists of repeatedly listening for a length of time to the teaching from a competent *ācārya*. While *adhyayanam* is learning to chant (*śabda-grahaṇam*), *śravaṇam* is understanding their meaning (*artha-grahaṇam*).

All these three *sādhanas* will be fruitful only when the seeker pursues Ātmā with intense desire. Ātmā will reveal its nature only to such a seeker. In other words, he will gain *Ātmajñānam* effortlessly.

Grammatically, this mantra has another interpretation: whoever is chosen by Ātmā will get Ātmā (instead of saying whoever chooses Ātmā will get Ātmā). If we use the word God in place of Ātmā, it will be clear. The basic question is whether I choose God or God chooses me. Which is more important – self-effort or *Īśvara anugraha*?

In the Vedānta, we always emphasize self-effort. If we say that God chooses a person, it certainly means that He is partial. Why should He give mokṣa to some and leave the

others suffering in *samsāra*? How can one worship such a partial God? Therefore, we emphasize self-effort. Secondly, we acknowledge that *Īśvara anugraha* is as important as self-effort. That is why we emphasize prayer before we start any endeavor. Why is effort emphasized more than than *Īśvara anugraha*? The Vedāntin knows that God's grace is always there and it is up to him to tap it. Therefore, Śaṅkarācārya interprets that the seeker chooses God and not the other way. This is called *tīvra mumukṣatvam*.

२४ नाविरतो दुश्चरिताद्, नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।
नाशान्तमानसो वापि, प्रज्ञानेनैवमाप्नुयात् ॥

24 **nāviraṭō duścariṭād, nāśāntō nāsamāhitaḥ ।**
Nāśāntamānasō vāpi, prajñānēnainamāpnuyāt ॥

न अविरतः – **na aviraṭaḥ** - Neither the one who has not withdrawn **दुश्चरितात्** – **duścariṭāt** - from bad conduct, न अशान्तः – **na aśāntaḥ** - nor the one who lacks sense-control, न वा अशान्तमानसः – **na vā aśāntamānasah** - nor the one who lacks mind-control, न अपि असमाहितः – **na api asamahitaḥ** - nor the one who lacks concentration **आप्नुयात्** - **āpnuyāt** - can attain एनम् – **ēnam** - this (Ātmā) **प्रज्ञानेन** – **prajñānēna** - through knowledge.

Neither the one who has not withdrawn from bad conduct, nor the one who lacks sense-control, nor the one who lacks mind-control, nor the one who lacks concentration can attain this (Ātmā) through knowledge.

Some more *sādhana*s are highlighted in this verse.

Morality - An immoral student cannot benefit from the Vedāntic study. He may take up the Vedānta for his PhD thesis and may even become a professor, but he will get mokṣa only if he is morally a sound person. One should give up immoral way of life (*duścariṭam*).

Self-Control (*damaḥ* or *indriya-nigrahaḥ*) – Without self control, it is not possible to attain mokṣa. Lord Yama refers the one without the sense control as *aśāntaḥ*.

Focused mind (*vyavasātmika buddhiḥ*)– He must have control over his mind (*aśāntamānsaḥ*) and must have a clear direction (*samāhitaḥ*). Tattva Bodha calls it *citta-samādhānam*.

Aṣṭāṅga Yoga is meant for developing these values: *yama* and *niyama* help develop moral life; *āsanā-prāṇāyāma-pratyahāra* help develop control over sense organs. *Dhāraṇa-dhyāna-samādhi* help gain control over the internal organs (mind/intellect) and gain *śamaḥ*. Without these four values, a person cannot assimilate the knowledge – this is the essence of this mantra.

Verses 23 and 24 essentially describe *sādhana catuṣṭaya sampattiḥ*.

२५ यस्य ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च, उभे भवत ओदनः ।
मृत्युर्यस्योपसेचनं, क इत्या वेद यत्र सः ॥

25 **yasya brahma ca kṣatram ca, ubhē bhavata oḍanaḥ ।
mṛtyuryasyopasēcanam, ka itthā vēda yatra saḥ ॥**

यस्य – **yasya** - For that (Ātmā) उभे – **ubhē** - both ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च – **brahma ca kṣatram ca** - brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas भवतः ओदनः – **bhavataḥ oḍanaḥ** - are food. मृत्युः – **mṛtyuh** - Death उपसेचनम् – **upasēcanam** - is sauce यस्य – **yasya** - for that (Ātmā). कः वेद इत्या – **kaḥ vēda itthā** - Who can know thus यत्र सः – **yatra saḥ** - where that (Ātmā) is?

For that (Ātmā) both brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas are food. Death is sauce for that (Ātmā). Who can know thus where that (Ātmā) is?

Having taken a small diversion into the topic of *sādhana*s, Lord Yama returns to the topic of *Ātmasvarūpam*. In this mantra, he brings about another important feature of

Ātmā. This is a very significant and symbolic mantra from which many corollaries can be derived.

Lord Yama brings the idea that Ātmā is *sṛṣṭi-sthiti-laya-kāraṇam* – the principle from which the world arises, remains established and ultimately resolves into. Lord Yama focuses on Ātmā, as the *laya-kāraṇam* which swallows the whole creation at the time of *pralayam*.

He also wants to show that time is an integral part of creation. In traditional Physics, we were taught that time and space are eternal and separate from creation and that the creation appears and disappears in time and space. Only in the modern Physics after the Theory of Relativity, it is determined that time and space are not separate from creation.

Time is a property of creation. When creation is absent, there is no concept of time. One of the corollaries whose meaning we will study in Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad: since we look upon time as an integral part of creation, origination of creation is the origination of time. Therefore, one can never logically say when the creation came into being; it is the same as saying when time came into being. To say this, time should have existed before time came into being – which is absurd. Therefore, the universe is *anirvacanīyam* (logically inexplicable). Similarly, one cannot logically say where space exists or how causality came into being.

In summary, Lord Yama says that creation along with time arose from Ātmā and are also swallowed together by Ātmā. At the time of *pralayam*, the world is swallowed as food (*odanaḥ*) by Ātmā. Creation is like the main dish and time (and space) is like a side dish. When we say Ātmā swallows time and space, we imply that Ātmā is beyond time and space. One should never wonder where Ātmā is or when Ātmā came into being. Space and time are within Ātmā. Ātmā is *deśa-kāla-sṛṣṭi-sthiti-laya-kāraṇam*.

In this verse, he calls the *brāhmaṇas* and the *kṣatriyas* as the world and so, they are the food for Ātmā. This is because *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas* are the protectors of dharma. The *brāhmaṇas* protect dharma by living and teaching the dhārmic lifestyle. *Kṣatriyas*

provide the infrastructure for dhārmic life by maintaining law and order. They keep adharmā in check by destroying the adhārmic people. In summary, dharma is protected by the *brāhmaṇas* by teaching and the *kṣatriyas* by punishing. Lord Yama also refers to death as the side dish (sauce) – death is *kālah*, the time principle.

॥ इति काठकोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये द्वितीयवल्ली ॥

Thus (ends) the first section of first chapter

तृतीयवल्ली

1.5 THIRD SECTION

INTRODUCTION

In the first *vallī*, the Upaniṣad presented the ideal conditions for the teaching of *Ātma Vidyā* indirectly providing the qualifications for the student and the teacher. It also glorified the knowledge. In response to the third boon asked by Naciketas by (1.1.20 and 1.2.14), *Ātmavidyā* was presented in a condensed manner in mantras 1.2.18 through 1.2.25. We saw the important features of *Ātmā* – *caitanyam*, *nirguṇam*, *nirvikāra*, *akartā*, *abhoktā*, *sarva-adhiṣṭānam* and *ṣṣṭi-sthiti-laya-kāraṇam*. Lord Yama conveys in mantra 1.2.25 that *Ātmā* is the substratum for the creation and time and space are integral part of the creation. *Ātmā* is not in time and space, but space and time are in *Ātmā*. Thus, in the second *vallī*, Lord Yama comprehensively described the features of *Ātmā* and briefly communicated *Ātmā Vidyā*.

In the third *vallī* also, Lord Yama will focus on *Ātma Vidyā*. Since this teaching is subtle, repeated listening is required. In this *vallī*, Lord Yama will describe the *sādhanas* (preparation) for *Ātma Vidyā*, then *Ātma Vidyā* itself and then the benefits (*phalam*).

१ ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके, गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे ।
छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति, पञ्चाग्रयो ये च त्रिणाचिकेतः ॥

1 ṛtaṁ pibantau sukṛtasya lōkē, guhāṁ praviṣṭau paramē parārdhē ।
Chāyātapau brahmaavidō vadanti, pañcāgnayō yē ca triṇāciketāḥ ॥

ब्रह्मविदः – **brahmavidah** - The knowers of Brahman वदन्ति – **vadanti** - say (that) छायातपौ – **chāyātapau** - (jīvātmā and Paramātmā), which are like shade and light, प्रविष्टौ – **praviṣṭau** - have entered गुहाम् – **guhām** - the intellect परमे परार्धे – **paramē parārdhē** - within the supreme abode of Paramātmā, पिबन्तौ – **pibantau** - experiencing ऋतं सुकृतस्य

– **ṛtaṁ sukṛtasya** - the result of their own actions लोके – **lokē** - in the body. ये पञ्चाग्नयः – **yē pañcāgnayaḥ** - Those who invoke the five fires च त्रिणाचिकेताः – **ca triṇāciketāḥ** - and who invoke the nāciketa-fire thrice (also say so).

The knowers of Brahman say (that jīvātmā and Paramātmā), which are like shade and light, have entered the intellect within the supreme abode of Paramātmā, experiencing the result of their own actions in the body. Those who invoke the five fires and who invoke the nāciketa-fire thrice (also say so).

In this verse, Lord Yama talks about *jivātma-paramātma-lakṣana*. This is a significant mantra because Vyāsa analyzed it in Brahmasūtra in *guhā-praviṣṭa-adhikāraṇam*. The features of *Paramātmā*, the infinite Consciousness has been discussed in the second section – the very word *Parama* shows it is all-pervading infinite (*deśa-kāla-atīta-caitanyam*). It is one, eternal, all-pervading etc. (*ekaḥ, nityaḥ, sarvagataḥ* etc.); it is analogous to space. Being all-pervading, it cannot undergo any change (*nirvikāra*); it cannot travel. This Consciousness pervades the body and mind also.

The mind is a subtle form of matter. It is not accurate to say that the mind is a flow of thoughts; it is appropriate to say that the mind has the flow of thoughts. In the mind, the thoughts arise and resolve. In sleep, when the thoughts are absent, the mind still exists. Being a subtle matter, the mind is inert, but it has the unique capacity to reflect (manifest) the all-pervading Consciousness (OC). Thus, the mind, the reflecting medium (RM) becomes a sentient entity. This reflected Consciousness (RC) is called *cidābhāsa* or *caitanya-pratibimba*. Ātmā is inherently sentient, but the mind is sentient because of borrowed blessing.

What is the nature of RC?

- It is located [OC is all-pervading] in the RM. The reflected image will only be in the mirror. It is finite (*paricchinnāḥ*)
- It is subject to change (*savikārah*). As the RM moves, the reflections also move.
- It is *anekaḥ* – it is not one – there will be as many RC's as there are RM's.

- It is subject to travel from one place to another (*gamana-agamanavān* or *calah*)
- Since *cidābhāsa* is associated with the mind and the mind is associated with the body, it can perform action. It is therefore, a *kartā*.
- Once it is a *kartā*, it also a *bhoktā*
- After being a *kartā* and *bhoktā* during the lifetime, the *cidābhāsa* drags the mind along with it and leaves the physical body and travels (to another body). The all-pervading OC is there even in the dead body, but the body is not alive because of the absence of *cidābhāsa*. The living has both OC and RC, but the dead only has the OC. This RC is called *jivātmā* and OC is called *Paramātmā*. The mind is endowed with both OC and RC. When the mind perishes, the RC will go, but the OC will survive.
- OC and RC have features that are diagonally opposite. [OC is all-pervading and RC is aal-pervading (Tamil *aal* = person)].

Jivātmā and *Paramātmā* are analogous to shade (*chāyā*) and light or sun (*ātapaḥ*) which are diagonally opposite. With this, the teacher is also introducing another idea that shadow cannot exist without light. Shade has dependent existence (*mithyā*) while light as independent existence (*satyam*). These two are resident in the sanctum sanctorum of the mind experiencing own *karmaphalam* (*rtam*).

Note: In Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, we discussed the example of two birds where *jivātmā* consumes the *karmaphalam* and the *paramātmā* remains as the witness. In this mantra, it says grammatically that both *jivātmā* and *paramātmā* are consuming *karmaphalam*. Is this a contradiction? Śaṅkarācārya interprets that it is not that *Paramātmā* consumes; it looks as though *Paramātmā* is consuming because it is closely associated and blessing *jivātmā*.

Both *jivātmā* and *Paramātmā* are discussed in *Karma kāṇḍa* as well as *jñāna kāṇḍa*. Both *karmis* and *jñānis* talk about these. In the *jñāna kāṇḍa*, the focus is on *Paramātmā* while in *karma kāṇḍa*, the focus is on the *jivātmā*, *karma* and *karmaphalam*. *Pañcāgnayaḥ* and *triṇāciketāḥ* are technical words describing the ritualistic people.

२ यः सेतुरीजानानाम्, अक्षरं ब्रह्म यत्परम् ।
अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं, नाचिकेतः शकेमहि ॥

2 yaḥ sēturijānānām, akṣaram brahma yatparam ।
abhayaṁ titīrṣatām pāraṁ, nācikētagm śakēmahi ॥

शकेमहि – śakēmahi - We can resort to नाचिकेतम् – nācikētam - the nāciketa-(fire) यः सेतुः – yaḥ sētuḥ - which is the means (to reach heaven) ईजानानाम् – ijānānām - for the ritualists. परम् अक्षरम् – param akṣaram - (We can also resort to) the supreme, imperishable, अभयं ब्रह्म – abhayaṁ brahma - fearless Brahman यत् – yat - which (is the means) तितीर्षतां पारम् – titīrṣatām pāram - for those who want to reach the shore (saṁsāra).

We can resort to the nāciketa-(fire) which is the means (to reach heaven) for the ritualists. (We can also resort to) the supreme, imperishable, fearless Brahman which (is the means) for those who want to reach the shore (saṁsāra).

Lord Yama deals with the *sādhanas*. *Jivātmā* introduced in the previous mantra represents a human who is a *kartāas* well as a *bhoktā*. A *jivātmā* born as an animal cannot express *kartṛtvam*. Although the subtle body (*sūkṣmaśarīram*) of an animal has all its faculties, the physical body does not have the provision to express them. An animal cannot express doership (*kartṛtvam*) because it does not have the freewill. In the case of plants, only the sense of touch is available. To be able to express all the 17 components of the subtle body, a human body is required. However, the animals (and plants) have the capacity to experience the pain and pleasures (*bhokṛtvam*). The animal must wait for the *sañcita puṇyam* to fructify in a future birth to be born as a human to be able to express *kartṛtvam*.

A *jivātmā* can have *puruṣārthas* (goals) only when it has a human body. In Kaṭhōpaniṣad, the four *puruṣārthas* have been combined into two – *śreyas* and *preyas* – spiritual and materialistic. The *jivātmā* can achieve the material through *karma mārga* – Lord Yama calls this Nāciketa ritual that contains all karmas. For the people who are seeking to be

liberated from *samsāra*, *jñāna mārga* is the means. *Akṣaram Brahma* in this verse should be interpreted in this context as *jñāna* which is the means to mokṣa. In this verse, mokṣa is referred to as *abhayam*, which means ultimate security. Material things including B-M complex in any *loka* are insecure.

We can choose one of these two goals. Most of the people unfortunately choose *preyas*.

३ आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि, शरीरं रथमेव तु ।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि, मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥

3 ātmānam rathinam viddhi, śarīram rathamēva tu ।
buddhim tu sārathim viddhi, manaḥ pragrahamēva ca ॥

विद्धि – **viddhi** - Know आत्मानम् – **ātmānam** - the jīvātmā रथिनम् – **rathinam** - to be the master of the chariot शरीरम् – **śarīram** - (and) the physical body रथम् एव तु – **ratham eva tu** - to be the chariot. विद्धि – **viddhi** - Know बुद्धिं तु – **buddhim tu** - the intellect सारथिम् – **sārathim** - to be the charioteer च मनः – **ca manaḥ** - and the mind प्रग्रहम् एव - to be the reins.

Know the jīvātmā to be the master of the chariot (and) the physical body to be the chariot. Know the intellect to be the charioteer and the mind to be the reins.

The introductory part is complete with the two previous mantras – *jīvātmā*, the traveler, the two destinations and the two paths have been introduced. Verses 3 through 9 describe the journey. The Upaniṣad only talks about the spiritual journey (*jñāna mārga*). It lays out the conditions for a successful journey. The general rule is that for any journey to be successful, the instrument of journey (the vehicle) must be made journey-worthy. The Upaniṣad uses a beautiful analogy called *ratha-kalpanā* for the vehicle. The gist of the analogy is first given here.

The components of the vehicle are the chariot (*rathah*), the horses to draw it (*aśvāḥ*), the reins to control the horses, the charioteer who controls the chariot by controlling the

horses with his reins and the master (owner or traveler) of the chariot who is seated in the back seat. The traveler does not directly drive the chariot, but he ultimately controls the destination by giving instructions to the driver. The sixth factor is the road (*mārga*) on which the horses and the chariot travel. Also, for the life journey, six components are involved and they are analogous to this chariot example:

Chariot = the physical body because it moves about

Horses = the sense organs that draw the body from one place to another. For example, the ears seek music, hunger takes you to an eatery etc. The body the chariot is drawn by five sense organs (horses).

Reins = the mind that regulates the sense organs just as the reins regulate the horses. The mind decides which sense organ is regulated – even though your hearing may be in a good condition, the mind may wander somewhere disabling the hearing capacity. [Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: *Without the mind, one cannot see or hear; only with the mind, one can see and hear*].

Charioteer = the intellect (*buddhi*) which controls the mind by controlling its emotions. That is why knowledge is important because with the knowledge, the intellect can solve our emotional problems. All sorrows can be solved by wisdom. Sometimes the *manomaya kośa* appears to overcome the *viññānamaya kośa* because we have not tackled the emotional problems at the root level. If one has nourished a habit, it takes long to give it up, but it is not impossible.

The traveler (*yajamānaḥ*) = *jivātmā* from *śloka* 1 (*cidābhasa* or *chāya*)

Road = the sense objects. There are 5 lanes to travel – i.e., the five sense organs can be drawn to the five-fold sense objects.

It is important keep these in good condition so that the journey can be successful. The preparatory *sādhanas* are:

- All the four components should be healthy (the road is not in our control; we can also leave the traveler out).
 - The spiritual seeker must keep the physical body fit (*ārogya*). While the *sāstras* discourage the pampering of the body, they also advise against negligence. Proper care is the right attitude. *Aṣṭāṅga yoga* is given a prominent place; Śaṅkarācārya has mentioned many times that even a *sannyāsī* must practice *Aṣṭāṅga yoga* to keep the body fit. We ask for physical health in *śānti-pāṭha* also.
 - Keep the sense organs fit (*damaḥ*) – the horses must be fit. In short, the chariot should be fit.
 - The mind should be fit (*śamah*). The seeker should be emotionally resilient. He must manage his emotions so that they do not cloud his thinking. Only a clear mind can make sound decisions. The healthy mind is immune to violent emotions, but even when such emotions arrive, it can quickly recover. This is the same with the physical body – a healthy body has the immunity to resist diseases, and it can recover quickly even if the disease comes. Emotionally unsound person is susceptible to depression. Mental health is connected to the values (Bhagavad Gita Chapter 16).
 - Intellectual health (*viveka* or *medhāśakti*) – A healthy intellect is required to acquire knowledge. The intellect is the instrument for reasoning without which one cannot gain any knowledge. Many become bhaktas without reasoning; when some thing terribly goes wrong, they question the compassion of the Lord and lose faith in Him. At that crucial time, the intellect will pose a question and demand a logical answer. The Vedānta is not a matter of faith, but of understanding. The intellect should be capable for logical thinking (*tarka śāstra* was meant for training the intellect for proper thinking). The second capacity of the intellect is language analysis or *mīmāṃsa*. Our knowledge is received and conveyed through language. It is the capacity of the teacher to communicate the knowledge clearly and precisely. It is also the capacity of the student to receive and assimilate the knowledge. The words are the only way to communicate the knowledge. Three fundamental factors are important for intellectual health –

logical thinking, language analysis and grammar – these were given to the students for soundness of intellect in those days.

- These organs should be healthy and should function in coordination (*ārjavam* – integration or harmonization). A concert will not be successful if the musicians are not in harmony even though they are top class. A *mahātmā* is one whose organs are integrated – if the intellect decides to come to this class, the mind obeys and remains in this hall. The sense organs are also in coordination with the thoughts. All the 17 components of the *sūkṣmaśarīram* should work in concert.

These five values must be there for a successful journey as described in mantras 3 through 9. The summary of this verse:

Ātmā in the context of this verse is *jīvātmā* (RC +RM) who is the traveler seated on the chariot. The physical body is *ratham*, the vehicle. *Śarīram* in Sanskrit means that something deteriorates or decays every moment. [Bhartṛhari: *Prepare to travel when the vehicle is in a good condition. If you postpone, the vehicle may become unfit*]. The mind (the reins) is behind the sense organs. Only when the mind is balanced, the sense organs can be mastered. The intellect is the charioteer. The driver should be informed – otherwise, he may get lost and not reach the destination. It is very difficult for the intellect to know the way by itself. Therefore, it should have a guide map – the *śāstras* (*guru-śāstra-upadeśa*). The intelligent seek help at the appropriate time. Driver should be sober – the intellect should be free of delusion [should not be under the influence of *bhrāntiḥ* (brandy!) that money, position fame etc. give security]. Intellect should have *viveka* and *jñāna*.

४ इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुः, विषयां स्तेषु गोचरान् ।
आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं, भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः ॥

4 **indriyāṇi hayānāhuḥ, viṣayāṅm stēṣu gōcarān |**
ātmēndriyamano-yuktam, bhōktētyāhurmaniṣiṇaḥ ||

आहुः – āhuḥ - They declare इन्द्रियाणि – indriyāṇi - the sense organs हयान् – hayān - to be the horses विषयान् – viṣayān - (and) the objects तेषु गोचरान् – tēṣu gōcarān - to be their paths. मनीषिणः आहुः इति – manīṣṇaḥ āhuḥ iti - The wise men declare that आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तम् – ātmēndriyamanoyuktam - (the jīvātmā) along with the body, sense organs and the mind भोक्ता – bhōktā - is the experiencer.

They declare the sense organs to be the horses and the objects to be their paths. The wise men declare that (the jīvātmā) along with the body, sense organs and the mind is the experiencer.

The sense organs are likened to the horses. The sense organs drag the physical body from place to place to experience sense objects. In the Vedānta, a sense object is defined as the sense pleasure derived from an object. The sense organ is not interested in the object itself, but is in the experience derived from that object. For example, a television is not a sense object, but the imagery that it presents is the sense object of vision (*rūpa*). Audio presented by the television is the sense object of sound (*śabda*). In the case of the delicious dish, the dish itself is not the sense object, but the taste (*rasaḥ*) is the sense object. Therefore, there are only five sense objects in this word – sound, touch, sight, taste and smell (*śabda-sparśa-rūpa-rasa-gandha*).

The traveler is the experiencer (*bhoktā*). One who is interested in being a *bhoktā* is also a *kartā*. In other words, no one will be interested in karma unless he is interested in some result (*phalam*). He is interested in impermanent or permanent happiness (*preyo-bhogaḥ* or *sreyo-bhogaḥ*). This *bhoktā* (RC or *pratibimba-caitanyam*) is endowed with the physical body, sense organs and the mind. In the sleep state, even though the *jīvātmā* is there, the medium (body+sense organs+mind) is not available for transaction and that so, he is not a *kartā* or a *bhoktā*. However, in waking and dreaming, *jīvātmā* is a *kartā* and a *bhoktā*.

The wise people said the above. This statement implies that this ṛṣi of this Upaniṣad (or Lord Yama) has not invented this concept, but came from his guru who claimed that it came from his guru and so on. The *parampara* is *anādi* – no date of origination.

५ यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवति, अयुक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्येन्द्रियाण्यवश्यानि, दुष्टाश्वा इव सारथेः ॥

5 **yastvavijñānavānbhavati, ayuktēna manasā sadā ।**
tasyēndriyāṅyavaśyāni, duṣṭāśvā iva sārathēḥ ॥

तु भवति – **tu bhavati** - Suppose there is one यः अविज्ञानवान् – **yaḥ avijñāvān** - who is without discrimination सदा – **sadā** - (and) always अयुक्तेन मनसा – **ayuktēna manasā** - with undisciplined mind. तस्य इन्द्रियाणि – **tasya indriyāṅi** - His sense organs अवश्यानि – **avaśyāni** - (will be) uncontrollable इव दुष्टाश्वाः – **iva duṣṭāśvāḥ** - like the unruly horses सारथेः – **sārathēḥ** - of the charioteer.

Suppose there is one who is without discrimination (and) always with undisciplined mind. His sense organs (will be) uncontrollable like the unruly horses of the charioteer.

Question: Is the vehicle that you possess your friend or enemy? If the vehicle is fit, it is your greatest friend that can take you anywhere. If the vehicle is unfit and not in your control, it can become your enemy. When the vehicle becomes an enemy, it takes you to a different destination (to Yama, the guru of Kaṭhōpaniṣad, but not for jñāna of course). Krishna borrows from this mantra and incorporates into verse 6.6 of the Bhagavad Gītā:

बन्धुरात्मात्मन्स्तस्य येनात्मैवात्मना जितः ।
अनात्मनस्तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेतात्मैव शत्रुवत् ॥६.६॥

Bandhurātmātmanstasya yēnātmaivātmanā jitah|
Anātmanastu śatru tvē vartētātmaiva śatruvat ||6.6||

The self is a friend of oneself for him by whom the self is mastered by the very Self. But, that very self would remain in enmity like an enemy for him who has not mastered the Self.

One should try to kill (transform) the mind that is giving you the unhappiness. We cannot abandon the mind, but must pay attention to it. The study of own mind is important to be able to efficiently function.

If the intellect is not well developed and sensitive to know the goals clearly and if the mind predominantly is undisciplined, the sense organs will be unruly. Such a person's fate will be the same as the traveler in the chariot drawn by unruly horses. Such a person is not in charge of his life; he leads a licentious life. Only the individual can take charge of his life; the *śāstras*, guru etc. can only assist in such an endeavor. Therefore, one must watch his thoughts because it will control his destiny as follows:

Thoughts → Words → Action → Habit → Character → Destiny.

६ यस्तुविज्ञानवान्भवति, युक्तेनमनसासदा ।
तस्येन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि, सदश्वा इव सारथेः ॥

6 **yastuvijñānavānbhavati, yuktēnamanasāsadā ।**
tasyēndriyāṇi vaśyāni, sadaśvā iv asā Rathēḥ ॥

तु भवति- **tu bhavati** - Suppose there is one यः विज्ञानवान् – **yaḥ vijñānavān** - who is with discrimination सदा – **sadā** - (and) always युक्तेन मनसा – **yuktēna manasā** - with disciplined mind. तस्य इन्द्रियाणि – **tasya indriyāṇi** - His sense organs वश्यानि – **vaśyāni** - (will be) controllable इव सदश्वाः – **iva sadaśvaḥ** - like the tame horses सारथेः – **sā Rathēḥ** - of the charioteer.

Suppose there is one who is with discrimination (and) always with disciplined mind. His sense organs will be controllable like the tame horses of the charioteer.

This verse contrasts the person in the previous verse. He is now describing the vehicle where every factor is fit.

His intellect is very clear about both his secondary and primary goals of his life. His secondary goals are aligned with the primary goal (*mokṣa*). The *sāstras* help one to set and accomplish the intermediate goals while not losing sight of the primary goal. While achieving the intermediate goals, one should self-introspect whether he is growing internally (*sādhana-catuṣṭaya-sampattiḥ*). This is described in verse 2.41 of the Bhagavad Gītā:

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन ।
बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम् ॥ २- ४१॥

Vyavasāyātmikā buddhirēkēha kurunandana |
Bahuśākhā hyanantāśca buddhayō'vyavasāyinām || 2- 41||

Oh Arjuna! (There is only) one clear understanding in this field. However, the notions of those without clarity are many branched and endless.

The unintelligent either do not know their destination or forget it. The intelligent ones are focused. *Satsang* will help one keep the destination in focus.

The intelligent one knows the necessity of the balanced mind. He is careful not be hijacked by his emotions (*rāga-dveṣa*) that can take him away from his path. Through the lifestyle of karma yoga, he maintains the equanimity of mind (*samatvam*) even in the worst crisis.

If the mind and intellect are under control, the sense organs will naturally be under his control. He is the master of his sense organs like the wonderful driver of well-tamed horses. The sense organs will go to the field that it values the most. By changing the values, one can change the way of life itself. The values dictate your actions – one cannot be forced otherwise.

In summary, the first requirement for spirituality is to make sure that all the organs and the instruments are in fit condition. One should put forth the effort, but the effort without the cooperative sense organs and the mind is insufficient. Arjuna openly confesses in Chapter 6 and Krishna concurs. We are bound to fail, but should pick

ourselves up with more effort and time. It is challenging, but a worthwhile pursuit. In all the Upaniṣads, we pray to the Lord to help us in our endeavor. Effort + grace of God → mastery of organs. It is a compulsory exercise for spiritual goal.

The main controller is the intellect (buddhi). If we want to bring about transformation in life, we need to focus on the intellect. An informed person has a strong intellect that will give the right message to the mind which in turn will give the right signal to the sense organs and then the body. They will all be in alignment. Educating and enlightening the mind is important.

