

Mundakopanishad

Mantra 9

स यो ह वै तत्परमं ब्रह्म वेद
ब्रह्मैव भवति नास्याब्रह्मवित्कुले भवति ।
तरति शोकं तरति पाप्मानं
गुहाग्रन्थिभ्यो विमुक्तोऽमृतो भवति ॥३.२.९॥

*sa yo ha vai tatparamam brahma veda
brahmaiva bhavati nasyābrahmavitkule bhavati.
tarati śokam tarati pāpmānam
guhāgranthibhyo vimukto'mṛto bhavati. (3.2.9)*

*ha vai -- indeed; saḥ yaḥ -- that person who;
veda -- knows; tat -- that; paramam -- limitless;
brahma -- Brahman; brahma eva -- Brahman itself;
bhavati -- becomes; asya -- his; kule -- in the family;
abrahmavit -- one who does not know Brahman;
na bhavati -- not there; tarati -- he crosses; śokam -- sorrow;
tarati -- he crosses; pāpmānam -- pāpās;
vimuktaḥ -- having been released;
guhā-granthibhyaḥ -- from the knots of the heart;
amṛtam -- immortal; bhavati -- becomes*

Indeed that person who knows that limitless Brahman, becomes Brahman itself. In such a person's family there is no one who does not know Brahman. He (or she) crosses sorrow and the *pāpās*. Having been released from the knots of the heart, the person is no longer subject to death.

There are three *mantras* here in the concluding section, which further tell exactly what happens to the knower of Brahman. After gaining the knowledge, should one not experience it? It is the question generally asked. The thinking is first, one gains an indirect knowledge, and then one seeks a direct experience. It is like getting indirect knowledge about a place one wants to go, and later experiencing it on visiting that place. The *śruti* negates that question here.

Saḥ yaḥ ha vai tat paramam brahma veda: any one who knows that Brahman definitely, clearly. The words 'ha' and 'vai' are for emphasis meaning definitely, clearly. They indicate that there can be knowledge which is inhibited. Then one has to do more *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana*. Here, the one who knows Brahman clearly is referred to. *Parama* means limitless.

Asya kule abrahmavid na bhavati: in the family of the knower of Brahman, no one is ever born who does not come to know Brahman. There is a double negative here. A person who does not know Brahman does not exist in the family of the *brahmavid*. *Brahmavid* is one who knows Brahman, who is no longer ignorant with reference to oneself being Brahman. If one is born in the family of a *brahmavid* one will become a *brahmavid*. A birth in the family of *brahmavid* itself indicates one has done a lot of *punya*. That is what Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Gītā*, "One who could not succeed in his spiritual pursuit in this life is born in the family of a *karma-yogin*."²¹⁷ Further, naturally, must be a *gṛhastha*, and since he has the preparedness of mind he gains the knowledge, but continues to be a *gṛhastha* because of *prārabdha*. The one who is born in that family is definitely going to pick up the thread even from childhood, and later gain this knowledge from his father like Bhṛgu and Śvetaketu did. Growing up in that atmosphere, he has been seeing his father as a teacher, so how can he not become a *brahmavid*? '*Abrahmavid asya kule na bhavati*' is a bold statement. In the house of a *brahmavid* nobody is going to miss this knowledge, at least for that generation.

Or the word 'kula' can be a *gurukula* also. In his *gurukula* all his disciples become knowers of Brahman. A disciple is called '*śiṣya*' in Sanskrit. It means the one who deserves to be taught. If he or she is qualified, he or she will soon become a *brahmavid*. There may be some obstacles which one has to surmount. Time will take care of that. Being taught properly by a *brahmavid*, nobody can escape from knowing. No one can ever say in that *gurukula* 'I do not know myself' or 'I do not know what is Brahman.' The knowledge itself can release certain obstacles born of *saṁskāra* and those obstacles do not, in anyway, affect the knowledge. Knowledge is born of *pramāṇa* and reveals that what one is seeking happens to be oneself. That knowledge is not going to be negated by *saṁskāra*, a memory born condition of the mind. It can only deny one the fruits of that knowledge but it cannot take away the knowledge.

It is something like a person who has this knowledge and who has so much to talk and write about it, but is sent to prison due to wrong identity. He or she does not have an audience to talk to or a pen and paper to write. The person may not be able to express himself or herself there. What the person knows may not manifest on paper for others to read. But definitely the knowledge he or she has, cannot go away, just because the knowledge is not expressed. He may not be able to enjoy the fruits of sharing the knowledge with others, but that does not take away his wisdom.

Further the teacher praises the knowledge by mentioning the results. *Saḥ śokam tarati:* he crosses sorrow. The cause for sorrow is not there any more. It is not an *upāya* for drowning the sorrow, but for removing the cause of sorrow.

Saḥ tarati pāpmānam: he crosses all the *pāpas*. It also includes the *puṇyas*. These *puṇya-pāpas* generally do not get destroyed without giving rise to experiences for the doer. If there is a small *pāpa*, one has to become a snail and quickly exhaust it. A snail's life is a very short life. But here, he does not exhaust anything. He is just bypassing. It is like a bypass surgery. The damaged artery is left alone, and a new vessel taken from the thigh or somewhere else, is simply attached there. The blood bypasses the old artery and goes through the new one. Here, the wise person bypasses all the *puṇya-pāpas* in the sense he does not undergo the experience any more. The crossing over is peculiar here.

Guhā-granthibhyo vimuktaḥ amṛto bhavati: released from the three-stranded knot of bondage that ties one to *saṁsāra*, he is no longer subject to death. The three strands are ignorance, desire and action. When ignorance goes the other two, which are its products, also go. The *śāstra* makes a person responsible first through *vidhi-niṣedha*, do-s and dont-s, and then releases the person from the same, if he or she comes to know Brahman. It is not a promise held out, but is based on facts. Brahman is never bound to *karma*.

The *śāstra* finally mentions here to whom one should give this knowledge of Brahman.

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Editor.