



मुण्डकोपनिषद् Muṇḍakopaniṣad



परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्रह्मणः
निर्वेदमायाद् नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन ।
तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्
समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् १।२।१२
parīkṣya lokān karmacitān brahmaṇaḥ
nirvedamāyād nāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena ।
tadvijñānārthaṁ sa gurumevābhigacchet
samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahmaṇiṣṭham 1|2|12

karmacitān – gained by doing actions (and meditation); lokān – the experiences; parīkṣya – examining; brahmaṇaḥ – discriminative person; nirvedam āyāt- may discover dispassion; akṛtaḥ – mokṣa which is not created; kṛtena through the action or meditation; na asti - not there; tat - that; vijñānārthaṁ - to know; saḥ - he; gurum - to a teacher; eva – only; abhigacchet - must go; śrotriyaṁ – one who is well versed in scriptures; brahmaṇiṣṭham – one who has clarity about Brahman; samitpāṇiḥ – with sacrificial twigs in hand.

‘Examining the experiences gained by doing actions and meditation, may the discriminative person discover dispassion. Mokṣa, which is not created, cannot be gained through action. Therefore, to gain the knowledge of Brahman, he must go with sacrificial twigs in hand to a teacher who is well-versed in scriptures and who has clear knowledge about Brahman.

Parīkṣya lokān karmacitān : having analysed the lokas gained by actions. Then, one develops a dispassion towards all these experiences. One does not require going through all experiences. One need not go to heaven also. So, śruti says, parīkṣya, examining purely by buddhi. It is not going through the experience, and afterwards examining what happened. The same thing that happened before is happening again. Nothing new is happening.

Let us understand the examination of experiences. One’s physical body is brought about by one’s own previous karma. As long as the prārabdha-karma lasts it will be there; afterwards it perishes. We have been seeing this—people have gone to join the majority. This physical body will go one day. While it is there, it is anitya because it is a product of karma, like a pot.

Further, in one’s own life here, one gains varieties of experiences. One works for five days and gets a weekend off—two days holiday. This weekend is earned by the work of five days. It is karma-cita, gathered by karma. Then that weekend is gone. If one works for a year, then one gets a holiday for four weeks or whatever.

That is also karma=cita. These holidays last for some time, and then they are over. Similarly, if one works the whole life, then one gets retirement. In America, retirement means buying a bus, and a boat along with it. One keeps driving all over the country to places that one had never seen before. Wherever one goes, one would see the same water, trees, mountains and so on. One has seen all these in different combinations. Even this retirement is not going to last for a long time. Any end achieved by actions on the part of the doer, comes to an undesirable end.

A karma whether mental, oral or physical implies a doer and produces a result. That result may be desirable. But even a desirable end comes to an undesirable end because it will be lost, since it is born of karma. The physical body or any other field of experience that one gets as a result of karma will be lost in time. If one has a lot of money, it will get exhausted, being born of karma. All empires have gone. Alexander the Great is seen only in books; even the Greek culture and religion are gone. They are all karma-cita. So, anything that is accomplished as a result of karma is founded in time. This is the examination.

Just as what is gained here through action, like money, holiday and so on, is gone, so too any other kind of loka, world, that one gains as a result of karma, also goes. It comes under the same law of karma and karma-phala. The law does not differ. The law is the same. In this great fabric of law, any karma done will give a result. A result whether it is desirable or undesirable is anitya. Therefore, if there is naraka, a world of pain, that will be anitya, and likewise svarga, the world of pleasure, will also be anitya.

In the Mahabharata we read that a special vehicle took Yudhishtira to heaven at the end. There he did not find Bhima or Arjuna or Nakula or Sahadeva or Draupadi; none of them was there. Instead, he found Duryodhana, Karna and Drona enjoying there. Yudhishtira became sad. He said, "I do not want to be in this heaven. I want to go where my brothers are". The messenger accompanying him took him to Yudhishtira to the place where his people were. They were undergoing all kinds of pain in naraka. They were crying and screaming. Even Bhima who always made people cry, was himself crying. Yudhishtira saw this. Unable to assimilate this sight, he asked, "Why are all of them here?" The messenger said, "This is how the law works. All of them did certain papa-karma, so they are suffering. You also told a lie once, therefore you are suffering now by seeing them suffering. Now all of you will go to heaven". Yudhishtira asked, "What about Kauvaras?" "They will all come here now", said the messenger. The people who have predominant punya will go through the painful experiences first, and then go through the pleasant experiences. Those who have predominant papa will go through the pleasant experiences first, and then go through the painful experiences.

In human life nothing is permanent. Pain as well as pleasure is not permanent. Consistent pain is naraka and consistent pleasure is svarga. Naraka is consistent as long as it lasts, and afterwards it is over. Svarga also is the same. Both of them are anitya. If you want permanent pleasure, it cannot be dependent on a heavenly situation because going there is samyoga, association. Therefore, there would be viyoga, disassociation also.

Brahmaṇaḥ nirvedam āyāt : the one who is a vivekin, gains dispassion. A sattvic person is a brahmana and so he is able to gain this viveka through analysis. Our experiences are the results of various right and wrong karmas, and are in keeping with the law of karma. The law of karma is the same for this world and the other world. That is why actions done here produce a result to be experienced in the other worlds. A finite karma can produce a finite result only. All karmas being finite, any kind of result is going to be finite only. This is the pariksha, analysis. This is what we call nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka, discriminative understanding of what is real and what is unreal. This viveka is always mentioned as one of the qualifications for the study of Vedanta, and is based on mantras like this. The examination is done with the help of all the means of knowledge at one's disposal, as well as the sastra. That every result from every action is lost in time is well known through pratyaksha, perception. The logical understanding is that any result of action is impermanent, being the result of action, like this physical body, which is born of prarabdha-karma. The Sastra also confirms this when it says that the fields of experiences gained in other worlds through punya also come to an end.

A person may respond to the above analysis saying, 'Let the result be anitya, I am happy with it. I am not interested in the eternal result'. When one is doing karma, one is not interested in an eternal result. One may not want it also because one does not know what it is. Again, there is nothing else available anyway. This is all that is available; therefore ultimately there is no choice.

But on a deeper analysis one can find that the above response is not true. There is a self-judgement in which one finds oneself dissatisfied all the time. I am not comfortable with this situation. Nobody thinks, "I do not want to be happy". In fact, I want to be happy here and anywhere. I want to be happy now and later too. I want to be happy in this situation and in any other situation also. But it is not possible at all that I will be happy at all times, in all places or in all situations unless that happiness is the nature of the atman and not situational. Perhaps it is my nature. My experience also tells me the same. If I am intrinsically an incomplete person, then I cannot feel satisfied occasionally, as I do. Our experiences really give rise to some understanding leading to viveka and also mumuksutva, the desire for freedom from this seeking itself.

To be continued...