In the beginning stages of life, one should focus only on education. Even for leading a religious life, one should know what religious life is. People practice religion without knowing the purpose of each religious practice. It is like handling an electrical appliance without knowing where to touch and where not. Therefore, the study of the scriptures is advised as a first *sādhana*. Even in *aṣṭāṅga yoga*, the most important book by Patañjali, meditation is not the first step. He advises *yama* and *niyama* first; *svādhyāya* is a fundamental component of *niyama*. Learn the theory of religion first; understand the intermediate and the final goals. Without being properly informed the intellect cannot not guide the mind properly. Then the sense organs and the body will also go astray. In the name of spiritual journey, one may go in the opposite direction even though the intention is good.

७ यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवति, अमनस्कः सदाशुचिः ।

न स तत्पदमाप्नोति, सः सारं चाधिगच्छति ॥

7 **yastvavijñānavānbhavati, amanaskaḥ sadāśuciḥ ।**

Na sa tatpadamāpnōti, saṁ sārāṁ cādhiḡacchati ॥

तु भवति – **tu bhavati** - Suppose there is one यः अविज्ञानवान् – **yaḥ avijñānavān** - who is without a discriminative intellect, अमनस्कः – **amanaskaḥ** - without a (disciplined) mind, सदा अशुचिः – **sadā aśuciḥ** - and ever impure. सः न आप्नोति – **saḥ na āpnōti** - He does not attain तत् पदम् – **tat padam** - that goal. अधिगच्छति – **adhigacchati** - He attains संसारं च – **samsāraṁ ca** - saṁsāra also.

Suppose there is one who is without a discriminative intellect, without a (disciplined) mind, and ever impure. He does not attain that goal. He attains saṁsāra also.

What will happen to the seeker if the vehicle is not in a fit condition?

- He does not know where he stands spiritually and what *sādhana* is relevant and appropriate for him now. Therefore, he is confused.
- A sharp intellect is required to understand the nature of the mind. He has a weak intellect and therefore, his mind is unruly. *Amanaskaḥ* means a person without a mind. When the mind is not obedient, it is as good as not there (like a disobedient servant).
- He becomes impure because his sense organs move about in *adhārmic* field. In those days, the entire society followed dharma but today, the society has little influence over the *dhārmic* values of a person. Therefore, that responsibility falls upon the individual. He needs to control his sense organs with his mind; this is possible only when he develops an informed intellect through education.

Such a person may stagnate or worse, he may even spiritually fall. He would then have to swim upstream to recover.

८ यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति, समनस्कः सदा शुचिः ।

स तु तत्पदमाप्नोति, यस्माद् भूयो न जायते ॥

8 yastu vijñānavānbhavati, samanaskaḥ sadā śuciḥ ।

Sa tu tatpadamāpnōti, yasmād bhūyō na jāyatē ॥

तु भवति – **tu bhavati** - Suppose there is one यः विज्ञानवान् – **yaḥ vijñānavān** - who is with a discriminative intellect, समनस्कः – **samanaskaḥ** with a (disciplined) mind, सदाशुचिः – **sadāśuciḥ** - and ever pure. सः तु आप्नोति – **saḥ tu āpnōti** - He definitely attains तत् पदम् – **tat padam** - that goal यस्मात् – **yasmāt** - from which न भूयः जायते – **naḥ bhūyaḥ jāyate** - he is not reborn.

Suppose there is one who is with a discriminative intellect, with a (disciplined) mind, and ever pure. He definitely attains that goal from which he is not reborn.

Lord Yama is now contrasting with the one with informed intellect. He fulfils *artha-kāma* by following dharma. In parallel, he purifies his mind doing *nitya-naimittika karma*. Gradually, his desires will get refined and will shift from *artha-kāma* to *mokṣa*. The roadmap is clear and then he follows the four *āśramas* that enables him to gradually enter active life and then gradually withdraw from it.

His sharp intellect combined with his pure lifestyle keeps his mind and the sense organs under control. He never strays from the *dhārmic* field. He will reach his destination after which he is never born again.

९ विज्ञानसारथिर्यस्तु, मनःप्रग्रहवान्नरः ।
सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति, तद्विष्णोः परमंपदम् ।

9 vijñānasārathiryastu, manaḥpragrahavānnaraḥ ।
sōSdhvanaḥ pāramāpnōti, tadviṣṇōḥ paramaṁpadam ।

सः नरः – saḥ naraḥ - That person यः तु विज्ञानसारथिः – yaḥ tu vijñānasārathiḥ - (who has) a discriminative intellect as the charioteer मनःप्रग्रहवान् – manaḥpragravān - and who has a disciplined mind as the reins आप्नोति – āpnōti - reaches पारम् अध्वनः – pāram adhvanaḥ - the destination of the journey. तत् परमं पदम् – tat paramaṁ padam - It is the supreme nature विष्णोः – viṣṇōḥ - of Brahman.

That person (who has) a discriminative intellect as the charioteer and who has a disciplined mind as the reins reaches the destination of the journey. It is the supreme nature of Brahman.

Lord Yama concludes the *ratha-kalpanā* here.

The individual who has an informed intellect as the driver of the chariot will have his mind under control (like the reins). Such a person reaches the destination of the journey (*adhvanah* = path or *mārga*). Death is not the end of the journey for one with weak intellect – he dies with unfulfilled desires.

Such a person attains *Viṣṇu padam*. This means he attains the nature of Brahman. (*padam* = *svarūpam*; *Viṣṇu padam* = *Viṣṇu svarūpam* = *Brahma svarūpam*). *Paramam padam* means higher nature – it distinguishes from the lower nature of *Viṣṇu* with form. There is no travel involved here; there is only understanding that *Viṣṇu padam* is never away from him. The dreamer reaches the waker by waking up. [*Viṣṇu* comes from the root *viṣ* which means all-pervading. There is no form for the higher nature of *Viṣṇu*].

In summary, the disciplines required are *ārogya*, *damah*, *samah*, *vivekah* and *ārijavam*. These were highlighted through mantras 3 through 9 in *ratha-kalpanā*. *Jñāna sādhana* topic is complete.

१० इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्थाः, अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः ।
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिः, बुद्धेरात्मा महान्परः ॥

10 indriyēbhyaḥ parā hyarthāḥ, arthēbhyaśca paraṁ manaḥ । manasastu parā buddhiḥ, buddhērātmā mahānparaḥ ॥

अर्थाः – **arthāḥ** - Sense-objects पराः हि – **parāḥ hi** - are superior इन्द्रियेभ्यः – **indriyēbhyaḥ** - to the sense organs. मनः परम् – **manaḥ param** - Mind is superior अर्थेभ्यः च – **arthēbhyaḥ ca** - to the sense-objects. बुद्धिः तु परा – **buddhiḥ tu parā** - Intellect is superior मनसः – **manasaḥ** - to the mind. महान् आत्मा – **mahān ātmā** - Mahat परः – **paraḥ** - is superior बुद्धेः – **buddhēḥ** - to the intellect.

Sense-objects are superior to the sense organs. Mind is superior to the sense-objects. Intellect is superior to the mind. Mahat is superior to the intellect.

With this verse, Lord Yama is entering the topic of *jñāna*. In the previous verse, we saw that there is no physical reaching of *Viṣṇu*. What one requires is dropping the notion that *Viṣṇu* (Consciousness or *Paramātmā Caitanyam*) is away. It is an intellectual journey; the Upaniṣad gives a progressive elaboration. The intellect cannot grasp the attribute-less consciousness because our intellect is used only to the objects. The Upaniṣad takes the seeker gradually from the *saguṇa* world to *nirguṇa-caitanyam*. This method is called *pañca-kośa-viveka* – taking one from formed body to formless *Ātmā*. The focus of our mind is taken from the gross physical personality (*annamaya-kośa*) to the energy personality (*prāṇamaya*) to the emotional personality (*manomaya*) to the intellectual personality (*vijñānamaya*) to the sleep personality (*ānandamaya*) and then to *Ātmā*. This is the inner spiritual journey – i.e. disidentification of the grosser body and gradual identification with the subtler components progressing from the body to mind to intellect to bliss to *Ātmā*.

Each later *kośa* is subtler, stronger and closer to one's nature. Initially the needs of the body are the most important for a person. Then, the emotional needs become important especially when one becomes older. The older person would sacrifice the physical needs for emotional support – especially the older parents longing to be with their children (less food served by the children is better than more food by the servant). The intellectual needs trump the emotional needs. For example, even though it is emotionally difficult to part with the son or daughter going away from home for higher studies or job, the parents, through discrimination understand the value of such separation even though it causes emotional pain. [Śaṅkarācārya: the subtler the personality, the more it pervades. The subtlest *Ātmā*, my true nature is all pervading].

The grossest personality is the physical body. The sense organs (*indriyāṇi*) are superior to the physical body. The Upaniṣad does not mention these and so we supply these to complete the analysis. The sense organs have control over the body. Just as the horses drag the chariot to places, the sense organs drag the body to various sense objects.

The sense objects (*arthāḥ*) are superior to the sense organs. This is because the sense objects have the capacity to tempt the sense organs. Therefore, perceived sense objects

are subtler than sense organs. They have entered the mind through the sense organs that drag the body towards it.

The mind is superior to sense objects. The perceived sense objects exist in the form of thoughts in the mind (*Arthāḥ* means *artha-vṛttayah*). The mind is superior to the thoughts because it is the cause (*upādāna kāraṇam*) of the thoughts. The thoughts arise in the mind, exist in the mind and resolve in it. The spiritual journey consists of withdrawing the identification from each one of the sense objects (thoughts). Identify with the mind.

The intellect is subtler and more powerful than the mind and therefore is superior. The mind and the intellect are not separate organs. They are two names of the same organ *antaḥkaraṇam* (internal organ). This is known by two different names based on the function (just as the same person is the wife at home and MD in the office). Mind is the doubting function and the intellect is the determination function. *Niścaya* (determination) destroys *samśaya* (doubt) and therefore, the intellect is superior to the mind. All the emotional problems (sorrows) can be conquered by the knowledge (*jñāna*) in the intellect. The entire *Gītā* is about conquering the sorrow through knowledge. In the chariot example, the driver (intellect) is the controller of the reins (mind). Disidentify with the mind and identify with the intellect (*vijñānamaya*).

Mahān ātmā is superior to the intellect. *Mahān ātmā* is the total intellect while *buddhiḥ* refers to the individual intellect. The total intellect is *Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ* (*samaṣṭi buddhiḥ*). It is superior to the individual intellect because the former pervades the latter [just as ocean pervades the wave]. The mind should not only go deeper, but it should also expand. Self-knowledge requires both breadth and depth. Lord Subrahmaṇya has a spear (*vēl*) as his weapon – through that the Lord is indicating what the mind should be like – sharp, wide and deep. With that spear you can destroy the *ajñāna-asura* and *samsāra-rākṣasa*. Our mind must learn to identify with the total intellect: I should understand that the individual intellect is not separate from the total intellect. [There is no individual body separate from total matter]. This is the travel from micro to macro.

११ महतः परमव्यक्तम्, अव्यक्तात्पुरुषः परः ।
पुरुषात्र परं किञ्चित्, सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥

11 mahataḥ paramavyaktam, avyaktātpuruṣaḥ paraḥ ।
puruṣāna paraṁ kiñcit, sā kāṣṭhā sā parā gatiḥ ॥

अव्यक्तम् – **avyaktam** - The unmanifest परं महतः – **paraṁ mahataḥ** - is superior to Mahat. पुरुषः – **puruṣaḥ** - Ātmā परः – **paraḥ** - is superior अव्यक्तात् – **avyaktāt** - to the unmanifest. न किञ्चित् – **na kiñcit** - There is nothing परं पुरुषात् – **paraṁ puruṣāt** - superior to Ātmā. सा काष्ठा – **sā kāṣṭhā** - That is the culmination. सा परा गतिः – **sā parā gatiḥ** - That is the supreme goal.

The unmanifest is superior to Mahat. Ātmā is superior to the unmanifest. There is nothing superior to Ātmā. That is the culmination. That is the supreme goal.

Avyaktam is superior to the total intellect. *Avyaktam* is that in which intellect (knowledge) resolves. All the divisions go into the potential condition. That state is called *kāraṇa avasthā* – the seed condition of the creation. At the time of *pralaya*, the world resolves into the seed form. It is called *kāraṇa prapañca*. The intellect belongs to *sūkṣma prapañca* and *avyaktam* belongs to *kāraṇa prapañca* and therefore, the latter is subtler than the former.

The micromodel for this potential state (*avyakta* or *kāraṇa avasthā*) is our daily sleep. Our mind with its emotions and the intellect with knowledge resolve into the deep sleep state. They are not absent, but are in the potential form – it is the subtlest form of creation. It is the subtlest because one cannot distinguish the emotions from knowledge just as one cannot distinguish the roots, branches etc. in the seed [*avyaktam* = undifferentiated]. However, they are all in the genetic code in the seed and will manifest in time. This is the subtlest form of matter. It is *ānandamaya kośa*– you are in bliss when asleep.

Puruṣaḥ (Ātmā), the Consciousness principle that is witnessing the blank state in sleep is superior to *avyaktam*. During deep sleep one does not experience anything, but when

he wakes up, he claims that he had a wonderful and sound sleep. Here *the absence of experience is equal to the experience of absence of experience*. [I did not experience anything = I experienced the absence of all experiences]. This means that blankness is matter and the witness of blankness is not matter – it is Consciousness. Blankness comes during deep sleep (*suṣupti*) and departs in the waking and dream states, but Consciousness (I) remains in all three states. Consciousness is there as witness to the absence as well as the presence of thoughts. I must turn my attention to Consciousness inherent in the blankness (and all states) as the witness of blankness (and the other states).

Light illumines the empty hall as well as the full hall. What we call an empty hall is still pervaded by the light. If the light is absent, we cannot say whether the hall is empty or not.

You can withdraw from sense organs, all emotions and knowledge and reach the state of blankness. Instead of turning the attention to the blankness, you own up to the Consciousness that is aware of the blankness. How do you turn your attention to Consciousness? By owning up to Consciousness as I am. To own up to the Consciousness, I have to use my mind, but mind is not included in it. For example, I use reading glasses for reading, but the glasses are not part of me as a person. Turning = Owning = Claiming = I am Consciousness.

[*Puru* = body; *ṣaḥ* = resident – the resident of the body. *Pure ṣete iti puruṣaḥ*. Second one: *pūrayati sarvam iti puruṣaḥ* – that which pervades everything is *Puruṣaḥ*. It is within and without. [In Tamil, God is called Kadavul (கடவுள்) – கட என்றால் கடந்தும் இருக்கிறார்; உள் என்றால் உள்ளேயும் இருக்கிறார்.]

After arriving at *Puruṣaḥ*, there is no more journey. This is the end – there is nothing superior or subtler or pervasive than *Ātmā*. *Puruṣaḥ* is the culmination of the inward journey – *Kāṣṭhā* literally means apex. It is the ultimate destination (goal). All the others are only intermediate stations (goals). Taittirīya Upaniṣad analyzes *pañca kośa* very elaborately.

१२ एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु, गूढोत्मा न प्रकाशते ।
दृश्यते त्वग्रया बुद्ध्या, सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥

12 *ēṣa sarvēṣu bhūtēṣu, gūḍhōtmā na prakāśatē |*
dr̥ṣyatē tvagryayā buddhyā, sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ ||

गूढः – *gūḍhaḥ* - Being hidden सर्वेषु भूतेषु – *sarvēṣu bhūtēṣu* - in all beings, एषः आत्मा-
ēṣaḥ ātmā - this Ātmā न प्रकाशते – *na prakāśatē* - is not evident. तु – *tu* - However,
दृश्यते – *dr̥ṣyatē* - it is seen सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः – *sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ* - by the people of subtle
vision अग्रया सूक्ष्मया बुद्ध्या – *agryayā sūkṣmayā buddhyā* - with a sharp subtle intellect.

*Being hidden in all beings, this Ātmā is not evident. However, it is seen by the
people of subtle vision with a sharp subtle intellect.*

With the previous two verses, the *pañca kośa* topic is complete. Here Lord Yama describes the qualifications for *pañca kośa viveka*. To recognize Ātmā, a subtle and sensitive mind is required (to do microsurgery, one must use a focused laser beam). This is true for any field – such as someone recognizing the absence of *śruti* in music. The mind that is not trained will not recognize it.

Consciousness is present in everybody and every body. It is hidden in *anātmā* – intermingled and inseparable with *anātmā (pañca kośas)*. The word *gūḍhaḥ* literally means covered. However, one should remember that all-pervading Consciousness cannot be covered by anything. So, it should be taken as “as though covered”. One is pre-occupied with *kośas* all the time so that he loses sight of Ātmā. For example, the movie characters cover the screen by drawing your attention.

Ātmā is not evident to the extroverted person whose mind is not subtle. For example, when this person sees the hand in the light, the presence of light is not evident to him. If he turns his attention from the hand to the light, he will discern the presence of light. To discern the ever-present light (Consciousness), one needs a very subtle mind. Turning the attention to Consciousness is equivalent to owning up – I am not the thought; I am

the awareness through which the thoughts are made aware. I am not the body; I am the awareness because of which the body is sentient.

Ātmā is "seen" by the seer with a sharp and subtle intellect that can discriminate the Consciousness from thought. With a sharp intellect, one can distinguish one object from another – such as light and hand. Similarly, he can intellectually differentiate between thoughts and Consciousness as objects, but to separate the subject (Consciousness) from the object, one requires a subtle intellect. The ones without the subtle intellect will treat Consciousness as an object and look for it in meditation. You cannot find it because the searcher is the searched – this understanding reveals Ātmā.

१३ यच्छेद्वाङ्मनसी प्राज्ञः, तद्यच्छेज्ज्ञान आत्मनि ।
ज्ञानमात्मनि महति नियच्छेत्, तद्यच्छेच्छान्त आत्मनि ॥

13 yacchēdvānmanasī prājñah, tadyacchējjñāna ātmani I
Jñānamātmani mahati niyacchēt, tadyacchēcchānta ātmani II

प्राज्ञः – **prājñah** - The discriminative one यच्छेत् – **yacchēt** -should resolve वाक् – **vāk** - the speech मनसी – **manasī** - into the mind. यच्छेत् – **yacchēt** - He should resolve तत् – **tat** - that (mind) ज्ञाने आत्मनि – **jñānē ātmani** - into the intellect. नियच्छेत् – **niyacchēt** - He should resolve ज्ञानम् – **jñānam** - the intellect महति आत्मनि – **mahati ātmani** - into mahat. यच्छेत् तत् – **yacchēt tat** - He should resolve that (mahat) शान्ते आत्मनि – **śāntē ātmani** - into the tranquil Ātmā.

The discriminative one should resolve the speech into the mind. He should resolve that (mind) into the intellect. He should resolve the intellect into mahat. He should resolve that (mahat) into the tranquil Ātmā.

In the previous verse, Lord Yama said that sharp and subtle intellect is required for *Ātmājñānam*. Many erroneously think that the mind is not required for self-knowledge. They think that the mind is a limited instrument that cannot know the limitless and therefore, one should drop it and transcend to the state of *samādhi* to achieve self-

realization. It is clear from mantra 12 that you cannot drop the mind and intellect because you need them to acquire self-knowledge.

It is said elsewhere in the other scriptures that the mind cannot know the Ātmā (Example: Kenopaniṣad 1.6). Is it not contradictory to the above statement? The simplest answer given by Śaṅkarācārya: when the scriptures say that the mind cannot know, it means that the unprepared mind cannot know. Only the sharp and subtle mind can know.

Here the teacher is emphasizing meditation as a method for preparing the mind. It must be emphasized that the meditation is only for preparing the mind and not for knowing the Ātmā. *Ātmajñānam* is only possible through the guru and *śāstras*. For the *guru-śāstra-upadeśa* to work, one needs a prepared mind.

Meditation is of two types:

- *Saguṇa Īśvara dhyānam*– meditating on God with form is *upāsanā* (before Vedantic study)
- *Nirguṇa Īśvara dhyānam*– *nididhyāsanam* after the Vedāntic study for those have not practiced *upāsanā*

Without *upāsanā*, the knowledge acquired in the mind is unassimilated. This person will be a scholarly *samsārī*. *Nididhyāsanam* is like the cow chewing the cud: assimilate the knowledge and distribute to the entire personality (Swami Paramarthananda Saraswati: if you have done *upāsanā*, you may need very little *nididhyāsanam*. Generally, people study the Vedānta without preparation and therefore, they need significant amount of *nididhyāsanam*). In this mantra, *nididhyāsanam-dhyānam* is emphasized. Chapter 6 of the Bhagavad Gītā is based on Kaṭhōpaniṣad.

Prājñah means one who has done *śravaṇam*, but has not assimilated the knowledge. He is a *jñānī*, but not a *jñāna-niṣṭhaḥ*. The Upaniṣad says that he should sit silently in a place (*vāk-manasī-yacched*). This indicates that he must withdraw the functions of *jñānendriyas* and *karmendriyas* into his mind (*manomaya-kośa*).

The next step is to withdraw the mind into the *viññāna-maya-kośa* (*jñāna-Ātmāni*). He should move away from the thoughts centered on the objective world to the thoughts centered on himself. [*Aham vṛtti = Viññānamaya kośa*]

Then he should withdraw the *viññānamaya kośa* into *samaṣṭi* intellect (*Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ*). This amounts to the recognition that the individual intellect is not separate from the total intellect. We look at Tamilnadu as a state. When we look at India, we recognize that there is no Tamilnadu separate from India. We look at Asia – we see that Tamilnadu is not separate from it. This withdrawal is an attitudinal change and not a physical one.

From that intellect, which is full of thoughts, turn the attention to *śanta Ātmā*, the witness of the intellect and the thoughts (like turning the attention to the light in the example of light and the hand). Thus, you gradually turn your attention from the observed world to the observer. After turning to the Consciousness, dwell on the fact that you are not limited by the physical body. By identifying with the Consciousness, disown the identification to the body-mind complex. This practice is called *nididhyāsanam* – we should practice this until transformation occurs. It is not possible to predict how long it will take for the transformation to occur – it depends on the person. Therefore, enjoy the process of *nididhyāsanam*.

How does one know whether one needs *nididhyāsanam*? If *śravaṇam* transforms a person, it is evident that it is not required. The seeker knows that he has had sufficient *nididhyāsanam* when the transformation occurs. Only the seeker will know that – no one else, including the guru.

१४ उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत,
प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।
क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया,
दुर्ग पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥

**14 uttiṣṭhata jāgrata,
Prāpya varānibōdhata I
kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā,
durgam pathastatkavayō vadanti II**

उत्तिष्ठत - Arise. जाग्रत- Awake. प्राप्य वरान्- Having approached the great ones, निबोधत- know (the Ātmā). कवयः वदन्ति- The wise declare that तत् पथः - the path (of Self-knowledge) दुर्गम्- is difficult to tread, निशिता धारा- (just as) the sharp edge क्षुरस्य - of a razor दुरत्यया - is difficult to tread.

Arise. Awake. Having approached the great ones, know (the Ātmā). The wise declare that the path (of Self-knowledge) is difficult to tread, (just as) the sharp edge of a razor is difficult to tread.

Another beautiful and comprehensive mantra that describes the entire range of spiritual *sādhana*s. It is parallel to the Mundaka Upaniṣad mantra (1.2.12):

परीक्ष्य लोकान्कर्मचितान्ब्राह्मणः, निर्वेदमायान्नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन ।
तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्, समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥

**parīkṣya lōkānkarmacitānbrāhmaṇaḥ, nirvēdamāyānnāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtēna I
tadvijñānārthaṁ sa gurumēvābhigacchēt, samitpāṇiḥ śrōtriyam brahmaṇiṣṭham II**
Having examined the worlds which are achieved through karma, a Brahmin should come to dispassion. The unproduced (mokṣa) is not possible through karma. Therefore, to attain knowledge, he must necessarily approach, with samit in hand, a teacher who is learned in scriptures and established in Brahman.

The first stage in spiritual journey is to recognize the problem just as a doctor diagnoses the problem before giving treatment. Karma Yoga way of life will help us determine what exactly we need. It will purify and sensitize the mind leading us to analyze whether the problem is with the world or within us. Without this, we tend to find fault with everything else in the world except ourselves. Karma yoga will make it very clear that self-ignorance (*ajñānam*) is the main problem and that the mind needs to be

strengthened through knowledge. [Verse 5.15 of the Bhagavad Gita states that all living beings are suffering because of *ajñāna*].

Therefore, the Upaniṣad says:

Wake up (to your problem through karma yoga)! Recognize that your problem is self-ignorance. After recognizing your problem, wake up (to your ever-pure nature through *jñāna yoga*). Just as a dreamer suffering in a dream waking up to the nature of the awake who is comfortably lying down in an air-conditioned room. Knowing the nature alone solves the problem. In one line, both the karma yoga and *jñāna yoga sadhānas* are pointed out.

How will I know my nature? Will the knowledge just dawn in me? Knowledge never happens by itself; it requires effort. One must go to a guru (*varaḥ = śrotriya-brahmaniṣṭhaḥ*) and ask for knowledge. In our tradition, even the greatest emperor went to the *ācārya* for knowledge. In the Bhagavad Gītā, Arjuna surrendered to Krishna in verse 2.7 asking for knowledge. The guru will give *jñāna* once approached appropriately as described in verse 4.34 of the Bhagavad Gītā. The only way to give knowledge is by teaching systematically and consistently for a length of time until the student understands. When Arjuna surrendered, Krishna gave knowledge through systematic teaching and not by touch or look. If knowledge could be given by touch or look, there would be no need for schools and colleges.

The wise people declare that the path of *jñāna mārga* is as difficult to tread as the walking on the razor's edge. Because of *jñān amārga* is difficult, people tend to avoid it – they incorrectly approach other *mārgas*. *Jñāna* alone leads to *moksa*.

The solution to this problem is to make *jñāna mārga* easy. Making it easy means prepare for it by acquiring the necessary qualifications (*sādhana-catuṣṭaya sampattiḥ*). Anything is difficult for the unprepared, and anything is easy for the prepared.

१५ अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं,
तथारसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् ।
अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परं ध्रुवं,
निचाय्य तन्मृत्युमुखात्प्रमुच्यते ॥

15 aśabdamasparśamarūpamavyayaṁ,
tathārasaṁ nityamagandhavacca yat ।
anādyanantaṁ mahataḥ paraṁ dhruvaṁ,
nicāyya tanmṛtyumukhātpromucyate ॥

यत् – **yat** - This (Brahman) अशब्दम् – **aśabdam** - is soundless, अस्पर्शम् – **asparśam** - touchless, अरूपम् – **arūpam** - colorless, अरसम् – **arasam** - tasteless, अगन्धवत् – **agandhavat** - smell-less, अनादि – **anādi** - beginningless, अनन्तम् – **anantam** - endless, तथा अव्ययम् – **tathā avyayam** - decayless, नित्यम् – **nityam** - deathless, ध्रुवम् – **dhruvam** - changeless, च परं महतः – **ca paraṁ mahataḥ** - and beyond mahat. निचाय्य – **nicāyya** - Having clearly known तत् – **tat** - that (Brahman), प्रमुच्यते – **promucyate** - one is totally freed मृत्युमुखात् – **mṛtyumukhāt** - from the jaws of death.

This (Brahman) is soundless, touchless, colorless, tasteless, smell-less, beginningless, endless, decayless, deathless, changeless, and beyond mahat. Having clearly known that (Brahman), one is totally freed from the jaws of death.

Another very important verse – one of the most important verses in the entire Upaniṣad (and the entire Upaniṣadic literature) where Lord Yama gives the definition of Brahman (Ātmā). The definition is given to show that Brahman cannot be objectified. Looking for Brahman experience will lead to tendency for objectification. The more you do that the more the risk of failure because Brahman is attribute-less:

- Brahman is free from these five fundamental properties – sound, touch, form, taste and smell (*āśabdam-asparśam-arūpam-arasam-agandham*). Brahman is not available for sensory perception

- Brahman without birth, death and the intermediary modifications (growth, metamorphosis and decay). Together they represent – *ṣaḍ-vikāra-rahitam* or free of six-fold modifications.
- Brahman is absolute – beyond time and space -*deśa-kāla-atītam*
- Brahman is eternal because it is free from timewise limitations
- Brahman is beyond the *samaṣṭi* intellect (*Hiraṇyagarbha* – explained in mantra 11).

The sense organs can only perceive the external objects – in other words, whatever the sense organs experience belong to the objective external world. Therefore, the external world is not Brahman. People talk about experiences within the mind – especially during meditation. None of the mystic experiences is Brahman because it arrives and departs. Whatever you experience outside or inside you is not Brahman. Then you will tend to conclude that there is no Brahman. It is there – because it is you. I, the experiencer am Brahman.

Having known in this manner, you will be freed from the mouth (grip) of *kālatattvam* (Lord Yama). Lord Yama: if you receive *jñāna*, I will not be able to get you in my grips – you will be immortal. [Your nature is immortal; you need not become immortal].

१६ नाचिकेतमुपाख्यानं, मृत्युप्रोक्तं सनातनम् ।
उक्त्वा श्रुत्वा च मेधावी, ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥

16 nācikētamupākhyānaṁ, mṛtyuprōktaṁ sanātanam ।
Uktvā śrutvā ca mēdhāvī, brahmalōkē mahīyatē ॥

श्रुत्वा – *śrutvā* - Hearing च उक्त्वा – *ca uktvā* - and repeating सनातनम् उपाख्यानम् – *sanātanam upākhyānam* - this eternal teaching नाचिकेतम् – *nācikētam* - which was received by Naciketas मृत्युप्रोक्तम् – *mṛtyuprōktaṁ* - and imparted by Lord Yama, मेधावी – *mēdhāvī* - the discriminative one महीयते – *mahīyatē* - becomes glorified ब्रह्मलोके – *brahmalōkē* - in Brahmaloaka.

Hearing and repeating this eternal teaching which was received by Naciketas and imparted by Lord Yama, the discriminative one becomes glorified in Brahmaloaka.

We are coming to the conclusion of the first chapter. Naciketas and Lord Yama are taking a brief break. The narrator makes these statements. The Upaniṣad is giving the benefits of listening to the first chapter of Kathopanishad.

