

कठोपनिषद् Kāthopanīṣad

2.3.14

14. When all desires clinging to one's heart fall off, then a mortal becomes immortal (and he) attains Brahman here.

In this final section of the upaniṣad, Yamadharmarājā is presenting three topics: The first one is summarizing briefly the teaching of Brahma Vidhyā. Then enumeration of some of the preparatory discipline or qualification—Brahma Vidhyā sādhanam—is the second topic. And the third topic is the Brahma Vidhyā phalam, viz. the benefit of this knowledge.

Of these three topics, two topics had been completed with Mantra No.13. The various qualifications were mentioned, and in the 13th mantra, the highlighted qualification is śraddhā—faith in the existence of Nirguṇa Brahman. Faith is required because the very description of Brahman will create a doubt in the very existence of such a Brahman because one cannot conceive a Brahman which is totally propertyless and also which is not available for objectification either sensorily or mentally.

If it is not available for senses, if it is not available for mind and intellect, if it is not available even for words and if it is totally attributeless, we will only think that such a Brahman which is not available for senses should be non-existent. It is very difficult to conceive and even some philosophies do not accept Nirguṇa Brahman. It requires a subtle intellect to grasp Brahman. In other words, the teacher teaches without teaching. The student understands without understanding and he gets liberated without getting liberated! It is a subtle topic. If a person does not understand, it is no wonder. If a person understands, āścaryo vaktā kuśalonulabdā. Śraddhā is very important until a person understand and give the benefit of doubt to the teacher and give the benefit of doubt to the scriptures also..

This open mindedness is called Śraddhā. Śraddhāvan labhate jñānam. And with emphasis on śraddhā, Yamadharmaraja concluded the qualification discussion. Now the final topic of Brahma Vidhyā phalam is being explained.

३॥ यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्येते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥

yadā sarve pramucyete kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śritāḥ |
atha martyo'mṛto bhavatyatra Brahma samaśnute || 14 ||

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्येते कब्रमा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥

yadā sarve pramucyete kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śritāḥ |
atha martyo'mṛto bhavatyatra Brahma samaśnute || 14 ||

Brahma Vidhyā phalam is mentioned in this verse as well as in the next verse. Brahma Vidhyā phalam is jīvanMukti—freedom here and now.

The next question is: freedom from what? Because, physically we have to depend upon the external world for food, clothing, shelter etc. Here, the freedom that we are talking about is the inner freedom from mental problems of saṁsāra. Saṁsāra expresses in the form of varieties of mental problems like fear, insecurity, jealousy, depression, anger etc. These are varieties of symptoms of saṁsāra, and of all the forms of saṁsāra, the main one often highlighted in the scriptures is kāma.

Kāma is the first off shoot of saṁsāra. Because of self-ignorance, I take myself to be the body-mind complex, and as body-mind complex, I am going to be limited all the time.

As ahaṅkāra I can never be pūrṇa and as ahaṅkāra, I will ever be a pūrṇaḥ and this self-ignorance expresses in the form of a pūrṇatha. It means there is always something lacking in life, something missing in life, something wanting. What I want varies. There is always a pūrṇata and this expresses itself in the form of kāma. Since I cannot withstand limitation, there is always a struggle to remove the limitation and I do not know what will remove the limitation. What should I do?

Therefore comes the trial and error method of experimentation; get this, get that, get rid of this, get rid of that; it is a life-long struggle to acquire. This struggle to acquire for the sake of pūrṇatvam is called kāma. The struggle to acquire for the sake of pūrṇatvam is kāma and freedom is defined as freedom from this struggle to be complete. I do not want to acquire anything for the sake of completion. I do not do anything for the sake of completion, and if at all I am doing something in my life, it is not for the sake of completion.

When I acquire something for the sake of completion, it is called a binding desire. But when I do for completion, it is called a non-binding desire. One can have any amount of non-binding desires. Binding desire is called saṁsāra, and it is this binding desire that goes away, and this is called

jīvanmukti. And that is why Krishna says in the second chapter of Gita, prajahāti yadā kāman sarvān pārtha manogatān —He gives up all binding desires. Why? Because ātmanyeva ātmana tuṣṭaḥ. I give up not because of scriptures or phillosophy. It is not like that. I am full, and therefore, I do not require anything and that is said here

Hṛdi śritāḥ kāmā ye'sya sarve pramucyete. All the desires are located in the mind. Here hridi means antaḥkaraṇa. Sarve means all desires including the desire for mokṣa. The last desire is desire for desirelessness and that is called mokṣa icchā. Desire for mokṣa is also again because by jnana. I understand that I need not get it because fortunately I am nitya mukta svarupah. Therefore one does not have even mokṣecchā. And naturally, atha martyo'mṛto bhavatyatra—such a person becomes immortal, free from the cycle of mortality.—He gets out of the cycle of punarapi jananam punarapi maraṇam.

What is the logic behind it? We have seen in the 8th chapter of Gita that the next birth is decided according to the kāmā, the strong desire that a person entertains at the time of death— yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaranbhāvam tyajatyantekaḷebharam. In the Mundaka Upanishad we have seen this. In the case of a jnani, kāmā abha vat, kāmā nimitta punrajanmapi nāsti. And if punar janma is not there, punar maraṇam also is not there. In fact, he goes beyond the birth-death cycle, and therefore, martyaḥ amṛto bhavati. Mortal becomes immortal. Here also we have to note that it is not that I, the mortal became immortal because finite can never become infinite. Mortal becomes immortal means the one who thought himself to be mortal knows that he is immortal. Therefore, travel from mortality to immortality is travel from ignorance to knowledge. It is not a physical travel. It is an intellectual travel from the knowledge that I am mortal to the knowledge that I am immortal. Becoming one with Brahman is dropping the notion that Brahman is away from me, and by dropping that notion, he becomes one with Brahman here and now, and Yamadharmarāja says mokṣa is even while we are alive. This, we emphasize because in certain other systems of philosophy, mokṣa is something to be acquired after death. Most of the other religions—even in Hindu religion itself, many of the systems believe mokṣa is after dropping the body I go to Vaikunta if I am a Vaishnavite or to Kailasa if I am a Saivite or to heaven if you are a Christian. Such people are only tourism promoters. For us, for mokṣa, one need not go anywhere. Mokṣa is here and now and this is called jivanmukti. That is the benefit of this knowledgde.