This teaching received by Naciketas, the disciple and given by Lord Yama is eternal. This story is older than the Upaniṣad because it is quoting the story. It is alive and kicking even in the 21st century. By teaching it, the guru will benefit and by listening, the student will benefit. Therefore, the wise who chooses to spend time on it is discriminative.

The phrase *Brahmaloke mahīyate* has two meanings: if the dialog is successful, the student attains *jñāna* and then mokṣa (*Brahma-loke* – in Brahman; *mahīyate* – he gets established). In short, he gets established in *param Brahma*.

The second meaning: if the student fails to get *jñāna*, he still will get *kramamukti* – he will go to *Brahmaloka*, get glorified, receive knowledge from Brahmaji and then gain mokṣa. Mokṣa is definite for this person.

१७ य इमं परमं गुह्यं, श्रावयेद् ब्रह्मसंसदि ।

प्रयतः श्राद्धकाले वा, तदानन्त्याय कल्पते,
तदानन्त्याय कल्पत इति ॥

**17 ya imam paramam guhyam, śrāvayēd brahmasamsadi |
prayataḥ śrāddhakālē vā, tadānanyāya kalpatē,
tadānanyāya kalpata iti ||**

यः – **yaḥ** - (If) a person श्रावयेत् प्रयतः – **śrāvayēt prayataḥ** - repeats with purity इमं परमं गुह्यम् – **imam paramam guhyam** - this supreme secret ब्रह्म संसदि – **brahma samsadi** - in the assembly of brahmins वा श्राद्धकाले – **vā śrāddhakāle** - or at the time of śrāddhā, तत् – **tat** - that कल्पते – **kalpatē** - conduces आनन्त्याय – **ananyāya** - to the infinite result. तद् आनन्त्याय कल्पते – **tad ananyāya kalpatē** - It certainly conduces to infinite result. इति – **iti** - Thus (this is ended).

(If) a person repeats with purity this supreme secret in the assembly of brahmins or at the time of śrāddhā, that conduces to the infinite result. It certainly conduces to infinite result. Thus (this is ended).

The idea from the last verse is repeated here. The Upaniṣad is giving this *phalam*. Even a simple *pārāyaṇam* of this chapter is highly beneficial. Even if the person does not know the meaning or the philosophy behind it, it does not matter – *pārāyaṇam* itself is beneficial.

If seeker reads (or chants) aloud this first chapter for others to hear, and especially if he reads this supreme secret to an assembly of *āstika* (*vaidika*) people (*Brāhmaṇas*), with physical and mental purity, he will attain the infinite (mokṣa). It must be understood that mere reading will not give mokṣa directly, but in due course, the seeker will develop interest in learning the meaning, get jñāna and then mokṣa. If he does this on *śrāddhā* in front of the Brahmins, he will receive extra benefit. [Reading on the other days is also beneficial].

The repetition of *ānantyāya kalpate* indicates the end of the first chapter.

इति काठकोपनिषदि प्रथमाध्याये तृतीया वल्ली ॥

Thus (ends) the third section of First Chapter

1.6. Chapter 1 – Summary

The first chapter consists of three sections (*vallī*).

First vallī

Mantra 1 through 9

In the first nine mantras, the Upaniṣad presents a story. A *Brāhmaṇa* named *Vājaśravas* was performing the *Viśvajit yāga*. At the end of the *yāga*, he had to give all his possessions as *dakṣiṇā*. He was about to give his old cows as *dakṣiṇā*. At that time, Naciketas told him, "Oh father, I am better than these miserable cows. Before you distribute those cows, you must give me as *dakṣiṇā* to someone." In a moment of irritation, *Vājaśravas* told Naciketas that he was going to send him to Yamaloka. Naciketas took it seriously and went to Yamaloka. Lord Yama was out on other business. Naciketas remained outside Lord Yama's house (since there were no male members of the family then) without food for three days. When Lord Yama came back, he regretted that a Brahmin boy had to stay outside for three days without food. Per the Vedic injunction, he invited him inside, performed *pāda-pūja* etc. He offered three boons as compensation.

Three values are conveyed in this section:

- The importance of *śraddhā* in properly performing the rituals and giving proper *dakṣiṇā*. Naciketas conveys this indirectly.
- One must keep the promise to show integrity. Naciketas insisted to his father that he keep his promise to send him to Yamaloka even if he did not mean it (*vākya-paripālanam* or *satyam*).
- *Athiti pūjanam* - Lord Yama, in spite his important position and status, respected Naciketas as a guest (*athiti devo bhava*) even though Naciketas was a small boy.

Mantras 10 and 11

The first boon is described in these mantras where Naciketas asked for his father's peace of mind. Naciketas thought that his must be worried because, of all places, he is in Yamaloka. Lord Yama fulfilled Naciketas' request. Through the first boon, the important value of devotion to parents (*pitṛ bhakti*) and caring for the welfare of his family is highlighted here [*pitṛ devo bhava*].

Mantras 12 through 19

These mantras describe the second boon. Naciketas asked for the ritual that would benefit the society. Through this ritual, the performer will be able to go to *svargaloka*. If this ritual is performed with *upāsana*, the performer will be able to go to even *Brahmaloka*. This meditation is called *virāt upāsana* or *viśvarūpa upāsana*. Lord Yama taught this ritual to Naciketas and then named it in the honor of his brilliant student. Naciketas was brilliant because he heard the whole teaching and he replayed it from memory. This ritual is *Naciketa karma + virāt upāsana*.

Through the second boon also, an important value is conveyed. After taking care of his parents, Naciketas' next priority was to take care of the society. He was not a selfish boy – he did not ask for a boon to fulfill his own desires. He put the welfare of the others before his.

Mantras 20 through 29

The third boon of self-knowledge as well as the preparatory qualifications is discussed in these mantras. Naciketas asked for self-knowledge. Lord Yama wanted to determine whether Naciketas was prepared (mature enough) to receive self-knowledge. Therefore, Lord Yama gave a series of tests and found that Naciketas was qualified to receive this knowledge.

The qualifications highlighted are:

Naciketas recognized that *mokṣa* was better than any other goal in life. This was not blind acceptance, but born of the knowledge that gains obtained through *artha-kāma-*

dharma goals are perishable. A person may enjoy the pleasure gained through *dharmārtha-kāma* goals for a finite time. After that, he may be more miserable than he was before he acquired them. Naciketas proved that he had a firm understanding of this because he spurned all the pleasures related to *dharmārtha-kāma* offered generously by Lord Yama in place of *mokṣa*.

Naciketas revealed that he had the discrimination for the permanent and impermanent (*nitya* and *nitya*), dispassion towards the pleasures of *dharmārtha-kāma* and intense desire (*tīvra mumukṣatvam*) for liberation. *Ātmavidyā* and *Ātmavidyā adhikāritvam* (eligibility) are presented in these verses.

The important mantras for memorizing:

- 1.1.20 – where Naciketas asks for self-knowledge – it is important because this is the question or request to which the entire Kaṭhōpaniṣad is the answer.
- 1.1.26 – Naciketas reveals his maturity – all *artha-kāma* and their pleasures are seemingly good for us, but the side-effects are worse than their advantages. The main consequence is that they are capable for producing as much sorrow as happiness.
- 1.1.27 –Naciketas says that no one will get contentment through any amount of wealth. He will never be contented – he will always look for the next better thing or more wealth. This is a very important statement coming from a nine-year old boy.

Second Vallī

Mantra 1 through 13

We get general observations from the Upaniṣad itself. The dialog and teachings are kept aside temporarily. The Upaniṣad talks about the glory of the Vedāntic student. Any such student should be admired because commitment to the study of the Vedānta requires tremendous maturity. We engage in the pursuit of *artha-kāma* and *dharma* for most of our lives; finding the time for the Vedānta is virtually impossible. We tend to postpone

the study of the Vedānta after all these activities are over – it is like waiting for the waves of the ocean to subside before taking a dip. Procrastination will permanently continue. This is *śiṣya-stutiḥ* – glorification of the student.

Next the Vedāntic teacher is glorified. His greatness lies in the two qualities: *śrotriyatvam* and *brahmaniṣṭhatvam*. *Śrotriyatvam* is the skill and capacity to communicate this teaching, which cannot be ordinarily communicated. *Ātmā* is an abstract and a verbally uncommunicable subject matter. If a guru can communicate such a subject matter and make the student understand, he is great indeed (*āścarya* – it is a wonder).

The teacher communicates to the student: You are the infinite *Ātmā*. Don't try to go in search of the infinite *Ātmā*. What you are searching for is the searcher, yourself. You are *pūrṇatvam*, peace (*śānti*), security, contentment and *ānanda* – do not look outside for these things. The teacher can communicate this confidently only if he himself has discovered that he is *Ātmā*. In all the other sciences, the teacher is different from what he teaches. In teaching the Vedānta, the teacher must be the embodiment of *pūrṇatvam*, *śānti* etc. Such a guru is a *brahmanishṭhaḥ*; in Kaṭhōpaniṣad, he is called *ananya-guruḥ*.

Next, the teaching itself is glorified. This is a unique knowledge that cannot be derived from the conventional methods like observation, logic etc. To improve observation, sophisticated instruments are developed and to explain the results, various analysis and reasonings are developed. All those conventional methods will not work for this knowledge because it is *apauruṣeya viśayaḥ* (not available for conventional means of knowledge). The only method of knowing is through the *śāstras* with the help of a guru (*guru-śāstra-upadeśa*). Lord Yama does not prescribe meditation or intuition for acquiring this knowledge; he prescribes *Vedānta-śravaṇam*. [*Vidyā-praśasta* = glorification of knowledge].

Mantra 14

This is a very important mantra because the third boon of self-knowledge is presented beautifully once again.

Mantra 15 through 17

The Upaniṣad talks about *Om̐kāra upāsanā* as the method of preparing the mind if the mind is not prepared. This is an incidental topic.

Mantra 18 through 25

Lord Yama gives the central teaching that Naciketas has asked for. The real teaching of the Kaṭhōpaniṣad begins with 1.2.18 just as the real teaching of the Bhagavad Gīta begins with verse 2.11. In this important portion, the nature of Ātmā, our real self (*Ātmasvarūpam*) is brought out. Six features of Ātmā are highlighted here:

- Ātmā is *nirvikāra caitanyam* – my real nature is changeless consciousness. The body-mind complex is not my real nature. Ātmā that is inherent in my body is my real nature
- Ātmā is *akartā* – it cannot do any karma – it is the actionless principle – *sañcita, āgāmi* and *prārabdha* karma do not belong to me at all
- Ātmā is *abhoktā* – since karma does not belong to me, *karmaphalam* also does not belong to me.
- Ātmā is *sarva-adhiṣṭhānam* – this changeless Consciousness is not only inherent in my body, it is inherent in the entire creation. This akin to the inherent water in waves, ocean, bubbles sprays etc. [*aṇoḥ aṇīyān mahato mahīyān*]
- Ātmā is *durvijñeyatvam* – this means that it is not easily comprehensible. Consciousness itself does not have any property; it appears to have property because it is associated with various body-mind complexes. It is of a confusing nature – *saguṇa-nirguṇa-svarūpam*. Consciousness itself does not have a form, but associated with the body, it appears to have a form. *Caitanyam* has one nature with the association with the body and another nature without the body. Therefore, it is confusing as to which nature is intrinsic and which is incidental.
- *Deśa-kāla-atītam* – this changeless Consciousness is not limited or conditioned by time and space. It is not located in time and space because they arise and resolve in Consciousness.

The important mantras for memorizing:

1.2.14 – Naciketas defines Ātmā in a brilliant manner

1.2.18, 19, 20, 25 – all of them are *Ātmsvarūpa* mantras revealing the nature of Ātmā.

Third Vallī

Mantra 1 and 2

These are introductory mantras in which the *jivātmā* is likened to a traveler in journey. We have been travelling since the beginning (really, without beginning) on and on looking for "home". The traveler is introduced in these mantras.

Mantras 3 through 9

In these mantras, the Upaniṣad gives the well-known chariot analogy to describe the journey. [In *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, the archery analogy is used]. The body is likened to the chariot, the sense organs to the horses, the mind to the reins, the intellect to the charioteer and then finally, the *jivātmā* to the traveler. The sense objects (world) are the routes through which we travel. Through this example, the Upaniṣad gives some very important preparatory disciplines:

- The chariot or the body must be healthy. Without the fit body, journey is not possible. Do not neglect your health (*ārogyam*)
- The sense organs (the horses) must be well controlled. [Sense organ control = *damah*]
- To keep the sense organs under control, the mind (the reins) must be handled properly. Only through the mind, the sense organs can be disciplined. Therefore, mind control (*samah*) is important.
- The driver must know the destination and the route clearly. The intellect must know what the goal of life and the path leading to the goal are (*vivekah*)

- All of them must function in coordination. Integration and teamwork are required. This integration is called *ārjavam*. When the intellect decides, all the other organs must cooperate.

When all these conditions are met, the traveler will comfortably reach mokṣa.

Mantras 10 through 15

In these mantras, the Upaniṣad talks about jñāna yoga, the spiritual journey. It is not an eternal physical journey, but it is in the form of enquiry (*vicāra yātra*). In this portion, Lord Yama beautifully presents the *pañca-kośa-viveka*, a method of self-enquiry. In this method, I gradually withdraw the attention from *annamaya* to *prāṇamaya* to *manomaya* to *vijñānamaya* to *ānanda maya* and then to my own nature, the witness Consciousness of everything in the world. A subtle and sharp intellect is required for such enquiry (*agryyā-sūkṣmā buddhiḥ*) because the object to be known happens to be the subject.

Mantras 16 and 17

The first stage of teaching is completed. These mantras talk about *phala-śruti* – the benefit of learning the Kathopanisad. The two benefits are:

- If you gain the knowledge (by attending these classes), immediate liberation will be gained.
- If you do not gain the knowledge, you will gain sufficient *puṇya* to reach *Brahmaloka* where Brahmaji will give you knowledge through which you gain mokṣa. This will give sufficient benefit even for *pārāyaṇam*, especially during the *śrāddha-kāla* in the presence of *śrāddha-brāhmaṇas*.

The important mantras for memorizing:

1.3.10 and 11 – to be read together are important because they present *pañca-kośa viveka*. This is elaborated in Taittirīya Upaniṣad.

1.3.14 and 15 – Mantra 14 is important because it presents the whole range of spiritual *sādhana*s in one mantra – karma yoga where you recognize the problem of ignorance

and then jñāna yoga to remove the problem of ignorance (through *guru-śāstra-upadeśa*) and then mokṣa. Mantra 15 is a significant where the definition of Ātmā is given which Śaṅkarācārya quotes it often.

द्वितीयाध्यायः

2. SECOND CHAPTER

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In the second chapter, Lord Yama conducts a more serious discussion on the nature of Ātmā (*Ātmasvarūpam*) that Naciketas is interested in. In the first chapter, Lord Yama briefly discussed *Ātmasvarūpam* in 1.2.18 through 1.2.26. Although there were some verses dedicated to this subject in the third *vallī*, the primary focus was on the preparatory *sādhana*s through the chariot example (*ratha kalpanā*).

The main teaching of the Kaṭhōpaniṣad is presented in the first two *vallīs* of the second chapter. The nature of the *jīva* (*jīvātmasvarūpam*) and its one-ness with the *Paramātmā* (*jīvātma-paramātmā-aikyam*) are also clearly presented. The first two verses of the first *vallī* of Chapter 2 start with the preparations for gaining this knowledge. They prescribe the *sādhana* of turning the mind inward (*manasaḥ-antarmukhatvam*). An extrovert mind can only seek *anātmā*, the objects with form (*saguṇa*) and can absorb only the finite world of sense objects (*śabda-sparśa-rūpa-rasa-gandha*). However, the Upaniṣad is revealing that Ātmā is not a sense object (*aśabda-asparśa-arūpa-arasa-agandha*). Therefore, the discovery of Ātmā requires turning the mind away from the *saguṇa anātmā*.

Lord Yama says it is very difficult because the mind by nature is extroverted. The extroverted mind is a big obstacle to spiritual progress; it makes the journey an uphill task. This can be overcome by discrimination (*viveka*). This discrimination requires the knowledge that anything in the external material world is temporary and perishable. Discrimination is the conviction that although one must live among the sense objects (*anātmā*), his security, fulfillment, and contentment are not in those objects [Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad -1.2.12]. Then one must turn his attention to the infinite [*preyas* to *śreyas*]. Lord Yama warns that one holding on to the perishable things will also perish (spiritually). [Lord Yama knows best because he is responsible for destroying anything

and everything other than Atma]. The dispassion born out of this discrimination is called *viveka-janya-vairāgyam*. This is turning inward (*antar-mukhatvam*)

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द्वितीयाध्यायः, प्रथमावल्ली

2.2. FIRST SECTION

१ पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत्स्वयम्भूः,
तस्मात्पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।
कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षद्,
आवृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥

1 parāñci khāni vyatṛṇatsvayambhūḥ,
tasmātparāṅ paśyati nāntarātman ।
kaściddhīraḥ pratyagātmānamaikṣad,
āvṛttacakṣuramṛtatvamicchan ॥

स्वयम्भूः – **svayambhūḥ** - The Lord व्यतृणत् – **vyatṛṇat** - destroyed खानि – **khāni** - the sense organs पराञ्चि – **parāñci** - (by making them) extrovert. तस्मात् – **tasmāt** - Therefore, पश्यति – **paśyati** - everyone perceives पराङ् – **parāṅ** - outside, न अन्तरात्मन् – **na antarātman** - not the Ātmā within. इच्छन् – **icchan** - Desiring अमृतत्वम् – **amṛtatvam** - immortality, , कश्चिद् धीरः – **kaścit dhīraḥ** - a rare discriminative one आवृत्तचक्षुः – **āvṛttacakṣuḥ** - with withdrawn eyes ऐक्षत् – **ēkṣat** - sees प्रत्यगात्मानम् – **pratyagātmānam** - the Ātmā within.

The Lord destroyed the sense organs (by making them) extrovert. Therefore, everyone perceives outside, not the Ātmā within. Desiring immortality, a rare discriminative one with withdrawn eyes sees the Ātmā within.

Lord Yama says that the Lord destroyed the sense organs by making them extrovert in nature. These defective sense organs and the mind are always busy with the pursuit of external duty and pleasures. No one has the time to introspect and think about Ātmā. Even the ones with faint interest postpone the spiritual pursuit. Śaṅkarācārya beautifully says in Bhajagovindam:

बालस्तावत्क्रीडासक्तः तरुणस्तावत्तरुणीसक्तः।
वृद्धस्तावच्चिन्तासक्तः परमे ब्रह्मणि कोऽपि न सक्तः ॥

Bālastāvatkṛīḍāsaktaḥ taruṇastāvattaruṇīsaktaḥ
Vṛddhastāvaccintāsaktaḥ parame brahmaṇi ko'pi na saktaḥ

The childhood slips away in attachment to playfulness. Youth passes away in attachment to woman. Old age passes away worrying about many things. Alas, there is hardly anyone who wants to be lost in Parabrahman.

Even when one realizes the importance of Ātmā and the purpose of life, it is so late in life that he is incapable of attaining it.

A rare discriminative person considers it worthwhile to devote time to pursue Ātmā.

He has intelligently analyzed his experiences in this world and has understood the three defects of *anātmā* – pain, dissatisfaction and attachment (*duḥkha-miśritvam*, *atrptikaratvam* and *bandhakatvam*).

Such a seeker wakes up and seeks immortality and then sees Ātmā within. Lord Yama offered the world to Naciketas, but the latter turned it down for immortality. The seeker knows that only Ātmā is immortal because it is beyond the parameters of time and space. Even when the creation resolves, Consciousness survives. Consciousness is the witness of the absence of time and space. Holding onto *anātmā* is like a drowning man holding onto the straw – the latter will drown with him.

He turns the mind and the sense organs away from the world. His attention is turned away from the objects and turned towards the subject. When a person looks at the mirror, even though he is looking outside, he is looking at himself. Similarly, through *śāstra vicāra* and *guru-upadeśa*, one sees himself, the observer.

२ पराचः कामाननुयन्ति बालाः, ते मृत्योर्यन्ति विततस्य पाशम् ।
अथ धीरा अमृतत्वं विदित्वा, ध्रुवमध्रुवेष्विह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥

2 **parācaḥ kāmānanuyanti bālāḥ, tē mṛtyōryanti vitatasya pāśam ।**
Atha dhīrā amṛtatvaṁ viditvā, dhruvamadhruvēṣviha na prārthayantē ॥

बालाः – **bālāḥ** - Indiscriminate ones अनुयन्ति – **anuyānti** - go after पराचः कामान् – **parācaḥ kāmān** - external pleasures. ते यन्ति – **tē yanti** - They enter पाशं मृत्योः – **pāśam mṛtyōḥ** - the net of death विततस्य – **vitatasya** - which is all pervading. विदित्वा – **viditvā** - Having discovered ध्रुवम् अमृतत्वम् – **dhruvam amṛtatvam** - the absolute immortality, धीराः अथ – **dhīrāḥ atha** - the discriminative ones, however, न प्रार्थयन्ते इह – **na prārthayantē iha** - do not seek anything here अध्रुवेषु – **adhruvēṣu** - amidst the impermanent.

Indiscriminate ones go after external pleasures. They enter the net of death which is all pervading. Having discovered the absolute immortality, the discriminative ones, however, do not seek anything here amidst the impermanent.

The same idea is reinforced in this verse. Lord Yama asserts that most people never attain maturity. An experience does not teach a person unless he chooses to learn from it. Experiences remaining the same, some people learn and the others remain spiritually retarded. Physically, the weight has increased, degrees have been accumulated and the hair has turned grey – despite all these experiences, many people are still childish internally.

Such people continue to chase the sense objects. When one object perishes, they should have learned that the objects are fleeting, but they go after another perishable object. They replace one addiction with another. Here the word *kāmāh* means sense objects (pleasures). Sense objects are *anātmā* which includes an inert object, live person or situation. The indiscriminate ones have attachment to *anātmā* and not to *Ātmā*. Arjuna was attached to Bhishma's and Drona's *anātmā* and not *Ātmā*. If he was attached to their *Ātmā*, he would not have worried about killing them [*Ātmā* can never be killed].

Obsessed with *anātmā*, they function within time and space. Therefore, they are permanently under the threat of Lord Yama. They are subject to the time principle and therefore, are caught in the net of death (time principle). The time principle (*kāla*) influences all the 14 lokas, including *Brahmaloka*. Even Brahmaji, who lives 100 years (in billions of human years) is still finite [Verse 8.17 – Bhagavad Gītā]. Only Ātmā is beyond the grasp of the time principle. In the story of Mārkaṇḍeya, when he embraced *Śivaliṅga*, Lord Yama could not touch him. Philosophically, this means that Mārkaṇḍeya got *Ātmajñānam* and went beyond the realm of time (embracing means *aikyam* – *jivātma-paramātma-aikyam*).

On the other hand, the discriminative ones, having discovered (attained) the absolute immortality (Ātmā), do not seek any perishable things in this world. A person surrounded by flood of fresh water, has no use for a pond (Verse 2.46 - Bhagavad Gītā). Lord Yama calls it absolute immortality because the scriptures also talk about relative immortality such as *svargaloka*.

३ येन रूपं रसं गन्धं शब्दान्स्पर्शांश्च मैथुनान् ।
एतेनैव विजानाति किमत्र परिशिष्यते । एतद्वै तत् ॥ ३ ॥

3 **yēna rūpaṁ rasaṁ gandhaṁ sparśāḅgr̥m̄sca maithunān |**
ētēnaiva vijānāti kimatra pariśiṣyatē | ētadvai tat || 3||

येन एतेन एव – **yēna ētēna ēva** - By this (Ātmā) alone **विजानाति** – **vijānāti** - one knows **रूपम्** – **rūpam** - color, **रसम्** – **rasam** - taste, **गन्धम्** – **gandham** - smell, **शब्दान्** – **śabdān** - sounds, **स्पर्शान्** – **sparśān** - touches, **च मैथुनान्** – **ca maithunān** - and conjugal pleasures. **किं परिशिष्यते अत्र** – **kiṁ pariśiṣyatē atra** - What remains here (to be known by the Ātmā)? **एतद्वै** – **etadvai** - This is indeed **तत्** – **tat** - that.

By this (Ātmā) alone one knows color, taste, smell, sounds, touches, and conjugal pleasures. What remains here (to be known by the Ātmā)? This is indeed that.

In the first two verses, introduction was given presenting a pre-requisite: turning the mind inward (*antarmukhatvam*). *Antarmukhatvam* does not mean giving up everything shutting down the organs. It means that your organs must be open for worldly (*vyāvahārik*) transactions, but you should not get lost in them. The sense objects are required in life, but they are not the primary things to be obsessed with.

Lord Yama now enters the subject of the nature of Ātmā (*ātmavarūpam*). This is the main section of Kathopanishad. Here he defines Ātmā as that, because of which, everything is experienced (objectified). It is the experiencer of all, distinct from everything that is experienced. Anything that you experience is negated as *anātmā* which can be classified into three levels:

- The external world (*bāhya prapañca*) – since I experience the external world, it is *anātmā*. I am not what I experience
- The physical body – It is available (experienced) in waking state, but not in dream and sleep. Therefore, It is also an experienced object
- The mind –The mind is experienced (available) only in waking and dream states and not in the sleep state. Therefore, it is an object of experience available for my transaction.

The body and the mind are objects that I use as instruments. They are so close to me that I identify them as myself (example: contact lens). Both contact lens and the book are objects, but the in the case of the former, it feels like an integral part of the reader. All these three are experienced by Ātmā, the subject. That experiencer is Ātmā.

The body serves only as the medium for manifestation of Consciousness (for transactions). The end of life of the physical body is not the end of Consciousness, but the end of its manifestation. In the example of the bulb and electricity, when the bulb is broken, the end of the light is not the end of electricity. When the medium goes away, the manifest becomes non-manifest. The manifest Consciousness is called the life principle or sentiency principle. This Consciousness is your true nature (*tat tvam asi*).

How to own up this Consciousness? The Upaniṣad gives a method called *dr̥k-dṛśya viveka*:

Whatever I experience is an object different from me. I keep negating anything that is observed (experienced) as *anātmā*:

- In the first stage of negation, I dismiss the whole creation as an observed entity in the form of sense objects (*śabda-spaśa-rūpa-rasa-gandha*). I am not anything that is observed.
- The second stage is to dismiss my body also as an object of experience. The body is an intimate object of experience (like the contact lens). The contact lens is so intimate to my body that I generally forget that it is an object. This physical body is even more intimate than the contact lens and therefore, it appears as part of the subject.
- The third and the most difficult stage is to dismiss my own mind which is even more intimate than the physical body. In the dream state, I continue to associate with the mind even after I have discarded the physical body. If the physical body is my dress, the mind is like the under-clothing. It is more intimate than the body. I am aware of the mind with its thoughts. When the thoughts are gone, I am aware of the thoughtlessness of the mind also. I am aware of the properties of the mind: thoughtful and thoughtless. Since I am the experiencer of the mind with its properties, I am not the mind.

Thus, the world, the body and the mind are dismissed (disowned); then what is left? What is left is the experiencer, the subject. Never ask the question how to experience the subject; the moment it is experienced, it becomes an object. [*dr̥geva na tu dṛśyate*].

If the experiencer is never experienced, how do I know if the experiencer is there? I don't require a separate (special) experience of the experiencer because the experience of every object reveals the presence of the experiencer. I need not make a special effort to see my eyes to prove its existence; every object that I see reveals the presence of my eyes. Every perception reveals the perceiver. Every experience reveals the experiencer. The experiences vary, but the experiencer is invariable. [Verse 2.4 - Kenopaniṣad].

I, the Consciousness am the experiencer of the world, body and the mind. I am inherent in the body and the mind. In sleep, both the body and the mind are resolved, but I, the Consciousness continue. When the body and the mind are available, experiences occur; in sleep, there is no experience because the media are not available. Whether there are experiences or not, I am ever existent.

Lord Yama says in this verse:

Only with the blessing of the Consciousness, one experiences everything in this world: the sense objects and human interactions. The Upaniṣad intelligently classifies the world of infinite number of objects into five: *śabda-sparśa-rūpa-rasa-gandha*. Lord Yama calls the human interactions as *mithunam* which means a pair. The interactions appear between pair of people – husband-wife, parent-child, *guru-śiṣya* etc.

Can there be anything outside the Consciousness? If there is anything outside of Consciousness, you can never be conscious of that. If you are not conscious of that, how can you talk about its existence? If you talk about the existence of anything, you know it (even a star that 12 million light years away). If you know it, it is within Consciousness. If there is a thing that you don't know now, but will sometime in the future, you will talk of its existence then; it will be within Consciousness then. Everything falls within Consciousness. In short, Consciousness is all-pervading.

This Consciousness is that Ātmā which Naciketas wanted to know through the third boon (*aham ātmā asmi*).

४ स्वप्नान्तं जागरितान्तं च, उभौ येनानुपश्यति ।
महान्तं विभुमात्मानं, मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥

4 **svapnāntaṃ jāgaritāntaṃ ca, ubhau yēnānupaśyati ।**
mahāntaṃ vibhumātmānaṃ, matvā dhīrō na śōcati ॥

येन – **yēna** - By this (Ātmā alone) अनुपश्यति – **anupaśyati** - one perceives उभौ – **ubhau** - both स्वप्नान्तम् – **svapnāntam** - the objects of dream च जागरितान्तम् – **ca jāgaritāntam** - and the objects of waking. मत्वा – **matvā** - Having known महान्तं विभुम् – **mahāntam** vibhum - the great, all-pervading आत्मानम् – **ātmānam** - Ātmā, धीरः – **dhīrah** - the discriminative one न शोचति – **na śocati** - does not grieve.

By this (Ātmā alone) one perceives both the objects of dream and the objects of waking. Having known the great, all-pervading Ātmā, the discriminative one does not grieve.

Through the *dr̥k-dṛśya* method, Lord Yama revealed Ātmā as the eternal subject. Now the very same Ātmā will be revealed as the *avasthātraya sākṣī* – witness of all three states of experience: *jāgrata*, *svapna* and *suṣupti avasthās*.

Jāgrata avasthā – the waking state in which I experience the external world through the mind

Svapna avasthā – the dream state in which I experience the internal world projected by the mind

I experience the external world in the waking state and the recorded world in the mind in the dream state. In both states of experience, we have distinct time, space and objects:

Viśaya-bhedhaḥ - in *jāgrata avasthā*, the objects are made of five elements (*bhautika*). In the *svapna avasthā*, the objects are not *bhautika*, but are made of thoughts (*vāsana-maya-vṛttaḥ*).

Kāla-bhedhaḥ - the time scales are different in *jāgrata* and *svapna avasthā* – in five minutes, you may go around the world in your dream.

Deśa-bhedhaḥ – you see the whole world in your head during dream. Within the small space, you may see sun, moon, rivers, mountains etc.

The only common factor is the observing Consciousness who is invariable, while the objects, time and space vary. Time and space come and go, but I, the Consciousness am beyond the time and space parameters (*deśa-atīta* and *kāla-atīta caitanyam*).

The same Consciousness is the witness of the absence of external and internal world in deep sleep (*suṣupti*) state. In the deep sleep, time and space (*kāla* and *deśa*) resolve into you. You know you have overslept only after waking – so, there is no *kāla* while you sleep. I, the Consciousness am the experiencer of *suṣupti*.

To know that the hall is full or empty, light is required. Without the light, you cannot know that the hall is empty. Similarly, we know the emptiness in sleep because of pure Consciousness. The thoughtless state is pure Consciousness. Whether the objects are there or not, light is always there. When thoughts are there or not, Consciousness is always there.

In short, it is *avasthātraya-sakṣī-caitanyam* (the witness Consciousness of three states).

I, the Consciousness am all-pervading (*mahāntam*). I do not need to wait for Ātmā to appear in meditation; I am Ātmā. The discriminative person who knows this will be free of sorrow in life.

Introduction to Mantras 5 through 10

Highly technical ideas are conveyed in mantra 5 onwards. These have been discussed in Tattva Bodha. This all-pervading Consciousness expresses through matter. This manifestation of Consciousness through matter (Reflecting Medium – RM) is Reflected Consciousness (RC). It is also called *pratibimba caitanyam* or *ābhāsa caitanyam* or *cidābhāsa*. The original Consciousness is called *bimba caitanyam* (OC). OC is only one, but RC will be as many as RM's. The quality of RC will depend upon the RM while that of OC will remain unaffected (*nirvikāra-kūṭastham*). The entire material universe is divided into three pairs: three belonging to the microcosm (*vyaṣṭitrayam*) and three belonging

to macrocosm (*samaṣṭitrayam*). Consciousness can manifest in any of these – so, we have three pairs of RC's (6).

At the individual level, I have three bodies – physical, mental and causal (*sthūla, sūkṣma* and *kāraṇa śarīram*). The physical body can be experienced by me as well as the others. The subtle body consisting of thoughts and emotions can only be experienced by me. The causal body which is the dormant personality of the mind, is neither knowable to me nor the others. It is dormant in the potential form now and not knowable by anyone, but only known when it manifests. Consciousness manifests through all these three.

When Consciousness is expressing fully through the physical body (RM1), it is called the waker-Consciousness (*Viśva* – RC1) When expressing through the mind (RM2), it is called the dreamer-Consciousness (*Taijasa* – RC2). The very same Consciousness when expressing through the dormant causal body (RM3) when we are in sleep state when it is illuminating the total blankness of the sleep state, is called *prājñah* (RC3). Only one OC expresses itself through these various media.

At the totality level – *sthūla prapañca*, the total gross universe (RM4) is parallel to the *sthūla śarīram*, the individual body. *Sūkṣma prapañca* (RM5) corresponds to *sūkṣma śarīram* and the *kāraṇa prapañca* (RM6) corresponds to *kāraṇa śarīram*. The very same OC manifests as these also. When it manifests through the gross universe, it is called *virāt caitanyam* (RC4 - cosmic person or *vaiśvānara*), through the subtle universe, it is called *Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ* (RC5) and when manifesting through *samaṣṭi prapañca* at the time of *pralayam* when the whole universe resolves (cosmic sleep), it is called *Īśvaraḥ* or *antaryāmī* (RC6)

Lord Yama, in these following verses points out that the same OC expresses as all the six RC's [*caitanyam eva sarvam*]. This vision expressed in mantras 5 through 10 is called *sarvātma bhāvaḥ*. Mantra 5 points out that Ātmā expresses in the form of *prājñā* and *Īśvara*. In mantras 6, 7 and 9, Lord Yama says that Ātmā manifests as *taijasa* and *Hiraṇyagarbha*. In mantra 8, the same Atma is the form of *viśva* and *virāt*. Mantra 10 is the conclusion of *sarvātma bhāvaḥ* where Lord Yama says that Consciousness alone

manifests in the form of micro as well as macro just water alone manifests as a small wave as well as the vast ocean. The truth of the wave as well as the ocean is water. Similarly, the truth of the micro individual and macro universe is the same Consciousness. I am that Consciousness; I am everything – *ahameva idagr̥m sarvam*.

५ य इमं मध्वदं वेद, आत्मानं जीवमन्तिकात् ।
ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य, न ततो विजुगुप्सते । एतद्वै तत् ॥

5 *ya imam madhvadam veda, ātmānam jīvamantikāt |*
īśānam bhūtabhavyasya, na tatō vijugupsatē | ētadvai tat II

यः वेद – *yaḥ veda* - One who knows इमं जीवम् आत्मानम् – *imam jīvam ātmānam* - this *jīvātmā*, मध्वदम् – *madhvadam* - the experiencer of the results of the action, अन्तिकात् – *antikāt* - to be identical with ईशानम् – *īśānam* - the Lord भूतभव्यस्य – *bhūtabhavyasya* - of the past and the future न विजुगुप्सते – *na vijugupsatē* - does not seek security ततः – *tataḥ* - thereafter. एतद्वै – *ētadvai* - This is indeed तत् – *tat* - **that**.

One who knows this jīvātmā, the experiencer of the results of the action, to be identical with the Lord of the past and the future does not seek security thereafter. This is indeed that.

This qualified student recognizes he is no different from Ātmā, the subject. As the individual, he is a *prājña*, the manifestation of the Consciousness as the *jīvātmā*. He also knows that the same Ātmā, the Consciousness manifests as *Īśvara* who is the lord of the past, present and the future (*Paramātmā*).

The glory belongs to *Īśvara* because the OC is reflecting in the subtlest medium, the totality (*samaṣṭi*). Since the reflection is in the vast and subtlest, it will be the brightest. The individual is less bright because of the inferior medium. Even though the electricity is the same, its manifestation in the flood light is vastly superior to that in the night lamp.

Because of the limitation of the reflecting medium, the *jīva* becomes a limited entity. Thus, he becomes a *kartā*, striving to become fulfilled (*pūrṇaḥ*) and then a *bhoktā* and *samsārī*. He suffers as a *samsārī* in his assumed limited identity. Lord Yama call this sufferer (*karmaphala bhoktā*) as *madhvadaḥ* - *madhu* means *karmaphalam* (because people get intoxicated with it) and *adaḥ* means consumer or experiencer. *Karmaphala bhoktā* is the *samsārī* (*prājña-jīvaḥ*).

This wise man understands that *samsārī* as well as *Īśvara* is the manifestation of one Ātmā alone.

After gaining this knowledge, the seeker no longer feels insecure. The insecurity never goes away no matter how much wealth one has; it only gives a false sense of security [Pūjya Swami Dayananda: *eversilver is never silver and real estate is unreal*]. Only this knowledge removes insecurity. Mokṣa is freedom from this sense of insecurity (it is mental).

This pair (*prājña* and *Īśvara*) is none other than the Ātmā that Naciketas asked for.

६ यः पूर्वं तपसो जातम्, अद्भ्यः पूर्वमजायत ।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तं, यो भूतेभिर्व्यपश्यत । एतद्वै तत् ॥

6 **yaḥ pūrvam tapasō jātam, adbhyaḥ pūrvamajāyata ।
guhām praviśya tiṣṭhantam, yōnbhūtēbhivyapaśyata । ētadvai tat ॥**

यः व्यपश्यत – **yaḥ vyapaśyata** - He knows (Ātmā to be) जातम् – **jātam** - (that Hiraṇyāgarbha) who was born पूर्वम् – **pūrvam** - in the beginning तपसः – **tapasaḥ** - from that tapas (Brahman), यः अजायत – **yaḥ ajāyata** - who was born पूर्वम् अद्भ्यः – **pūrvam adbhyaḥ** - before the waters, प्रविश्य – **praviśya** - (and) having entered गुहाम् – **guhām** - the heart, तिष्ठन्तम् – **tiṣṭhantam** - who resides there भूतेभिः – **bhūtebhiḥ** - with the body and sense organs. एतद्वै – **ētadvai** - This is indeed तत् – **tat** - that.

He knows (Ātmā to be that Hiranyagarbha) who was born in the beginning from that tapas (Brahman), who was born before the waters, (and) having entered the heart, who resides there with the body and sense organs. This is indeed that.

This is another technical verse. In this Lord Yama points out that the same Ātmā expresses as *Hiranyagarbha* (*sūkṣma prapañca*) and *taijasa* (*sūkṣma śarīram*). *Hiranyagarbha* consists of the RM (the subtle universe) and RC. The subtle universe was born out of the causal universe. The causal universe is never born; it always exists even at the time of *pralaya* (the stage before creation). *Īśvara* (RC) existed before creation during *pralayam*. At the appropriate time, the causal universe evolved into the subtle universe. Thus, *Hiranyagarbha* was born out of *Īśvara*. The Upanisad says that *Īśvara* created *Hiranyagarbha* by *tapas*. [In Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, the word *tapas* was used. It was defined as the mere wish of *Īśvara*. It is like creating a dream - requires no effort].

Lord Yama says in this verse:

Hiranyagarbha was born out *Īśvara's tapas* in the beginning (of creation). He was born before the *Virāt* principle or the gross universe. *Adbhyaḥ* or water represents all the five elements (*pañca bhūtāni*) which in turn represent the gross universe. In other words, the evolution of the universe occurred as:

causal universe → subtle universe → gross universe

Īśvara → *Hiranyagarbha* → *Virāt*

The total pervades the individual and therefore, *Hiranyagarbha* (RC) pervades the individual *sūkṣmaśarīram* [Whatever pervades the US, pervades California also]. The same Consciousness is present in the subtle body also with a different name: *taijasa* that is surrounded by a gross body.

The wise man understands that *Hiranyagarbha* and *taijasa* are none other than Consciousness (OC).

७ या प्राणेन सम्भवति, अदितिर्देवतामयी ।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तीं, या भूतेभिरव्यजायत । एतद्वै तत् ॥

7 *yā prāṇēna sambhavati, aditirdēvatāmayī ।
guhām praviśya tiṣṭhantīm, yā bhūtēbhirvyajāyata । ētadvai tat ॥*

अदितिः – **aditiḥ** - (He knows Ātmā to be) goddess Aditi **देवतामयी** – **dēvatāmayī** - who is the embodiment of all deities, **या सम्भवति** – **yā sambhavati** - who is born **प्राणेन** – **prāṇena** - in the form of Hiranyāgarbha, **या व्यजायत** – **yā vyajāyata** - who is born **भूतेभिः** – **bhūtēbhiḥ** - along with the elements, **प्रविश्य** – **praviśya** - (and) having entered **गुहाम्** – **guhām** - the heart, **तिष्ठन्तीम्** – **tiṣṭhantīm** - who resides there. **एतद्वै** – **ētadvai** - This is indeed **तत्**- **tat** - that.

(He knows Ātmā to be) goddess Aditi who is the embodiment of all deities, who is born in the form of Hiranyāgarbha, who is born along with the elements, (and) having entered the heart, who resides there. This is indeed that.

The verses 6, 7 and 9 discuss the subtle universe (*sūkṣma prapañca*).

The subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīram*) consists of 17 components – five sense organs of knowledge (*jñānedriyāṇi*), five organs of action (*karmendriyāṇi*), five *prāṇas* (*pañca prānas*), the mind and the intellect. Each of these components (*indriyas*) is presided by a deity (*devatā*). Each deity is given a name in Tattva Bodha. The *indriya* is at the individual level and the *devatā* represents the total of the *indriya* of all the individuals. *Hiranyagarbha* is total of all the *devatās* (*samaṣṭi devata*). Therefore, the Upaniṣad says that these *devatās* are born out of *Hiranyagarbha*.

Hiranyagarbha is referred to as *prāṇa devatā* in this verse because the latter is the most important *devatā*. We can manage without the function of any organ, but cannot survive without the function of *prāṇa*. In deep sleep, all the organs resolve into the person except *prāṇas* which never stop during a person's life.

A story in Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: Each of the organs left the body and found out that the person could survive without it. When the prāṇa was about to go, the individual's life was jeopardized.

The macro *Hiraṇyagarbha* is present in the micro individual who is referred to as *guhā* in this verse (called *taijasa* by Tattva Bodha). This *taijasa* experiences the world through the mind and the sense organs (*aditiḥ* - the one who consumes through the sense organs).

This *taijasa-Hiraṇyagarbha* pair is none other than the pure Consciousness.

८ अरण्योर्निहितो जातवेदाः, गर्भ इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः ।
दिवे दिव ईड्यो जागृवद्भिः, हविष्मद्भिर्मनुष्येभिरग्निः । एतद्वै तत् ॥

8 aranyōrnihitō jātavēdāḥ, garbha iva subhṛtō garbhīṇībhīḥ ।
Divē diva īdyō jāgrvadbhiḥ, haviṣmadbhirmanuṣyēbhiragniḥ । ētadvai tat ॥

जातवेदाः – **jātavēdāḥ** - The fire निहितः – **nihitah** - which is present अरण्योः – **aranyōḥ** - in the two pieces of araṇi-wood सुभृतः – **subhṛtah** - is carefully maintained इव – **iva** - just as गर्भः – **garbhaḥ** - the foetus (is maintained) गर्भिणीभिः – **garbhīṇībhīḥ** - by pregnant women. अग्निः – **agniḥ** - (That) fire दिवे दिवे ईड्यः – **divē divē īdyah** - is daily worshipped मनुष्येभिः – **manuṣyēbhīḥ** - by those हविष्मद्भिः – **haviṣmadbhiḥ** - who are ritualists जागृवद्भिः – **jāgrvadbhiḥ** - and meditators, एतद्वै – **ētadvai** - This is indeed तत् – **tat** - that.

The fire which is present in the two pieces of araṇi-wood is carefully maintained just as the foetus (is maintained) by pregnant women. (That) fire is daily worshipped by those who are ritualists and meditators. This is indeed that.

This verse discusses the last pair: *Virātand viśva*. *Virāt* is the Consciousness expressed through the tangible and visible universe (*sthūla prapañca*). In this mantra as well as several other places, *Virāt* is represented by the fire principle (*agnitattvam*). We saw this

idea in the first section of the first chapter in mantras 1.1.13 and 1.1.14 where three meanings for Agni were presented of which one was *Virāt*.

Agni was the first element that became visible (space and air that preceded agni are not visible). The gross universe (*Virāt*) is visible and therefore, the *śāstras* decided to symbolize it with Agni. The *śāstras* also say that *agnitattvam* is inside as well as outside the body [*adhyātma* or *āntara* agni and *bāhya* agni]. The Agni that we experience outside our body is *Virāt*. The digestive fire that we experience inside us is called *Vaiśvānara agni*. The food is first cooked outside to be edible and tasty and then "cooked" inside for conversion to nutrients for the body to absorb. This digestive fire represents *viśva*, the gross individual gross body (*vyaṣṭi*) and the external fire represents *Virāt*, the cosmic universe (*samaṣṭi*).

The Upaniṣad does not associate all forms of external fire (such as cigarette fire) to *Virāt*. It only takes the ritualistic fire (*yajña agni*) to represent *Virāt* (although the other fires are also part of *Virāt*). It is necessary to understand the ritual to be able to understand where the *yajña agni* is located:

To kindle the fire for a ritual, one must use a special method (not just a lighter): the fire is created by rubbing two logs (araṇiḥ) together – one log called adho-araṇiḥ is kept stationary – it has a hole within. Another log of wood called utara araṇiḥ is placed in the hole and set in a churning motion. The sparks resulting from the friction lights up very dry grass or cotton. This fire is yajña agni.

Virāt referred to as *Jātavedaḥ* in this verse, is hidden in the two *araṇis* and becomes manifest when they are rubbed together. The ritualistic people protect the *araṇis* very carefully (maintained properly) just as the pregnant women carefully protect their foetus in their wombs. The ritualistic people worship *Virāt* Agni daily. The first mantra of *Ṛg Veda* is the worship of Agni. In our tradition, the first thing we do in the morning is light the lamp before we light the fire for cooking.

Some other worshippers meditate on *Vaiśvānara*, the internal fire. This *Virāt-Vaiśvānara*- pair is none other than Ātmā, the Consciousness that Naciketas wanted to know.

९ यतश्चोदेति सूर्यः, अस्तं यत्र च गच्छति ।
तं देवाः सर्वे अर्पिताः, तदु नात्येति कश्चन । एतद्वै तत् ॥

9 *yataścōdēti sūryaḥ, astam yatra ca gacchati |*
taṁ dēvāḥ sarvē arpitāḥ, tadu nātyēti kaścana | ētadvai tat ||

सर्वे देवाः – *sarvē dēvāḥ* - All gods अर्पिताः – *arpitāḥ* - are based तम् – *tam* - on that यतः च – *yataḥ ca* - from which सूर्यः उदेति – *sūrya udēti* - the sun rises च यत्र – *ca yatra* - and in which अस्तं गच्छति – *astam gacchati* - (it) sets. उ – *u* - Indeed, न कश्चन – *na kaścana* - nothing अत्येति – *atyēti* - exceeds तत् – *tat* - that. एतद्वै – *etadvai* - This is indeed तत् – *tat* - that.

All gods are based on that from which the sun rises and in which (it) sets, Indeed, nothing exceeds that. This is indeed that.

This verse is also describing *Hiraṇyagarbha*. Every *devatā*, being part of *Hiraṇyagarbha* depends on it for survival (verse 7). Just as the wave rises, rests and resolves in the ocean, every *devatā* originates, rests and resolves in *Hiraṇyagarbha*. That is why *Hiraṇyagarbha* is called *sūtra-ātmā*, which means inherent in everyone. The total is inherent in every individual.

Sūrya devatā (Lord of eyesight) rises at creation and then resolves at *pralayam* into *Hiraṇyagarbha*. In fact, all the 17 *devatās* similarly rise and resolve into *Hiraṇyagarbha*. The *śāstras* say that there are 330 million *devatās* once you expand the organization chart – for each function there is a *devatā*. There is in fact, an infinite number of *devatās* because there are infinite faculties required for infinite number of functions. All these are in *Hiraṇyagarbha* just as all waves are in the ocean. No one can exist beyond that

Hiranyagarbha just as no wave can exist outside the ocean. In short, *Hiranyagarbha* is infinite.

This *Hiranyagarbha* is none other than that pure Consciousness. The instrument (object) of manifestation may differ, but there is only one Consciousness.

Other notes:

From the point of view of Brahman (*pāramārthika* plane), there is neither the creator *Īśvara* nor the created individual or the universe (*jīva* or *jagat*). Only in the *vyāvahāika* plane, the difference between the creator and the created exists.

Mantras 5-9 say that Consciousness alone expresses through the three pairs – *sarvam brahma mayam jagat*.

१० यदेवेह तदमुत्र, यदमुत्र तदन्विह।
मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति, य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥

10 yadēvēha tadamutra, yadamutra tadanviha |
mṛtyōḥ sa mṛtyumāpnōti, ya iha nānēva paśyati ||

तद् यद् इह – **tad yad iha** - That which is here एव अमुत्र – **ēva amutra** - alone is there. .
तद् यद् अमुत्र – **tad yad amutra** - That which is there अनु इह – **anu iha** - alone is here. सः
यः पश्यति – **saḥ yaḥ paśyati** - One who sees इह नाना इव – **iha nānā iva** - here plurality,
as it were, आप्नोति – **āpnōti** - goes मृत्योः मृत्युम् – **mṛtyōḥ mṛtyum** - from death to
death.

That which is here alone is there. That which is there alone is here. One who sees here plurality, as it were, goes from death to death.

This the summary of the mantras 5 through 9.

The Consciousness manifests in the individual body (*vyaṣṭi śarīram*) as well as the macro universe (*samaṣṭi parpañcam*). Even though it appears dull in the former and very bright in the latter, dullness or brightness does not belong to the Consciousness, but to the respective reflecting medium. Śaṅkarācārya says in *Maṇiṣa Pañcakam* that the Consciousness in *Virāt* and *Hiraṇyagarbha* is the same as that in an ant. There is no question of higher or lower Consciousness. It is a misconception that a *jñānī* has a higher Consciousness than an *ajñānī*; because the former has a superior mind, his Consciousness seems to be exalted.

The one absorbed in the medium sees only plurality. He is likely to make comparisons, gradations etc. and have the six vices – lust, anger, greed, delusion, arrogance and jealousy (*kāma-krodha-lobha-moha-mada-mātsarya*). Lord Yama says that such a person will see mortality. His sense of insecurity and struggles will be endless. The insecurity will end only with the knowledge that I, the immortal Consciousness am transacting through the mortal body. When I know that I am the Consciousness, I know that everyone else is also the Consciousness (Verse 5.18 – Bhagavad Gītā). This is seeing the one-ness in everything (*advaita darśanam*). There is plurality in the transactional world, but I am not absorbed in that plurality. I am absorbed in the one-ness behind the plurality.

Lord Yama makes a beautiful statement: one who sees plurality in this world goes from death to death. Even in one life, he experiences many imaginary deaths and one final death. The fear of death is constantly present in his lifetime. Another interpretation of this statement: because we are born time after time, we also die time after time. In short, *samsāra* persists.

११ मनसैवेदमाप्तव्यं, नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन ।
मृत्योः स मृत्युं गच्छति, य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥

**11 manasaivēdamāptavyam, nēha nānāsti kiñcana ।
mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum gacchati, ya iha nānēva paśyati ॥**

इदम् – **idam** - This आप्तव्यम् – **āptavyam** - has to be attained मनसा एव – **manasā ēva** - through the mind alone. अस्ति न नाना – **asti na nānā** - There is no plurality किञ्चन इह – **kiñcana iha** - at all here. सः यः पश्यति – **saḥ yaḥ paśyati** - One who sees इह नाना इव – **iha nānā iva** - here plurality, as it were, गच्छति – **gacchati** - goes मृत्योः मृत्युम् – **mṛtyōḥ mṛtyum** - from death to death.

This has to be attained through the mind alone. There is no plurality at all here. One who sees here plurality, as it were, goes from death to death.

Śaṅkarācārya quotes this mantra often. The second line of this mantra is almost the same as the second line of the previous mantra (*gacchati* instead of *āpnoti*). If a person sees plurality as real, then he will travel from death to death.

The essence of the mantra is that there no plurality at all. The Upaniṣad conveys this idea through the verb "*asti*" which means there is no plurality even in the present (tense). The Upaniṣad conveys that we are not transforming from *dvaitam* to *advaitam*. If there is transformation, the Upaniṣad would have used the future tense. *Advaitam* exists eternally – in the past, present and the future.

*Advaitam*is "reached" only by dropping the notion that there is *dvaitam*. Dropping this notion is through understanding and therefore, it is an intellectual exercise. The wave need not transform to water; it just needs understand that it is water.

The Upaniṣad says that the *advaita jñāna* can be acquired only with the help of the mind. There is no other alternate method. Any meditation with the objective of making the mind non-functional will not give *jñāna*. How can you get jnana without the mind? If the mind is not required, what is the use of purifying it? Why should the *śāstras* insist on *sādhana catuṣṭaya sampattiḥ*? Therefore, the mind is a must for *Ātmajñānam*. [Don't misunderstand *manonāśa* and engage in "destroying" the mind].

Mantra 1.6 of Kenopaniṣadsays that Ātmā cannot be known through the mind. Here it is said that only through the mind can one know Ātmā. Mantra 3.1.9 of Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad

also says that Ātmā can be known only through the mind. These seemingly contradictory statements can be reconciled as follows:

- When the Upaniṣad says that you cannot know the Ātmā through the mind, it means an unprepared mind. When the Upaniṣad says that Ātmā can only be known through the mind, it means a qualified and prepared mind. Karma yoga (the religious life) prepares the mind.
- The mind (*antaḥkaraṇam* – includes the intellect) has two roles in gaining knowledge:
 - o It serves as the locus of knowledge – a place where knowledge takes place through the modification of thoughts. Regardless of the instrument used, the knowledge takes place only in the mind. The sound comes through the ears, but the knowledge of the sound takes place in the mind. You require both the ears and the mind for the knowledge to take place. [If ears are the locus, the knowledge can still take place with your mind wandering all over. This is not possible].
 - o Mind also serves as the instrument of knowledge through reasoning. At the end of reasoning, the conclusion takes place in the mind which is the locus of knowledge.

For *Ātmajñānam*, *Vedānta śravaṇam* (*guru upadeśa*) is the instrument of knowledge. Mind (or even the reasoning intellect) is not the instrument of knowledge. However, the mind is the locus of the knowledge acquired through *Vedānta śravaṇam*. Thus, mind is the locus of knowledge even for *Ātmajñānam*. You "travel" from mortality to immortality when the change in perspective place from *bhedam* to *abheda*.

Other notes:

In mantras 5-10: There is no substance called *anātmā*; there is only Ātmā. This is akin to: the ornaments are many, but gold is the only substance. We need names and forms for worldly transactions, but in the back of the mind, we should remember that Ātmā is the only substance [*Sarvam Ātmā*].

In verse 11, Lord Yama calls this a compulsory knowledge because without it, a human will not get what he seeks— peace, security, fulfillment and happiness. Everyone seeks peace from the result of an action, but without the *sarvātma bhāva*, one cannot get fulfillment (*pūrṇatvam*). The opposite vision of duality (*dvaitam*) sustains mortality. Lord Yama will chase him permanently (*punarapi jananam punarapi maraṇam*).

१२ अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषः, मध्य आत्मनि तिष्ठति ।
ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य, न ततो विजुगुप्सते। एतद्वै तत् ॥

**12 aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣaḥ, madhya ātmani tiṣṭhati ।
Īśānō bhūtabhavyasya, na tatō vijugupsatē । ētadva itat ॥**

पुरुषः – **puruṣaḥ** - Ātmā, अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः – **aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ** - which is the size of the thumb
ईशानः – **īśānaḥ** - (and) which is the lord भूतभव्यस्य – **bhūtabhavyasya** - of the past and
the future, तिष्ठति – **tiṣṭhati** - dwells मध्ये आत्मनि – **madhyē ātmani** - in the heart of the
body. ततः – **tataḥ** - After (knowing that), न विजुगुप्सते – **na vijugupsatē** - one does not
seek security. एतद् वै – **ētad vai** - This is indeed तत् – **tat** - that.

Ātmā, which is the size of the thumb (and) which is the lord of the past and the future, dwells in the heart of the body. After (knowing that), one does not seek security. This is indeed that.

In verses 12 and 13, Lord Yama re-emphasizes *jīvātma-paramātma-aikyam* – the oneness of the microcosm (*vyaṣṭī*) and the macrocosm (*samaṣṭī*).

In the first line, the Upaniṣad says that the *jīvātma* is (as though) situated in the center (heart) of the body. In this context, the word *ātmani* in the verse refers to the physical body. *Jīvātma* is to be understood as the Consciousness that illumines thoughtful and thoughtless states of the mind. The *śāstras* say that the mind is resident in the heart (Śaṅkarācārya: it is the physical heart). The heart is of the size of the fist and therefore, in this verse, the mind is imagined to be (as though) the size of the thumb.

The verse also calls *jīvātmā* the lord of the creation - the past, (present) and the future. Therefore, although it appears to be limited in size, it is the limitless, all-pervading *Paramātmā* who is the Lord of the entire creation. There is one Ātmā – this is a *mahāvākya* mantra.

The space within the pot is viewed as limited space. Upon enquiry, we understand that the expression limited space is a delusion. We know that the space is neither inside nor outside the pot, but all pots are within the space. In the same way, Consciousness is neither within nor without the heart; everything is within *jīvātmā*.

After knowing that I am the limitless *Paramātmā*, I never feel insecure (*gupsa* = seeking security).

It is this Consciousness that Naciketas was seeking in the third boon.

१३ अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषः, ज्योतिरिवाधूमकः ।
ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य, स एवाद्य स उ श्वः। एतद्वै तत् ॥

**13 aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣaḥ, jyōtirivādhūmakāḥ ।
Īśānō bhūtabhavyasya, sa ēvādya sa u śvaḥ । ētadvaitat ॥**

पुरुषः – **puruṣaḥ** - Ātmā, अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः – **aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ** - which is the size of the thumb
ईशानः – **īśānaḥ** - (and) which is the lord भूतभव्यस्य – **bhūtabhavyasya** - of the past and
the future, इव ज्योतिः – **iva jyōtiḥ** - is like a flame अधूमकः – **adhūmakāḥ** - without
smoke. सः एव – **saḥ ēva** - That alone अद्य – **adya** - (exists) today; सः उ श्वः – **saḥ u śvaḥ** -
that alone (will exist) tomorrow. एतद् वै – **ētad vai** - This is indeed तत् – **tat** - that

Ātmā, which is the size of the thumb (and) which is the lord of the past and the future, is like a flame without smoke. That alone (exists) today; that alone (will exist) tomorrow. This is indeed that.

This is another *mahāvākya* mantra emphasizing the *jīvātma-Paramātma-aikyam*.

Consciousness is seemingly limited in size (of the thumb) and confined to the body as *jīvātmā*. We recognize this Consciousness only in our body and therefore erroneously conclude that it is limited to the periphery of the body.

The Upaniṣad likens the *jīvātmā* to a smokeless flame that capable of brightly illuminating the objects. The *śāstras* define light as that in whose presence, things are known. Every sense organ is comparable to light. Only in the presence of the mind, things can be known and therefore, the mind is also comparable to light. Extending along those lines, the ultimate light is Consciousness without whose presence, neither the mind nor the sense organs can perceive. That is why *jīvātmā* is called the light of lights (*jyotiṣām jyotiḥ*). This *jīvātmā* is none other than the *Paramātmā*, the lord of the past, (present) and the future.

This means that plurality is only apparent and not real.

The light house appears to have three moving lights. However, there is only one light with a rotating device and three windows. The rotating device makes the light look like it is moving and three windows give the appearance of multiplicity. The plurality and movement does not belong to the light. Similarly, the Consciousness does not move; only the body-mind complex, the device moves. The plurality of the bodies and their movements are falsely transferred to the Consciousness.

Many have this misconception that the Consciousness is destroyed with the death of the body (brain). Lord Yama says that Consciousness alone exists today and that alone will exist in the future. This is a direct answer to Naciketas' question in 1.1.20: after my death, do I continue to exist or not? When *sūkṣma śarīram* itself survives, what can one say about *Ātma caitanyam*? It is eternal.

This Consciousness is what Naciketas wanted to know through the third boon.

१४ यथोदकं दुर्गे वृष्टं, पर्वतेषु विधावति ।
एवं धर्मान्पृथक्पश्यन्, तानेवानुविधावति ॥

**14 yathōdakaṁ durgē vṛṣṭaṁ, parvatēṣu vidhāvati ।
ēvaṁ dharmānpṛthakpaśyan, tānēvānuvidhāvati ॥**

पश्यन् धर्मान् – **paśyan dharmān** - One who sees the jīvas पृथक् – **pṛthak** - definitely
अनुविधावति – **anuvīdhāvati** - goes after तान् एव – **tān ēva** - them only एवं यथा – **ēvaṁ
yathā** - just as उदकम् – **udakam** - water वृष्टं दुर्गे – **vṛṣṭaṁ durgē** - rained on a mountain
विधावति – **vidhāvati** - runs down पर्वतेषु – **parvatēṣu** - the slopes (and disappears).

*One who sees the jīvas definitely goes after them only just as water rained on a
mountain runs down the slopes (and disappears).*

In these concluding two mantras, Lord Yama emphasizes that duality (*dvaita-darśanam*) leads to mortality and non-duality (*advaita darśanam*) leads to immortality. In this mantra, he says that *dvaita-darśanam* leads to mortality.

One who sees *jīvātmās* as different will be born again and again in the world of plurality. *Tāneva* means the very same world of *jīvātmā* (plurality). *Jīvātmā* is referred to as dharma in this verse. To convey this, Lord Yama gives an analogy of water rained on the slope of the mountain. This water divides itself into many streams and then gets absorbed in the mud. It gets divided, dissipated and destroyed. Water divided is water destroyed. When these streams unite together, they become a huge river that never gets destroyed. Unity is strength and division is destruction. The *jīvātmā* who sees division will get destroyed. Swamiji also gives another example:

When the wave looks at itself as an individual wave, it is frightened of mortality because it will eventually be destroyed. When the very same wave understands that there are no waves, but only water, there is no fear of mortality. The wave knows it is eternal as water and that the "waveness" is just the name and form (nāma-rūpa).

Wave darśanam = dvaita darśanam = mortality.

१५ यथोदकं शुद्धे शुद्धम्, आसिक्तं तादृगेव भवति ।
एवं मुनेर्विजानतः, आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥

**15 yathōdakam śuddhē śuddham, āsiktaṁ tādr̥gēva bhavati ।
ēvaṁ munērvijānataḥ, ātmā bhavati gautama ॥**

आत्मा – **ātmā** - The Ātmā विजानतः मुनेः – **vijānataḥ munēḥ** - of the wise sage भवति – **bhavati** - becomes (the same as Brahman) एवं यथा – **ēvaṁ yathā** - just as शुद्धम् उदकम् – **śuddham udakam** - pure water, आसिक्तम् – **āsiktam** - poured शुद्धे – **śuddhē** - in pure (water), भवति – **bhavati** - becomes तादृग् एव – **tādr̥g ēva** - the same alone. गौतम – **Gautama** - Oh Naciketas!

The Ātmā of the wise sage becomes (the same as Brahman) just as pure water, poured in pure (water), becomes the same alone. Oh Naciketas!

In this verse, Lord Yama says that *advaita darśanam* leads to immortality. The *jīvātma-Paramātmā-aikyam* is revealed through an analogy.

When a container of pure water is poured into another (larger) container of pure water, one cannot differentiate one water from the other - they become indistinguishably one [identical or inseparable].

Similarly, through proper *sādhanas*, when the wise pour the *jīvātma* into the *Paramātmā*, the adjectives *jīva* and *Parama* get removed and Ātmā alone remains. *Vijānataḥ* means a wise person; *muniḥ* means the one who has gone through *vedānta śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsanam*. By becoming a *muniḥ*, he has become wise.

Other Notes:

- Both waters must be pure (*śuddham*) – if one is not pure, the impurity will be added. Of these two, *Paramātmā* need not be purified; only the *jīvātmā* requires purification through appropriate *sādhanas*.
- The merger of the waters is a physical event in space and time, but *jīvātma-Paramātmā-aikyam* is not. Physical merger is possible only when two things are physically away from each other at a distance. The *Paramātmā* pervades everything including the *jīvātmā* and therefore, there is no question of travelling and merging. Only knowledge is required to remove the separation by dropping the notion of difference. The merger is an intellectual event in which the false notion is dropped by the right understanding. When the false notion goes away, I no longer want to merge into the *Paramātmā* because I now know that I am *Paramātmā*.

इति काठकोपनिषदि द्वितीयाध्याये प्रथमा वल्ली ॥

Thus (ends) the first section of Second Chapter

ॐ

द्वितीयावल्ली

2.3. SECOND SECTION

१ पुरमेकादशद्वारम्, अजस्यावक्रचेतसः ।
अनुष्ठाय न शोचति, विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते। एतद्वै तत् ॥

1 puramēkādaśadvāram, ajasyāvakracētaṣaḥ ।
anuṣṭhāya na śōcati, vimuktaśca vimucyātē । ētadvai tat ॥

पुरम् – puram - The city एकादशद्वारम् – **ēkādaśadvāram** - with eleven gates अजस्य – **ajasya** - belongs to the birthless Ātmā अवक्रचेतसः – **avakracētaṣaḥ** - which is of the nature of undifferentiated consciousness. अनुष्ठाय – **anuṣṭhāya** - Meditating on (this), न शोचति – **na śōcati** - one does not grieve. विमुक्तः – **vimuktaḥ** - Having become liberated (while living), विमुच्यते च – **vimucyātē ca** - he becomes liberated (after death) also. एतद्वै – **etad vai** - This is indeed तत् – **tat** - that.

The city with eleven gates belongs to the birthless Ātmā which is of the nature of undifferentiated consciousness. Meditating on (this), one does not grieve. Having become liberated (while living), he becomes liberated (after death) also. This is indeed that.

The nature of Ātmā (*Ātmasvarūpam*) is discussed elaborately in the first *vallī* of the second chapter. Since it is an extremely subtle subject, he chooses to teach it again from a different angle in this *vallī*. Because of the subtlety of the subject, the teaching is often repeated in the Upaniṣads.

In this mantra, Lord Yama describes the nature of the individual self (*jīvātmā*). Here the *jīvātmā* is depicted as the master (ruler) of the body. For this purpose, the body is likened to a small kingdom or a city (*puram*). The master or the king (*jīvātmā*) lives in the

heart (*hr̥dayam*) of the city. The organs are the citizens who work for the master. The functions of the body are industries; various goods (nutrients) are manufactured and transported to various places. The blood arteries are the highways; the blood vessels are roads and the capillaries are by-lanes. The blocked roads (arteries) require by-pass roads. The kingdom is protected by the wall called the skin. There are gateways – some are one-way entrance gates (sense organs of knowledge - *jñānendriyas*), some are one-way exits (*karmendriyas*) and the mouth is two-way. The city thrives (be alive) so long as the ruler is healthy and available. When the powerful king goes away, a civil war breaks out and the body disintegrates. *Ātmā* is the master of the body, the *anātmā*.

The physical body has eleven openings of which seven are in the head – two each of ears, eyes and nostrils and one mouth. Then there are three openings down below – two for evacuation and the one nābhi (navel) which was operational when we were in our mother's womb. This door is permanently sealed after birth. The last opening called brahmarandhram is at the top of the head (crown); it opens only when the qualified seeker (upāsaka) dies. This is the special hole that leads to the passage to Brahmāloka. In the verse 5.13 of the Bhagavad Gītā, Krishna only talks about navadvāram (9 gates) because we rarely use nābhi and brahmarandhram.

This *jīvātmā* is of the nature of the changeless Consciousness. Lord Yama uses this special adjective *avakram* because the physical body is constantly changing (*vakram* or *vakrapuram*). It is also birthless unlike the body (*puram*) which has a date of birth.

The objective in life is to claim that I am the master of the body (*puraswāmī*) and not the body (*puram*). The primary exercise to achieve this vedānta *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsanam*. *Śravaṇam* and *mananam* are meant for intellectually separating the body from its master, the Consciousness. Once this conviction sets in, I should train my mind through *nididhyāsanam* to this new orientation. The result of this effort is that one ceases to have sorrows in life. He will enjoy liberation even while living – this is unique teaching of the Vedānta. All the other religions promise liberation after death. This, one can only believe, but not verify.

After death, the *jivanmukta* enjoys total freedom because he is never born again.

This is the *puraswāmi Ātmā* that Naciketas wanted to know in verses 1.1.20 and 1.2.14

२ ह२ सः शुचिषद्वसुरन्तरिक्षसद्, होता वेदिषदतिथिर्दुरोणसत् ।
नृषद्वरसद्वतसद्योमसदब्जाः, गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतं बृहत् ॥

**2 haṁsaḥ śuciṣadvasurantarikṣasad, hōtā vēdiṣadatithirdurōṇasat ।
nṛṣadvarasadṛtasadvyōmasadabjāḥ, gōjārṭajādrijārṭambṛhat ॥**

बृहद् ऋतम् – *bṛhad ṛtam* - This infinite Reality शुचिषत् – *śuciṣat* - dwells in the heaven
हंसः – *haṁsaḥ* - as the sun; अन्तरिक्षसत् – *antarikṣasat* - dwells in the interspace वसुः –
vasuḥ - as the wind; वेदिषत् – *vēdiṣat* - dwells on the earth होता – *hōtā* - as the fire;
दुरोणसत् – *durōṇasat* - dwells in the house अतिथिः – *atithiḥ* - as a guest; नृषत् – *nṛṣat* -
dwells in people, वरसत् – *varasat* - dwells in gods, ऋतसत् – *ṛtasat* - dwells in sacrifices
(and) व्योमसत् – *vyōmasat* - dwells in space. अब्जाः – *abjāḥ* - It is born in waters, गोजाः –
gōjāḥ - is born on the earth, ऋतजाः – *ṛtajāḥ* - is born as sacrificial accessories, अद्रिजाः –
adrijāḥ - (and) originates from mountains (as rivers).

*This infinite Reality dwells in the heaven as the sun; dwells in the interspace as the
wind; dwells on the earth as the fire; dwells in the house as a guest; dwells in
people, dwells in gods, dwells in sacrifices (and) dwells in space. It is born in
waters, is born on the earth, is born as sacrificial accessories, (and) originates from
mountains (as rivers).*

In this mantra, Lord Yama says that the *jīvātmā* that pervades my body also pervades all the bodies. This is the next stage of understanding. Philosophies such as *Sāṅkhya*, *Nyāya* etc. claim that *Ātmās* are many (*ātma-bahutva-vādaḥ*). This verse negates these philosophies. Lord Yama emphasizes that there is only one all-pervading Consciousness (*ātmanah ekatvam*). Lord Krishna gives this teaching in Chapter 13: in verse 13.2, He says that Consciousness (*kṣetrajñam*) is the experiencer of the body (*kṣetram*). In verse 13.3,

Krishna says that He is that *kṣetrajñam* indicating that Consciousness is one while the bodies are plural.

To illustrate this, Lord Yama lists various things in the universe pervaded by the Consciousness.

Haṁsaḥ (the sun) - Ātmā is residing in the sky in the form of the sun. *Haṁsaḥ* derives from the root *han* – to destroy – it destroys darkness. A *jñāni* is also called *haṁsaḥ* because he destroys the internal darkness of *ajñāna* [*Paramahaṁsaḥ*].

Vasuḥ (air or *Vāyu*) - Ātmā is in the inter-space in the form of *Vāyu*. [*Vasuḥ* = *vāsayiti sarvam iti vasuḥ* – it carries and spreads the fragrance].

Hotā (fire or Agni) – Ātmā is on the earth in the form of Agni. *Hotā* in this context means Agni. *Hotā* normally means one who offers oblation.

Atithiḥ (guest) - *duroṇasat* – Ātmā is in the house as a guest. Lord Yama is referring to all the sacred things so that we will have reverence.

Nṛḥ (human being) – Ātmā is in every human being as sentiency.

Varaḥ (god or *deva*) – *Devas* are superior to the human beings. Ātmā is in every *deva* in the form of sentiency

Ṛtam (Vedic ritual) – Ātmā is in all the vedic rituals

Vyomaḥ - Ātmā is present in the all-pervading space in the form of very Existence

Abjāḥ– It is present in aquatic things and beings

Gojāḥ – Atma is upon the earth in the form of earthly things

Ṛtajāḥ – it is in the form of sacrificial accessories

In short, Ātmā is everywhere and therefore, it is called *br̥hat* (infinite)

Joining this verse with the previous one, we conclude that the *jīvātmā* pervades everything (*jīvātma-paramātma-aikyam*).

Summary of the first two verses:

There are four stages for Vedānta:

- Separate the Consciousness from the body-mind(B-M) complex. This stage is called *ātma-anātma-vivekaḥ*. One must be convinced of this through proper study
- Learn to shift the identification from the B-M complex to Consciousness. Replace the thought "I am the body with Consciousness" with "I am the Consciousness with an incidental body." This takes long practice. The function of the body is only to conduct transactions in this world. I will certainly lose the body at some point in time not dictated by me.
- I, the Consciousness operating through this body am not confined to this body, but I pervade all bodies. I am non-dual, indivisible and formless space-like Consciousness, functioning through innumerable bodies. [*aham brahma asmi* – *brahma* means infinite]
- I should know my relationship with matter. When I view the Consciousness as separate from matter, I still maintain duality (*dvaitam*). The fourth stage is the pinnacle of *advaitam*: This is the understanding that all the bodies are only the lower manifestation of one Consciousness and not separate from it. I am Brahman. Brahman is *jagat kāraṇam* and therefore, I am *jagat kāraṇam*. I create this body and transact through it.

These ideas may be difficult to swallow, especially that I create the body and transact through it. To explain this, the Vedānta gives an analogy: you create the dream world with dream time, space and body. When in dream, you do not create a new *jīva*, but

a dream body in which you enter. You use dream-sense organs to transact in the dream world. [dream hunger satisfied by dream food!]. When you are in a dream, you do not believe that you are dreaming. When you extend this to the waking life, you reach the understanding that you are the Consciousness in your higher nature conducting transactions as matter, your lower nature in this world. In Chapter 7 of the Bhagavad Gīta, Krishna calls the higher nature *parāprakṛti* and the lower nature, *aparāprakṛti*. I am Brahman (*ṛtam bṛhat*) manifesting as all the worldly things (sun, wind etc.). There is nothing other than me (*sarvātma bhāvaḥ*).

Mantra 2.2.1 teaches the first two stages and 2.2.2 teaches the other two stages.

३ ऊर्ध्वं प्राणमुन्नयति, अपानं प्रत्यगस्यति ।
मध्ये वामनमासीनं, विश्वे देवा उपासते ॥

**3 ūrdhvaṁ prāṇamunnayati, apānaṁ pratyagasyati ।
Madhyē vāmanamāsīnaṁ, viśvē dēvā upāsatē ॥**

उन्नयति – **unnayati** - (Ātmā) draws प्राणम् – **prāṇam** - prāṇa ऊर्ध्वम् – **ūrdhvam** upwards
अस्यति अपानम् – **asyati apānam** - (and) sends the apāna प्रत्यक् – **pratyak** - downwards.
विश्वे देवाः – **viśvē dēvāḥ** - All sense organs उपासते – **upāsatē** - worship वामनम् –
vāmanam - (this) adorable one आसीनम् – **āsīnam** - who resides मध्ये – **madhyē** - in the
heart (of the body).

**(Ātmā) draws prāṇa upwards (and) sends the apāna downwards. All sense organs
worship (this) adorable one who resides in the heart (of the body).**

The B-M complex is inert in nature. It is made up of five elements (*pañca-bhūtas*) that have no life of their own. Ātmā blesses the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīram*) by its reflection (*cidābhāsa*). It is analogous to the mirror that is non-luminous; it becomes luminous only by the blessing of the sun's reflection. Ātmā lends sentiency to *sūkṣma śarīram* through *cidābhāsa*. With this borrowed sentiency, the *sūkṣma śarīram* lends sentiency (*cidābhāsa*) to the physical body (*sthūla śarīram*). The *sthūla śarīram* enjoys the

secondary *cidābhāsa*. Ātmā blesses the *sūkṣma śarīram* directly and *sthūla śarīram* indirectly.

What happens at the time of death? When the mirror is removed, the reflection disappears, but the sun continues to be there. When the *sūkṣma śarīram* quits the body, Ātmā in the form of RC, the *cidābhāsa* (from the *sūkṣma śarīram*) is no longer available to the body, but Ātmā, the OC is very much there.

Our breathing is the proof of Ātmā's blessing. Ātmā (RC) draws *prāṇa* (the exhalation air) out of your lungs and throws it outside. It then draws *apāna* (the inhalation air) inward that goes downward into the lungs.

This adorable Ātmā (*Vāmana*) resides in the mind which is in the heart. It is not the physical residence; Ātmā is recognizable within the mind in the form of awareness, Consciousness, experiencer etc. It is like saying that the Lord is in the temple although God is all-pervading. All-pervading God is available for worship in the temple. All the sense organs (*viśve devāḥ*) worship this Ātmā residing in the sanctum sanctorum, the mind. Each sense organ is a priest or a devotee offering different sense objects (*śabda, sparśa, rūpa, rasa* and *gandha*) to this RC. For example, when I am conscious of sound, the sense object sound is absorbed in the mind. The offerings are coming constantly.

Other notes:

The word Atma is used very loosely – either OC or RC (*cit* or *cidābhāsa*). RC is there only when RM is present, but OC is always there regardless of the presence of RM. To avoid confusion, we use the term *jivātmā* to represent RC. *Paramātmā* is the OC, the non-traveling Ātmā. When RC and RM leave the body, death occurs. Although OC is still there, it cannot directly bless the physical (dead) body.

४ अस्य विस्त्रंसमानस्य, शरीरस्थस्य देहिनः ।
देहाद्विमुच्यमानस्य, किमत्र परिशिष्यते ।एतद्वै तत् ॥

4 *asya vistrāmsamānasya, śarīrasthasya dēhinaḥ I*
dēhādvimucyamānasya, kimatra pariśiṣyatē lēadvai tat II

अस्य देहिनः – *asya dēhinaḥ* - When this Ātmā, शरीरस्थस्य – *śarīrasthasya* - which resides in the body, विस्त्रंसमानस्य – *vistrāmsamānasya* - gets detached विमुच्यमानस्य देहात् – *vimucyamānasya dēhāt* - as it is freed from the body, किं परिशिष्यते – *kiṃ pariśiṣyatē* - what remains अत्र – *atra* - in this (body)? एतद् वै – *ētaḍ vai* - This is indeed तत् – *tat* - that.

When this Ātmā, which resides in the body, gets detached as it is freed from the body, what remains in this (body)? This is indeed that.

The idea that Ātmā gives life to the body is further clarified in this mantra with *anvaya-vyatireka* logic which conclusively establishes the cause and effect relationship. To establish a factor conclusively to be the cause of an effect, the presence of that cause must always produce that effect (*anvaya*), while the absence of that cause must always result in the absence of the effect (*vyatireka*). Without this, one cannot conclusively establish the cause and effect relationship. For example, to establish that potato is the cause of an allergy, the consumption of potato must always cause the allergic reaction, while the abstinence from potato should always result in the absence of such reaction. [Sanskrit: *yat tattve yat tattvam, yat abhāve tat abhāvaḥ, tat tasya kāraṇam*]. The Upaniṣad establishes that when Ātmā is present, the body is alive and when Ātmā is absent, the body is dead, and therefore, Ātmā is the cause of life in a body. In the previous śloka (2.2.3), *anvaya* part of the logic was described. Now the *vyatireka* part will be explained in this mantra.

When Ātmā (RC) departs from the body (along with RM), i.e., when freed from the body, what remains in the body? This is rhetorical question – the responder to this question is gone!

This Consciousness that blesses the body indirectly (OC) is what Naciketas wanted to know.

५ न प्राणेन नापानेन, मर्त्यो जीवति कश्चन ।
इतरेण तु जीवन्ति, यस्मिन्नेतावुपाश्रितौ ॥

5 na prāṇena nāpānēna, martyō jīvati kaścana ।
itarēṇa tu jīvanti, yasminnētāvupāśritau ॥

न प्राणेन – na prāṇena - Neither by praṇa न अपानेन – na apānēna - nor by apāna कश्चन
मर्त्यः – kaścana martyaḥ - does any mortal जीवति – jīvati - live. तु – tu - But, जीवन्ति –
jīvanti - they live इतरेण – itarēṇa - because of something else यस्मिन् – yasmin - upon
which एतौ उपाश्रितौ – ētau upāśritau - these two depend. एतद् वै – etad vai tat - This is
indeed तत् – tat - that.

Neither by praṇa nor by apāna does any mortal live. But, they live because of something else upon which these two depend. This is indeed that.

At the time of death, RC, along with RM leaves the body. Although the subtle body (RM) has 17 components, the most important one is *prāṇa*. When RM leaves, we use the expression, "*prāṇa* has departed." In this verse, therefore, the subtle body is represented by *prāṇa*. How do we know which one blesses the body – RM or RC? When the body is alive, both are present and therefore, one may argue that *prāṇa* (RM) is the cause of sentiency in the body.

The body is alive when both RC and RM are present, and dies when they both leave. Therefore, *anvaya-vyatireka* logic seems to apply for RM to be the cause of sentiency in the body. However, *prāṇa* by nature is inert (made of subtle elements) and therefore, it cannot lend sentiency to the physical body. Its function is to receive sentiency from the OC and transfer to the body through the RC.

To illumine the darkroom, you require both the mirror and the reflected sun – only the mixture can illumine the dark room. If you remove the mirror, the darkroom cannot be

illuminated. Even though anvaya-vyatireka logic seems to apply, it is not correct because the mirror does not have a light of its own. The credit goes to the sun and not the mirror.

In short, *prāṇa* and *apāna* are dependent on Ātmā for sentiency.

६ हन्त त इदं प्रवक्ष्यामि, गुह्यं ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।
यथा च मरणं प्राप्य, आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥

6 hanta ta idaṁ pravakṣyāmi, guhyaṁ brahma sanātanam ।
Yathā ca maraṇaṁ prāpya, ātmā bhavati gautama ॥

हन्त गौतम – **hanta Gautama** - Well, Oh Naciketas! प्रवक्ष्यामि – **pravakṣyāmi** - I shall reveal इदं गुह्यं सनातनम् – **idaṁ guhyaṁ sanātanam** - this secret, eternal ब्रह्म ते – **brahma tē** - Brahman to you; च – **ca** - and also यथा – **yathā** - how आत्मा भवति – **ātmā bhavati** - the jīva fares प्राप्य मरणम् – **prāpya maraṇam** - after death.

Well, Oh Naciketas! I shall reveal this secret, eternal Brahman to you; and also how the jīva fares after death.

In this mantra, Lord Yama promises to teach more about the eternal Brahman because it is an extremely subtle subject (secret). He also promises to reveal what happens to the ignorant *jīvātmā* after death. In the case of the wise person, all the three bodies resolve (dissolve) into the corresponding total (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad: 3.2.7) like an iceberg dissolving into the ocean. Thus, the *jñānī* attains *videha mukti* by becoming one with Brahman.

Since Lord Yama is the head of the department of death, he knows what happens to the ignorant *jīvātmā*. He will now explain to Naciketas.

७ येनिमन्ये प्रपद्यन्ते, शरीरत्वाय देहिनः ।
स्थाणुमन्येऽनुसंयन्ति, यथाकर्म यथाश्रुतम् ॥

7 yēnimanyē prapadyantē, śarīratvāya dēhinaḥ I
sthāṇumanyē'nusamṃyanti, yathākarma yathāśrutam II

अन्ये देहिनः – **anyē dehinaḥ** - Some jīvas प्रपद्यन्ते – **prapadyantē** - enter योनिम् – **yōnim** - the womb शरीरत्वाय – **śarīratvāya** - for acquiring bodies अन्ये – **anyē** - (and) others अनुसंयन्ति – **anusamṃyanti** - assume स्थाणुम् – **sthāṇum** - plant-form यथाकर्म – **yathā karma** - according to (their) karma यथाश्रुतम् – **yathāśrutam** - and according to (their) upāsanā.

Some jīvas enter the womb for acquiring bodies (and) others assume plant-form according to (their) karma and according to (their) upāsanā.

Lord Yama explains what happens to the *jīvātmā* of the *ajñānī* after death.

This *śloka* is an important source of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) for rebirth (*punarjanma*). The *śāstras* are the primary evidence for rebirth. There is no scientific evidence for rebirth; we only have supporting evidence. Rebirth is beyond the other instruments of knowledge available to the humans (*apauruṣeya viśayaḥ*). The supporting evidence is the nature of a person in this birth. For example, if a person is a genius in music versus another who has no musical sense, we conclude that for the latter, the training continues from the previous birth. There can be no other explanation for this. This supporting evidence is called *sambhāvanā yuktiḥ* [the proving evidence = *niścāya yuktiḥ*].

When an ignorant person dies, what happens to the four factors: the three bodies and Ātmā?

The physical body (*sthūla śarīram*) dies and mingles with the five elements (*pañca-bhūtas*). This is obvious through direct observation (*pratyakṣa pramāṇa*). Ātmā of the *ajñānī* also is all-pervading and therefore, it cannot travel. The subtle and causal bodies (*sūkṣma* and *kāraṇa śarīrams*) are not perceptible by any instrument of knowledge. We can only know their fate from the *śāstras*. These bodies survive the death of the physical

body. *Sūkṣma śarīram* (*kāraṇa śarīram* included) and *cidābhāsa* together is called *ahamkāra* and that travels.

The *ajñānī's ahamkāra* travels and occupies another physical body of a *deva*, human being or other living beings including the plants. God does not determine the type of the new body directly. Lord Yama says that the fruits of our actions (*puṇya-pāpa-karmaphalam*) determine it.

Karmaphalam can only be exhausted only through experience (*sukha-duḥkha-anubhava-dvāra-eva-karmaphalam-kṣīyate*). Experience (*anubhava*) is possible only through the physical body. The *jīva* acquires another physical body appropriate to the world (*loka*) he is going to. Even in dream, one needs the appropriate physical body to exhaust the dream experience. The physical bodies of heavenly (*svarga*) and the dream (*svapna*) worlds are not visible to us.

How long will it take? It cannot be known because:

- One does not know when the next set of *karmaphalam*s will fructify
- More importantly, when this body drops, the time concept will change – it is not possible to measure the time of another birth in terms of this physical body. The parallel drawn is: the dream time is totally different from the waker's time.

The new body will be taken when it is ready.

Lord Yama says that every event is governed by law. The type of birth with favorable or unfavorable body and circumstances is dictated by karma of that person. We are fortunate that we do not remember the karma of our previous births; the regrets of the past in this birth itself is burdensome.

Lord Yama says that our birth also depends upon what we dwell upon constantly (*upāsana*). Whatever one thinks intensely is what he becomes:

Thoughts→words→action→habit→character→destiny

Ultimately our destiny begins with thought. Krishna confirms this in verse 8.6 of the Bhagavad Gītā. If one constantly dwells upon God, he becomes one with Him (*Īśvara cintayā Īśvara-aikyam*).

८ य एष सुप्तेषु जागर्ति, कामं कामं पुरुषो निर्मिमाणः ।
तदेव शुक्रं तद् ब्रह्म, तदेवामृतमुच्यते ।
तस्मिँल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे, तदु नात्येति कश्चन । एतद्वै तत् ॥

8 *ya ēṣa suptēṣu jāgarti, kāmaṁ kāmaṁ puruṣo nirmimāṇaḥ ।
tadēva śukraṁ tad brahma, tadēvāmṛtamucyatē ।
tasmimँllōkāḥ śritāḥ sarvē, tadu nātyēti kaścana । ētadvai tat ॥*

पुरुषः एषः – *puruṣaḥ ēṣaḥ* - Ātmā is this (consciousness) यः जागर्ति – *yaḥ jāgarti* - which keeps awake निर्मिमाणः – *nirmimāṇaḥ* - projecting कामं कामम् – *kāmaṁ kāmam* - various (dream) objects) सुप्तेषु – *suptēṣu* - when (all senses are) asleep. तद् एव शुक्रम् – *tad ēva śukram* - That is pure. तद् अमृतम् – *tad amṛtam* - That is immortal. तद् एव – *tad ēva* - That is indeed उच्यते ब्रह्म – *ucyatē brahma* - said to be Brahman. सर्वे लोकाः – *sarvē lōkāḥ* - All the worlds श्रिताः – *śritāḥ* - are based तस्मिन् – *tasmin* - on that. उ – *u* - Verily, न कश्चन – *na kaścana* - nothing अत्येति – *atyēti* - exceeds तत् – *tat* - that. एतद् वै – *etad vai* - This is indeed तत् – *tat* - that.

Ātmā is this (consciousness) which keeps awake projecting various (dream) objects when (all senses are) asleep. That is pure. That is immortal. That is indeed said to be Brahman. All the worlds are based on that. Verily, nothing exceeds that. This is indeed that.

Brahman is the Consciousness that resides in every individual. It is called *puruṣaḥ*. In the first mantra, the body was called *puram* and *ṣaḥ* means indweller. Therefore, *puruṣaḥ* means the indweller of the body.

The Consciousness is ever awake and illumines everything all the time. The other organs illumine the world when they are awake and do not when they are asleep. Therefore, they are temporary illuminators. When the mind is active, the Consciousness illumines the active mind and when the mind is asleep (blankness), the Consciousness also illumines the sleeping (condition of) mind.

When I wake up from deep sleep, I say "I did not know anything in sleep". How did I know that I did not know anything in sleep? I am the illuminator of the knowing and the non-knowing mind. [*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: I know that I (my mind) know. I also know that I (my mind) don't know. I am the ever-effulgent Consciousness*].

I am the creator of the internal and external universe as I like. At the time of the dream, I, the Consciousness create an inner world through the mind (*vāsanās* and *saṁskāras*). I create the external universe through my karma by taking up different bodies. Yet, I am ever pure even though the mind, body and the world that I create and associate with are impure.

I, the Consciousness am Brahman, the limitless (*mahāvākyam*). I am not limited to this body, but all bodies are in me, the immortal Brahman. Just as the space does not disappear when the walls are pulled down, I do not die when the body dies. We began with the statement that Consciousness resides in the body (*puruṣaḥ*) and now we say that this body along with all the bodies reside in the Consciousness. Therefore, nothing in the creation can exist beyond that Consciousness.

That Ātmā, the Consciousness in which the whole world rests [rises, rests and dissolves in me] is what Naciketas wanted to know in the third boon.

९ अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टः, रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा, रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥

**9 agniryathaikō bhuvanaṁ praviṣṭaḥ, rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpō babhūva ।
ēkastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā, rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpō bahiṣca ॥**

एकः सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा – **ēkaḥ sarvabhūtāntarātmā** - The one Ātmā which is in all beings (assumes) प्रतिरूपः – **pratirūpaḥ** - various forms in keeping with रूपं रूपम् – **rūpaṁ rūpam** - every form (of being) तथा यथा – **tathā yathā** - just as एकः अग्निः – **ēkaḥ agniḥ** - one fire-element, प्रविष्टः भुवनम् – **praviṣṭaḥ bhuvanam** - which is in the universe, बभूव – **babhūva** - assumes प्रतिरूपः – **pratirūpaḥ** - various forms in keeping with रूपं रूपम् **rūpaṁ rūpam** - every form (of object). बहिः च – **bahiḥ ca** - (It is) outside also.

The one Ātmā which is in all beings (assumes) various forms in keeping with every form (of being) just as one fire-element, which is in the universe, assumes various forms in keeping with every form (of object). (It is) outside also.

Mantas 8 through 15 are all important because they discuss the central theme of the Upaniṣad: the nature of Brahman (*Brahmasvarūpam*). Although it manifests in the formed body, the Consciousness itself is formless. For example, the light pervades the room and everything in it, but light itself does not have a form (*nirākārah*). Because the light is all pervading, it is not resident in a specific location. The formless (unlocated) light pervades the formed (located) body. The fact that light pervades the body is proved by the perceptibility (experiencibility) of the body.

When the formless and unlocated light pervades the body, it takes the shape of the body and therefore, it also appears as formed and located. The light seemingly inherits the limitation of the body. Onelight also becomes seemingly plural when there are multiple bodies, because of its reflection on multiple bodies. [*Advaitam dvaitam iva bhavati; aparicchinnam paricchinnam iva bhavati*]. Unlimited seems to become limited, formless seems to become formed and unlocated seems to become located all because of association with the body. Similar misunderstanding of plurality occurs when some conclude that each *anātmā* has its own Ātmā. The Consciousness is not experienced in between *anātmās* and therefore, a misconception is also reached that Consciousness is not present outside the body.

In addition to attributing forms and limitedness to Ātmā, we also misconclude that after the death, it leaves the body and travels to the other worlds – *svarga, naraka, piṭṛ loka* etc. [We also pray for *Ātma śānti*]. Lord Yama clears this misconception in verses 9, 10 and 11 with the example of fire, air and sunlight (*agni-vāyu-sūrya dṛṣṭāntaḥ*) respectively.

In this verse, Lord Yama points out that the fire principle (*agnitattvam*) formlessly pervades the universe. Heat (*agnitattvam*) does not have a form; it is all pervading (*sarvam vyāpakam*). When *agni* manifests in the log of burning wood, because of the former's association with the latter, we mistakenly conclude that fire is localized in the log of wood. It appears to be localized because of the manifesting medium (*upādhiḥ*). *Upādhiḥ* creates an error in the mind. *Agnitattvam* survives even after the log of wood is destroyed. Another example: when the wick is removed, *agni* changes from the shaped to shapeless because of loss of the *upādhi*, the wick. *Agni* itself survives.

Similarly, one Ātmā pervades every being (*sthūla-sūkṣma-sārīram*), but we see plurality (*punyatmā, pāpātmā* etc.) in the physical bodies because of our ignorance. The ignorant people say that the fire is localized in the log, while the wise say that fire is everywhere, but manifests in the log. Similarly, the ignorant say that Ātmā is limited to the body while the wise say that Ātmā is all-pervading and manifests in a body.

Lord Yama also says that the fire is beyond the log of wood also (he uses the word *bahiḥ ca* – also outside) The fire beyond the log is not visible. Similarly, the Consciousness also exists outside the body but it is experiencable (as sentiency) only in the body.

We tend to mistakenly equate non-visibility to non-existent. Non-visibility is not the proof of non-existence.

१० वायुर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टः, रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा, रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥

10 vāyuryathaikō bhuvanaṁ praviṣṭaḥ, rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpō babhūva ।
Ēkastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā, rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpō bahiṣca ॥

एकः सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा – **ēkaḥ sarvabhūtāntarātmā** - The one Ātmā which is in all beings (assumes) प्रतिरूपः – **pratirūpaḥ** - various forms in keeping with रूपं रूपम् – **rūpaṁ rūpam** - every form (of being) तथा यथा – **tathā yathā** - just as एकः वायुः – **ēkaḥ vāyuḥ** - one air-element, प्रविष्टः भुवनम् – **praviṣṭaḥ bhuvanam** - which is in the universe, बभूव – **babhūva** - assumes प्रतिरूपः – **pratirūpaḥ** - various forms in keeping with रूपं रूपम् **rūpaṁ rūpam** - every form (of object). बहिः च – **bahiḥ ca** - (It is) outside also.

The one Ātmā which is in all beings (assumes) various forms in keeping with every form (of being) just as one air-element, which is in the universe, assumes various forms in keeping with every form (of object). (It is) outside also.

This verse is almost identical the previous verse: except for the first line, all the other lines are identical (replication). In the first line, the word Agniis replaced by Vāyu.

Everything explained about Agni applies to Vāyu. The manifested Vāyu in every living being is called *prāṇaḥ*. Vāyu is also outside the body, but unmanifested. We make the same errors related to the plurality of *prāṇaḥ* as we make with *agni*. Lord Yama says that we make the same mistake with Ātmā also.

११ सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य चक्षुः, न लिप्यते चाक्षुषैर्बाह्यदोषैः ।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा, न लिप्यते लोकदुःखेन बाह्यः ॥

11 sūryō yathā sarvalōkasya cakṣuḥ, na lipyatē cākṣuṣairbāhyadōṣaiḥ ।
Ēkastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā, na lipyatē lōkaduḥkhēna bāhyaḥ ॥

बाह्यः – **bāhyaḥ** - Being transcendental, एकः सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा – **ēkaḥ sarvabhūtāntarātmā** - the one Ātmā which is in all beings न लिप्यते – **na lipyate** - is not affected लोकदुःखेन –

lokaduḥkhēna - by the sorrows of the world **तथा यथा** – **tathā yathā** - just as **सूर्यः** – **sūryaḥ** - the sun, **चक्षुः सर्वलोकस्य** – **caḥṣuḥ sarvalōkasya** - the eye of the entire world, **न लिप्यते** - **na lipyatē** - is not affected **चाक्षुषैः** – **cāḥṣuṣaiḥ** - by the perceptual **बाह्यदोषैः** – **bāhyadoṣaiḥ** - (and) external impurities.

Being transcendental, the one Ātmā which is in all beings is not affected by the sorrows of the world just as the sun, the eye of the entire world is not affected by the perceptual (and) external impurities.

With the examples of Agni and Vāyu in the previous two verses, Lord Yama has established that Ātmā is one and all-pervading (*ekaḥ* and *sarvagataḥ*). Now through the example in this verse, Lord Yama shows that the all-pervading Ātmā cannot be polluted by anything in the creation. When there is a fragrance in room, the all-pervading Vāyu also becomes fragrant because of the association. The fragrant Vāyu travels also. Association causes pollution. We may therefore conclude that Ātmā also gets polluted by its association with the body. Atma is *asaṅgaḥ* – it does not take the positive or negative traits of an individual. To illustrate this, Lord Yama is using the example of sunlight.

The sun spreads light all over the earth, but does not acquire the properties of any of the objects that it illumines. The light shining on a dusty book does not acquire the dust. Light intimately pervades water, but does not get wet by it. Similarly, sentiency (*caitanyaṃ*) spreads over the body and mind which are full of impurities, but *Ātma-caitanyaṃ* does not acquire these properties. [Krishna borrows this in verse 13.15 of the Bhagavad Gītā].

Lord Yama explains as following in this verse:

The sun is the eye of the entire world because it illumines the objects and make them known. The reference here is to the sunlight and not the solar disc that has a form located at a distance. The solar light that pervades the earth has no form.

It is one and is not tainted by the internal and external impurities. The internal impurities are invisible. Śaṅkarācārya defines these internal impurities are those *pāpas* acquired through sensory abuse. For example, if you see something that is prohibited, you acquire *pāpa*. The external impurities are visible – dirt, dust etc.

Similarly, one *Ātma-caitanyam* that is present in all the living beings is intimately associated with the bodies (*sthūla* and *sūkṣma*), but it is not affected (tainted) by their sorrows (impurities). This is because *Ātma* is unattached (*asaṅgaḥ*). Lord Yama uses the word *bāhyaḥ* to imply that *Ātmā* is above the bodies. It is not physically above; it just means that *Ātmā* transcends the impurities even though it pervades them.

The screen in the movie is in and through every character in the movie, but the screen is above the characters because it is not affected by rain or fire in the movie.

१२ एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा, एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति ।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीराः, तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम्॥

**12 ēko vaśī sarvabhūtāntarātmā, ekaṁ rūpaṁ bahudhā yaḥ karōti |
tamātmasthaṁ yē'nupaśyanti dhīrāḥ, tēṣāṁ sukhaṁ śāśvataṁ nētarēṣām ||**

एकः – **ēkaḥ** - The non-dual सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा – **sarvabhūtāntarātmā** - *Ātmā* which is in all beings वशी – **vaśī** - is the inner controller (of all). एकं रूपम् – **ekaṁ rūpaṁ** - (Remaining in) one form, यः करोति – **yaḥ karōti** - it transforms बहुधा – **bahudhā** - (itself) into manifold forms. धीराः – **dhīrāḥ** - (They are) in the discriminative ones ये अनुपश्यन्ति – **yē anupaśyanti** - who see तम् – **tam** - that (*Ātmā*) आत्मस्थम् – **ātmastham** - dwelling in the body. तेषाम् – **tēṣām** - They enjoy शाश्वतं सुखम् – **śāśvataṁ sukham** - lasting happiness; न इतरेषाम् – **na itarēṣām** - not the others.

The non-dual Ātmā which is in all beings is the inner controller (of all). (Remaining in) one form, it transforms (itself) into manifold forms. (They are) in the discriminative ones who see that (Ātmā) dwelling in the body. They enjoy lasting happiness; not the others.

Another important and complete mantra. The first two lines describe *Paramātmā*, the third line describes the *jīvātma-paramātmā-aikyam*, and the fourth line gives the benefit of knowing this fact.

Brahman is one without the second. Ātmā resident in every being is the controller of all beings. In this context, controller (*vaśī*) means that Ātmā is independent (*svatantraḥ*). Consciousness is an independent entity and does not depend on matter for existence. It requires matter for manifestation, but not for existence. However, matter depends upon Consciousness for existence.

As we have seen in verses 9, 10 and 11, Ātmā is the inner essence of every living being. It is like the invisible thread through the beads of a necklace. The bodies are the beads (some of them are emeralds, sapphires and some are fake). Krishna makes this analogy in verse 7.7 in the Bhagavad Gītā.

Remaining in its own changeless, non-dual and indivisible nature, Ātmā appears plural because of many bodies. The waker is one, but seemingly divides into many for dream transactions. Even during the dream transactions, the waker is one; when he wakes up, he continues his non-dual nature (waker).

Ātmā that resides within your own body is the experiencer of the body. Don't search for it – you will find everything other than Ātmā because searcher is the searched. The discriminative seekers (*sādhana-catuṣṭaya-sampannāḥ*) recognize this fact. They know: "I am Brahman – *Paramātmā* is neither inside nor outside me – it is me". These have broken the objectification orientation with the help of *guru-śāstra-upadeśa* (the meaning *anu* in this verse). A prepared intellect is not sufficient; it should be assisted by *guru-śāstra-upadeśa*.

With this knowledge that "I am the limitless Consciousness", one loses the fear of mortality and the sense of limitation. He attains fulfillment (*pūrṇatva darśanam*). This *pūrṇatvam* remains forever because it is born out of wisdom. He is a *jīvanmukta* – he is

full regardless of what experiences come and go. In verse 2.70 of the Bhagavad Gītā, Krishna compares this person to the ocean which remains full regardless of whether the rivers flow into it.

Lord Yama says that this is the only method to attain *mokṣa*. The people who pursue other means do not get *pūrṇatvam*. You should not renounce the other *sādhana*s but should not get stuck; you must graduate to knowledge.

१३ नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानाम्,
एको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान् ।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन् धीराः,
तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम् ॥

13 *nityō'nityānām cētaṇāścētanānām,*
ēkō bahūnām yō vidadhāti kāmān |
tamātmastham yē'nupaśyanti dhīrah,
tēṣām śāntiḥ śāśvatī nētarēṣām ||

नित्यः – *nityaḥ* - (This Ātmā) is permanent अनित्यानाम् – *anityānām* - among the impermanent. चेतनः चेतनानाम् – *cētaṇaḥ cētanānām* - It is the consciousness in the conscious beings. यः एकः – *yaḥ ekaḥ* - This nondual (Ātmā) विदधाति कामान् – *vidadhāti kāmān* - fulfills the desires बहूनाम् – *bahūnām* - of all. धीराः – *dhīrah* - (They are) the discriminative ones ये अनुपश्यन्ति – *yē anupaśyanti* - who see तम् – *tam* - that (Ātmā) आत्मस्थम् – *ātmastham* - dwelling in the body. तेषाम् – *tēṣām* - They enjoy शाश्वती शान्तिः – *śāśvatī śāntiḥ* - lasting peace; न इतरेषाम् – *na itarēṣām* - not the others.

(This Ātmā) is permanent among the impermanent. It is the consciousness in the conscious beings. This nondual (Ātmā) fulfills the desires of all. (They are) the discriminative ones who see that (Ātmā) dwelling in the body. They enjoy lasting peace; not the others.

This verse gives a parallel idea that is almost the same as the previous verse. The first two lines give the nature of the *Paramātmā*. The third line describes *aikyam* and the last line describes the *phalam*.

Ātmā is the only permanent amidst all the impermanent things. Wherever the impermanent (*anitya-vastu*) is present, the permanent (*nitya-vastu*) is present as well. Otherwise, there will be a misunderstanding that the permanent is far away from this impermanent world and we will go in vain search of Brahman. The immortal *Paramātmā* is resident as the Consciousness in every inch of this mortal body.

This Consciousness is one non-dual principle. *Paramātmā*, the Consciousness with the power of *māyā* is *Īśvara*. What does *Īśvara* do? He fulfills the various desires of all the people (Lord Yama now switches to *karma kāṇḍa*). He fulfills them in keeping with their effort [Śaṅkarācārya: *karma anurūpam kāmān vidadhāti*].

The third line is the same as the previous verse. The discriminative seeker breaks the objectification orientation with the knowledge acquired through *guru-śāstra-upadeśa*. He then attains permanent peace and fulfillment.

Self-knowledge (*Ātmajñānam*) is the only method to attain this permanent peace; there is no other way. In the other paths, you will get a piece of peace which will go to pieces in a short period!

Verses 12 and 13 are *mahāvākya mantras*.

१४ तदेतदिति मन्यन्ते, अनिर्देश्यं परमं सुखम् ।
कथं नु तद्विजानीयां, किमु भाति विभाति वा ॥

**14 tadētaditi manyantē, anirdēśyaṁ paramaṁ sukham ।
kathaṁ nu tadvijānīyāṁ kimu bhāti vibhāti vā ॥**

तद् एतत् – **tad ētat** - "That is this" – इति – **iti** - thus मन्यन्ते – **manyantē** - they know अनिर्देश्यं परमं सुखम् – **anirdēśyaṃ paramaṃ sukham** - the indefinable supreme ānanda. कथं नु – **katham nu** - How indeed विजानीयां तत् – **vijānīyāṃ tat** - can I know that? किं उभाति – **kiṃ ubhāti** - Does it shine by itself? विभाति वा – **vibhāti vā** - Does it shine distinctly or (not)?

"That is this" – thus they know the indefinable supreme ānanda. How indeed can I know that? Does it shine by itself? Does it shine distinctly or (not)?

This verse is in the form of a question. We can assume that it was asked by Naciketas. Or, Lord Yama himself is raising this question and answering it himself.

Brahmānanda (Ātmānanda) is the highest *ānanda* possible. This *ānanda* is indescribable (*anirdēśyam*). However, the wise people refer to it not as a remote concept, but as "this" that is intimately available to them here and now. How can I make that *ānanda* available to me? How can I get this *aparokṣa jñānam*? Is it available and distinctly perceptible or not?

How to get *Brahmānanda*? Is it available easily or with difficulty?

१५ न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं,
नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं,
तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥

**15 na tatra sūryō bhāti na candratāraṅkaṃ,
nēmā vidyutō bhānti kutō'yamagniḥ ।
tamēva bhāntamanubhāti sarvaṃ,
tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṃ vibhāti ॥**

सूर्यः न भाति – *sūryaḥ na bhāti* - The sun does not illuminate तत्र – *tatra* - that (Ātmā). चन्द्रतारकं न – *candratāraṅkaṃ na* - The moon and the stars do not (illumine). इमाः विद्युतः – *imāḥ vidyutaḥ* - These flashes of lightening (also) न भान्ति – *na bhānti* - do not

illumine. कुतः – kutaḥ - How can अयं अग्निः – ayam agniḥ - this fire (illumine)? सर्वं अनुभाति – sarvaṁ anubhāti - Everything shines after तम् एव – tam ēva - that (Ātmā) alone भान्तम् – bhāntam - which is self-effulgent. तस्य भासा – tasya bhāsā - By its light सर्वम् इदम् – sarvam idam - all this विभाति – vibhāti - shines.

The sun does not illuminate that (Ātmā). The moon and the stars do not (illumine). These flashes of lightning (also) do not illumine. How can this fire (illumine)? Everything shines after that (Ātmā) alone which is self-effulgent. By its light all this shines.

This verse occurs in Mundaka Upanisad also (2.2.11 or 2.2.10 in some books). It is an important mantra that gives a relevant answer to Naciketas' question. The question was how to experience *Brahmānanda*? Lord Yama answers that *Brahmānanda* is never an object of experience. The moment you reduce *Brahmānanda* to a specific form of an ordinary or extraordinary experience, you subject it to the limits of time, space and condition. All experiential pleasures come under *viṣayānanda* (sense pleasures). Lord Yama answers that *Brahmānanda* is not a time bound experience; it is the Consciousness itself. Since *Brahmānanda* is the Consciousness, this *ānanda* should be translated as *anantaḥ* - the limitless Brahman. *Anantam Brahman* is not experienced and therefore, it is never subjected to arrival and departure; it is ever present.

How should one accomplish *Brahmānanda*? It can be only accomplished through wisdom. What type of wisdom? It is the wisdom that I am that *Brahmānanda*, the Consciousness [*caitanyam aham - caitanya rūpa ahameva brahma ānandaḥ*]. It exists (I exist) before and during the arrival of an experience, and after its departure. *Brahmananda* is the substratum of all the experiences. When is *Brahmānanda* available? The answer to this is the counter question: when is it not available? Verse 2.4 of Kenopaniṣad says that Brahman is self-evident in every experience. Instead of defining *Brahmānanda*, Lord Yama defines the Consciousness itself:

The sunlight does not illumine the Consciousness. In fact, it is the other way; the latter makes the former known. Similarly, the moonlight, the stars and the flashes of

lightening do not illumine the Consciousness. It is the other way around. Then how can an ordinary flame illumine it? The Consciousness cannot be known by any instrument of knowledge.

If it cannot be known, how do we know that Consciousness exists? Lord Yama says that all the experiences are possible only because of Consciousness. It proves everything, but it does not require any proof. For example, a camera is never in the picture, but we do not require the proof of the existence of the camera. The picture is possible only because of the camera.

Everything in the creation is known only because of the self-evident, self-revealing, self-proven Consciousness.

You are *ānanda*. You need not look for *ānanda*. You are *ananta*, the limitless. The whole creation is resting in you. Everything belongs to you.

इति काठकोपनिषदि द्वितीयाध्याये द्वितीया वल्ली ॥

Thus (ends) the second section of Second Chapter

ॐ

तृतीयावल्ली

2.4. THIRD SECTION

INTRODUCTION

This is the final section of the Upaniṣad in which Lord Yama focuses on Brahma Vidyā, the preparatory *sādhanas* (*brahmavidyā sādhanāni*) and the benefits (*brahmavidyā phalam*). These have been discussed before; he is repeating them for concluding the Upaniṣad (summary). In the first three verses, he describes the nature of Brahman (*Brahmasvarūpam*). Krishna has borrowed from this verse for verse 15.1 of the Bhagavad Gītā. In this mantra, Lord Yama is comparing the universe to a peepal tree (*aśvattha*). Brahman is presented as the root of the tree (*jagad-ādihāraḥ* or *jagad-kāraṇam*). Śāṅkarācārya writes an elaborate commentary showing the common features of the universe and the *aśvattha* tree. He shows that this tree example (*vrkṣa-dṛṣṭānta*) is ideal for comparison with *saṁsāra*. Śāṅkarācārya mentions many common features of which nine are discussed here:

- *Mahatvam* – vastness – *aśvattha* tree is huge with a vast spread just as the universe is vast whose limits we cannot even imagine (and the universe keeps expanding).
- *Ādi-anta-rahitatvam* – without the beginning or the end – We cannot determine the beginning of the universe – it is eternal. Even during *pralayaṁ*, the universe does not get destroyed; it goes into its potential form. It then again manifests and thus, the cycle continues eternally. Similarly, the beginning of the tree is also impossible to determine because of the eternal seed-tree cycle – we cannot say which came first. We also cannot determine their end also because the cycle eternally continues. Verse 15.3 of the Bhagavad Gītā also says that there is no beginning or the end of the tree.
- *Anirvacanīyatvam* – inexplicable –The tree is the cause of the next seed while it is the effect of the previous seed. Therefore, one cannot say whether the seed or the tree is

a cause or an effect. The creation came into being because of our karma (*puṇya-pāpa*). The very purpose of this creation is to exhaust our *puṇya-pāpa* which came into existence because of karma in the previous creation [karma-karmaphalam cycle]. Did karma come from *janma* or vice versa? We cannot trace which is the cause and which is the effect. Similarly, we are unable to understand fate and freewill because they are mutually cause and effect. Nothing is clearly definable. Scientifically also, as we go deeper, the universe is becoming more and more vague and inexplicable.

- *Mūlavatavam* – they both have support - There is an invisible root that is nourishing the tree. It is invisible and therefore is inferred. Similarly, there is a substratum *Īśvara* that provides support to the universe (*viśvādhāram gaganasadṛśam*). While the tree is available to the sense organs, the root is not. (The tree is *indriya-gocaraḥ* and the root is *indriya agocaraḥ*). Similarly, the world is perceptible while Brahman or *Īśvara* is imperceptible by the sense organs.
- *Śākāvatvam* - Both have widely spreading branches - upper, middle or lower ones. Similarly, the universe also has layers of 14 worlds (*lokas*). The higher *lokas* (*ūrdhva lokas*) such as *bhuvah*, *suvah*, *mahaḥ*, *janah*, *tapaḥ* and *satya* are comparable to the upper branches. The middle branch is *bhūloka*. Then we have the lower *lokas* (*atala*, *vitāla*, *sutāla*, *rasātāla*, *mahātāla*, *talātāla* and *pātāla*).
- *Phalavatvam* – The tree meets its obligation by producing fruits. The fruits may be of three types – sweet, bitter or neutral. The universe also gives three phalams – pleasure, pain and their mixture (*sukham*, *duhkham* and *miśra-phalam*).
- *Pakṣi-āśrayatvam* -Because of the availability of fruits, the birds come, build nests and reside in the branches of the trees. Therefore, the tree becomes the support for the birds (*pakṣi-āśrayaḥ*). It is also noisy because of the birds – both good and bad. The universe, similarly gives support to the *jīvātmas* in 14 *lokas* which is also noisy. Bhartṛhari: *One house has celebratory sound and another has the wail of grieving mother. One house has a day full of laughter and another day, it is full of wailing.*
- *Calanavatvam* - Even though the *aśvattha* tree is very big, it is moved by the powerful wind. In the same way, the *saṁsāra vṛkṣa* is moved or swayed by the *prārabdha karma*. Every individual is moving constantly. The movement is caused by

the combination of my karma and of the others. The total karma (*samaṣṭi karma*) sways the universe.

- *Chedyatvam* - Even though *aśvattha* वृक्षा appears to be without the beginning or the end (*anādi-ananta*), it can be uprooted. It is possible to permanently destroy the tree gradually by first cutting off the branches, then the trunk and then the root. In the same way, *samsāra* can be gradually destroyed by the sword of *jñāna*.

१ ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽवाक्शाखः, एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः ।
तदेव शुक्रं तद् ब्रह्म, तदेवामृतमुच्यते ।
तस्मिँल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे, तद् नात्येति कश्चन । एतद्वै तत् ॥

1 *ūrdhvamūlō'vāksākhah, eṣō'śvatthah sanātanaḥ* ।
Tadēva śukraṁ tad brahma, tadēvāmṛtamucyate ।
tasminँllōkāḥ śritāḥ sarvē, tadu nātyēti kaścana । *ētadvai tat* ॥

एषः – *eṣah* - This (universe) सनातनः अश्वत्थः – *sanātanaḥ aśvatthah* - is (like) an eternal fig tree, ऊर्ध्वमूलः – *ūrdhva mūlah* - whose root is above अवाक्शाखः – *avāksākhah* - (and) whose branches are below. तद् एव शुक्रम् – *tad ēva śukram* - The (root) is pure (consciousness). तद् अमृतम् – *tad amṛtam* - That is immortal. तद् एव उच्यते – *tad ēva ucyatē* - That is indeed said to be ब्रह्म – *brahma* - Brahman. सर्वे लोकाः – *sarvē lōkāḥ* - All the worlds श्रिताः – *śritāḥ* - are based तस्मिन् – *tasmin* - on that. उ – *u* - Verily, न कश्चन – *na kaścana* - nothing अत्येति – *atyēti* - exceeds तत् – *tat* - that. एतद् वै – *ētad vai* - This is indeed तत् – *tat* - that.

This (universe) is (like) an eternal fig tree, whose root is above (and) whose branches are below. The (root) is pure (consciousness). That is immortal. That is indeed said to be Brahman. All the worlds are based on that. Verily, nothing exceeds that. This is indeed that.

Brahman is the support (*ādhāra*) for this huge samsara tree – that is how the teaching is presented. Lord Yama describes the nature of Brahman (*Brahmasvarūpam*) in this verse.

- This universe is like the *aśvattha* tree
- It is eternal (*sanātanaḥ*). Death is not the end of the tree; its life continues after that. Similarly, *pralayam* is not the end of the world; it is recreated.
- Brahman is the support for the universe just as the root (*ūrdhvamūlam*) is the support for the tree. The literal meaning of *ūrdhvam* is up or above. We should take the secondary meaning of *ūrdhvam* as qualitatively superior. Brahman is not up or down because it is all-pervading. The word high or above is used *durvijñeyatvam* which something that is difficult to understand (today's class went above my head). Just as the nourishing root in the tree, Brahman is also invisible.
- This *samsāra vṛkṣa* has many branches. The word *avāk* literally means lower. This means the branches (creation) are lower in quality than the root (Brahman). Why is the creation inferior to Brahman? Brahman is eternal while the creation is subject to arrival and departure. Brahman is *satyam* while the creation is *mithyā*; Brahman is *kāraṇam* while the universe is *kāryam*. (We respect the parents because they are our cause - *kāraṇam*). In short, the tree is endowed with perishable branches just as the universe is with the *lokas*.
- That Brahman is pure (*śukram*) and that is why it is superior. The creation is full of impurities (*pāpa karma, puṇya karma* etc.), but Brahman is not affected by any of these. The dream world does not afflict the *ādhāra*, the waker.
- That Brahman alone is immortal. By using the word *eva*, Lord Yama indicates that everything else is mortal. Don't hold onto the universe that is mortal; hold on to the root (Brahman) and then you will be safe. As for the people in the world, you can love them, help them, entertain them etc., but do not depend on them.
- That Brahman is the support of all the 14 lokas.
- Nothing can exist outside Brahman. No part of the dream can exist outside the waker. The existence of any object in the dream is given by the waker. Similarly, the existence of any object is borrowed from Brahman only.

Naciketas may wonder why Lord Yama is describing *Brahmasvarūpam*, when he asked for *Ātmasvarūpam*. Lord Yama ends this verse with a statement (*etadvai tat*) that the nature of Brahman is your own nature. Both *sat* and *cit* are this Brahman (*ayam ātmā brahma*).

२ यदिदं किञ्च जगत्सर्वं, प्राण एजति निःसृतम् ।
महद्भयं वज्रमुद्यतं, य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

2 **yadidaṁ kiñca jagatsarvaṁ, prāṇa ējati niḥsṛtam ।
mahadbhayaṁ vajramudyataṁ, ya ētadviduramṛtāstē bhavanti ॥**

इदं सर्वं जगत् – **idaṁ sarvaṁ jagat** - This entire universe **यत् किञ्च – yat kiñca** - whatever (it consists of), **निःसृतम् – niḥsṛtam** - emerges **एजति – ējati** - (and) moves **प्राणे – prāṇe** - because of Brahman. **महद् भयम् – mahad bhayam** - It is a great terror (like a person) **उद्यतं वज्रम् – udyataṁ vajram** - with uplifted thunderbolt. **ते ये विदुः – te ye viduḥ** - Those who know **एतत् – ētat** - this **भवन्ति – bhavanti** - become **अमृताः – amṛtāḥ** - immortal.

This entire universe whatever (it consists of), emerges (and) moves because of Brahman. It is a great terror (like a person) with uplifted thunderbolt. Those who know this become immortal.

The same idea from the previous verse is further clarified. Brahman is the intelligent (*nimitta*) as well as the material (*upādāna*) cause (*kāraṇa*) of this universe.

This whole universe, with everything in it, without exception, emerges only in the presence of Brahman just as the dream world only emerges from the waker. In this context, *prāṇa* should be interpreted as Brahman. It functions only because of Brahman. Brahman, therefore, is the creator as well as the maintainer of this universe.

Brahman, the maintainer of order in this universe is described as the source of fear with a weapon in hand. It is because of Him, the world is functioning in order. If the order is disturbed in any way, there will be calamity (if the sun moves closer or further away, we will be scorched or frozen). The laws must be maintained strictly for the universe to function in perfection and harmony. *Īśvara* (Brahman), is the strict enforcer of these laws.

Every suffering we get is the punishment we receive for violating one law or the other. The moment you violate the health law, sickness is the punishment. Every dharma violation is the cause of our sorrow.

Most of us follow the laws out of fear. That's why we have the expression: God fearing person.

The people who know Brahman (*Īśvara*) as the intelligent and material cause of this universe and its maintainer (*śṛṣṭi-sthiti-laya-kāraṇam*) will attain immortality (*jīvanmukti*).

We should add *etadvai tat*: That is the Brahman that Naciketas wanted to know in the third boon.

३ भयादस्याग्निस्तपति, भयात्तपति सूर्यः ।
भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च, मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥

3 bhayādasyāgnistapati, bhayāttapati sūryaḥ ।
bhayādindraśca vāyuśca, mṛtyurdhāvati pañcamaḥ ॥

अग्निः तपति – **agniḥ tapati** - Fire burns भयाद् अस्य – **bhayād asya** - out of fear of this (Brahman). सूर्यः तपति – **sūryaḥ tapati** - The sun shines भयात् – **bhayāt** - out of fear. इन्द्रः च वायुः – **indraḥ ca vāyuḥ** - Indra and Vāyu (function) भयात् – **bhayāt** - out of fear च मृत्युः – **ca mṛtyuḥ** - and Yama, पञ्चमः – **pañcamaḥ** - the fifth one, धावति – **dhāvati** - runs (out of fear).

Fire burns out of fear of this (Brahman). The sun shines out of fear. Indra and Vāyu function out of fear and Yama, the fifth one, runs (out of fear).

In this verse, Lord Yama explains the third line of the previous verse that Brahman is the source of fear (*mahadbhayam vajramudyatam*). All the *devatās* that govern the natural forces are functioning perfectly because of the fear of Brahman (*Īśvara*):

The fire burns, the sun shines, Indra brings rain and Vāyu assists Indra all because of fear of Brahman. None of this is an accident because the probability of everything happening by accident is zero. Brahman, the invisible intelligence is maintaining these.

Lord Yama also says that he, the fifth *devata* also runs out of fear of *Īśvara*. Everyone is afraid of Lord Yama who himself is afraid of *Īśvara*. To get protection from Yama, go to *Īśvara*. No one will get immortality by seeking the wordly things. The only escape from mortality is through *Īśvara-aikyam*, which is symbolized by the story of Mārkaṇḍeya who embraced Śivaliṅga when chased by Yama. It is not a physical embrace, but it is in the form of *aham brahma asmi*.

In short, Brahman (*Īśvara*) is the intelligent cause (*nimitta kāraṇam*) of this universe.

४ इह चेदशकद् बोद्धुं, प्राक्शरीरस्य विस्रसः ।
ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु, शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥

4 *iha cēdaśakad bōddhum, prākśarīrasya visrasaḥ |
tataḥ sargēṣu lōkēṣu, śarīratvāya kalpatē ||*

चेत् – *cēt* - If अशकद् बोद्धुम् – *aśakad bōddhum* - one manages to know (Brahman) इह – *iha* - here प्राग् विस्रसः – *prāg visrasaḥ* - before the fall शरीरस्य – *śarīrasya* - of the body, (then, one is liberated). ततः – *tataḥ* - Else, कल्पते – *kalpatē* - one becomes fit for शरीरत्वाय – *śarīratvāya* - taking another body लोकेषु – *lōkēṣu* in the world सर्गेषु – *sargēṣu* - of creatures.

If one manages to know (Brahman) here before the fall of the body, (then, one is liberated). Else, one becomes fit for taking another body in the world of creatures.

Lord Yama discussed *Brahmasvarūpam* in the first three verses. Now he discusses the favorable factors (conditions) required for *brahmajñāna*. The primary pre-requisite for *brahmajñāna* is human birth. Per the *śāstras*, there are 8.4 million species of living beings. To get a human birth is rare. [Tamil: இப்பிறவி தப்பினால் எப்பிறவி

வாய்க்குமே]. We must understand the importance of human birth and utilize it properly. For crossing the *saṁsāra*, we need a special boat, the human body. The cost of this expensive boat is *puṇya*. This boat is not permanent and therefore, we should cross before it is lost.

If a person knows this truth in this human birth, he will be released from *saṁsāra* before he dies. In other words, he will be a *jīvanmukta*. If he squanders this opportunity, he becomes fit only to take another *janma*. Lord Yama does not say that he will acquire a human body. It can be any body in any of the 14 lokas created by the Lord.

Lord Yama scares us out of compassion!

५ यथादर्शे तथात्मनि, यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके ।
यथाप्सु परीव ददृशे तथा गन्धर्वलोके, छायातपयोरिव ब्रह्मलोके ॥

5 **yathādarśē tathātmani, yathā svapnē tathā pitṛlōkē |**
yathāpsu parīva dadṛśē tathā gandharvalōkē, chāyātapayōriva brahmalōkē ||

परिदृशे – **paridadṛśē** - One sees (the Ātmā as follows -) यथा आदर्शे – **yathā ādarśē** - as in a mirror, तथा आत्मनि – **tathā ātmani** - so in the (human) intellect; यथा स्वप्ने- **yathā svapnē** - as in a dream, तथा पितृलोके – **tathā pitṛlōkē** - so in pitṛloka; यथा अप्सु इव- **yathā apsu iva** - as in waters, तथा गन्धर्वलोके – **tathā gandharvalōkē** - so in gandharvaloka; इव छायातपयोः – **iva chāyātapayōḥ** - like light and shade ब्रह्मलोके – **brahmalōkē** - in brahmaloka.

One sees (the Ātmā as follows -) as in a mirror, so in the (human) intellect; as in a dream, so in pitṛloka; as in waters, so in gandharvaloka; like light and shade in brahmaloka.

Lord Yama explains whether this knowledge can be acquired in any *loka* other than *manuṣya loka* (Earth). He accepts that this knowledge can be acquired in the other *lokas*

also. Even with that, he says that the knowledge acquired in *manuṣya loka* is clearer than in the other *lokas*. Therefore, the human birth is the best for self-knowledge.

The knowledge gained with the human intellect (Ātmā in this context) is crystal clear like seeing the face in a clear mirror.

It is possible to acquire the knowledge in *pitṛ loka* also, but it will not be as clear. It will be vague like a dream where things are fleeting and quickly changing. Dream is based on thoughts which constantly change and so it will be vague. That is why we often do not remember the dream.

It is also possible to acquire knowledge in *Gandharva loka*, the world of arts, dance, music and enjoyment. Here also, the acquired knowledge will be vague like seeing the face in water. It is not as clear as in the mirror. If the water is disturbed by the wind, reflection will be disturbed also.

Finally, the knowledge acquired in *Brahmaloka* is also very clear; it is as distinct as darkness and light. Chapter 8 of the Bhagavad Gītā extensively discusses this as *kramamukti*.

Of these four lokas, *pitṛ* and *Gandharva* lokas can be ruled out because the knowledge acquired will be unclear. Although the knowledge is crystal clear, *Brahmaloka* may not be a viable option. It is extremely difficult to attain *Brahmaloka* because it requires intense karma and *upāsana* throughout the life and even at the time of death. Chapter 8 of the Bhagavad Gītā discusses in detail all the yogas that the seeker must perform at the time of death.

Manuṣya janma is the best option for self-knowledge. If you are reading this, you already have it. Do not postpone; make full use of this *janma*. This is the essence of this verse.

६ इन्द्रियाणां पृथग्भावम्, उदयास्तमयो च यत् ।
पृथगुत्पद्यमानानां, मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥

6 **indriyāṇām pṛthagbhāvam, udayāstamayō ca yat ।**
pṛthagutpadyamānānām, matvā dhīrō na śōcati ॥

मत्वा – **matvā** - Knowing यत् पृथग्भावम् – **yat pṛthagbhāvam** - the distinction इन्द्रियाणाम् – **indriyāṇām** - of the sense organs उत्पद्यमानानां पृथक् – **utpadyamānānām pṛthak** - which originate separately च उदयास्तमयो – **ca udayāstamayō** - and (knowing their) rise and fall, धीरः – **dhīrah** - the discriminative one न शोचति – **na śōcati** - does not grieve.

Knowing the distinction of the sense organs which originate separately and (knowing their) rise and fall, the discriminative one does not grieve.

The second value, *Ātma-anātma-viveka* is highlighted in this verse. Only when we can discriminate between *Ātmā* and *anātma*, the knowledge of *aham brahmāsmi* is possible. When the word I (*aham*) is used, one can interpret it as any aspect of personality – *sthūla, sūkṣma, kāraṇa śarīram* or *Ātmā*. When I say, I am very old, I am referring to the physical body. Since the *sūkṣma śarīram* has been existent since the beginning of time, there is no question of old or young. When a student says *aham brahmāsmi* without hesitation or doubt, he refers to *Ātmā*. When the person identifies with the B-M complex, his worries overpower the identification with *Ātmā*. One should learn to withdraw from the physical and emotional aspects of personality. The process of withdrawing from *anātma* and identifying with *Ātmā* is technically called *śodhanam*.

By studying the three states of experience (*avasthātrayam*), I can conclude that the sense organs are not my nature, but are just temporary instruments that I use for transactions (like a pair of eyeglasses or hearing aid). If I take off my glasses, I am unable to see objects, but I continue to exist. The transactions may end, but the transactor continues to exist. Because the instrument is so close and intimate, I mistakenly identify them as me. When asked to list the things in front of me, I will list everything except my eyeglasses because they are assumed to be a part of the subject. The body is the most

intimate instrument and therefore, it appears to be the subject. We know that body is an instrument because in the waking state (*jāgrata avasthā*), I use them, but in the deep sleep state (*suṣupti*), I disown it. The instruments, including the mind arise (*udaya*) and resolve (*astamaya*), but I am ever present as the witness. The instruments are not my intrinsic nature. They are separately born and gone. When a person goes blind, the eyes are gone, but he still exists.

Once this is understood, one loses the resistance to the identification with the limitless Brahman (*aham brahmāsmi*). Then he can comfortably claim that he is limitless. Such a discriminative person of sharp intellect never again grieves in life. Grief is because of the identification with the body. The body's mortality becomes my mortality. The thought that I am mortal is a source of discomfort. I can never accept that I am mortal because my nature is immortal. I cannot accept anything that is against my nature. When something external (unnatural) enters my organs, eyes or nose, it is naturally rejected through tears, sneeze etc. The struggle with mortality will go away only when I drop the identification with the mortal body. The problem is not with the mortality of the body because it is natural, but it is with the thought that I am mortal.

The knowledge of *aham brahmāsmi* gives me the ability to objectify my body, making separation easy to accept. How can I then complain that people are dying? I should complain that they are not dying!

७ इन्द्रियेभ्यः परम् मनः, मनसः सत्त्वमुत्तमम् ।
सत्त्वादधि महानात्मा, महतोऽव्यक्तमुत्तमम् ॥

**7 indriyēbhyaḥ param manaḥ, manasaḥ sattvamuttamam ।
sattvādadhi mahānātmā, mahatō'vyaktamuttamam ॥**

मनः – **manaḥ** - Mind परम् – **param** - is superior इन्द्रियेभ्यः – **indriyēbhyaḥ** - to the sense organs. सत्त्वम् उत्तमम् – **sattvam uttamam** - Intellect is superior मनसः – **manasaḥ** - to the mind. महान् आत्मा – **mahān ātmā** - Mahat अधि सत्त्वात् – **adhi sattvāt** - is superior to

the intellect. अव्यक्तम् – **avyaktam** - The unmanifest उत्तमम् – **uttamam** - is superior महतः – **mahataḥ** - to Mahat.

Mind is superior to the sense organs. Intellect is superior to the mind. Mahat is superior to the intellect. The unmanifest is superior to Mahat.

The same idea as verse 6 is repeated in verses 7 and 8. This identification with Ātmā is necessary for *brahmajñānam*. The anātmā comprises of five layers called *pañcakośa*. We must peel each layer: withdraw from each layer at a time:

annamaya → prāṇamaya → manomaya → vijñānamaya → ānandamaya → Ātmā.

This is called *pañcakośa viveka*. We have already discussed in verses 1.3.10 and 1.3.11. These two mantras are repeated in 2.3.7 and 2.3.8.

The process of sensitizing the mind is gradual. The mountaineers gradually go from base to base as they climb higher so that they get used to the rarified atmosphere. From the grossest state, the mind cannot comprehend the subtle Atma. Therefore, the withdrawal takes place one step at a time (*Arundati darśana* method). The principle behind this technique is that the controller is subtler and more powerful than the controlled. The steps in sequence are:

- Withdraw from the world and identify with the body. Then withdraw from the body and identify with the sense organs. This step is not explicitly mentioned in this verse, but implicitly understood.
- Withdraw from the sense organs and identify with the mind; the latter is subtler and more powerful and therefore controls the former
- The intellect is subtler than the mind. The mind represents the doubting faculty (*saṅkalpa-vikalpatmakam*). The intellect rationally analyzes and removes the doubt (*niścayatmakam*). Therefore, the intellect is stronger than the mind. *Vijñānamayakośa* is subtler than *manomayakośa*. The mantra does not explicitly say that we should withdraw from the mind, but we supply this in this context.

- From the individual intellect (*sattvam*), learn to identify with the total intellect (*mahatvam*). This process is also important because to ultimately claim that I am Brahman, in addition to being subtle, the mind must also expand. Brahman is both subtle and all-pervading. When I claim that I am a Tamilian, I am limited. I must learn to expand my identity to Indian, Asian, human and then to living being. Then remove the adjective "living" and claim that I am a being. Shift the identification to pure Existence. The adjectives belong to *anātmā*, the names and forms. When we come to that stage, we identify with the limitless. As a first step, expand the mind by identifying with *Hiraṇyagarbha*, the total intellect (*samaṣṭi buddhi*). This is done by understanding that the individual does not exist separate from total.
- *Avyaktam*, the total *kāraṇa śarīram* (*Īśvara*) is superior to the total *sūkṣma śarīram* (*Hiraṇyagarbha*). It is the subtlest in the material field. When Tattva Bodha is taught, most people do not understand *kāraṇa śarīram* because it is experienced in deep sleep. There is blankness in deep sleep. Blankness is not the absence of things; it is the creation in the potential form. [Zero is not nothingness; it represents the potential form]. From nothingness, nothing can come out. Blankness is a state where everything is undifferentiable – it is not nothing. The scientists call it singularity – it is beyond comprehension, but it is not nothing. The sleep state is the potential form of the individual. *Avyaktam* is the totality of this state (*samaṣṭi*) and therefore, learn to identify with the total.

The next mantra describes how to go to the next level.

८ अव्यक्तात्तु परः पुरुषः, व्यापकोऽलिङ्ग एव च ।
यं ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते जन्तुः, अमृतत्वं च गच्छति ॥

8 *avyaktāttu paraḥ puruṣaḥ, vyāpakō'liṅga ēva ca ।*
yaṁ jñātvā mucyate jantuḥ, amṛtatvaṁ ca gacchati ॥

पुरुषः तु – *puruṣaḥ tu* - Ātmā is indeed परः अव्यक्तात् – *paraḥ avyaktāt* - superior to the unmanifest. व्यापकः – *vyāpakaḥ* - It is all-pervasive एव च अलिङ्गः – *ēva ca aliṅgaḥ* - and attributeless. ज्ञात्वा यम् – *jñātvā yam* - On knowing that, जन्तुः – *jantuḥ* - the mortal

मुच्यते – *mucyatē* - is free च गच्छति – *ca gacchati* - and attains अमृतत्वम् – *amṛtatvam* - immortality.

Ātmā is indeed superior to the unmanifest. It is all-pervasive and attributeless. On knowing that, the mortal is free and attains immortality.

The blankness that we experience when we suspend all our activities (sensory, emotional and intellectual) is not nothingness, but the potential state of creation. This potentiality is the subtlest state of matter (*avyaktam*). Ātmā, the Consciousness is subtler than this blankness. You can reach up to blankness and objectify it, but Ātmā can never be objectified. The awareness of blankness is subtler than blankness. That awareness is Ātmā. I am experiencing blankness or nothingness means that there is nothing called nothingness because there is one who experiences nothingness. That I, the experiencer is the real I.

Ātmā is indeed superior to the unmanifest (*avyakta*). It is called *puruṣaḥ* in this verse because it is resident both in the body as well as outside. It is all-pervading. [Tamil: கடவுள் = கடந்தும்இருக்கிறார், உள்ளேயும்இருக்கிறார்).

Ātmā is all-pervading (*vyāpakah*) just as water pervades the ocean, wave, bubbles, spray etc. When the wave identifies with the water, it is birthless and deathless. Identify with the essential nature instead of the superficial nature.

Ātmā is without attributes (*aliṅgaḥ*). The attributes belong to the *pañcakośa* and not to me, the *nirguṇa caitnyam*.

The seeker who recognizes *puruṣaḥ* in all the *jantus* (living beings), is released from the notion of mortality. Lord Yama calls us *jantu* because we are mortal [*jāyate iti jantuḥ*]. So long as I identify with the body, I have a date of birth; I celebrate it every year and declare proudly that I am *jantu*!

I am released from the notion of mortality. I am not released from mortality because I was never mortal. I was immortal, I am immortal and I will ever be immortal. When the notion of mortality goes away, I own up to the true nature of immortality. When you remove the impurities, the gold shines. The shine is not an acquired property; it is natural to gold. Natural shine is obstructed by the impurity. Similarly, my natural immortality is obstructed by the notion of mortality.

Samsāra is the product of a false notion – therefore, we call it an intellectual problem. It is not a spiritual problem. It is an intellectual problem regarding my spirit – my higher nature. The intellectual problem should be solved intellectually. That is why insist upon scriptural study. Knowledge alone removes any false notion.

९ न सन्दृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य, न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
हृदा मनीषा मनसाभिव्लृप्तः, य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

9 **na sandṛśē tiṣṭhati rūpamasya, na cakṣuṣā paśyati kaścānainam ।
hṛdā manīṣā manasābhikṛptaḥ, ya ētadviduramṛtāstē bhavanti ॥**

रूपम् अस्य – **rūpam asya** - The nature of this (Ātmā) न तिष्ठति – **na tiṣṭhati** - does not fall सन्दृशे – **sandṛśē** - in the range of perception. न कश्चन – **na kaścāna** - No one sees this चक्षुषा – **cakṣuṣā** - with the eye. अभिव्लृप्तः – **abhikṛptaḥ** - It is revealed मनसा – **manasā** - by the insight मनीषा – **manīṣā** - (gained) through the intellect हृदा – **hṛdā** - which resides in the heart. ते ये विदुः – **tē yē viduḥ** - Those who know एतत् – **ētat** - this भवन्ति अमृताः – **bhavanti amṛtāḥ** - become immortal.

The nature of this (Ātmā) does not fall in the range of perception. No one sees this with the eye. It is revealed by the insight (gained) through the intellect which resides in the heart. Those who know this become immortal.

When the mind has the total focus (laser-like), the teaching will be absorbed by mere *śravaṇam*. When the mind is prepared, *śravaṇam* penetrates it easily. The patient listens to his biopsy report with intense focus because the future of his life depends on it. Do

we have such a mind when we listen to *Tat tvam asi*? If we can enjoy the teaching totally with such deep concentration, it will be absorbed instantaneously. Parīkṣit had only seven days to live and yet, he sought liberation. Imagine how focused he would have been. Lord Yama calls that mind *hṛṇ maṇīṭ*. It is a technical word. In the first two lines, Lord Yama says that Brahman is the subtler than anything in the creation and therefore, the mind should also be very subtle to understand this.

The nature of Brahman does not fall within the range of perception (*rūpam* means *svarūpam*). It is then very clear that whatever falls within the range of perception is not Brahman. *Saguṇa Īśvara* is available for *darśanam*, *sparsanam* etc., but the Upaniṣad says that it is only an intermediary stage. The ultimate is not available for perception.

Therefore, no seeker can see that Brahman through the ordinary or extraordinary eye because whatever is seen is *anātmā* or object. If it is not available for sensory perception, how can it be known? It can be known only through *guru-śāstra-upadeśa*. You can see your own eyes only through the mirror; no other instrument will be useful. Likewise, *śāstra-darpaṇa* is the only instrument available for "seeing" Brahman, the self. To see my own eyes, I should have the mirror as well as a good pair of eyes. If neither one is good, there is no way to see the self.

Therefore, a subtle intellect as well as *guru-śāstra-upadeśa* is required for jñāna. By the prepared and sensitized intellect, one can grasp the subtle Brahman by *śravaṇam* alone. That intellect (*manīṣā*) is resident in the heart (*hṛdā*). With that intellect and the insight (*manah*) given by the teacher, his mind is illumined by proper understanding. Thus, Brahman is revealed. This is the only way to know. Such a person who has gone through this process "becomes" immortal.

Other notes:

Tvam pada lakṣyārtha – real meaning of the word "I" as seen by the scriptures must be very clear because the *śāstras* reveal Brahman as "You are that". When Upaniṣad says

"You are That", the word You refers not to the B-M-S complex, but to the Consciousness that inheres the B-M-S complex. If I have the subtle mind to immediately understand this, the *lakṣyārtha* (the intended meaning) will smoothly enter my mind.

१० यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते, ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।
बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टति, तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ॥

**10 yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhantē, jñānāni manasā saha ।
buddhiśca na vicēṣṭati, tāmāhuḥ paramām gatim ॥**

आहुः – **āhuḥ** - They declare तां गतिम् परमाम् – **tām gatim paramām** - that state to be the highest यदा – **yadā** - in which पञ्च ज्ञानानि – **pañca jñānāni** - the five (organs of) knowledge सह मनसा – **saha manasā** - along with the mind अवतिष्ठन्ते – **avatiṣṭhantē** - abide (in the Ātmā) च बुद्धिः – **ca buddhiḥ** - and the intellect न विचेष्टति – **na vicēṣṭati** - does not waver.

They declare that state to be the highest in which the five (organs of) knowledge along with the mind abide (in the Ātmā) and the intellect does not waver.

The Upaniṣad discusses meditation (*yogābhyāsa*) in verses 10 and 11. The purpose of meditation is to develop a disciplined mind that can concentrate for a length of time without distraction. Meditation is the product of *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga*, a well-known system developed by Sage Patañjali. *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* is accepted in our tradition for preparing and sharpening the mind. This systematic exercise culminates in *nirvikalpaka samādhi*, the total absorption of the mind in an object or a chosen field. In *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga*, the objects of meditation are various *cakras* in the body. *Advaitins* are not generally interested in the meditation on objects such as *cakras*. They combine *yogābhyāsa* with *upāsanā* by practicing meditation on a *devatā* instead of *cakras*. *Saguṇa Īśvara dhyānam* is combined with *yogābhyāsa* to develop the qualification of *citta- samādhānam* (the focusing faculty of the mind), which is one of the components of *sādhana catuṣṭaya sampattiḥ*. Chapter 6 of the Bhagavad Gītā discusses the eight stages of *Aṣṭāṅga yoga* in detail.

Yogābhyāsa (samādhi abhyāsa) is not prescribed as the means for self-knowledge and mokṣa. The only acknowledged method is *guru-śāstra-upadeśa*. Mokṣa can be gained only through *jñāna*, which can be gained only through *śravaṇam*. *Samādhi abhyāsa* is only an instrument to polish the mind. We do not prescribe meditation for mystical experiences because these have nothing to do with spiritual knowledge or liberation. A person can be happily liberated without any such experiences. He only requires purity, focusing capacity and the ability to study and assimilate the *śāstras*.

In this verse, Lord Yama discusses the culmination of *yogābhyāsa (upāsana)* into *nirvikalpa samādhi*. We have the focusing capacity in any field; there is an instance of a chess player losing 5 kg just by playing with concentration although no physical exertion took place. We are using the same focusing capacity to gain *sādhana catuṣṭaya sampattiḥ* through *saguṇa Īsvara dhayānam* (focusing on formed god). We get visible (*dṛṣṭa*) as well as invisible (*adṛṣṭa*) benefits by this (playing Chess with intense concentration gives will not give *adṛṣṭa phalam*). These two verses are the basis for Chapter 6 of the Bhagavad Gītā. In verse 6.19 of the Gītā, Krishna likens the mind in *samādhi* to a flame that remains without flickering when protected from the wind. Lord Yama says:

As the culmination of this meditation, the five sense organs (*jñānendriyāṇi*) along with the mind, remain without distraction. The intellect also remains focused devoid of any thought other than the object of meditation (*sajātīya pratyaya pravāhaḥ*). This state of absorption is also divided into two – *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa*. Absorption through deliberate effort is *savikalpa samādhi* that eventually becomes spontaneous after the will recedes (*nirvikalpa samādhi*).

Nirvikalpa samādhi is the highest goal of *yogābhyāsa*, but not the the highest goal of life. The function of *yogābhyāsa* is only to provide a well-equipped mind with which Vedānta *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsanam* can begin.

११ तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते, स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।
अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति, योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ॥

11 tām yōgamiti manyantē, sthirāmindriyadhāraṇām ।
apramattastadā bhavati, yōgō hi prabhavāpyayau ॥

मन्यन्ते – manyantē - They consider तां स्थिराम् इन्द्रियधारणाम् – tām sthirām indriyadhāraṇam - the steady poise of the sense organs इति योगम् – iti yogam - to be yoga. भवति अप्रमत्तः – bhavati apramattaḥ - One should be alert तदा – tadā - at that time, हि – hi - because योगः – yogah - yoga प्रभवाप्ययौ – prabhavāpyayau - is subject to rise and fall.

They consider the steady poise of the sense organs to be yoga. One should be alert at that time, because yoga is subject to rise and fall.

The state of absorption mentioned in the previous mantra is also called *yogaḥ*. Thus, the practice as well as destination is called *yogaḥ*. In this state, the sense organs are steady and free from distraction. Focusing is a difficult task, but retaining the focus is even more difficult. In this state of *samādhi*, the sense organs and the mind remain focused for a length of time.

One should be alert to avoid distraction because the mind fluctuates during meditation. In verse 6.26 of the *Gītā*, Krishna cautions against such distractions and gives us the technique to bring the mind back to focus. We all had this focus as children (watching the ant or cockroach). In the name of growth and sophistication, we have lost that faculty. We are trying to retrieve it now. So, one should be alert to the distractions.

Since the mind is subject to fluctuations, one should practice to keep it steady. Practicing meditation on Rama or Krishna or Omkāra makes the mind ready for *Vedānta śravaṇam*. It is prescribed as part of *upāsanā*. If a person has not done *upāsanā*, he will have difficulty in concentrating during *śravaṇam* and absorbing the knowledge as he is listening. The lectures may appear as academic and powerless information. If the

listening is effective, the knowledge will take place with mere *śravaṇam*. If the person has not practiced *upāsanā*, he must practice *nididhyāsanam* after *śravaṇam*. In *nididhyāsanam*, the meditation is on the teachings heard during *śravaṇam* and not on the external objects such as a *devatā* or *cakra*.

१२ नैव वाचा न मनसा, प्राप्तुं शक्यो न चक्षुषा ।
अस्तीति ब्रुवतोऽन्यत्र, कथा तदुपलभ्यते ॥

**12 naiva vācā na manasā, prāptum śakyō na cakṣuṣā ।
astīti bruvato'nyatra, kathā tadupalabhyatē ॥**

शक्यः प्राप्तुम् – **śakyah prāptum** - (Brahman) can be grasped न चक्षुषा – **na cakṣuṣā** - neither through the eye, न एव वाचा – **na ēva vācā** - nor through speech, न मनसा – **na manasā** - nor through mind. कथं तत् – **katham tat** - How can it उपलभ्यते – **upalabhyatē** - be known अन्यत्र – **anyatra** - by anyone other than the one ब्रुवतः – **bruvataḥ** - who declares इति अस्ति – **iti asti** - that it exists?

(Brahman) can be grasped neither through the eye, nor through speech, nor through mind. How can it be known by anyone other than the one who declares that it exists?

The next important preparatory value is highlighted here: *śraddhā*. This is the faith in the existence of *nirguṇa Brahman*. The more the scriptures describe *nirguṇa Brahman*, the more we doubt its existence. *Nirguṇa Brahman* is not available for any sense organs, the mind or any instrument of knowledge. It is also not logically provable. Therefore, our conclusion will be that it is non-existent.

Śaṅkarācārya gives an example in a *śloka* describing how it may appear to the unprepared mind:

Here goes a son of a barren woman. After taking a dip in the water of the mirage, he has bedecked his head with flowers from the sky. He has a bow made of a special material – the rabbit horn.

One may get an idea like the above about *nirguṇa Brahman* and conclude that it is non-existent. The philosophies such as *Viśiṣṭādvaitam*, *Dvaitam*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Nyāya* etc. do not accept *nirguṇa Brahman*.

Therefore, the faith in the existence of *nirguṇa Brahmanis* required until one understands it after systematically going through the study of scriptures for a length of time. We are unable to objectify *nirguṇa Brahman* not because it is absent, but because the it is the very subject that objectifies everything else. It takes time to grasp this *cidambara rahasyam* and therefore, have faith.

Lord Yama says:

Brahman cannot be grasped by words (*karmendriyas*) or the sense organs (*jñānendriyas*) or the mind. It cannot be grasped by anything because it is the grasper.

This can be understood only by the one who has the faith in the existence of *nirguṇa Brahman* until he gains the understanding "I am that". The others, who lack this faith (*aśraddhāvān*) and open-mindedness, can never know Brahman.

१३ अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धव्यः, तत्त्वभावेन चोभयोः ।
अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धस्य, तत्त्वभावः प्रसीदति ॥

**13 astītyēvōpalabdavyaḥ, tattvabhāvēna cōbhayōḥ ।
astītyēvōpalabdhasya, tattvabhāvaḥ prasīdati ॥**

उपलब्धव्यः – upalabdavyaḥ - (Brahman is first) to be known **इति एव अस्ति** – iti ēva asti - as existent **च तत्त्वभावेन** – ca tattvabhāvena - and then, as it really is. **उभयोः** – ubhayōḥ - Of these two, **तत्त्वभावः** – tattvabhāvaḥ - the real nature (of Brahman), **उपलब्धस्य** –

upalabdhasya - which has been known इति एव अस्ति – iti ēva asti - as existent, प्रसीदति – prasīdati - favors (by revealing itself).

(Brahman is first) to be known as existent and then, as it really is. Of these two, the real nature (of Brahman), which has been known as existent, favors (by revealing itself).

With faith, a person says that there is *nirguṇa Brahman (Brahma asti)*. With the understanding of the Vedānta, "Brahman is" will be converted to "Brahman am". He begins with an idea that Brahman is an object. As the teaching unfolds, he understands, "Brahman I am". This journey consists of transformation from "is-ness" to "am-ness". *Brahma asti* is *parokṣajñānam* (knowledge of the remote Brahman) while *Brahma asmi* is *aparokṣajñānam* which is self-evident here and now. Lord Yama calls it *tattva-bhāvaḥ* which means the real nature of Brahman. Being myself is the real nature of Brahman; with this one-ness with Brahman (*aikyam*) is evident. *Brahma asmi* is not directly possible; you must start with *Brahma asti*:

Brahma nāsti→*Brahma asti*→*Brahma asmi*

Lord Yama says in this verse:

Initially, one should try to grasp Brahman in the third person and then grasp its real nature later. When Brahman is grasped as *asti*, it will reveal its true nature eventually.

In summary, with *śraddhā*, acquire *parokṣajñānam* and then eventually, you will acquire *aparokṣajñānam*.

Other notes:

There is a saying in Tamil: *the teacher teaches without teaching and the student understands it without understanding*. SP-ji adds: *we get liberated without getting liberated*. If a person does not understand, it is no wonder, but if he does, it is a wonder.

Give the benefit of doubt to the scriptures and the teacher. This open-mindedness is called *śraddhā*.

१४ यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते, कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवति, अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥

**14 yadā sarvē pramucyantē, kāmā yē'sya hṛdi śritāḥ ।
atha martyō'rmṛtō bhavati, atra brahma samaśnutē ॥**

यदा – **yadā** - When सर्वे कामाः – **sarvē kāmāḥ** - all desires ये श्रिताः – **yē śritāḥ** - which are based अस्य हृदि – **asya hṛdi** - on his heart प्रमुच्यते – **pramucyatē** - wear off, अथ मर्त्यः – **atha martyaḥ** - then, the mortal भवति अमृतः – **bhavati amṛtaḥ** - becomes immortal. समश्नुते ब्रह्म – **samaśnutē brahma** - He attains Brahman अत्र – **atra** - here (itself).

When all desires which are based on his heart wear off, then, the mortal becomes immortal. He attains Brahman here (itself).

Verses 14 and 15 describe the benefits of *Brahmavidyā* (*Brahmavidyā phalam*). The *phalam* is *jīvanmukti* which is the freedom here and now. This is not physical freedom, because we must depend upon the external world for food, clothing, shelter etc. The freedom referred to here is the mental freedom from problems of *saṁsāra* which expresses in the form of desire, anger, greed, delusion, arrogance, jealousy and fear. The scriptures mainly highlight and focus on *kāmaḥ* (desire). Because of self-ignorance, I identify with the B-M complex and therefore, I feel limited. Thus, there is something always lacking in my life. Ignorance leads to lack of fulfillment (*ajñāna* → *apūrṇata*). What I want varies; that I want continues.

This *apūrṇata* expresses in the form of *kāma*; there is a constant struggle to remove my limitation. This struggle is expressed by our tendency to acquire various things to attain fulfillment (*pūrṇatvam*). This struggle is called *kāmaḥ*. Freedom is the freedom from this struggle to be complete. With freedom, I do things not for fulfillment, but with fulfillment. The former is called a binding desire while the latter is a non-binding desire.

It is harmless to have any number of non-binding desires, but the binding desire leads to *saṁsāra*. *Jīvanmukti* is freedom from binding desires. Krishna borrows this in the second chapter in verse 2.55 of the *Gītā*:

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्यार्थं मनोगतान् ।

Oh Arjuna! when one gives up all the desires obtaining in the mind

He further adds:

आत्मन्योवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥

satisfied in himself by himself, he is said to be (a man) of firm knowledge.

Don't give up desires because they are sour grapes. You will give up when you are full.

Lord Yama says:

When all the desires in the mind (*hr̥dī = antaḥkaraṇe manasē*) wear off, one becomes free of cycle of mortality; he becomes immortal. This includes the desire for *mokṣa*. The last desire is the desire for desirelessness. *Jñānī* has no desire for even *mokṣa* because he understands that his own nature is *mokṣa* (*mokṣa-svaraupa*).

In verse 8.6 of the *Gītā*, it is said that the next birth is decided by the strong desire that a person entertains at the time of death. Verse 3.2.2 of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* also says that whatever desires a person dies with, he is born with them again. When one gains *jñāna*, he has no more desires and therefore he is not born again (and does not die again). Thus he "becomes" immortal (*amṛtaḥ*). Truly speaking, the mortal does not become immortal because it is impossible for the finite to become infinite. The one who thought he was mortal now knows that he has always been immortal and always will be. Travel from mortality to immortality is the travel from ignorance to knowledge; it is not physical, but intellectual. The travel is from the notion that I am mortal to the knowledge that I am immortal.

He “becomes” one with Brahman when he drops the notion that Brahman is away from him. This clearly means that he must be alive to drop this notion. This must be noted with emphasis that *mokṣa* is here and now while living. This contrasts with some other philosophies that claim that *mokṣa* happens after death in some *loka* or heaven or Paradise. [Pujya Swami Dayananda: these other religions are tourism promoters!]

१५ यदा सर्वे प्रभिद्यन्ते, हृदयस्येह ग्रन्थयः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवति, एतावद्ध्यनुशासनम् ॥

**15 yadā sarvē prabhidyantē, hṛdayasyēha granthayaḥ ।
atha martyō'mṛtō bhavati, ētāvaddhyānuśāsanam ॥**

यदा – **yadā** - When सर्वे ग्रन्थयः – **sarvē granthayaḥ** - all the knots हृदयस्य – **hṛdayasya** - of the heart प्रभिद्यन्ते – **prabhidyantē** - are completely destroyed इह – **iha** - here (itself), अथ मर्त्यः – **atha martyaḥ** - then, the mortal भवति अमृतः – **bhavati amṛtaḥ** - becomes immortal. एतावद् हि – **ētāvad hi** - This much alone अनुशासनम् – **anuśāsanam** - is the teaching.

When all the knots of the heart are completely destroyed here (itself), then, the mortal becomes immortal. This much alone is the teaching.

The same benefit (*phalam*) as the last verse is presented in a different manner.

In the previous mantra, the benefit was presented as the destruction of desires (*hṛdayasya kāma nāśaḥ*). In this verse, Lord Yama says the knot of ignorance in the mind (*hṛdayasya granthayaḥ*) is destroyed. We have seen this analogy before inverse 2.2.9 of Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad. Śaṅkarācārya: *a knot that has been there for a long time cannot be undone. It must be cut*. Our self-ignorance is beginning-less and therefore, it must be cut by knowledge. We can take another meaning: a knot joins two things together. Symbolically, wedding is the joining of the husband and wife (with 3 knots). In the Vedānta, the ignorance is the knot by which I associate myself with the body-mind complex. Ātmā and *anātmā* are knotted together (*anyonya adhyāśaḥ*).

The knots of the mind are destroyed for good because the identification with the B-M Complex (*deha-abhimāna*) is dropped through knowledge. The mortal *jīva* becomes immortal because of the destruction of this ignorance.

When I identify with the body, I claim the body's mortality as my mortality. When I identify with Ātmā, I then see the body's mortality as body's and not mine. Mortality per se is not *saṁsāra*, but the identification (*abhimāna*) with the body is *saṁsāra*.

Lord Yama says that this much alone is his teaching that started in verse 2.2.18 in response to Naciketas' question in the third boon.

१६ शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्यः, तासां मूर्धानमभिनिःसृतैका ।
तयोर्ध्वमायन्नमृतत्वमेति, विष्वङ्ङन्या उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥

**16 śataṁ caikā ca hṛdayasya nāḍyaḥ, tāsāṁ mūrdhānamabhiniḥsṛtaikā ।
tayōrdhvamāyannamṛtatvamēti, viṣvaṅṅnyā utkramaṇē bhavanti ॥**

शतं च एका च – śataṁ ca ekā ca - Hundred and one नाड्यः – nāḍyaḥ - are the nāḍīs हृदयस्य – hṛdayasya - of the heart. तासाम् – tāsām - Among them एका अभिनिःसृता – ekā abhiniḥsṛtāḥ - one emerges out मूर्धानम् – mūrdhānam - through the crown of the head. आयन् ऊर्ध्वम् – āyan ūrdhvam - Going up through तथा – tayā - that, एति अमृतत्वम् – ēti amṛtatvam - one attains immortality. अन्याः विष्वङ् - anyāḥ viṣvaṅ - The other, having different directions भवन्ति उत्क्रमणे – bhavanti utkramaṇē - lead to rebirth.

Hundred and one are the nāḍīs of the heart. Among them one emerges out through the crown of the head. Going up through that, one attains immortality. The other, having different directions lead to rebirth.

In the last two verses, the benefits of *Brahmavidyā* were described. In this verse, Lord Yama goes back to the second boon (1.1.12 through 1.1.19) where he taught the Nāciketa ritual that combines the ritual with the meditation on *Virāt* (*karma sahita*

upāsanā or *upāsana sahita karma*). In technical language, it is called *karma-upāsana-samuccayaḥ* (combination). The *upāsanā* in the Nāciketa ritual is called *Virāt upāsanā* – meditation upon the *Agni* where the ritual is performed.

In this verse, Lord Yama describes the *phalam* of the *karma-upāsana-samuccayaḥ*. The combination of karma and *upāsanā* gives a greater benefit than karma alone. Meditating on the form of God will give better benefit than mechanically chanting (For example: *Viṣṇusahasranāmam*). The *phalam* of *karma-upāsana-samuccayaḥ* is *kramamukti*. At the time of death, the *upāsaka's sūkṣma śarīram* will exit through the *suṣumṇā nādī*, and travel to Brahmaloka taking the *śukla gati*. The *upāsaka* will get *jñāna* from Brahmaji, attain *jīvanmukti* in Brahmaloka and then attain *videha-mukti* at the end of his life. If one performs karma without *upāsanā*, he will not travel through *suṣumṇā nādī*, but some other *nādī*. The *karmi* will be born again; the nature of his birth will be based upon his karma. Thus, the *ajñānīs* are of two types: *karmīs* and *upāsakas*.

From the heart, 101 primary (*pradhāna*) *nādīs* emerge and spread through the body. Of these, one goes through the middle of the body and exits from the crown of the head. It is called *brahmarandhram*, which is a tender part of the head. At the exit, the *suṣumṇā nādī* connects with the path called *śukla gati* or *devayāna* which leads to *Brahmaloka*. The *sūkṣma śarīram* of the *upāsaka* takes this route to Brahmaloka. He attains *kramamukti*.

The *sūkṣma śarīram* of the non-upāsaka (*karmi*) will emerge out of other *nādīs* that are pointed in directions other than up (*Brahmaloka*). Thus, he takes up rebirth in the other *lokas*.

१७ अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा,
सदा जनानां हृदये संनिविष्टः ।
तं स्वाच्छरीरात्प्रवृहेत्,
मुञ्जादिवेषिकां धैर्येण ।
तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतं,
तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतमिति ॥

17 aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣō'ntarātmā,
sadā janānām hṛdaye saṁniviṣṭaḥ |
taṁ svāccharīrātpravṛhēt,
muñjādivēṣikām dhairyēṇa |
taṁ vidyācchukramamṛtaṁ,
taṁ vidyācchukramamṛtamiti ||

पुरुषः अन्तरात्मा – **puruṣaḥ antarātmā** - Puruṣa, the Ātmā within, अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः – **aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ** - is of the size of the thumb. सदा संनिविष्टः – **sadā saṁniviṣṭaḥ** - It is ever seated हृदये – **hṛdaye** - in the heart जनानाम् – **janānām** - of the people. प्रवृहेत् तम् – **pravṛhēt tam** - One should separate that स्वात् शरीरात् – **svāt śarīrāt** - from one's own body धैर्येण – **dhairyēṇa** - with diligence, इव इषीकाम् – **iva iṣīkām** - like (separating) the stalk मुञ्जात् – **muñjāt** - from muñjā grass. विद्यात् तम् – **vidyāt tam** - One should know that शुक्रम् अमृतम् – **śukram amṛtam** - to be pure and immortal; विद्यात् तम् - **vidyāt tam** - one should know that शुक्रम् अमृतम् – **śukram amṛtam** - to be pure and immortal – इति – **iti** - thus (ends the teaching).

Puruṣa, the Ātmā within, is of the size of the thumb. It is ever seated in the heart of the people. One should separate that from one's own body with diligence, like (separating) the stalk from muñjā grass. One should know that to be pure and immortal; one should know that to be pure and immortal – thus (ends the teaching).

Lord Yama does not want to finish the teaching with *kramamukti* because the student generally only remembers the last point in the teaching. So, he returns to *jīvanmukti* in this verse. *Brahmavidyā phalam* is revisited and re-ascertained in this mantra. First *Brahmavidyā* is summarized:

There is the inner self (*antarātma*) that is of (as though) the size of the thumb. That *antarātma* is *puruṣaḥ* (we have seen two meanings before: in-dweller of the body and all-pervading). Ātmā is present in everyone's heart (mind). It is present as the

Consciousness witnessing the presence and absence of thoughts. *Brahmavidyā* is separating this *Ātmā* from its container, *anātmā*.

One should separate that Consciousness from the body, the matter. This is the discrimination called *Ātma-anātmā-vivekaḥ* (*dr̥k-dr̥śya-vivekaḥ*). This discrimination or separation is an intellectual process that consists of subtle understanding and therefore, requires a subtle intellect. There is never a physical separation in any state (*avasthā*) including *nirvikalpaka samādhi*. One must be alert in separating *Ātmā* and *anātmā* just as one would be careful in separating the stalk from the *muñjā* grass. One must be careful because the grass has a sharp edge.

Then, one should know that this Consciousness is that Brahman described in the Upaniṣad as pure and eternal and that I, the Consciousness am Brahman. This is *tadpada aikyam* and therefore, a *mahāvākya*.

In summary, disidentify with the body and identify with Brahman. *Cinmudra* symbolizes this – separate yourself from the three bodies and associate yourself with Brahman (*anguṣṭamātrah*). This is the *Brahmavidyā* that will give *jīvanmukti*. This is repeated to indicate the conclusion of the *Yama-Naciketa-samvādaḥ*.

१८ मृत्युप्रोक्तां नचिकेतोऽथलब्ध्वा,
विद्यामेतां योगविधिं च कृत्स्नम् ।
ब्रह्मप्राप्तो विरजोऽभूद्विमृत्युः,
अन्योऽप्येवं यो विदध्यात्ममेव ॥

18 mṛtyuprōktām nacikētō'thalabdhvā,
vidyāmētām yōgavidhiṃ ca kṛtsnam ।
brahmaprāptō virajō'bhūdvimṛtyuḥ,
anyō'pyēvaṃ yō vidadhyātmamēva ॥

नचिकेतः – **Nacikētaḥ** - Naciketas कृत्स्नं लब्ध्वा – **kṛtsnam labdhvā** - completely acquired एतां विद्याम् – **ētām vidyām** - this knowledge च योगविधिम् – **ca yōgavidhim** - along with the method of yoga मृत्युप्रोक्ताम् – **mṛtyuprōktām** - which were taught by Lord Yama.

अथ – **atha** - Thus, प्राप्तः ब्रह्म – **prāptaḥ brahma** - having attained Brahman, अभूद् विरजः – **abhūd virajāḥ** - he became pure विमृत्युः – **vimṛtyuḥ** - and immortal. अन्यः अपि एव – **anyaḥ api ēva** - Anyone else too, यः एवंविद् अध्यात्मम् – **yaḥ ēvaṁvid adhyātmam** - who thus knows Ātmā, (attains Brahman).

Naciketas completely acquired this knowledge along with the method of yoga which were taught by Lord Yama. Thus, having attained Brahman, he became pure and immortal. Anyone else too, who thus knows Ātmā, (attains Brahman).

This is the conclusion of the Upanisad. It is glorifying Naciketas. He was a brilliant student who received this knowledge and got liberated.

Naciketas attained this wisdom given by Lord Yama (*Mṛtyuḥ*) who also taught him *yogābhyāsa* that is required for the assimilation of the teaching (*nididhyāsanam*). He became one with Brahman and therefore, he became free of all impurities and mortality.

Anyone else receiving the same wisdom in the same manner will attain Brahman and become immortal. There is no restriction related to caste, gender or *āśrama* mentioned in the Upaniṣad. Such a person will be free from *pāpa* as well as *puṇya*. Once karma is not there, there is no rebirth and without birth, there is no death. Therefore, whoever studies Kaṭhōpaniṣad will be liberated here and now. This is the *phalaśruti* given by Upaniṣad.

इति काठकोपनिषदि द्वितीयाध्याये तृतीया वल्ली ॥

Thus (ends) the third section of Second Chapter

2.5. Chapter 2 - Summary

This is the summary of the second Chapter of the Kathopanisad. Naciketas asked for *Ātmavidyā* through the third boon after exhausting the first two boons on the welfare of his father and the society. Lord Yama fulfilled the first two boons and then elaborately teaches *Ātmavidyā* to fulfill the third boon. In the first chapter, *Ātmavidyā* was given in the second and third sections. All three sections of the second chapter also discuss *Ātmavidyā*. The essence of the three sections of the second chapter is summarized here.

First Vallī

Mantras 1 and 2

In this section, the first two mantras discuss the important pre-requisites for a student to pursue *Ātmajñāna*. In the first verse, Lord Yama discusses sensory control (*indriya nigrahaḥ* or *damaḥ*) as an important discipline. In the *yogaśātra*, it is called *pratyāhāraḥ*. He points out that it is not easy because the sense organs are naturally turned outward attached to the sense objects. It is not an acquired habit, but it is instinctive and inherent in a person. It is difficult to overcome something instinctive because it is fighting against our own nature. It is an uphill task. It requires discrimination and will power. Only a few rare people master the sense organs. This mastery is born out of understanding and not suppression. In suppression, the control is external, but in mastery, it is the internal wisdom that controls it.

In the second mantra, Lord Yama describes the other pre-requisite: discrimination. Without discrimination, the seeker will be lost in the ephemeral world of sense objects. He will be lost in the world of mortality resulting in the birth-death cycle (*punarapi jananam, punarapi maranam*). In Lord Yama's language, this person will be under his grip. Understand and master your sense organs.

Mantra 3-13

Lord Yama discusses the central theme of this section answering Naciketas' question on *Ātmasvarūpam* (*Ātmasvarūpa varṇanam*). Ātmā is the all-pervading and eternal Consciousness. Because of Consciousness, one is conscious of all the sense objects (*śabda-sparśa-rūpa-rasa-gandha*).

Even though Consciousness is all-pervading and one, it manifests in the medium of matter in different ways. Therefore, it appears as individual Consciousness in each medium. It also appears to have varying quality because of the quality of the medium. The same Consciousness manifests at three macro-levels:

- *Īśvara caitanyam* or *antaryāmī caitanyam* – *samaṣṭi kāraṇa prapañca*– the causal universe
- *Hiraṇyagarbha caitanyam* – *samaṣṭi sūkṣma prapañca* – the subtle universe (total mind)
- *Virāt caitanyam* or *vaiśvānara caitanyam* – *samaṣṭi sthūla prapañca* – the gross universe

The same Consciousness expresses at micro-level also

- *Prājña caitanyam* – *kāraṇa śarīram* – the causal body
- *Taijasa caitanyam* – *sūkṣmaśarīram* – the subtle body
- *Viśva caitanyam* – *sthūlaśarīram* – the gross body

These six are manifestations of Consciousness in different matter media. When we remove the matter, Consciousness is one – what is at the macro level is the same as what is at the micro level. The attributes micro and macro belong only to matter.

Consciousness may be one, but there seems to be plurality in the case of matter. Lord Yama says that there is no plurality in matter also; there is no matter separate from Consciousness. Therefore, matter is simply Consciousness with names and forms (*nāma-rūpa*). Lord Yama establishes *advaitam* in the first section.

Mantras 14 and 15

Lord Yama describes the benefit of the vision of non-duality (*advaita darśanam*) and the consequences of the vision of duality (*dvaita darśanam*). The one who sees plurality will go from mortality to mortality. Whoever sees *advaitam*, will attain immortality. An example is given of rain water that flows down the slope of a mountain. The water that separates into smaller streams gets dissipated and disappears after getting absorbed by the earth. When there is a "split" into many streams mortality occurs because water gets weaker and weaker. Multiplicity creates this "destruction". When the water flows as one, it merges with the ocean – the eternity or *nityatvam*. When a wave views itself as a wave, it will see itself as mortal. If the wave views itself as water, it is immortal (*sarvatra eva jala darśanam*). The vision is your choice and the benefit corresponds to the vision.

Second Vallī

The second section of this chapter is devoted entirely to *Ātmasvarūpa varṇanam*. This is the only topic in this section. Ātmā is looked at from both the micro and the macro angle. The individual is called *jīvātmā* while the totality is *Paramātmā*. In fact, there is only Ātmā – there is no adjective.

Mantras 1 through 7

Ātmā is described from the individual angle. Lord Yama points out that Ātmā alone makes every organ alive by lending *cidābhāsa* (RC) to the mind and then to the physical body. The *pañca prāṇas* are sentient because of Ātmā. Lord Yama points out that Ātmā lends Consciousness to *prāṇa*, which then lends it to the physical body. Superficially, the body seems to get sentiency from the *prāṇas*, but truly, it receives sentiency from Ātmā indirectly. Without the Consciousness, the *prāṇas* and the body will decay and decompose. In Chapter 15 of the Bhagavad Gītā, Krishna says that every activity reveals the presence of Ātmā. When you feel the body, it is the expression of *caitanyam*. When tasting something, taste is possible because of life. The life is an expression of Ātmā.

Mantras 8 - 15

Ātmā is described from the macro angle. *Ātmacaitanyam* is not located in the body, but all the bodies are in *Ātmacaitanyam*. This can be explained by the following example:

First stage: You see space is within the hall. Second stage: You see that space is not only within the hall, but also outside of it. Third stage: You understand that all halls are in one all-pervading space.

The entire universe is in Consciousness. Ātmā is *sarva-adhiṣṭhāna caitanyam*. Being *sarva-adhiṣṭhānam*, Atma is all-pervading (*sarva-vyāpaka-caitanyam*). Two examples are given: Agni and Vāyu. Just as the fire and air principles that pervade the entire earth, Ātmā also pervades everything. Lord Yama also conveys another important point. When the fire is the red-hot metal, it seems to have the shape of the metal. The shapeless fire seems to have a shape in the shaped metal. If there are two shaped metals, it appears that there are two different fires and there is no fire in between. The fact is that the fire is not only in the metals, it is also in between. [How do you know? Stand close and you will feel the heat]. The fire is formless, but seems to have a form in the media. It is the same with Consciousness.

Even though Consciousness is all-pervading, it is not affected by anything. It is associated with everything, but not affected by anything (*asaṅga-caitanyam Ātmā*). Ātmā is likened to the sunlight which pervades every object, but it is not wet by water, burnt by fire, sullied by dirt or the smell. Consciousness is *asaṅgaḥ* and therefore, not tainted.

Since the Consciousness is all-pervading, it is one (*ekaḥ* or *advitīyaḥ*). The media has multiplicity. Philosophically, this is significant because the other philosophies such as *Sāṅkhya* (very close to *advaita* philosophy) believe in multiple Ātmās – one for each body. One Ātmā manifests as plural and therefore, it is called *jagat-kāraṇam*.

Then Lord Yama points out that Ātmā is eternal (*nityaḥ*). Any product is *anityam*, but the cause is *nityam*. Clay existed before the pot, in the pot and continues to exist after the

pot is destroyed. Clay exists in all three periods of time – past, present and the future. The pot is subject to birth and death. Ātmā being the *jagat-kāraṇam*, it is *nityaḥ*. It is one cause for all perishable effects.

Third Vallī

Mantras 1-4

Lord Yama summarizes *Ātmasvarūpam* that he revealed in the previous section. He highlights one feature in these four mantras: Ātmā is the intelligent as well as the material cause of the universe (*nimitta-upādāna kāraṇam*). In Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, the example of a spider was given as both the intelligent and the material cause of the web.

Mantras 5 -13

Lord Yama gives various preparatory disciplines. It is very important because Ātmā is a very subtle subject. Grasping the teaching requires preparation:

1. Remembering the greatness of the human birth: In this birth alone, knowledge is possible. Do not postpone. In the other births, it is not possible. Even if you get knowledge in the other *lokas*, it will not be clear. Only in Brahmaloḥa, it is possible, but the entry into Brahmaloḥa is very difficult. Prioritize properly.
2. *Ātma-anātma-viveka*: seeing the real meaning of the word "I" as taught by the scriptures. When we are learning the scriptures, we have to be mindful of the two "I"s: The Consciousness principle and the B-M-S complex it pervades. If I say that you are all pervading, if you have understood that "you" means Ātmā, the knowledge will be immediate. If you take yourself to be the body, my statement will not make sense. [*Tvam pada lakṣyārtha* must be kept in mind during *Vedānta śravaṇam*]. *Lakṣyārtha-jñānam* is the second qualification required for listening to the Vedānta.
3. Lord Yama introduces *yogābhyāsa*: meditation for disciplining the mind. This is the capacity to withdraw the mind and focus on a field and retain it for a length of time. This absorption is called *nirvikalpaka samādhi*. Lord Yama prescribes *samādhi abhyāsa* for disciplining the mind. This is *upāsana* or meditation.

4. *Śraddhā* – faith in the word of the guru and the scriptures. Brahman is not perceptible by the sense organs or the mind and so, you may get the doubt of its existence. Yet, you should give the benefit of doubt to the scriptures and the guru. Accept the existence of Brahman: *Brahma asti* is *śraddhā*. With this *śraddhā*, listen to the teaching and in time it will be clear.

Mantras 14 -18

Jñānaphalam is presented here in three different ways:

- *Sarvagranthi nāśaḥ* – knots of ignorance are destroyed. *Avidyā adhyāsa nāśaḥ* – destruction of ignorance and the consequent misconception. Ignorance by itself is not a problem (it is a bliss), but it leads to errors, which are the problem. Ignorance + errors = *granthayaḥ*.
- *Sarva kāma nāśaḥ* – destruction of all (binding) desires. It is harmless to have any number of non-binding desires – fulfilled or unfulfilled. Binding desire is that without which you lack fulfillment in life. This may lead to negative emotions which are the symptom of *saṁsāra*.
- *Brahmaprāptiḥ* – attainment of one-ness with Brahman here and now – *atra brahma samaśnute*. *Brahmaprāpti* is not the union with Brahman; it is dropping the notion of division between Brahman and me. The most important point is that it is available here and now. It is verifiable.

Incidentally, Lord Yama also gives the *phalam* for the Naciketa ritual taught when fulfilling the second boon [*virāt-upāsana-sahita-nāciketa-karma*]. The benefit of this is *kramamukti*.

After presenting this, Lord Yama and Naciketas withdraw to the green room. The Upanisad says that whoever gains this knowledge, will also get the same benefits. With this general *phalaśruti*, the Kaṭhōpaniṣad concludes. We thank the Lord with *śāntipāṭha* for allowing us to complete this lesson.

Om Tat Sat

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Arsha Avinash Foundation

104 Third Street, Tatabad, Coimbatore 641012, INDIA

Phone: + 91 9487373635

E mail: arshaavinash@gmail.com

www.arshaavinash.in